Entomological Society of America
Proposal Form for new Common Name or Change of ESA-Approved Common Name

Complete this form and e-mail to pubs@entsoc.org. Submissions will not be considered unless this form is filled out completely.

The proposer is expected to be familiar with the rules, recommendations, and procedures outlined in the “Use and Submission of Common Names” on the ESA website and with the discussion by A.B. Gurney, 1953, *Journal of Economic Entomology* 46:207-211.

1. Proposed new common name:
Conehead Termite

2. Previously approved common name (if any):
None

[Background context the Committee will want to know: Although this termite species does not have an ESA-Approved Common Name, soon after this invasive species was discovered in south Florida in 2001 it was nicknamed the "Tree Termite." That nickname remained in use until late January 2013 when senior administrators of Florida’s Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services announced that the state of Florida would adopt the nickname “Conehead Termite" [for reasons elaborated in section 4 below; venue for announcement described in section 8 below].

3. Scientific name (genus, species, author):
Order: Blattodea (although most entomologists still consider termites to be in the order Isoptera)
Family: Termitidae
Genus: Nasutitermes
Species: corniger (Motschulsky 1855)

Supporting Information

4. Reasons supporting the need for the proposed common name:

The reproducing population of the adaptable termite *Nasutitermes corniger* in (currently) about a 2 square mile area of Dania Beach, Florida, marks the first time that this destructive species, or any member of its notorious genus, has become established in the United States. The termite likely arrived on a pleasure boat from the Caribbean or Central or South America, and was first discovered near a marina in Dania Beach in 2001.

The effort to contain / control / eradicate this agile and voracious invasive species was “rebooted” and redirected in 2012 following discovery of an aggressive resurgence of the termite, previously thought to be under control if not eradicated. The state of Florida is leading the charge, and partnering with local and federal industry (Florida Pest Management Association [FPMA], Certified Pest Control Operators of Florida [CPCO], and the National Pest Management Association [NPMA], the City of Dania Beach and Broward County Governments and citizen groups, University of Florida Extension, national scientists, and a broad base of public and private constituencies to focus and integrate efforts to contain, control, and
successfully eradicate this species before it spreads further and becomes irreversibly established in Florida and perhaps beyond.

Given the importance of alerting the public, private industry, and local, state, and federal governments to the urgency of this invasive species situation and seek cooperation with the eradication effort, we feel it is time to formalize a common name for this termite. We also seek authoritative consistency for the common name because official common names are requested on some applications and proposals (e.g., for EPA submissions for exemptions to the label in pesticide use for special circumstances such as an invasive species requiring different application sites and procedures).

The new nickname, “Conehead Termite,” was adopted by the state of Florida (in place of the originally used nickname “Tree Termite”) for the reasons below. These justifications also support this request to designate “Conehead Termite” as the ESA approved official common name.

- The original nickname given to the invasive Nasutitermes corniger in southern Florida, “Tree Termite,” led to confusion—primarily the incorrect inference that it always lived and nested in or on trees, as well as the false sense of security that “at least my house is safe because the ‘Tree Termite’ only eats trees.” This hungry, agile termite nests in or on—and happily consumes—trees, shrubs, roots, structures, fences, wooden furniture, scrap wood, paper products and probably many other items made of cellulose. It may build nests on open ground with no trees close by.

- “Tree Termite” does not distinguish this species to assist in unambiguous identification because many species of subterranean, drywood and dampwood termites occur in trees in south Florida.

- “Tree Termite” would be confusing as an official common name because two U.S. termite species already contain the phrase “Tree Termite” in their ESA-approved common name: the “Forest Tree Termite” (*Neotermes connexus* (Snyder)) and the “Lowland Tree Termite” (*Incisitermes immigrans* (Snyder)). Both of those species are in the family Kalotermitidae.

- “Conehead” describes the distinctive shape of the soldier form’s dark cone- or teardrop-shaped head. Soldiers of this species are numerous and lively, and are the most likely caste for people to see and notice. The reinvented nickname therefore offers distinctive species diagnosis, differentiating this termite from all others in Florida, as well as from ants (often confused with termites by the public) and other bugs.

- “Conehead” is a catchy, memorably amusing nickname. Although this infestation is serious and anything but humorous, engaging the public, and media, with an easy-to-remember, comical but meaningful nickname may help evoke the attention and cooperation critical for success of the eradication effort.

- Although the name was inspired by soldier head shape rather than Saturday Night Live’s popular Coneheads, these termites are exotics just like the beloved SNL characters were aliens, hence the association fits.

- Shifting to a new, more striking and descriptive nickname is one of several examples of the bold steps that the state, partnering with the industry, scientists, extension and broad educational outreach, and hopefully the federal government, is implementing as it reboots and redirects initiatives to aggressively diminish, and eventually eradicate, this invasive species.

