

Bugs R All

Newsletter of the
Invertebrate Conservation & Information Network of South Asia (ICINSA)

Unique survival strategy of termites during flood



Termites making cluster for their survival during flood.

Termites are considered social insects that come under the Infraorder Isoptera and the order Blattodea (along with cockroaches). They are considered one of the most successful insect groups on the planet as they are found on all continents except Antarctica and from a few hundred individuals to massive societies with millions of individuals they can colonize their groups. Among all the insect groups, the termite queen has the longest lifespan of any insect.

The life cycle of termites is a little bit different than ants. They go through an incomplete metamorphosis which includes egg, nymph, and adult stages, whereas other ants go through

complete metamorphosis. They are considered superorganisms as they have the self-regulating entity in the colony itself. Like other social insects, termite colonies also have workers, queens, etc. In the termite colony, the majority of the labour work performed by worker termites includes the collection of food and its storage, offspring, and maintenance of nest.

Furthermore, the soldier termites play the role of defence in their colony. They have enlarged heads with extremely modified jaws (Bignell et al. 2010).

The queen is the fertile female they are known for the production of eggs in the colony. The

king termite copulates with the queen for the life (Horwood & Eldridge 2005; Keller 1998).

During the flood in June 2022 in Athgharia village, Nalbari, Assam, it was observed that a colony of termites was floating over the water. When water enters into the termite nest, they come out with their young and eggs. They form a cluster and keep the eggs on top of the colonies for safety. After floating for a while, they form finger-like projections and help the colony to stick to bamboos and walls. They start placing their young ones and start building their nests as soon as the flood goes down.

References

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