

New species of crab with unusual outgrowths has its name written in the stars

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The new species *Pariphiculus stellatus* showing wart-like mushroom-shaped outgrowths covering the carapace and chelipeds. Credit: Dr. Peter K. L. Ng

A new species of crab with star-shaped tubercles all over its body has been collected from red coral beds during a survey at a small seamount by Peng-Chia-Yu Island, Taiwan. It has also been found in the

Philippines. It is described in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

This astonishing creature is distinct with its carapace and chelipeds covered in pointy protrusions. Interestingly, these change with age, becoming shorter, blunter and mushroom-shaped to resemble wart-like outgrowths and granules. Regardless of their sex, as the [crabs](#) grow larger, their carapaces also get proportionately rounder and wider.

The curious protuberances on the bodies reminded the research team of Dr. Peter Ng, National University of Singapore, and Dr. Ming-Shiou Jeng, Biodiversity Research Center, Academia Sinica, Taiwan, of stars. Hence, the crab was given the name *Pariphiculus stellatus*, where *stellatus* translates as 'starry' from Latin.

The colouration of *P. stellatus* varies among specimens. While predominantly orange with white patches, their shade could be either dull, pale or intense. The white spots might cover some of the protrusions or extend over most of the body. The underside of the body is dirty white to light brown.

Another rare crab species, *Acanthodromia margarita*, has been reported for the first time from Taiwan in the same study, having previously been known from the Andaman Sea in the eastern Indian Ocean, Japan and the Philippines. The collected female specimen is one of the largest representatives of the species known so far.

"With their bright orange to pink bodies, these hedgehog-like crabs are truly striking in life!" says Dr. Peter Ng.



Adult specimen of the new species *Pariphiculus stellatus* showing wart-like mushroom-shaped outgrowths covering the carapace and chelipeds. Credit: Dr. Peter K. L. Ng



The newly recorded from Taiwan species *Acanthodromia margarita*. The collected female specimen is one of the largest representatives of the species known so far. Credit: Dr. Peter K. L. Ng

More information: Ng PKL, Jeng M-S (2017) Notes on two crabs (Crustacea, Brachyura, Dynomenidae and Iphiculidae) collected from

red coral beds in northern Taiwan, including a new species of *Pariphiculus* Alcock, 1896. ZooKeys 694: 135-156. [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.694.14871](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.694.14871)

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