5. Stage or characteristic to which the proposed common name refers:
All castes and life history stages of the termite *Nasutitermes corniger*

6. Distribution (include references):
Wide distribution in the Neotropics: documented from 13 countries in Central and South America as well as 42 Caribbean islands


7. Principal hosts (include references):

*Nasutitermes corniger* is an ecologically flexible species that nests in or on a wide variety of substrates and consumes a very broad diet. Trees (including citrus and other fruit trees as well as palms), shrubs, roots, structures, fences, wooden furniture, scrap wood, paper products and probably many other items made of cellulose have been recorded as nest locations and food. This termite may also build nests on open ground with no trees close by. Representative references:


8. References containing previous use of the proposed common name:

First published use of “Conehead Termite”, quoting Dr. Thorne: newspaper article by Meg Laughlin, August 23, 2012, “Shores Scientist Joins Fight to Stop Ferociously Hungry Termite”

http://vb32963online.com/STORIES%202012/AUGUST%202012/VB32963_Shores_Barbbara_Thorne_Fights_Termite_Issue34_082312.html

January 25, 2013: Announcement by Anderson H. (Andy) Rackley, Director of the Division of Agricultural Environmental Services, State of Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (leading the invasive species containment / control / eradication efforts) that the State of Florida will officially switch to use of the nickname “Conehead Termite” in place of the former nickname “Tree Termite” for the invasive termite species *Nasutitermes corniger*. Andy Rackley made the announcement at a meeting of the Florida Pest Management Association’s Government Affairs Committee (about 80 people in attendance) in Orlando, Florida. Also endorsing the decision at the same meeting was Dr. Lisa Conti, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Science Officer at Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Plant Industry website:

Door hanger printed and distributed to residents by Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Plant Industry. Available at: http://www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/tree-termite/images/conehead-termite-door-hanger-2013.pdf

Door hanger printed by the University of Florida, Gainesville (Dr. Faith Oi coordinating the effort; Jane Medley graphic artist designer), sent to pest management trade associations (Certified Pest Control Operators [CPCO] and Florida Pest Management Association [FPMA] for pest management professionals to distribute to residents in impacted and surrounding neighborhoods. Also sent to Broward County Extension Office, and used in pest management training sessions. [Door hanger layout is included at the end of this document]

Other media use of “Conehead” nickname:

Trade journal publication:


National Pest Management Association’s March 2013 Legislative Day documents, including the attached [final page of this document] Position Paper regarding the Florida Invasive Termite Species Eradication Initiative

9. References using common names (give names) other than that proposed:

The following trade journal article and presentations use “Tree Termite” as a nickname, not an ESA approved common name, for Nasutitermes corniger. I have not yet found a peer reviewed scientific article including that nickname, but perhaps I missed it...


Also various press release and media mentions of “Tree Termite” in the past – a few found through an online search, such as this 2004 article from University of Florida news: http://news.ufl.edu/2004/05/19/termiteeradication/

10. Other insects or organisms to which the proposed common name might apply:
None proposed

11. Steps you have taken to consult with other workers who are familiar with the insect or organism as to suitability of and need for the proposed common name:

I sent a draft of this proposal to colleagues elected to the national Termiticide Scientific Review Panel (TSRP; distinguished termite biologists who serve as advisors to industry and the EPA on termite control issues and technologies), and to two scientists who have worked on aspects of the basic biology of *Nasutitermes corniger*.

The following members of the TSRP endorse this common name proposal and gave me permission to list their names as supporters:

- Dr. Brian Forschler, Chair, Professor, Department of Entomology, University of Georgia
- Dr. Brad Kard, Structural and Urban Entomology Endowed Professorship, Oklahoma State University
- Dr. Faith Oi, Extension Scientist, Department of Entomology and Nematology, University of Florida
- Dr. Patrícia Zungoli, Professor, Department of Entomology, Soils, & Plant Sciences, Clemson University

The basic biology researchers (who have studied *Nasutitermes corniger* in Central America) and support this proposal are:

- Dr. Rebeca Rosengaus, Associate Professor, Department of Biology, Northeastern University
- Dr. James Traniello, Professor, Department of Biology, Boston University

One prominent colleague acknowledged that “Conehead Termite” is a very useful name for media and the public, but that individual “personally disagrees” with ESA approving common names for invading species. In practice, however, using a consistent common name for invading species may help immensely in advancing the cause, and precedent to approve common names for invasive species was set years ago.

I have also considered and discussed with colleagues the possible concern that because there are so many species of *Nasutitermes*, all with ‘conehead’ morphology, another species may at some point invade the U.S., perhaps then causing confusion with “Conehead Termite.” We understand this possibility, but at this point – and hopefully well into the future due to lessons learned from the present situation – *N. corniger* is the only *Nasutitermes* species established in the U.S. It is also, unquestionably, the most numerous member of the genus, and has the widest geographic distribution, hence merits the ‘baseline’ common name “Conehead Termite.” IF other nasute species, for example the Caribbean species *N. acajutlae* arrive in the future, we will deal with the common name issue then, most logically by assigning a descriptive adjective to that species (e.g. the “Hairy Conehead Termite” for *N. acajutlae* due to its prominent pilosity.

