

New miniature grasshopper-like insect is first member of its family from Belize

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This is the new insect, *Ripipteryx mopana*. Credit: Sam W. Heads, Steven J. Taylor

Scientists at the University of Illinois, USA have discovered a new species of tiny, grasshopper-like insect in the tropical rainforests of the Toledo District in southern Belize. Dr Sam Heads and Dr Steve Taylor co-authored a paper, published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*, documenting the discovery and naming the new species *Ripipteryx mopana*. The name commemorates the Mopan people – a Mayan group, native to the region.

"Belize is famous for its biodiversity, although very little is known about the insect fauna of the southern part of the country. This is particularly

true of the Orthoptera – the grasshoppers, crickets and katydids" said entomologist and lead author on the paper, Dr Sam Heads. "The new insect is the first representative of it's family ever to be found in Belize. Given the amount of high quality habitats in the region, it isn't really surprising that new [species](#) still await discovery, especially in the less-explored areas" added Dr Heads.

Just less than 5 mm long, the insect is a tiny, black, white and orange coloured, grasshopper-like species that uses its large jumping hind legs to escape predators.

"Very little is known about the biology of this genus and its closest relatives" said Heads, who specializes in the study of orthopteran [insects](#). "The group as a whole is rather poorly studied and even though we continue to document new species, we still have a long way to go".

More information: Heads SW, Taylor SJ (2012) A new species of Ripteryx from Belize with a key to the species of the Scrofulosa Group (Orthoptera, Ripterygidae). *ZooKeys* 169: 1-9. [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.169.2531](#)

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