

Hollywood star Brad Pitt shares a name with a new wasp species from South Africa

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New endoparasitic wasp species *Conobregma bradpitti*. Credit: Dr Buntika A. Butcher

Not only did an international research team discover two new endoparasitic wasp species in South Africa and India, and significantly expanded their genera's distributional range, but they also gave a celebrity name to a special one of them.

While thinking of a name for the new wasp, Dr Buntika A. Butcher, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, recalled her long hours of studying in her laboratory right under the poster of her favourite film actor. This is how a parasitic wasp from South Africa was named after Hollywood star Brad Pitt. The researchers have published their findings in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

The new wasp species, called *Conobregma bradpitti*, belongs to a large worldwide group of wasps parasitising in moth or butterfly caterpillars. These wasps lay their eggs into a host, which once parasitised starts hardening. Thus, the wasp cocoon can safely develop and later emerge from the 'mummified' larva. Despite their macabre behaviour, many of these [wasp species](#) are considered valuable in agriculture because of their potential as biological control.

Brad Pitt's flying namesake is a tiny creature measuring less than 2 mm. Its body is deep brown, nearly black in colour, while its head, antennae and legs are brown-yellow. The wings stand out with their much brighter shades.



A close-up of the face of the new endoparasitic wasp species *Conobregma bradpitti*. Credit: Dr Buntika A. Butcher

Interestingly, the wasp with celebrity name unites two, until now, doubtful genera. Being very similar, they had already been noted to have only four diagnostic features that set them apart. However, *C. bradpitti*

shared two of those with each. Thus, the species prompted the solution of the taxonomic problem and, as a result, the two were synonymised.

In their paper, the authors from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand and the [University of Calicut](#), India, also describe another new species of parasitic wasp. It is the first from its subtribe spotted in the whole of India, while its closest 'relative' lives in Nepal.



The second new endoparasitic wasp species *Facitorus nasseri*. Credit: Dr Buntika A. Butcher

More information: Buntika A. Butcher et al, Major range extensions for two genera of the parasitoid subtribe Facitorina, with a new generic synonymy (Braconidae, Rogadinae, Yeliconini), *ZooKeys* (2016). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.584.7815](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.584.7815)

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