

## The Jet Ant (*Lasius fuliginosus*) - Gould 1747

This account was written by R.W. Gould in 'An Account of British Ants' in 1747 and is quoted in Donisthorpe, H.St.J.K. (1927) 'British Ants their Life-history and Classification'. Routledge, London.

"There remains a particular Curiosity to be mentioned with regard to the Jet Ants, which not only deserves Admiration, but strongly tends to illustrate the preceding Observations, and to show that Man is not the only Partaker of Wisdom. It is remarkable of these Ants, that in carrying on their Employments they Form so many Streets or different Tracts as are proportionable to the Size and Situation of their Colonies. If the Inhabitants be very numerous, as it usually happens in this Species, they extend their Streets to a considerable Length, (Forty Yards or more) and the Number of them shall amount perhaps to four, besides several less Branches that strike off from the main Tracts. Sometimes there is but one, sometimes two or more grand Streets, beside the little Allies, all which frequently vary in Length. In these Paths the Workers continually make their Progresses to and from the Colony. And you may, with equal Pleasure and Certainty, observe the variety of their Provisions, their Sedulity in seeking, and Method of bringing it Home. The Tracts are every Moment thronged with Multitudes of industrious Ants; we may (to compare little things with great) not improperly resemble them to the busy Concourse in the Streets of London, - a regular Confusion. Only with this Difference, that not a single Ant is unemployed, or deserves the Title of a Vagrant. All are engaged for the Public Emolument, without Envy, without Complaint. No other Strife, but who shall first return laden with Provisions to sustain the Young. A laudable Emulation! They exert their Labours at the earliest Appearance of Spring, and continue them so long as the Smiles of Autumn give leave. Nothing but Severity of Weather interrupts their Processions. Amongst the many Curiosities this



*Lasius fuliginosus*, Town Coppice

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Scene affords us, the Opportunity we have of viewing their Diversity of Aliment is not the least. Numbers of them come Home either with the Spoils of Insects, or the Insects themselves. But far the greatest Part are distended with Juice. I never could discern any fatiguing themselves with the Carriage of Wheat or other Grain: and how such a constant Delusion should arise, if they delighted in Corn, is not easy to conjecture. Their Manner of collecting Provisions is likewise a pleasing Amusement. Their Settlements are generally placed in the Bottom of a Tree somewhat decayed, and in whose Neighbourhood are other Trees more flourishing and verdant. Sometimes the Jet Ants prefer residing in a Garden Wall replenished with Fruit. The Tracts are so contrived as to pass along by such Trees as promise the most Nourishment. The Labourers make Excursions from their main Paths to the Trees, and having gathered what Forage they can meet with, return the same Way they came. In order to facilitate their Progress, they remove any Obstacles that lie in their Road, as Bits of Straw, Sticks, and other Rubbish; and also Bite off the Herbs almost even with the Surface of the Ground. Thus by their indefatigable Pains they suffer not the Grass to grow in the Streets."



*Lasius fuliginosus* ants walking between their nest to right and aphid colony in oak tree to left., Town Coppice

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