

Four new dragon millipedes found in China

October 30 2014



Male (left) and a female (right) *Desmoxytes nodulosa* (Photographed not to scale). Credit: Liu Weixin

A team of speleobiologists from the South China Agriculture University and the Russian Academy of Sciences have described four new species of the dragon millipedes from southern China, two of which seem to be cave dwellers. The study was published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

The millipede genus *Desmoxytes* is well-known because the dragon-like appearance of the species in it. The four [new species](#) all can be recognized by their spiky body, the distinctive characteristic which gave the representatives of the genus their unique common name.

Unlike other groups of cave millipedes, which are usually very common, the representatives of *Desmoxytes* are comparatively rare in caves, and always with low in numbers populations. In addition, they are often distributed in a narrow geographical area, or even only present in a single cave, or cave system. Because of such rarity and endemism, dragon millipedes are ideal material for evolutionary studies.

China holds the most diverse resources of *Desmoxytes*. Up to now, China has 14 millipedes of genus, including 9 cavernicolous species. It is believed, however, that the country holds a greater diversity of these bizarre creatures, which are yet to be discovered in future.

More information: Liu WX, Golovatch SI, Tian MY (2014) A review of the dragon millipede genus *Desmoxytes* Chamberlin, 1923 in China, with descriptions of four new species (Diplopoda, Polydesmida, Paradoxosomatidae). *ZooKeys* 448: 9–26. [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.448.8081](#)

Additional Information: Golovatch SI, Li YB, Liu WX, Geoffroy J-J (2012) Three new cavernicolous species of dragon millipedes, genus *Desmoxytes* Chamberlin, 1923, from southern China, with notes on a formal congener from the Philippines (Diplopoda, Polydesmida,

Paradoxoaomatidae). *Zookeys* 185: 1-17. [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.185.3082](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.185.3082).

Provided by Pensoft Publishers

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