

Host tree species, nest appearance and colony demography of medically important *Tetraponera rufonigra* Jerdon (Hymenoptera, Formicidae), in selected urban localities of Sri Lanka

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Serious medical conditions caused by *Tetraponera rufonigra* Jerdon stings have been recently reported from urban locations in Sri Lanka. Nests of *T. rufonigra* were surveyed by checking the worker trails visually and locating and severing the nests on the host trees at the Grounds of Royal Colombo Golf Club, Colombo 08, Tyre Cooperation Road, Kelaniya and Vihara Mahadevi Park, Colombo 07 from February to August, 2015. Host trees of the species were listed and the physical appearance of each type of nest and colony demography of each nest was described. Nine host tree species, *Acacia catechu* Willd, *Casuarina equisetifolia* L., *Albizia lebbek*(L.) Benth, *Cassia fistula* L., *Adenanthera pavonina* L., *Filicium decipiens*(Wight&Arn.) Thwaites, *Pericopsis mooniana* Thwaites, *Plumeria* sp. and *Tectona grandis* L.f. were recorded for the first time as host trees of *T. rufonigra*. Well-decayed branches carrying many longitudinal tunnels and large holes throughout the hardwood and peripheral softwood, moderately decayed branches bearing few longitudinal tunnels and smaller holes in hardwood and many holes in peripheral softwood and, less-decayed branches with very few holes in the peripheral region, were observed. Tunnels made by other insects seemed to be occupied by the species but very small holes seen throughout the *Plumeria* wood log were probably made by the workers of the species. Workers, winged females, de-alate queens, males, eggs, larvae and pupae were observed in 25%-83%, 0.18%-0.72%, 0%-0.13%, 0% - 1.5%, 0% - 42%, 14.6%-70.5% and 0.94%-9.2%, respectively. Dead or cut branches of the above tree species should be fully-removed or covered to prevent colonization by the ant species.

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