

A kingdom of cave beetles found in Southern China

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Dongodytes (s.str.) yaophilous, one of the new species of cave dwelling beetles.
Credit: Mingyi Tian

A team of scientists specializing in cave biodiversity from the South China Agricultural University (Guangzhou) unearthed a treasure trove of rare blind cave beetles. The description of seven new species of underground *Trechinae* beetles, published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*, attests for the Du'an karst as the most diverse area for these cave dwellers in China.

"China is becoming more and more fascinating for those who study cave [biodiversity](#), because it holds some of the most morphologically adapted

cavernicolous animals in the world. This is specifically true for fishes and the trechine beetles, the second of which is also the group featured in this study," explains the senior author of the study Prof. Mingyi Tian.

Like most cavernicolous species, *Trechinae* cave beetles shows a number of specific adaptations, such as lack of eyes and colour, which are traits common among [cave dwellers](#).

The new *Trechinae* beetles belong to the genus *Dongodytes* whose members are easily recognizable by their extraordinary slender and very elongated body. Members of this genus are usually very rare in caves, with only five species reported from China before now.

During the recent study of the [cave systems](#) in Du'an karst however this numbers drastically changed, Out of the 48 visited caves 12 held populations of trechine beetles. A total of 103 samples were collected, out of which the team of scientists determined ten different species, seven of which are new to science.



Researchers in action: the team is ready to submerge in the Du'an karst caves in search for new species. Credit: Mingyi Tian

"This new discovery casts a new light on the importance of the Du'an Karst as a biological hotspot for cavernicolous *Trechinae* in China," adds Prof. Mingyi Tian.

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