

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ACADEMY AND AFFILIATED  
SOCIETIES

## ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## 394TH MEETING

The 394th regular meeting was held June 2, 1927, in Room 43 of the National Museum. In absence of the president, the corresponding secretary-treasurer presided. The entire evening was devoted to brief notes and exhibition of specimens.

Dr. T. E. SNYDER spoke of the genus *Coptotermes* which was established in 1896 by Wasmann, the oriental species *gastroi* Wasmann being the genotype. There are approximately 43 species, 21 oriental, 9 Australian, 9 Ethiopian, and 4 neo-tropical. The status of some of the species is as yet in doubt. The genus *Coptotermes* is in the family Rhinotermitidae, the intermediate family between the higher and lower termites. Most of these termites are subterranean in habit; a few of them make hard carton true nests, but most of them burrow in soil and wood with diffused nests. Soldiers of species of *Coptotermes* have a frontal gland which exudes an acidulous secretion coagulating and hardening in the air which is used as defense against ants. With this secretion it is possible to dissolve lime mortar in stone and brick foundations. The Japanese Government has prohibited the use of lime mortar in consequence. Species of *Coptotermes* attack buildings, bridges, telephone poles, and various growing crops. They are a serious enemy in rubber plantations. About 1913 a *Coptotermes*, at first supposed to be the Australian species *C. lacteus* Froggatt, was discovered on the Island of Oahu at Honolulu. In 1920 the Japanese entomologist, M. Oshima, described it as a new species, *C. intrudens*, close to but distinct from *C. formosanus* Shiraki. In 1924 it was found on the Island of Hawaii at Hilo. In 1926 American entomologists decided that *intrudens* is a synonym of *formosanus* of southern Japan, Formosa and the south China coast. Another species of *Coptotermes*, a new species doing 95 per cent of the damage to buildings done in the Philippines, was intercepted in Hawaii and has not become established. Owing to the fact that *Coptotermes formosanus* has been found infesting floating dry docks, coal barges, and other vessels in the harbors of the Hawaiian Islands, it is quite possible that it may be introduced into continental United States, especially California. Every effort will be made by the Federal Horticultural Board, the State Board of Agriculture of California, and officials at Hawaii, to prevent this. The insect builds a concentrated nest, hence fumigation is an effective control measure. A photograph was shown of such a nest found in the hold of a floating dry dock from which nest earthlike shelter tubes went down on timbers below the water level, i.e., were submerged in salt water. This ability of the insect to live below the water line is a strong point in its life history.

Dr. SNYDER also discussed *Insect damage to yellow and white pine timbers in the roof of the White House*. During May 1927 an examination was made of the timbers from the roof of the White House which were being removed in repair work. The supporting timber trusses had been pulled out of place so that they no longer structurally served as trusses but carried the heavy load as beams. This caused the roof to sag to a dangerous degree. It was found that the white and yellow pine timbers had become infested by *Hexarthrum ulkei* Horn, one of the Cossind beetles in the family of weevils Curculionidae.



This insect is one of the so-called powder-post beetles which reduce the wood fiber to a powder-like condition. There are several earlier records of similar damage to the woodwork of buildings and flooring, caused by this insect, some of these records occurring in Washington, D. C. The ends of heavy timbers were badly weakened where they had been eaten by these insects—some were even broken off. The insect also invaded sound lathing attached to the infested timbers. There was no decay in some of the timbers infested by this beetle nor in the lathing. However, decay was present in the ends of some of the timbers supporting the roof of the tall portico in front of the White House. These powder-post beetles usually lay their eggs in joists or crevices of timber under conditions of darkness and poor ventilation. Impregnation treatments of timbers with zinc chloride would prevent such infestation and even coats of varnish would probably be effective. Frequent inspection of untreated timbers is advisable, especially in old buildings. Where timbers are not structurally weakened the insects infesting them can be killed by thoroughly saturating the wood with orthodichlorobenzene, applying the liquid with a saturated rag or mop, or as a spray. Several applications may be necessary to kill the insects. If this chemical is used as a spray it is advisable to open the building, as the odor of the chemical may prove disagreeable in a closed room. In spraying timbers overhead, care should be taken not to let the liquid drip down as it might slightly burn the face and hands and would be especially injurious to the eyes.

Dr. H. MORRISON discussed briefly the Cockerell types of Coccidae in the U. S. National Museum. According to most recent lists there are now over 3000 described species of Coccidae, of which 512, or approximately one sixth, have been described by Dr. Cockerell. The National Collection of Coccidae, according to a preliminary check, contains types or co-types of all but 81 of the species described by Dr. Cockerell. Mr. ROHWER spoke briefly of Dr. Cockerell's 19-month fossil collecting trip now in progress.

Dr. MORRISON also reported arrival of two shipments of scale insects sent for identification over a year ago by Mr. Kincaid from Seattle, Washington. These proved to be *Lecanium coryli* (Linn.), a species reported once from Nova Scotia many years ago, though there is no certainty that the identification was correct. It was introduced some 15 years ago into British Columbia and has recently attained importance as a pest of shade trees. It is a general feeder on shade, ornamental and rosaceous fruit trees, and occurs in considerable numbers in Stanley Park, Vancouver, and in Seattle and adjacent territory. Some efforts have been made to obtain an appropriation from Congress for work on it. Material was exhibited by Dr. MORRISON.

Dr. SCHAUSS reported the recent gift by Jordan of a paratype of *Sthenaupe parasitus* Jord. He discussed briefly its larval habits, especially its rather curious feeding habits. He also read a paragraph from *Novitates Zoologicae* (vol. 33, 1926) containing additional very interesting information regarding it.

Mr. BARBER exhibited local forms of Lampyridae and spoke of the contrast between "species" as they have been recognized by taxonomic study and "species" as they occur in nature. He thinks of a species as a living population, reproducing its kind, but isolated from other species by specialized habits or adaptations. These may be evident in distinctive mating instincts, in peculiar ecological habitat, in time of appearance, etc., as well as (more fortunately from our standpoint) in differences in structure. The Lampyridae differ from their near relatives the Lycidae and the Cantharidae (Tele-





Snyder, Thomas Elliott. 1928. "Insect Damage to Yellow and White Pine Timbers in the Roof of the White House." *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 18, 381–382.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/123329>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/101249>

**Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

**Sponsored by**

Biodiversity Heritage Library

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Washington Academy of Sciences

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions/>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.