

Of Star Trek, Mark Twain and helmets: 15 new species of wasps with curious names

March 27 2017



The new species *Phanuromyia odo* was named after Star Trek: Deep Space Nine fictional character Odo. Credit: Dr. Norman F. Johnson

A total of fifteen new species of parasitic wasps have been described from across the Neotropical region. Apart from belonging to a peculiar group of wasps distinct with large and elongated bodies, the new insects also draw attention with the curious names they have been formally assigned with.

Among them, there are species named after characters from the [television series](#) Star Trek and Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, and five [wasps](#) bearing species names all translating to 'helmet'. The study, conducted by graduate student Katherine C. Nesheim and Dr. Norman F. Johnson, both affiliated with the Ohio State University, USA, and Dr. Lubomír Masner, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, is published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

The larvae of the studied wasps parasitise the eggs of lanternflies and planthoppers. These species inhabit exclusively the Neotropical region, with their range stretching from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the north to Misiones in southern Paraguay. Despite being quite abundant in the region, these insects have remained under-researched until recently.

One of the newly discovered wasp is named *Phanuromyia odo*, where the species name *odo* refers to the Star Trek: Deep Space Nine fictional character of the same name. In the popular sci-fi television series, Odo belongs to a species of shapeshifters called Changelings. The reason for the scientists to associate the parasitoid with the character is the spectacular variability observed within the insect species. In fact, it was this peculiarity that, at some point, led the entomologists believe they were dealing with two separate species.



The new species *Phanuromyia princeps* was named after Mark Twain's character from the novel *The Prince and the Pauper*. Credit: Dr. Norman F. Johnson

The authors do not make a clear statement that the [new species](#) *P. pauper* has a name inspired by the famous novel *The Prince and the Pauper* by Mark Twain. Instead, they justify their choice with the fact that the species lacks a specific morphological feature - thus making it 'poor'. On the other hand, the authors confirm that the new species called *P. princeps* is of 'blue blood' indeed, having its name derive from the other main character of the same book. Furthermore, both species are reported to look a lot like each other.

Among the curious names in the list of new species, there are also five wasps whose scientific names all translate to 'helmet' in three different languages - Greek, Latin and Old Norse. The reason behind is that they have unusually large heads, which reminded the scientists of a "knight wearing a helmet". Likewise, a related species received a name that in Latin means 'wearing a hood'.

There is also a [species](#), whose name means 'having long hair', and another called 'constellation' in Latin.



The new species *Phanuromyia pauper* named after Mark Twain's character from the novel *The Prince and the Pauper*. Credit: Dr. Norman F. Johnson

More information: Katherine C. Nesheim et al. *The Phanuromyia*

galeata species group (Hymenoptera, Platygasteridae, Telenominae):
shining a lantern into an unexplored corner of Neotropical diversity,
ZooKeys (2017). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.663.11554](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.663.11554)

Provided by Pensoft Publishers

Citation: Of Star Trek, Mark Twain and helmets: 15 new species of wasps with curious names
(2017, March 27) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-03-star-trek-twain-helmets-species.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.