

Shadow-loving insect named after Tuomas Holopainen of Nightwish

March 6 2017



Fungus gnat of the new species *Orfelia boreoalpina*. Credit: Jukka Salmela

Tuomas Holopainen, the multi-talented musician and founder of the

symphonic metal band Nightwish, is also a full-blooded nature person. This gave conservation biologist Jukka Salmela of Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland an idea for the name of a new species he found in Finland. Discovered in eastern Lapland during an insect survey, the fungus gnat was given the scientific name *Sciophila holopaineni* after Tuomas. The new species is described in the open access *Biodiversity Data Journal*.

"I am very, very touched. This is the highest honour a nature nerd like me can receive," Tuomas Holopainen replied after Jukka, who collected and described the fungus gnat, asked him for permission to name the [species](#) after him.

The idea for the name came up to Salmela while he was thinking about the habitat and appearance of the species. Then, he recalled Tuomas Holopainen's interest in the natural sciences.

So far, the [new species](#) of fungus gnat has been only known from two locations: the Törmäoja Natura Area in Savukoski, eastern Lapland, and a meadow close to the White Sea, Russian Karelia.

The dark and beautiful gnat thrives in shadowy environments. In Törmäoja, it was caught in a river gulch next to the river source, while hiding under the shelter of the forest. Salmela proposes 'tuomaanvarjokainen' as the common Finnish name, inspired by the latest Nightwish album. After all, the themes of the album, [Endless Forms Most Beautiful](#), are evolution and the diversity of nature.

Fungus gnats are flies, which feed on dead wood or fungi. Some of the larvae are predaceous. At current count, there are almost 800 species in Finland and about 1,000 in the Nordic countries. In fact, the Fennoscandia region is one of Europe's biodiversity hotspots for this group of insects.



Fungus gnat of the new species *Orfelia boreoalpina*. Credit: Jukka Salmela

The Tuomas Holopainen's species is only one of the eight new flies described in the study. Among them are the *Boletina norokorpii* fungus gnat, named after Docent Yrjö Norokorpi and known only from Ylitornio; *Phronia reducta*, which inhabits Salla and Siberia; and *Orfelia boreoalpina* found in Törmäoja and the German Alps.

The Parks & Wildlife Finland of Metsähallitus is responsible for the

management and species surveys of the State's nature reserves. The collected data is needed in activities such as assessing the status of biodiversity, the protection of species, and planning the management and use of the reserves. Insects are as good an indicator of the state of the natural environment as better-known vertebrates or plants. The diversity of insect species forms part of natural biodiversity and is necessary to human well-being.

More information: Jukka Salmela et al, New and poorly known Palaearctic fungus gnats (Diptera, Sciaroidea), *Biodiversity Data Journal* (2017). [DOI: 10.3897/BDJ.5.e11760](https://doi.org/10.3897/BDJ.5.e11760)

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