

## REPLY:

In a recent Letter to the Editor, Seal and Tschinkel (2012) asserted that we incorrectly stated in the Abstract of our recent paper on neotropical fungus-growing ants (Formicidae: Myrmicinae: Attini), that ours was the “first study to detect correlations of nest traits with worker number and size of fungus garden in the less conspicuous attines” (Leal et al. 2011).

The authors further stated in their letter that their earlier papers on *Trachymyrmex septentrionalis* McCook (Seal and Tschinkel 2006, 2008) were the “first publications to reveal these patterns for any fungus gardening ant” (Seal and Tschinkel 2012).

We would like to clarify what we believe can be a misunderstanding regarding the statement in our Abstract.

Because our study provided comparative data for six genera in the Attini (*Cyphomyrmex*, *Mycetarotes*, *Mycocetopus*, *Myrmicocrypta*, *Sericomyrmex*, and *Trachymyrmex*), we made our statement in the plural format: “. in the less conspicuous attines.” By using the plural form “attines” in the Abstract, we wanted to mean explicitly that our work included *several* species of fungus-growing ants (each from a distinct genus), and not only one species. Indeed, the anonymous attine experts that reviewed our paper apparently understood our meaning, because we were not advised to amend the statement in the Abstract.

Although the use of the plural form “attines” in our native language (Portuguese) would mean clearly that we had investigated several taxa, now we realize that this may not always apply to English. We should probably have emphasized the distinctiveness of our work by writing instead “first comparative study” in the Abstract. However, we want to stress that we behaved in good faith in the first place.

Noticeably, Seal and Tschinkel (2012) use the singular format in their letter when referring to their work on *T. septentrionalis*: “.any fungus gardening ant.”

Of course, had we known beforehand the most valuable work on the North American *T. septentrionalis* by Seal and Tschinkel (2006, 2008), we would have certainly cited and discussed their results in our article. We do regret having missed it.

## References Cited

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