

MYRMICA SCABRINODIS COLONY JOURNAL

1 MAY 2006

I received this colony on 27 April 2006 from Ant Store, consisting of about 20 workers, a few larvae, and 1 queen. These ants are almost identical in appearance to *Myrmica rubra* but do have a few subtle differences, but a microscope/magnifying glass is really needed to see the differences. They have been very busy digging a huge tunnel right up against the side of the glass, under a large stone I have put into their tank. Already they have been foraging and eating on flies.

7 May 2006

These ants like to send their workers out far and wide to forage, namely out of the tank and on the floor of the Ant Room. They have not eaten much over the past 6 days since gorging on a couple of maggots I placed in the tank. The tunnel they have built turns sharply away from the glass sides so I cannot see much at the moment, but I can see a larvae chamber that is packed with brood. On comparison with my *rubra*'s these ants appear to be slightly larger.

14 May 2006

Not too much activity in the way of foraging this week but some nest expansion still continues. They do not seem to forage in as great numbers as the *rubra*'s do, but when they do find something tasty recruitment seems to be swift.

31 May 2006

These ants, although fairly active, do not seem to be so aggressive in their foraging as the *Myrmica rubra* colony. They have spent a lot of time digging new tunnels and moving around brood, and I was fascinated to discover that during the warmer parts of the day the whole colony, including queen and brood, migrate from below ground into the frame work of the glass tank itself; obviously taking advantage of the sun's rays which frequently hit the plastic lip around the top of the tank, in which they are all able to climb into and rest. They continue to send their workers out of the tank in small numbers as they forage. One unfortunate worker strayed too close to the *Myrmica rubra* colony territory and was discovered by a group of the latter. The poor ant paid a dear price – its life. I have just realised that I have had this colony for one year and two weeks; it hardly seems that long ago since I got these ants!

24 June 2006

I have been away for the past few weeks and so have not been able to study these ants during that time. I placed a piece of cockroach into their tank today and they swarmed around it and stripped it. They do not seem to be sending many workers out of the tank now, but that is probably because they keep getting their heads kicked in by the nearby *Myrmica rubra* colony. There has been some next expansion continuing but now they seem to have settled that down to a slower rate.

23 July 2006

Due to the fact that I have been away (again) for the past few weeks, I have not been able to see much of these ants. They do continue to be active in their foraging, but nothing more exciting than that I'm afraid. However, I was very surprised to see the presence of flying ants in this colony the other day. I only saw one, a male, but where there is one there are probably others. Hopefully there may be queens as well and it is possible that they may mate in the nest and remain behind, boosting the single egg laying queen present at the moment.

9 September 2006

These ants have been fairly active over the past few weeks but I have seen nothing of the winged males I saw earlier in the year. However, the queen is obviously keeping busy as there is quite a number of brood appearing in the chambers.

21 November 2006

I have seen nothing of these ants over the past few weeks. Perhaps they are hibernating? I am led to believe that these ants stay more active at lower temperatures than many British species. We shall see.

27 December 2006

HIBERNATING!

6 February 2007

Still hibernating but I just wanted to add that at long last I have cleared out the garden shed, something I have been meaning to do since last spring, but were too lazy to do it. Well, now the shed is clear and the tank has been moved from the house. The shed is not heated in any way and therefore is colder than the ant room with its radiator switched off and window open. The shed also has a comfy chair in it for me to sit back in, relax and watch the ants - once they

wake up that is. (A picture of the tanks in the shed can be found on the "My Ant Colonies" page.)

20 February 2007

I removed the side covering from the tank today to have a peek inside, and I saw four or five workers walking slowly (due to the low temperatures) through the tunnels. I could not see anymore as most of the ants are within the deeper, hidden confines of the nest. I have placed pieces of banana, apple, mealworm, and tuna into their tank but as far as I am aware they have not ventured to the surface to eat yet.

9 March 2007

Even though these ants are a little active below ground, they have not, as far as I have seen, emerged from the nest yet. Food I have placed into their tank remains untouched at the moment. It is still quite cold in the garden shed though, so I am not too concerned.

