

New Yorkers beware! New cockroach hits the Big Apple

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The sun sets behind the Manhattan skyline on December 11 in New York. New Yorkers are used to fighting each other for space, but there may be a new contender in town according to a Rockefeller study that appears to have uncovered a new species of cockroach.

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"The [cockroach](#) is genetically modified. Species don't differ more than one percent, this cockroach is four percent different, which suggests it is a new species of cockroach," Professor Mark Stoeckle, an expert on genomics and DNA barcoding at Rockefeller University, told AFP.

"We think that the museums of natural history in Paris or New York

could be interested."

The previously-unidentified creepy-crawly was uncovered as part of a project undertaken by two high-school students, Brenda Tan, 17, and Matt Cost, 18, under Stoeckle's supervision.

In their roles as "DNAHouse investigators," the pair trawled New York apartments, stores and street, collecting 217 specimens between November 2008 and March 2009.

They took samples from supermarket food, the remains of an insect found in a box of fruit, a feather from a duster, dried dung and a cockroach and matched [DNA sequences](#) using the Barcode of Life Database and GenBank.

The American Museum of Natural History laboratory identified 170 genetic codes, leading the researchers to identify 95 different animal species, including some that were unexpected.

"A feather from a duster yielded ostrich DNA. A delicacy labeled 'sturgeon caviar' instead turned out to be from the strange-looking paddlefish. A popular Asian snack was revealed as giant flying squid. Bison DNA was found in a dog biscuit," the pair wrote on the Rockefeller University website.

In fact, they found that 16 percent of food items were mislabeled, including cheeses labeled sheep's milk that were actually made of cow's milk, a potentially dangerous labelling error for those with allergies.

But perhaps the biggest surprise for the researchers was the discovery of "a genetically distinct 'mystery' cockroach that might be a new species."

"By appearance it looks like the American cockroach (*Periplaneta*

americana) but it is genetically different from other American cockroaches in the databases," the researchers said.

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