SCIENTIFIC NOTE

PRECENCE OF *SOLENOPSIS TETRACANTHA* EMERY (INSECTA: HYMENOPTERA) IN THE PROVINCE OF LA PAMPA, ARGENTINA

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The cosmopolitan genus *Solenopsis* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) is a large ant genus with 108 species in the New World (Bolton, 1995), of which 21 are known as fire or red ants (hormigas coloradas). They are aggressive and armed with a defensive sting. Some species are important plagues, as they have undergone steep increases in their population densities. This is especially true in urban areas of South America.

Solenopsis species are difficult to identify because workers are small (less than 2 mm long) (Creighton, 1950; Mackay & Vinson, 1989). These ants are mainly hypogean and can be found near nests of other species of ants; they presumably steal their larvae or their food (Mackay & Vinson, 1989). They live in warm or temperate areas of America, including cool-temperate regions such as Patagonia.

Most species of *Solenopsis* in Argnentina are grain-eating, arboreal, or necrophagous like *S. saevissima, S. clytemnestra*, and *S. tridens* (Fernández, 2003).

S. tetracantha was recorded in the cities of Buenos Aires (Emery, 1905; Santschi, 1917) and La Plata (Forel, 1912) in Buenos Aires Province.

The aim of this study was to identify the presence of *Solenopsis tetracantha* Emery in urban areas of Santa Rosa, La Pampa, Argentina.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Ten locations were randomly sampled (within the city limits). The map used to select the localities was the Section Map of the city of Santa Rosa, La Pampa, Argentina. Samples were collected with a vacuum, observed under a stereoscopic microscope (72X), and identified using dichotomous keys (Moreno González & MacKay, in press; Bolton et al., 2007). Specimens were deposited in the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia” (Buenos Aires, Argentina).

RESULTS

Studied specimens are workers of *Solenopsis tetracantha* Emery (Hymenoptera: Formicidae: Myrmicinae)

Biology: *Solenopsis tetracantha* has been found in nests of *Acromyrmex striatus* Roger, an ant with a cutting habit and considered a plague, as it affects agricultural ecosystems, together with *Solenopsis leptanilloides* Santschi.

Appointment for the first time the presence of *Solenopsis tetracantha* Emery, in central Argentina (36°37'22.36" S 64°17'01.74" W).

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