

SHORT
COMMUNICATIONS

**An Ant Species of the Genus *Pyramica* (Hymenoptera,
Formicidae) New for the Fauna of Russia
and the Northern Caucasus**

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Abstract—Data on the location of the ant *Pyramica argiola* (Emery 1869) in Russia, in the territory of the Northern Caucasus (Nalchik), are presented for the first time. The species was previously known from Transcaucasia. The species chorology and ecology and morphological peculiarities of individuals from the regional population are considered.

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The genus *Pyramica*, distinguished by Roger (1862) and including 349 species [Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS); Bolton, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2000, with supplements], belongs to the tribe Dacetini (Myrmicinae). The Palearctic fauna of the genus includes 21 species, among which 18 are known from eastern Asia (Japan, Korean Peninsula, China) and 4 (1 species is introduced) from Europe and North Africa. Until recently, the species considered here was named *Epitritus argiolus* (Emery, 1869). The synonymy of *Epitritus* and *Pyramica* was established by Bolton (1999). At present, two species of this genus, *Pyramica argiola* (Emery, 1869) and *P. baudueri* (Emery, 1875), are known in the Caucasus. Both are reported only for Transcaucasia (Arakelian and Dlussky, 1991; Dubovikov, 2006). The former one was found in our collections from the Northern Caucasus.

The paper is based on examination of the material collected by the author in 2004–2006 within the precincts of the town of Nalchik (Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria). The material was collected by hand in autumn, during the “mating flight,” and identified using keys of Arakelian and Dlussky (1991). The accuracy of the identification was confirmed by the results of comparison of the material collected by the author and specimens from the collection of the Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg [ZIN]. The material is deposited at the Institute of

Ecology of Mountain Territories, Kabardino-Balkarian Scientific Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences, Nalchik.

***Pyramica argiola* (Emery, 1869)**

Material. Russia, Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, Nalchik, agrocenosis, near nest of *Myrmica* sp., 6.IX.2004 (1 ♀); same locality, 5.IX.2005 (1 ♀, 2 ♂); same locality, near nest of *Tetramorium caespitum* (Linnaeus, 1758), 9.IX.2006 (1 ♀, 3 ♂).

The species of this genus are small-sized (1.2–2.6 mm), mainly mesophilous, soil forms. The females collected in Nalchik do not differ clearly from those of other populations. The coloration of the males slightly differs from that in specimens from Armenia: the head, postpetiolus, and abdomen are dark brown, the prosternum and petiolus are pale brown.

Collecting sites (reported for the first time for Russia): Northern Caucasus (Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria); Azerbaijan (Arnoldi, 1948; Dubovikov, 2006); Armenia (Arakelian, 1994); Georgia (Arakelian and Dlussky, 1991; Dubovikov, 2006); Greece, the former Yugoslavia (Agosti and Collingwood, 1987); southern France, Italy, Hungary, Tunisia (Emery, 1916); Switzerland (Kutter, 1977); Portugal (Boeiro et al., 1999; Salgueiro, 2002); Spain (Espadaler, 1979); Morocco (Cagniant, 1962).

The species *Pyramica argiola* belongs to the tribe Dacetini which is a highly specialized group of ants mainly inhabiting tropical forests, with only a few species occurring in the temperate and subtropical zones. The insects are characterized by a distinctive appearance, which is related to their food specialization and peculiar way of hunting (Brown and Wilson, 1959). Most species feed on Collembola. These are solitary hunters with a hidden mode of life (Arakelian and Dlussky, 1991). In Dacetini, the antennae are reduced to 4–7 segments and hidden in special sulci at the sides of the head.

The biology of the ants of this tribe is primitive. Their colonies are usually small and consist of several dozens of workers and one female. A nest usually consists of a single chamber in the soil or in decayed tree sprouts (Arakelian and Dlussky, 1991).

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