

An ant scientist's picnic: The highly diverse ant fauna of the Philippines

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This is a deforested mountain in northwest Mindoro Island. Credit: Image courtesy of David M General

Intensive field work by researchers David General of the Palawan State University, The Philippines and Gary Alpert of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University has led to the discovery of nine genera of ants that had never been recorded before in the Philippines. Another two new genera were discovered by other researchers in a remote mountain region. The study was published as the 200th jubilee issue of the open access journal [Zookeys](#).

About 30% of all currently known ant genera have been recorded in the Philippines, with a land area roughly the size of Italy or Arizona. At least 474 species of [ants](#) are known from the [archipelago](#). In addition, several

dozen new species remain to be formally described and given scientific names. "New species have been found even in highly disturbed places like university campuses," reported Mr. General.



This shows three ant genera new to science. Credit: Image courtesy of Gary D. Alpert and David M. General

"The complex blend of climatic diversity, geologic history and island structure of the country has likely led to rapid development of new ant genera and [species](#), a phenomenon that deserves much further exploration," Dr. Alpert surmises.

The discoveries were made on a private reforestation project on the fringe of a single protected area, the [Mt. Isarog Natural Park](#), on Luzon Island. Unfortunately, the study site was poached and all the trees have been cut down, wiping out 27 years of stewardship. [Habitat destruction](#) continues to threaten the ants of the Philippines and the [plants and animals](#) that depend on them.



This shows intact lowland forest at the mouth of Puerto Princesa Underground River, Palawan Island. Credit: Image courtesy of David M General

Many islands, mountains and unique habitats remain unexplored for their ant communities.

Ants are very common and easily recognizable insects but are poorly studied in the region. This new study may spur interest and provide such a reference for people who want to study ants in the Philippines.

More information: General DM, Alpert GD (2012) A synoptic review of the ant genera (Hymenoptera, Formicidae) of the Philippines. *ZooKeys* 200: 1. [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.200.2447](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.200.2447)

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