Proposed by (your name): **Dr. Barbara L. Thorne** [author or co-author of over 20 papers on *Nasutitermes corniger* biology, most resulting from field studies in Central and South America and the Caribbean; currently serving as Science Advisor to the state of Florida regarding the *N. corniger* infestation, and containment / control / eradication effort, in south Florida.]

Address: Department of Entomology, 4112 Plant Sciences Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-4454 [presently living in Florida, but this remains my university affiliation and professional address]

E-mail (if none, please type “none”): bthorne@umd.edu

Phone: 772-257-6425
Fax: (none)

Date submitted: April 29, 2013
‘Conehead’ Termites Found in Dania Beach, Broward County, Florida

A HUNGRY, rapidly growing species of termite snuck into Florida from the tropics and has become established in the Dania Beach area, but may have spread farther. Please be on the lookout, and contact a certified pest control operator if you see any of the following:

1. **Tunnels:** Narrow (usually ½" wide or less), brown “tunnels,” or termite highways, on the side of a tree, house, wall, or almost any surface.

2. **Coneheads:** The soldier form of this termite has a distinctive, dark “conehead,” or teardrop-shaped head. If you break open one of the thin tunnels, little bugs — each about the size of a grain of rice — may run out, including the odd-looking “conehead” soldiers.

3. **Nests:** These termites build conspicuous, dark brown nests, usually in the shape of a large ball or watermelon with a hard, bumpy surface. Nests may be on, in, or by a tree, shrub, or structure, or sometimes on open ground. You may find tunnels without a nest, which is still important. We urge you to report the discovery.

‘Conehead’ Termite

(formerly known as ‘Tree’ Termite

Scientific name: *Nasutitermes corniger*
CONEHEAD TERMITES could cause billions of dollars of damage to homes, businesses, schools, plants, and wooden items if we don’t try to halt and eradicate this rogue species.

✗ These termites do not bite or sting, but don’t treat them yourself because the colony may move rather than die.

✔ To report Conehead Termite activity, even if you’re not sure, please contact this local pest management company for FREE inspection, expert advice, and free treatment if needed:

Call (850) 617-7997 to report suspected termite activity
( NOT AN ENDORSEMENT OF ANY COMPANY )
**Issue:** Florida Invasive Termite Species Eradication Initiative

**Background:** Florida’s climate and its role as a popular vacation destination and global trade center makes it extremely vulnerable for the establishment of invasive species including exotic termite species. The latest arrival is nicknamed the “Conehead Termite” (scientific name *Nasutitermes corniger*), an exceptionally destructive, adaptable, and rapidly growing termite native to the Caribbean and Central and South America. This challenging termite was first discovered in the Dania Beach area of Ft. Lauderdale in 2001.

Conehead termites attack homes and other structures as well as live citrus, palms, sea grapes, and most species of trees and shrubs, wood and paper products. Of particular concern, they are capable of dispersing and spreading their geographic range quickly and broadly. Because the termite is presently located in close proximity to major travel corridors such as highways (I-95), ports (Port Everglades) and airports (Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport), inadvertent transport to residential neighborhoods and agricultural areas throughout the state, the Everglades and neighboring states is likely. Such range expansion would have vast economic impacts, and would shut our narrow window of ‘now or never’ opportunity to eradicate this.

Another invasive species – the Formosan subterranean termite (*Coptotermes formosanus*) – first arrived in Florida in the mid-1980s, and is now well established in most of the state’s major urban areas including, Ft. Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Miami, West Palm Beach, Orlando, Pensacola, Tallahassee and Tampa.

Florida’s professional pest management industry is working closely with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to contain the Formosan termite and eradicate the Conehead termite. Fortunately, the geographic scope of the present Conehead termite infestation makes eradication a real possibility, but only with decisive and expeditious actions. The initial victims of a delayed response would be Florida consumers, with a broad scope of impacts for future generations. According to FDACS, the economic impact of establishment of the Conehead termite in Southeast Florida’s coastal counties (Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin) is $460 million in increased annual termite treatment costs, not including damage repair expenses. Contained in FDACS’ FY 2014 budget is a line item request for $202,422 for development and implementation of a program for control and, hopefully, eradication of the Conehead termite. Additional federal resources are also essential, however, to ensure that the Conehead termite does not establish permanent residency in the Sunshine State, and spread to other states.

**Position:** The Florida and National Pest Management Associations are requesting Florida’s Congressional delegation seek and obtain federal funding from appropriate sources for Florida, which would supplement state funds, and allow for FDACS to train and contract with Florida pest management professionals to inspect and treat properties for and destroy the Conehead termite, at no or very limited charge for consumers. There is a narrow window of opportunity in which to act to evict this invasive termite and thwart the immense economic, structural, agricultural, and horticultural impacts it could have in Florida and beyond.

March 7, 2013