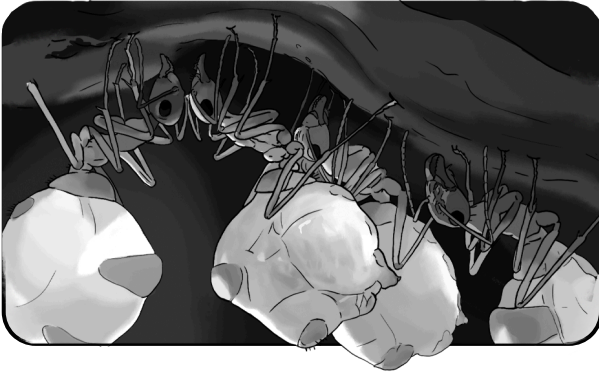


HONEYPOT ANTS

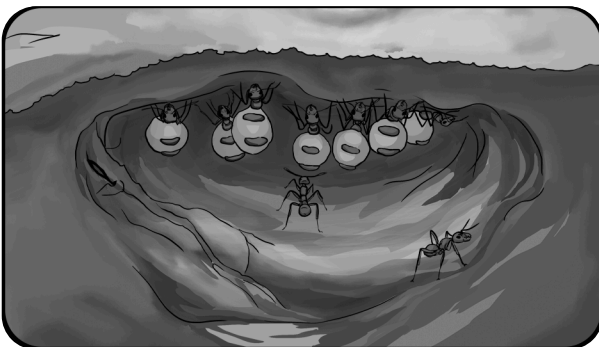
MYRMECOCYSTUS MEXICANUS



Myrmecocystus mexicanus, also known as the honey pot ant, has an unusual adaptation to dry habitats: some ants of this species, known as “honey pots”, store food in the form of honeydew and nectar in their highly expandable abdomen. They swell up like balls and hang motionless from the ceiling of the nest chambers to serve as living reservoirs for the entire colony. When food is scarce, they feed their conspecifics from these stores. This adaptation enables the species to successfully survive long periods of drought in desert areas.



It feeds mainly on carbohydrate-rich food such as **nectar** and **honeydew**, which is excreted by aphids and other plant-sucking insects. Occasionally they supplement their diet with small insects and animal proteins. It is also known to collect dead harvester ants of the species *Pogonomyrmex* as a food source.



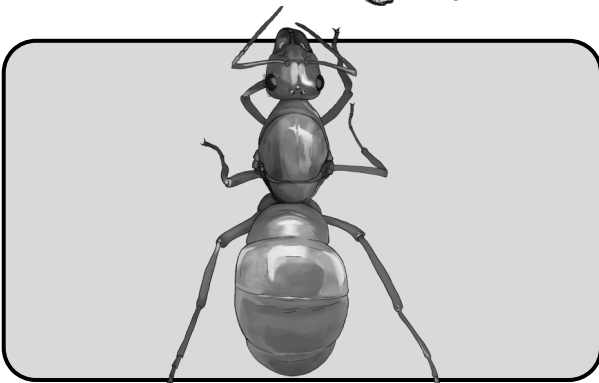
Myrmecocystus mexicanus gathers food mainly during the night and in the cooler hours of twilight. During the day, the ants usually stay in the nest to escape the intense heat of dry desert areas. The workers leave the nest in groups and search specifically for food sources. In the summer months, from March to November, they collect the most nectar to fill their living stores.



The distribution area of *Myrmecocystus mexicanus* mainly comprises dry regions in the southwest of North America. These include:

- Southwestern USA (e.g. Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas)
- Northern Mexico, especially desert and semi-desert areas

They prefer open, sandy habitats with little vegetation, including deserts, semi-deserts and steppe regions, where they are optimally adapted to the conditions of long dry periods.



Queens:

- Size: approx. 10-13 mm
- Color: head and thorax reddish-brown, abdomen light brown to golden yellowish

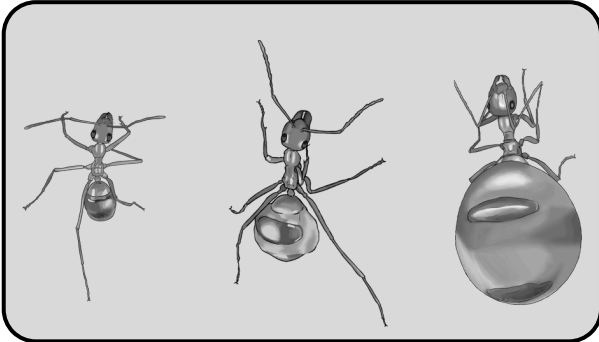
HONEYPOT ANTS

MYRMECOCYSTUS MEXICANUS



Males:

- Size: approx. 9-12 mm
- Color: mostly uniformly dark brown to black, slimmer build, wings present



Workers:

- Size: approx. 6-9 mm (normal workers), up to about 12 mm (honeypot workers with inflated abdomen)
- Color: Head and thorax yellowish to reddish-brown, abdomen often lighter, amber, shiny