

ANIMAL FUN FACTS

THE AFRICAN TERMITE

The African Termite build massive earth mounds that can reach heights of 17 feet and require more than 550 pounds of dirt moved in a year. These spectacular mounds house cities of termites, all working together for the survival and benefit of their community as a whole.

The mound's intricate network of tunnels and passages are made of a mixture of soil, termite saliva, and dung. Air travels through small holes in the wall structures, ventilating the entire colony. Six feet below ground level is the cellar, where the termites live in a fascinating and complicated comb-like colony.



African Termites are the first social insects to survive in what is known as a caste system, which means that they are born to assume different roles within the colony.

The colony starts with one pair - **a king and a queen**.

The **queen** has the longest life span of any known insect on earth. She is also the largest termite because she is swollen with eggs. She can live and reproduce for many years.

The **king** fertilizes the queen and helps to care for the young.

The **larger workers** are termites whose job is to dig and build on the surface of the ground. **Smaller workers** tend to be blind since most of their jobs are inside the dark mound such as making the fungus comb and tending to the larva and reproduction.

The **major soldiers** guard the entrances to the mound. **Smaller soldiers** defend the workers. And they both use tapping signals if they detect a threat.

Termites also use pheromones, special chemical scents to communicate, and create big ecological benefits by recycling dead trees into new soil and aerating the existing soil with their tunnels.



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