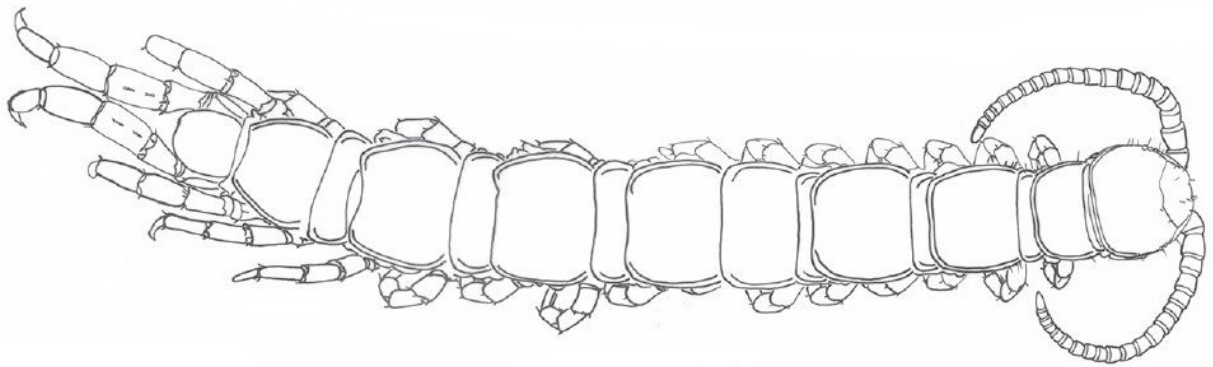


# Two new species of stone centipedes found hiding in larch forests in China

March 7 2018

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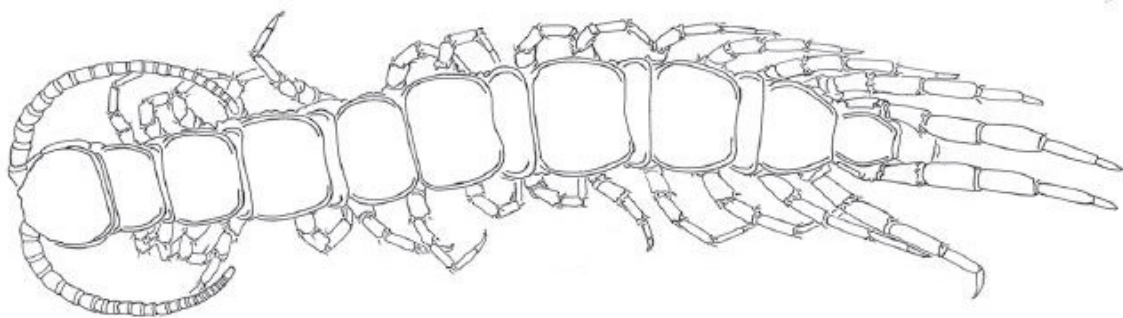
The new stone centipede species *Lithobius (Ezembius) tetraspinus*. Credit: Dr Huiqin Ma

Scientists described two species of previously unknown stone centipedes from China. Now housed at the Hengshui University, China, where all members of the team work, the studied specimens were all collected in the leaf litter or under rocks in larch forests.

Having conducted their research across China, researchers Dr Sujian Pei, Yanmin Lu, Haipeng Liu, Dr Xiaojie Hou and Dr Huiqin Ma announced the two new species - *Lithobius (Ezembius) tetraspinus* and *Hessebius luculentus* - in two articles published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

Stone centipedes are the species which belong to the order Lithobiomorpha. These centipedes are anamorphic, meaning that they grow additional pair of legs as they moult and develop additional body segments. By the time they are fully grown, these count 15 in total. Unlike earlier predecessors, stone centipedes do not have the compound eyes we know from insects. Instead, stone centipedes see through simple eyes, sometimes a group of simple eyes, or, if living exclusively underground, they might have no eyes at all.

One of the newly discovered species, *Lithobius (Ezembius) tetraspinus*, is recorded from Hami City, Xinjiang Autonomous Region, northwestern China. The studied specimens were collected from moderately moist larch forest habitats at altitude of 950 to 1000. There, the small predominantly brown centipedes, measuring no more than about 13 mm in body length, were hiding under roadside stones and [leaf litter](#).



The new stone centipede species *Hessebius luculentus*. Credit: Dr Sujian Pei

The second previously unknown [centipede](#), *Hessebius luculentus*, discovered in Shandan County, Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, is slightly larger - reaching up to 20 mm. Its colours are a mix of yellow and brown with

the odd grey or red hue. While it has the same preference for relatively moist habitats, this [species](#) lives at greater altitude. It has been reported from forest floor at about 1400 m above sea level.

In both papers, the authors point out that while the myriapod fauna of China remains generally poorly known, even less attention has been given to the order of [stone](#) centipedes.

The research articles are included in the special issue "[Proceedings of the 17th International Congress of Myriapodology, Krabi, Thailand](#)". The congress, organised by Prof. Somsak Panha, [Chulalongkorn University](#), Bangkok, was held in July 2017.

**More information:** Sujian Pei et al. *Lithobius (Ezembius) tetraspinus*, a new species of centipede from northwest China (Lithobiomorpha, Lithobiidae), *ZooKeys* (2018). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.741.19980](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.741.19980)

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Citation: Two new species of stone centipedes found hiding in larch forests in China (2018, March 7) retrieved 8 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-species-stone-centipedes-larch-forests.html>

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