

Termites in Europe.

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The Labour Day holidays I was travelling to Montenegro to see my friends. We went for a beautiful walk near Tivat with a stunning view of Kotor bay. The kids were playing around, picking up stones and showing us all the creatures they would come across. Under one stone they found something they didn't know until I started screaming "Termites! Termites in Montenegro!!!". Good for me as a person studying termites, but bad for the local pest control, as some termites are known to be invasive pest species. Based on the location, it could be a species from the *Reticulitermes* genus, possibly *R. urbis* or *lucifugus*. I immediately started to google termite species in Montenegro, but the map of termites (<https://mapadeterminas.org/en/>) didn't indicate any, and I found only a few mentionings of termites in Montenegro.



Photo of the termites I came across in Montenegro.

When I came back home, I got curious to learn more about termite species from the Balkans. I found out that the first occurrence of *Reticulitermes urbis* in Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina was described in 2013 [1]. This invasive species is found in the Balkans, Italy and France and was suggested to have originated from the Balkans and was introduced to Italy and France multiple times [2]. Some termite species travelled to different continents and successfully invaded new territories. For

example, the *R. flavipes* population that has been present in Europe since the 17th century was discovered to have come from Louisiana.

This species and other invasive termites are feeding on wood and can lead to economic damage in the regions in which they are propagating. Even though only a small proportion of termites are invasive, it's still important to understand their distribution and spread dynamics due to their ecological and economic impact. It's fascinating to study how species "travel" and successfully adapt to a completely new environment. Due to trade and climate change, termite species may spread further in the future.

References:

- [1] Dejan Kulijer, Simon Dupont, Anne-Geneviève Bagnères: Distribution and Natural Habitat of the invasive termite species *Reticulitermes urbis* in the Balkans (Isoptera: Rhinotermitidae). - Entomol Gener 34 (3): 189-196: Stuttgart 2013-03.
- [2] Scicchitano, V., Dedeine, F., Bagnères, AG. et al. Genetic diversity and invasion history of the European subterranean termite *Reticulitermes urbis* (Blattodea, Termitoidae, Rhinotermitidae). Biol Invasions 20, 33–44 (2018).