

BOOK REVIEW

Termites Their Recognition and Control.

W. VICTOR HARRIS.

Longmans Green, London. 187 pp., VIII colour plates, 57 black and white plates: 26 figs. and line drawings. 40s. Sterling.

This latest publication in the Tropical Agriculture series maintains the high standards set in earlier volumes and presents a comprehensive coverage of a topic which should interest all those who dwell in tropical and sub-tropical countries.

The book is divided into convenient chapters with plenty of easy-to-find sub-headings. Many aspects of termites are discussed including anatomy, biology, types of damage, methods of control and notes on chemicals used in control. The text is amply backed up with many fine illustrations and a handy bibliography.

The wide scope of the book makes it necessary for the author to deal briefly with some sections and the professional entomologist will find it lacking in many respects. However, it is written mainly for workers interested in pest control and they should find it well suited to their needs.

Termite biology is treated in such a manner as to sustain the reader's interest. Many different species are cited as examples of unusual aspects. Taxonomy of the Isoptera has always been a difficult matter and the author traces the history of the classification without adding anything new to clarify the situation which is outside the scope of this book. He suggests the six family groupings of Mastotermitidae, Kalotermitidae, Termopsidae, Hopotermitidae, Rhinotermitidae, and Termitidae; the last family containing about four-fifths of the known species as an assembly of divergent forms. Keys to the families are based on characters of the alates, workers and soldiers and hence are easy to

follow. A supplementary list of references to be consulted for specific determination is included.

Several theories have been postulated regarding the ecological significance of termites in the soil. Harris attempts to resolve this by collating data from different sources and he dispels the belief that termites contribute greatly to soil fertility. Cases of apparently increased fertility can be attributed to mere redistribution of more fertile subsoil to the less fertile topsoil; similarly the presence of lime rich termite mounds is, at least, in East Africa a purely local and inconsiderable phenomenon and laterite formation attributed to termites is also probably due to other causes.

In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of termites as primary pests of crops. The meagre information available on the topic is discussed under the various crop headings, and reference is made to *Neotermes papua* (Desn.) attacking cacao in New Guinea, but control measures are not given.

Protection of buildings from termites is discussed at considerable length and it should prove to be of great value to those engaged in constructional work. A list of termite resistant timbers and chemicals used in pest control is contained in this section.

The book is well presented in a very readable form and it will be of value to all those interested in protecting their assets from termites which are a real and ever present threat to man's existence in the tropics.

A. CATLEY.

Port Moresby: W. S. Nicholas, Government Printer.—7282/6.62.



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