

Scientist collects 30 sawfly species not previously reported from Arkansas

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Pamphilius ocreatus, one of the species newly recorded in Arkansas. Photo by John Rosenfeld, used with permission. Credit: John Rosenfeld

Sawflies and wood wasps form a group of insects that feed mainly on plants when immature. Field work by Dr. Michael Skvarla, which was conducted during his Ph.D. research at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, USA, has uncovered 30 species of these plant-feeding

wasps that were previously unknown in the state. The study is published in the open access journal *Biodiversity Data Journal*.

After collecting sawflies in tent-like Malaise traps or [hanging funnel traps](#), Dr. Michael Skvarla sent the specimens to retired sawfly expert Dr. David Smith for identification.

In total, 47 species were collected, 30 of which had not been found in Arkansas before. While many of the species are widespread in eastern North America, eight species were known only from areas hundreds of kilometers away.

"I knew that many insect groups had not yet been surveyed in Arkansas, but I was surprised that 66% of the sawfly species we found were new to the state," Skvarla says.

"In addition, over a quarter of the newly recorded species represent large range extensions of hundreds of miles; [*Monophadnoides conspiculatus*](#), for instance, was previously known only from the Appalachian Mountains. This work highlights how much basic natural history is left to discover about insects."



Acordulecera dorsalis, one of the species newly recorded in Arkansas. Credit: Tom Murray

Sawflies and wood wasps comprise the wasp suborder Symphyta and derive their common names from the serrated or saw-shaped ovipositor many species use to lay eggs into plant tissue, and because some species bore into wood.

While some sawfly and woodwasp [species](#) can be pests on crops or ornamental plants, most do not pose an economic concern, and all are harmless to people.

More information: Michael Skvarla et al, Terrestrial arthropods of Steel Creek, Buffalo National River, Arkansas. II. Sawflies (Insecta:

Hymenoptera: " Symphyta "), *Biodiversity Data Journal* (2016). [DOI: 10.3897/BDJ.4.e8830](https://doi.org/10.3897/BDJ.4.e8830)

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