

A STUDY ON THE SYSTEMATICS, ECOLOGY AND
BEHAVIOUR OF TERMITES OF JAFFNA PENINSULA

V K Ganesalingam and Renuka Sarawanamuthu
Dept. of Zoology, University of Jaffna

Although several species of termites have been recorded in tropical and sub tropical regions, only a few species have been recorded from Sri

Lanka and they were specially from tea growing districts. The present study was undertaken to study the termites of Jaffna peninsula with regard to their taxonomy, ecology and general behaviour.

Termite samples were collected from various places and their mandibles were prepared permanently. The taxonomy was studied using the mandibles.

The termite species of primitive family, namely Kalotermitidae was not found in the collection. Among Rhinotermitidae, there were only two species, namely Coptotermes ceylonicus and Heterotermes ceylonicus. The members of Termitidae recorded were Odontotermes horni, Odontotermes ceylonicus and Hypotermes obscuriceps. Odontotermes montanus has not been recorded earlier. The most prevalent species were Odontotermes ceylonicus and Odontotermes horni.

With regard to the ecology of termites, the members of Rhinotermitidae were mostly found in dry or decaying wood, and those of Termitidae were subterranean living in any type of soil.

This study shows that the termite families Rhinotermitidae and Termitidae are extensively found in Jaffna peninsula and they are of economic importance as they attack buildings, houses and timber.