



## Termites, White Ants Order Isoptera

**What do they look like?** Small (3 – 12 mm long), soft, pale-bodied colonial insects, with no eyes, usually encountered in large numbers. Soldier Termites usually have an enlarged, dark brown head with either large jaws (like an ant's) or a nozzle on the front end. There are many species. Often called 'white ants', they are unrelated to ants, and more closely related to cockroaches.

**Where do they live?** Various species occur in all habitat types across the region. Some species are restricted to certain habitats such as spinifex country.

**What do they need to live, eat and breed?** Termites are very susceptible to drying out, and usually remain hidden during the day. Most species feed on grasses, but a few can feed on dry timber. These are the ones that can pose a threat to wooden structures.

**When might I see (or hear) them?** The most obvious local species are those that build above-ground termite nests. Some species don't build obvious nests while others nest in trees. Mud coloured tunnels on the outside of timber are Termite 'tracks'. During late spring/early summer rainfall, millions of winged reproductive Termites, called 'alates' emerge to breed. These swam around lights at night, not necessarily any cause for alarm as most species are grass-eaters and pose no threat to infrastructure. Mostly, Termites are only seen when cutting timber, moving logs or when they attack timber structures.

**What management actions affect this species?** Maintaining a wide variety of vegetation on the property will help ensure a variety of species can occur and maintain overall ecosystem balance. Control measures are only necessary when wood-eating species attack infrastructure.

**How do they benefit the land I manage?** Termites are absolutely critical to the function of woodland and soil ecology and are particularly important in arid ecosystems. By consuming live and dead grasses, and burying much organic material, they create soil, increase soil fertility, enhance water infiltration and reduce erosion. They are a vital food source for countless species of native fauna including other insects, frogs, reptiles, birds and mammals. Termites hollow out trees, which is vital for the survival of many of our hollow-dependant species. The value of a diverse and healthy Termite population cannot be overstated.

