

This species could be easily confused with the intermediate sized workers of *Ph. obtusospinosa*. It can be distinguished, as the background sculpture of the head of *Ph. obtusospinosa* is obviously punctate and only weakly shining. The propodeal processes of *Ph. obtusospinosa* are in the form of an angle, and not a spine as in *Ph. porcula*. The scape of the intermediate sized worker of *Ph. obtusospinosa* is strongly angulate, and flattened near the base, where it is narrower than it is near the apex (Fig. 228).

**Distribution.** USA: west Texas (Jeff Davis Co., Real Co.), possibly CO. We have no records from NM, but this species may be found in the southeastern part of the state.

**Habitat.** Cypress and oak forests, grasslands, up to 1450 meters in elevation. They are apparently most common in semi-arid habitats.

**Biology.** These ants nest under stones, in very rocky loam. They can be aggressive when the nest is disturbed, and the minors, and especially the majors, can bite.

### *Pheidole rhea* Wheeler

Figs. 223, 247, 248; Map 92

**Discussion.** This is a large, polymorphic species, in which the propodeal spines of both the major and minor are unusually long and sharp (Fig. 247). The gaster is rounded anteriorly, where it connects to the postpetiole (Fig. 248). The entire dorsum of the head is covered with striae, which diverge towards the posterior lateral lobes. These

striae may form concentric whorls on the posterior lateral lobes of the largest workers. The apex of the petiole is relatively sharp, and may be bidentate in the largest workers (Fig. 248). The lateral connules are well developed.

The minor worker is similar, and could be mistaken for a member of the genus *Aphaenogaster*, based



Fig. 247. Mesosoma, petiole and postpetiole of a minor worker of *Ph. rhea*.

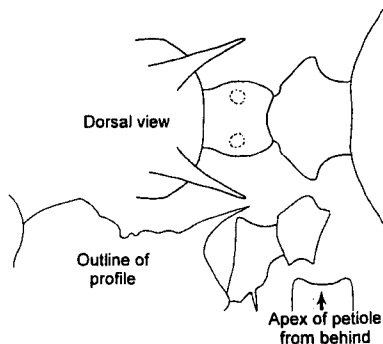


Fig. 248. Mesosoma, petiole and postpetiole of a major worker of *Ph. rhea*. The upper inset shows the propodeum, petiole, postpetiole and anterior edge of the gaster as seen from above, the lower inset shows the apex of the petiole as seen from behind.

on its relatively large size and well developed propodeal spines (Fig. 247). The three-segmented club easily separates it from *Aphaenogaster*. The dorsum of the head is predominantly smooth and shining, the scapes extend about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of their length