



NORTH AMERICAN SECTION

# ***NAS/IUSSI NEWSLETTER***

## ***November 21, 2008***

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### ***William L. and Ruth D. Nutting Award***

This award is named in honor of the late Bill Nutting, an outstanding termite biologist who made major contributions to termite biology, both through his own research and mentoring of students, and in honor of Ruth Nutting for her support of Bill's work and continued interest in termite biology. It is given to the NAS/IUSSI student member who shows the most distinguished record of research in the area of basic termite biology. The award consists of a plaque and a research grant of \$1,000. This year's Selection Committee consisted of Michael Haverty (chair), Edward Vargo, Colin Brent, Brian Forschler, and Kenna MacKenzie.

### ***General Statement***

There were two nominees for the Nutting Award this year; one individual stood out. The North American Section of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects is proud to announce that **Hou-Feng Li** was selected as the recipient of the **2008 William L. and Ruth D. Nutting Award**. Mr. Li's Masters research focused on foraging gallery construction by subterranean termites. He demonstrated that subterranean termites excavate foraging galleries without depositing soil above ground, thus disproving the long-held assumption that termites compact soil. Mr. Li used creative techniques, such as multicolored soil particles, digital microphotography and mathematical analysis of the resulting color pixels, to test the hypothesis of soil compaction by termites. He has five (four as first author) research publications in excellent journals, and has demonstrated outreach to the scientific, pest control industry and greater entomological community. He is involved with basic research, as well as serving as a site manager for a study to evaluate modifications to a bait system for control of subterranean termites.

**Hou-Feng Li** is a student of Nan-Yao Su at the University of Florida in Fort Lauderdale. His Ph.D. research involves the phylogenetic relationships of populations of *Coptotermes*

*formosanus* and *C. gestroi*. Of the many termite pest species, these two are the most destructive and wide-spread. Florida and Mr. Li's native Taiwan are the only two known places in the world where these two "supposedly" allopatric species co-exist. The distributions, population genetics, and inter-specific competition between these two species will be the topics of his Ph.D. research program.

His references write of Mr. Li: "... he has authored or co-authored refereed papers related to termite biology and has been actively participating in many scientific meetings and won several student competition awards. These are remarkable achievements for a non-native speaker of English, and are excellent examples of his motivation and diligence in his academic interests." "Hou-Feng has been infected with the same sense of wonder that Bill Nutting had for his beloved and mysterious termites of the Sonoran Desert." "Mr. Li is one of my most reliable and enthusiastic research cooperators in our study of termite baits, which is being conducted with eight researchers throughout the southeastern US. In my experience, it is very unusual to find a researcher, like Mr. Li, who is equally excellent and interested in conducting both basic and applied research." For these reasons, the Award Committee is very pleased to announce that Hou-Feng Li is the recipient of the 2008 William L. and Ruth D. Nutting Award.