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☐ Initial submission   ☐ Revised version   ☒ Final submission

Life Sciences Reporting Summary

Nature Research wishes to improve the reproducibility of the work that we publish. This form is intended for publication with all accepted life science papers and provides structure for consistency and transparency in reporting. Every life science submission will use this form; some list items might not apply to an individual manuscript, but all fields must be completed for clarity.

For further information on the points included in this form, see Reporting Life Sciences Research. For further information on Nature Research policies, including our data availability policy, see Authors & Referees and the Editorial Policy Checklist.

▶ Experimental design

1. **Sample size**

   Describe how sample size was determined.

   > For our differential expression analyses the sample size is predetermined by the number of genes, since we were comparing full transcriptomes between conditions.

2. **Data exclusions**

   Describe any data exclusions.

   > For the kings of the termite Macrotermes natalensis, the sequencing of several samples failed, leading to only two replicates. We therefore did not conduct or report the results of any statistical tests with these samples.

3. **Replication**

   Describe whether the experimental findings were reliably reproduced.

   > For the differential expression analyses we only reported results for which at least 3 replicates were available. For DESeq2, the package with which we calculated differential expression, it is standard practice to work with 3 or more replicates.

4. **Randomization**

   Describe how samples/organisms/participants were allocated into experimental groups.

   > This is not relevant. The experimental groups were determined by the caste membership of an individual.

5. **Blinding**

   Describe whether the investigators were blinded to group allocation during data collection and/or analysis.

   > not relevant

   Note: all studies involving animals and/or human research participants must disclose whether blinding and randomization were used.

6. **Statistical parameters**

   For all figures and tables that use statistical methods, confirm that the following items are present in relevant figure legends (or in the Methods section if additional space is needed).

n/a	Confirmed
☐	☒ The exact sample size (n) for each experimental group/condition, given as a discrete number and unit of measurement (animals, litters, cultures, etc.)
☐	☒ A description of how samples were collected, noting whether measurements were taken from distinct samples or whether the same sample was measured repeatedly
☐	☒ A statement indicating how many times each experiment was replicated
☐	☒ The statistical test(s) used and whether they are one- or two-sided (note: only common tests should be described solely by name; more complex techniques should be described in the Methods section)
☐	☒ A description of any assumptions or corrections, such as an adjustment for multiple comparisons
☐	☒ The test results (e.g. P values) given as exact values whenever possible and with confidence intervals noted
☒	☐ A clear description of statistics including central tendency (e.g. median, mean) and variation (e.g. standard deviation, interquartile range)
☒	☐ Clearly defined error bars

   See the web collection on statistics for biologists for further resources and guidance.

▶ Software

Policy information about availability of computer code

7. Software

Describe the software used to analyze the data in this study.

> The software used is described in detail within the methods and the supplementary material. These are:
> Genome assembly: Allpaths LG, SOAPdenovo, gapcloser, kgf
> Transcriptome assembly: Trinity, Cufflinks, TopHat
> Repeat annotations: RepeatModeler/RepeatClassifier, LTRharvest/LTRdigest, TransposonPSI, CD-hit, Repeat Classifier, RepeatMasker
> Annotation: Maker, AUGUSTUS, GeneMark-ES Suite, SNAP, GeneWise, PASA, GLEAN, CPC, OrfPredictor
> Differential gene expression: HiSat2, DESeq2
> Protein orthology: OrthoMCL
> IR and OR identification: HMMER suite, MAFFT
> Gene family expansions and contractions: MC-UPGMA, CAFE
> Test for positive selection: codeml of the PAML suite
> GO enrichment: pfam2GO, topGO.
>
> Many custom-made scripts available on request.

For manuscripts utilizing custom algorithms or software that are central to the paper but not yet described in the published literature, software must be made available to editors and reviewers upon request. We strongly encourage code deposition in a community repository (e.g. GitHub). *Nature Methods* guidance for providing algorithms and software for publication provides further information on this topic.

▶ Materials and reagents

Policy information about availability of materials

8. Materials availability

Indicate whether there are restrictions on availability of unique materials or if these materials are only available for distribution by a for-profit company.

> no unique materials

9. Antibodies

Describe the antibodies used and how they were validated for use in the system under study (i.e. assay and species).

> not applicable

10. Eukaryotic cell lines

a. State the source of each eukaryotic cell line used.

> n/a

b. Describe the method of cell line authentication used.

> n/a

c. Report whether the cell lines were tested for mycoplasma contamination.

> n/a

d. If any of the cell lines used are listed in the database of commonly misidentified cell lines maintained by ICLAC, provide a scientific rationale for their use.

> n/a

▶ Animals and human research participants

Policy information about studies involving animals; when reporting animal research, follow the ARRIVE guidelines

11. Description of research animals

Provide details on animals and/or animal-derived materials used in the study.

> worker, queen and kings of the two termite species: Cryptotermes secundus and Macrotermes natalensis
> Nymphs (5th and 6th instars) and adult females of Blattella germanica

Policy information about studies involving human research participants

12. Description of human research participants

Describe the covariate-relevant population characteristics of the human research participants.

> n/a