

An illustrated key to Neotropical termite genera (Insecta: Isoptera) based primarily on soldiers

REGINALDO CONSTANTINO

Departamento de Zoologia, Universidade de Brasília, 70910-900 Brasília, DF, Brazil;
e-mail: constant@unb.br

Abstract

A key for the identification of neotropical termite genera is presented, with illustrations of representatives of most genera. The key is chiefly based on the external morphology of soldiers, except for the soldierless Apicotermatinae and a few genera of Termitidae, where worker characters were used, especially gut morphology. Distribution maps are presented for some genera. Relevant taxonomic works and keys to species are indicated for each genus, when available.

Key words: termites, Isoptera, Neotropical, identification

Introduction

Termites are abundant and diverse in the Neotropical Region, particularly in the rainforests and savannas of South America. There are currently more than 500 species in 83 genera recorded in the Neotropics (Constantino 1998). Due to their ecological and economic importance in the tropics, termite identification is essential in urban and agricultural pest management, study of soil fauna, analysis of the diet of vertebrates, and any ecological or biological study involving termites. The identification tools currently available in English (e.g. Mill 1983) are rather limited, poorly illustrated, outdated or scattered among several taxonomic papers and monographs.

The delimitation of the Neotropical Region used for this work is the traditional one based on Sclater (1858). The northern limit extends to the lowlands of Mexico south of the Sierra Maestra. For termites this corresponds approximately to the northern limit of *Nasutitermes* and the southern limit of *Reticulitermes*. There is no exact line dividing the two regions and some species and several genera occur in both. Some authors, such as Canello & Myles (2000a), adopt a different concept of the Neotropics. In terms of Historical