

A new, beautifully colored lizard discovered in the Peruvian Andes

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This is an example of *Potamites montanicola*, new species from southern Peru. This is a female specimen. Credit: Germán Chávez, Diego Vásquez

Germán Chávez and Diego Vásquez from the Centro de Ornitología y Biodiversidad (CORBIDI) in Peru have discovered a new colorful lizard which they named *Potamites montanicola*, or "mountain dweller". The new species was found in Cordillera de Vilcabamba and Apurimac river valley, the Cusco Region of Peru at altitude ranging from 1,600 to 2,100 meters. Their study was published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

"The new discovery raises some questions", say the authors. This is the only member of the genus known to live at such altitude. It is yet unknown what biological mechanisms help the lizard to survive in this harsh environment, much colder than what its relatives in the genus prefer. Scientists also believe the lizard may be nocturnal, which raises

the question of how it maintains its body temperature during night time. In some cases, individuals were observed swimming in streams, which is rather unusual behavior for the members this genus.



These are the colorful males of the newly described species. Credit: Germán Chávez, Diego Vásquez

"Further studies are needed to reveal its biology, population structure and conservation status, and outline its overall distribution", Chávez concludes.

More information: Chávez G, Vásquez D (2012) A new species of Andean semiaquatic lizard of the genus *Potamites* (Sauria, Gymnophthalmidae) from southern Peru. *ZooKeys* 168: 31. [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.168.2048](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.168.2048)

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