

# New whirligig beetle species discovered

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Male *Dineutus shorti*, a newly described species of whirligig beetle. Credit: Entomological Society of America.

A new species of whirligig beetle is the first to be described in the United States since 1991. Grey Gustafson, a PhD student at the University of New Mexico, and Dr. Robert Sites, an entomologist at the University of Missouri's Enns Entomology Museum, describe the new

species in an article appearing in the *Annals of the Entomological Society of America*.

Whirligig beetles belong to the family Gyrinidae and are well known for their whirling swimming pattern. Gustafson found the [new species](#) in Alabama's Conecuh National Forest while hunting for similar whirligig beetles, and he noticed that they looked very similar to specimens in the Enns Entomology Museum that had not yet been identified.

"Dr. Sites noticed that in the museum's collection there were 11 specimens of a whirligig beetle collected back in the 1970s and identified by somebody—they don't know who—as possibly being a new [species](#)," Gustafson said. "He contacted me because he knew I was working on a paper to help people identify the North American whirligig beetle species in the genus *Dineutus*."

Gustafson confirmed that the 11 museum specimens were members of a new species, and that they were the same species as the specimens he had recently collected in Alabama.

"When I got back and checked my samples, sure enough, it was the same species," he said. "It was lucky that somebody had originally noticed that this was potentially new, and that the natural history collection was around to preserve the specimens and that Dr. Sites contacted me. And then it was even more serendipitous that I happened to stumble upon it."

Gustafson named it *Dineutus shorti* after University of Kansas coleopterist Dr. Andrew E. Z. Short.

"I volunteered as an undergrad in his lab, and he inspired me and showed me that you can have a career being an insect taxonomist," Gustafson said.

*Dineutus shorti* is not the first insect that Gustafson has named—it's his fifth—but he still gets excited when new species are discovered.

"It's hard to describe the thrill I felt when I was looking at these old [specimens](#) from the 1970s and realizing, wow, this is actually something new, and not only is it new, but it's right here in the United States," he said. "And then I actually found it myself! It's not like this species was small or cryptic. If you just walk up to the river, there they are. It's really exciting."

**More information:** The full article, "A North American Biodiversity Hotspot Gets Richer: A New Species of Whirligig Beetle (Coleoptera: Gyrinidae) from the Southeastern Coastal Plain of the United States," is available at [aesa.oxfordjournals.org/lookup ... /10.1093/aesa/sav100](https://aesa.oxfordjournals.org/lookup.../10.1093/aesa/sav100)

Provided by Entomological Society of America

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