

UQ students name and describe insect species

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Phd candidate, Penelope Mills, in the habitat where *Apiomorpha nookara* was found

(PhysOrg.com) -- Third-year Biological Sciences students at The University of Queensland have applied their knowledge from the classroom to name and describe a species of gall insect; *Apiomorpha nookara*.

Students Penelope Mills (now a PhD student in the School of Biological Sciences), Melanie Macdonald and Lisa Rigby were working together on the project.

They said the newly discovered gall-inducing insect has a tight

association with a single [species](#) of eucalypt in Australia.

"We named the insect *Apiomorpha nookara*, as the species epithet is an [anagram](#) of the region in northern NSW where it was first found," Ms. Mills said.

"Our paper is different from many other species descriptions," Ms. Mills said.

"Unlike taxonomy papers that describe only the visible features of the animal, we have also included other information such as the chromosome number and [DNA data](#) showing how it is related to other gall insects."

The students said that it is the shape of the gall which makes *Apiomorpha nookara* quite distinct from those made by other gall insects.

Unlike its close relatives that have a single chamber in the gall in which the adult female lives, feeds and gives birth - *Apiomorpha nookara* has a second, outer chamber.

"We don't know why this species has the second chamber and what purpose it serves," Ms. Mills said.

"It might help prevent other insects from attacking and killing the female inside the gall."

Without the work of these students, yet another of Australia's endemic but [unknown species](#) would still be waiting for a name.

The students' names will now be associated with the species forever.

The paper, titled "A recently discovered species of *Apiomorpha* *Rubsaamen* (Hemiptera: Coccoidea: Eriococcidae) with unusual gall morphology", was published on November 8 in the international taxonomic [journal Zootaxa](#).

Provided by University of Queensland

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