

PAVEMENT (FORCEPS) ANT/ FLAT-BACKED TYRANT ANTS *Iridomyrmex* sp.

Found in some areas of the North Island; named because nests are commonly located in pavement cracks

Length about 2 mm; antennae 12-segmented; mandibles with 7 teeth; the single petiolar node is in the form of a narrow, vertical scale; colour uniformly brown, apart from the gaster, which is darker.



Nests inside in walls, insulation and under floors and slabs near heat sources during winter.

Can invade kitchens where it shows a liking for "sweet and savory foods."

Ant rapidly and erratically moving on pavements and areas of bare ground in summer, when ants swarming out of the nest. Swarmer appear outside in January and February but can emerge anytime inside; workers bite only when provoked.

The vast majority of collections are from Auckland City and its surrounds(including offshore islands), where it has become a conspicuous member of the ant fauna. This species is also present in Northland, Coromandel, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay and Nelson City.

They are highly abundant and aggressive ants. Workers are commonly seen in New Zealand foraging on pavements and areas of bare ground, and entering and exiting their nests below.

Aucklanders often complain that, "its habit of nesting under paving stones displaces quite a large amount of sand, and eventually makes the stones uneven and dangerous." Small mounds of excavated soil or sand mark the location of nest entrances. Most species of the genus are general scavengers, and this species appears to be no exception - its habit of invading kitchens where it shows a liking for "sweet and savory foods." She also observes that workers have been known to bite humans on occasions.

In the field it can readily be distinguished from other ants in New Zealand because of its rapid gait (workers have long legs) and zigzag trailing over the substrate.

Likely of nuisance value as it is a highly visible, rapidly moving ant on pavements and areas of bare ground. In summer, ants swarming out of the nest may cause concern. Can enter buildings in search of food, but not as common an occurrence as with some other species. Bites people occasionally.