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Occurrence and activity of subterranean termites in temperate forest soils: United States and Spain

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Termites are an important component of many tropical, sub-tropical, and temperate soil invertebrate communities, and they have an impact on soil hydrological, chemical and biological processes. Termites also emit methane and could be an important factor in the production of this important atmospheric greenhouse gas. Many studies have been conducted on mound-building termites in tropical ecosystems, but much less is known on the ecology of subterranean termites in temperate soils. Most of the information about the subterranean termites is derived from work focused on protecting dwellings, which does not necessarily translate to ecosystem-level functions. We have developed an international network across diverse biomes to assess wood decomposition in forests; this presentation will summarize findings on the effects role of termites. Their occurrence is much more prevalent than commonly thought, and their role in mediating wood turnover appears to be significant.