7 April 2007

These ants are now foraging above ground with 3 or 4 workers actively looking for food. I have given them various pieces of food but so far they have only shown interest in the Ant Jelly and honey. That is all colonies now out of hibernation!

28 April 2007

Several times over the past few weeks I have been placing pieces of mealworm into the scabrinodis tank, and every time, within minutes, there have been about 20 workers around it, dragging the pieces away. Inside the nest the activity is increasing, though the queen remains hidden away. This will be the colony's second year with me, and hopefully it will be a successful summer for them. This colony only has one queen so it would be nice if more were produced either this year, or soon after.

17 May 2007

There are a lot of larvae in this nest at the moment which I saw after taking a peek into the nest. There appears to be a large chamber full of larvae right at the bottom of the tank, with several smaller chambers containing larvae elsewhere in the nest. I have seen no eggs or pupae but I guess there must be some in the nest but out of sight away from the glass sides of the tank. Due to the amount of larvae I have seen in the nest I have increased the food that these ants are getting – and they certainly seem to be enjoying it all.

17 June, 2007

These ants continue to eat like there is no tomorrow, a sure sign of a growing colony. One thing I have noticed with this species, and I am not sure if I have mentioned this before, but on a quick glance through the journal I do not notice that I have, they appear to be quite a nervous *Myrmica* subspecies and scatter at the slightest disturbance, whereas the *rubra* seem to stand their ground more. Even though there is no lid on this tank, these ants have not been seen to have ventured out of the tank. In fact very few of my other ants have done the same even though their tanks are also open. I suppose this is due to the fact that they have their food given to them within close proximity of the nest and therefore do not have to forage far and wide.

13 July 2007

I took a peek into the nest of these ants and was amazed to find chambers packed full with larvae and pupae ☺ I have not noticed any winged ants yet and do not know if there will be any this year. They are still actively foraging and usually find any food I place into their tank within minutes. I have noticed that these ants seem to be duller in colour than *rubra* or *ruginodis*.

5 August 2007

There is still a lot of brood in the chambers, and whenever I put food out for the ants, they are very quick to find it, even when, or so it seems, there are no workers out of the nest. Haven't noticed any fliers amongst them though ☺

15 August 2007

These ants are very quick to find food when it is placed in their tank, it is as if they can smell it from within their nest, and send out a worker to investigate. It amazes me that although there is no lid on their tank, there is no evidence that any of them have ever left the tank. There are still a lot of brood present within the nest.

9 September 2007

There has not been a great deal of activity in the *scabrinodis* tank as there usually is, and food has been left uneaten. There are some brood in the nest chambers, but not nearly as much as there was a few months ago. It has started to get a little less warm at night, and the nights are also getting noticeably longer as autumn sets in, so I guess that this colony may be readying itself for hibernation. The queen will reduce her egg laying which means less larvae in the nest and this would explain the drop in foraging for food by the workers.

6 October 2007

I have seen very little of these ants over the past few weeks, other than a few workers eating from a piece of ant jelly near the entrance to the nest. Food further afield appears not to have been touched. Due to the fact that the outside temperature, particularly at night, has been dropping, it is probable that these ants are preparing for hibernation.

22 October 2007

Hibernating!

15 April 2008

I have not seen much of these ants since the last update, though they did emerge to feed on a cricket I placed into their tank last week. I do not get to check on the as often as I would like at the moment. No longer hibernating.

08 May 2008

These ants are currently eating from a piece of freshly killed cricket that I placed into their tank. There are a few workers there but not as many as I have seen in the past; yet it is still quite early for the ants, and they simply may not be hungry. There were about 3 or 4 ants feeding when I checked on them a little while ago.

9 August 2008

Due to the lack of time that I have to dedicate to my many ant colonies, I have decided to give several of them away, and this colony is one of them. Therefore this journal is now closed. Sorry for any disappointment to those that may have been following the progress of this colony.

JOURNAL CLOSED