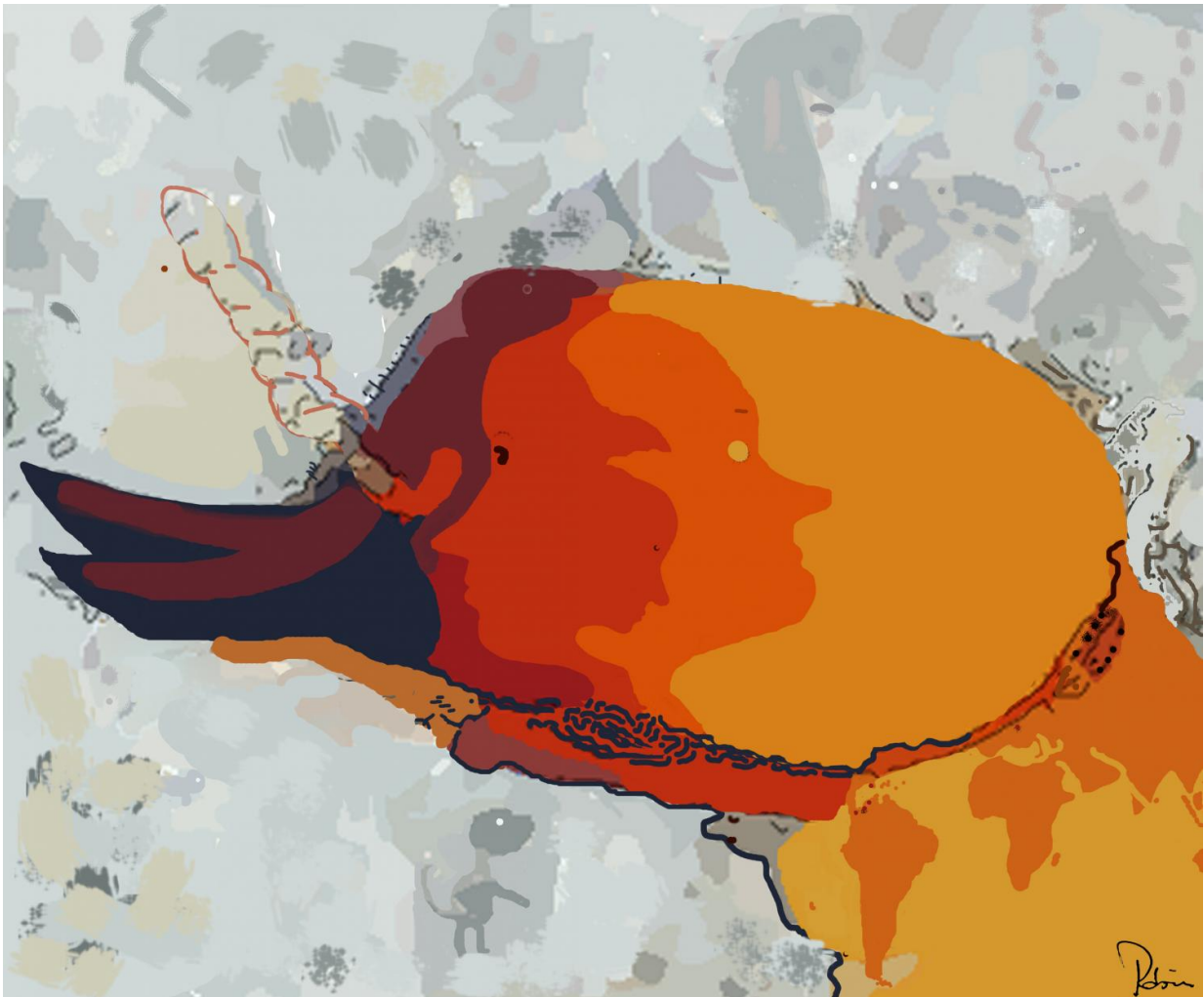


New termite species condemned to 100 years of solitude with a second chance

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Artistic interpretation of a Kalotermitidae species collected in Colosó, Sucre (Colombia) in 2014. Now *Proneotermes macondianus* in *Zookeys*. Credit: Robin Casalla

While the last species of the termite genus *Proneotermes* has been discovered more than a hundred years ago, now scientists have discovered a new and a third one. Part of the fauna living in the dry forests in Colombia, its name was inspired by the magic realism of the fictional town of "Macondo" from the novel 'One hundred years of solitude' by Nobel Prize laureate Gabriel García Márquez.

Termitologists Robin Casalla, Freiburg University, Germany, and Universidad del Norte, Colombia, Dr Rudolf H. Scheffrahn, University of Florida, USA, and Prof Dr Judith Korb, Freiburg University, discovered a termite species and described it as new based on its unique shapes and colors, as well as its genes. The new termite is published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

Furthermore, there is a story behind the name of this new species, called *Proneotermes macondianus*. "Macondianus" refers to the fictional town of "Macondo" in the novel 'One hundred year of solitude' written by Nobel Prize laureate Gabriel García Márquez. Macondo stands for a forgotten microcosm in the history of Colombia with unimaginable events. According to the story, the magical realm was eventually wiped off the map by gigantic storms of the Caribbean as a form of divine punishment to the violation of the biblical laws of genetics, incest.

"*P. macondianus* may have been one of those characters playing in the novel during the destruction of Macondo, remaining unrecognized until today," comments lead author Robin Casalla.



Macondo's trees (*Cavanillesia platanifolia*). Coincidentally, this tree was found close to the sampling sites in the dry forest of "El Ceibal," Santa Catalina, Bolivar, the habitat of *Proneotermes macondianus*. This tree species may have been a source of inspiration for the name of the fictional town of "Macondo."
Credit: Robin Casalla

In Colombia many species still await their discovery, either in the wild, or frozen in time in museum cabinets and lacking a name. The only way to refer to them, is by pointing to them with your finger. But now, *P. macondianus* has been [described](#) in *ZooKeys*.

The soldiers of this species have a characteristic elongated, rectangular

heads, about 5 - 7 mm long, ranging in color from black (at the tip) to ferruginous orange (at the back). *P. macondianus* has a voracious appetite for drywood, especially thin branches of less than 2 cm in diameter, and lives in small colonies of about 20 individuals. Although few drywood termites are considered pests in some urban areas, *P. macondianus* lives only in the wild and prefers tropical [dry forests](#).

The termite *P. macondianus* 'sentenced' to over a hundred years of 'solitude', has now been given a second chance to not be forgotten again, being recognized as part of the Colombian natural ecosystem.



The new drywood termite species *Proneotermes macondianus*. Credit: Robin Casalla

More information: Robin Casalla et al, *Proneotermes macondianus*, a new drywood termite from Colombia and expanded distribution of *Proneotermes* in the Neotropics (Isoptera, Kalotermitidae), *ZooKeys* (2016). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.623.9677](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.623.9677)

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