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.

1. Proposed new common name:
   West Indian drywood termite

2. Previously approved common name (if any):
   n/a

3. Scientific name (genus, species, author):
   Cryptotermes brevis (Walker)
   Order: Blattodea
   Family: Kalotermitidae

Supporting Information

4. Reasons supporting the need for the proposed common name. Please provide a clear and convincing explanation for why a common name is needed, possibly including but not limited to the economic or medical importance, striking appearance, abundant appearance, or endangered status of the insect:

   Cryptotermes brevis is today a widely distributed termite, but is not cosmopolitan. Its structural niche is supplanted by C. domesticus in southern Asia. C. brevis was first described from Jamaica, and regenerative reproducing populations are most commonly found in the Caribbean basin, hence the “West Indies” descriptor is appropriate. It is a member of the drywood termite family. This family is capable of living without connection to the soil, as opposed to subterranean termites in the Rhinotermitidae.

5. Stage or characteristic to which the proposed common name refers.
   (Note: If the description involves a physical feature it is strongly encouraged that an image of the organism be provided with this submission.):

   The proposed name refers to all life stages’ ability to feed on relatively dry wood, surviving from its extreme water conserving anatomy and behavior.

6. Distribution (include references):

3/10/14
Until recently this termite was not known from natural habitats, but a 2007 survey of northern Chile and Peru revealed outdoor populations at numerous sites. Currently it is thought that C. brevis originated in western deserts of South America and spread via post-Columbian shipboard infestations and movement of infested wood to many parts of the world (Scheffrahn et al 2008). The West Indian drywood termite, Cryptotermes brevis (Walker), is a common pest of structural lumber, furniture, and other sheltered wood products in the New World tropics and tropical oceanic islands (Edwards and Mill 1986; Bacchus 1987). This termite is also present, but to a more uncertain degree, in parts of Africa and Madagascar (Williams 1976) and Reunion Island (Fouquet 2000). In eastern Queensland, Australia, spread of this termite has been limited, at least in part, by aggressive eradication efforts (Peters 1990). Its structural niche is supplanted by C. domesticus in southern Asia. (see map)

Figure 1 Worldwide regenerative established populations of C. brevis based on published records and previously unpublished University of Florida Collection localities (Sheffran et al 2008)

7. Principal hosts (include references):
Most commonly found infesting wood in or around structures, but has also been found in natural wood in the desert areas of the west coast of South America (Scheffrahn et al 2008).

8. References containing previous use of the proposed common name. Please provide multiple references establishing clearly that the proposed name is in established and ideally widespread use:
- Wikipedia article on Cryptotermes brevis https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cryptotermes_brevis
- Dozens of references in Google Scholar, especially recent.

9. References using common names (give names) other than that proposed. Please identify any other common names currently in use:
The diversity and permutations of common names for this termite demonstrate the importance of a simple, accurate common name.

West Indian [or West Indies] powderpost termite


Powderpost termite

- Ebeling, W. 1975. Urban Entomology

West Indian rough-headed powderpost drywood termite


Rough-headed powderpost termite

- NPMA Field Guide to Structural Pests [also lists West Indian powderpost termite as a common name]

10. Other insects or organisms to which the proposed common name might apply. Please give careful consideration to any other insects to which the proposed name might apply and provide an explanation as to why the proposed name is best suited for the insect in question:
None. This is the only pestiferous West Indian (or for that matter Neotropical) termite that has no free water requirement.

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. Please document your efforts to consult with entomologists and others with experience with the insect in question regarding the proposed name:

See Scheffrahn 2008. Also, one of us (Scheffrahn) in 2016 gave a presentation at the 2016 International Congress of Entomology entitled: “The West Indian drywood termite: From enigmatic origin to dominant household pest.” Among the termite experts assembled from around the world, no objections were offered to assigning the proposed common name to C. brevis.

Proposed by (your name): Mike Merchant (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension) and Rudi Scheffrahn (University of Florida)

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References Cited


