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New ant in the big city: Known natural history of *Lasius cf. emarginatus* in its native range and potential impacts of recent US introduction

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New York City has been the site of introduction for some of North America's most damaging invasive pests, from chestnut blight to the Asian long-horned beetle. Despite these cautionary examples, there has been no formal tracking of a newly introduced ant species, *Lasius cf. emarginatus*, which has quickly become among the most common species in the city. Sometime between the first ant diversity survey of New York City in 2006 and the second in 2011, *L. cf. emarginatus* was introduced and quickly became established in the most urban habitats with the highest human contact. In contrast to other urban exploiting ant species, *L. cf. emarginatus* does not appear to be feeding on human food waste. Instead, we hypothesized that *L. cf. emarginatus* may be exploiting a novel urban niche space by feeding on homopeteran-produced honeydew in the canopies of urban street trees left vacant by native species that cannot tolerate urban conditions. Here I will compile the known natural history of *L. cf. emarginatus* in its native range and what we know so far about this species in the United States. I will also outline the potential impacts of this *L. cf. emarginatus*' introduction and present methods that will be used to study this species' diet and survival in a highly urban habitat.

Key words: ants, urban ecology, invasive species, natural history