

ANNOUNCING


## NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

*A NEW MYRMECOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER*

April 20, 1988

One of my favorite journals is *Sphecos*, the insiders' newsletter notable for its exciting tales of field trips and research, gossip, feisty opinion, insouciance and above all, love of the subject, in this case wasps. Somehow it captures the aura surrounding entomology that drew me to the discipline in the first place and keeps me there. When the card-carriers gather they talk like *Sphecos* and not like the *Annals of the ESA* or *American Naturalist*.

A growing, bright and vigorous new generation of myrmecologists now having arrived on the scene (what a joy it was to draw energy from them, vampire-like, at the 1987 meeting of the Entomological Society of America), the need for an equivalent newsletter is obvious. The editors, Carlin, Cover and Moffett, who like most of us reading this first appeal are deeply imprinted ant freaks, deserve credit for initiating *Notes from Underground*. I hope that it will succeed, and I look forward to contributing. For starters: Will someone please find a colony of *Thaumatomyrmex* and tell me what they catch with their pitchfork mandibles? Or, failing that, how about something -- anything -- on the natural history and brood cycle of *Cheliomyrmex*? Or for Australians, any idea why the *Leptomyrmex* ergatogyne looks like a squashed giraffe, or (as Alfred Buschinger recently pointed out to me) so few social parasites have been found in Australia? More later.

  
E. O. Wilson

Dear fellow myrmecophile,

An extraordinary gathering of myrmecologists occurred at last December's Entomological Society of America meeting in Boston. As part of Diana Wheeler's memorable workshop on the identification of Neotropical ants, a group discussion was held on research in the tropics, which also examined a number of issues important to our field as a whole. The consensus of the participants was that, for students of social insects, we are sadly deficient in communication mechanisms, particularly between systematists and ecologists. The suggestion was made that a newsletter would be of great benefit to us all in providing a forum for improved exchange of information. With considerable trepidation, we have decided to attempt to establish such a forum, to be generally modelled after *Sphecos*, the well-received publication for aculeate wasp researchers. Departing from the trend of taxonomic titles used by other hymenopterists' groups (*Sphecos*, *Melissa*, *Ichnews*), and with no offense intended

FOR OUR BULLETIN BOARDS: If you have any notices you want posted under any of the following headings, please enter them here or on the back of the page.

Wanted: Dead or Alive: Need preserved specimens or live ants? (Please specify which.) Indicate which taxa and castes, whether you have other material to exchange, whether you can pay sender's expenses or offer additional remuneration.

Travels With Our Ants: Going somewhere interesting? Let us know where, what groups you intend to study or collect, what localities you have in mind, what sort of suggestions or assistance you could use from travellers who've already been there. If you will need identifications on your return, perhaps you can collaborate with systematists by offering to collect other material of interest to them while you're out there. Staying at home for now, but need material from a remote field area? Advertise here to contact someone that might be travelling there soon.

Ant Matters: For any kind of inquiries you may have, requests for information on particular taxa you may be studying, collecting and rearing methods, etc., directed toward individual specialists or to the ant research community in general.

Literature Search: Can't find a reference? Inquire here for help in locating obscure citations, foreign journals, books, unpublished material such as regional keys, etc.

Announcements: Any forthcoming meetings, books, etc. of which our readers ought to be made aware?

SUGGESTIONS: What would YOU like to see in a myrmecologists' newsletter?

toward arboreal ant faunas, this newsletter will be called *Notes from Underground*. Each number will contain:

(1) A series of "bulletin boards" listing systematists and the groups on which they are working, other ant researchers and their current projects, changes of address, requests for and offers of specimens (Wanted: Dead or Alive), announcements of upcoming field trips and requests for suggested collecting localities (Travels with Our Ants), requests for identifications or other information on particular taxa, lists of recent publications, announcements of forthcoming meetings, books, etc., and anything else of interest (suggestions are most welcome). The accumulated researcher listings will be issued at intervals in directory form.

(2) Articles contributed by YOU, dear readers. This is intended as a venue for short (most less than 500 words) communications that don't really belong in reviewed journals. E.g., ruminations on the state of our field and what ought to be done about it, short research summaries, meeting reports, amusing anecdotes, constructive criticisms of ideas or methods in current vogue in the literature, travelogues and travel recommendations, local faunal lists, informal taxonomic notes, new keys (let a discerning public try them out), collection notes, new information on behavior, ecology, range, etc. of little-known critters, unusual natural history tidbits, recommended collection, preparation or rearing techniques, neat literature finds from old or obscure sources, book reviews, movie reviews, cartoons, poems...if we've left something out, send it anyway. Unfortunately, we are unable to print photographs.

(3) A guest column by some eminent myrmecologist (prepare to be solicited) proffering sage wisdom, autobiographical sketches or funny stories to the rest of us.

(4) Letters commenting on the above, or dealing with any other ant issues great and small.

To join our readership, please fill out the enclosed questionnaire, which will give us the information for bulletin boards for the initial issues. Thanks to the great generosity of Dr. E. O. Wilson, we can produce and distribute the first several issues FREE. We hope to get out one or two numbers in 1988; if interest and contributions are sufficient, we will then begin to charge subscriptions, to cover whatever the costs turn out to be.

**PLEASE SEND US YOUR QUESTIONNAIRES AND CONTRIBUTIONS AT ONCE!** The more material we receive, the more interesting the newsletter will be. It cannot be self-sustaining unless YOU contribute. Also, if you have suggestions for people to put on our mailing list, please let us know, and please pass this letter on to friends and colleagues. It is our hope that *Notes from Underground* will provide a real service to the ant research community, and we promise to print everything (well, everything legally printable) sooner or later. Where can you get a better deal than that?

Norman Carlin, Stefan Cover and Mark Moffett  
editors