

New species of pea-size crab parasitizing a date mussel has a name of a Roman god

October 24 2016



The new pea crab species *Serenotheres janus* photographed in its host, date mussel *Leiosolenus obesus*. Credit: Zachariah Kobrinsky and David Liittschwager

Tiny crabs, the size of a pea, dwell inside the mantles of various bivalves, living off the food filtered by their hosts. A new species of these curious crustaceans has recently been reported from the Solomon Islands, where an individual was found to parasitise a large date mussel.

Because of the new pea crab's characteristic large additional plate, covering its upper carapace, giving it the illusion of having two faces, it has been named after Janus, the Roman two-faced god. Discoverers Dr Peter Ng, National University of Singapore, and Dr Christopher Meyer, U.S. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, have their findings published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

Being only the second species in the genus (the first was from Malaysia), the new pea crab *Serenotheres janus* can be distinguished by its broader carapace and other features. It is cream-yellow in color.

Both representatives of the genus are unique in having an additional large plate covering the upper side of the carapace. However, its purpose is still unknown. The two pea crabs are also the only known parasites of the rock-boring bivalves of the mytilid subfamily Lithophaginae.



The holotype of the new pea crab species *Serenotheres janus* discovered in a date mussel, *Leiosolenus obesus*. Credit: Peter K. L. Ng

More information: Peter K. L. Ng et al, A new species of pea crab of the genus *Serenotheres* Ah Yong & Ng, 2005 (Crustacea, Brachyura, Pinnotheridae) from the date mussel *Leiosolenus* Carpenter, 1857 (Mollusca, Bivalvia, Mytilidae, Lithophaginae) from the Solomon Islands, *ZooKeys* (2016). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.623.10272](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.623.10272)

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Citation: New species of pea-size crab parasitizing a date mussel has a name of a Roman god (2016, October 24) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-10-species-pea-size-crab-parasitizing-date.html>

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