

Citizen scientists discover a new water beetle and name it after Leonardo DiCaprio

April 30 2018



The new species *Grouvellinus leonardodicaprioi*. Credit: Taxon Expeditions - Hendrik Freitag

New animal species are sometimes named after celebrities because of their trademark looks. That's how we got the blonde-haired Donald Trump moth and the big-armed Arnold Schwarzenegger fly, to name a few. However, some well-known people are enshrined in animal names

not for their looks, but rather for what they do for the environment.

This is exactly how a newly discovered water beetle, described in the open access journal *ZooKeys*, was given the name of Hollywood actor and environmentalist Leonardo DiCaprio. The tribute marks the 20th anniversary of the celebrity's Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation (LDF) and its efforts towards biodiversity preservation.

The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation has become one of the world's foremost wildlife charities, having contributed to over 200 grassroots projects around the globe devoted to climate change mitigation, wildlife conservation, and habitat preservation.

"We can all have an impact," [says DiCaprio](#) in a special LDF video, "but we have to work together to protect our only home."

Going by the scientific name of *Grouvellinus leonardodicaprioi*, the new water beetle was discovered at a waterfall in the remote Maliau Basin, Malaysian Borneo, during the first field trip initiated by Taxon Expeditions - an organisation which arranges scientific surveys for untrained laypeople with the aim to discover previously unknown species and bridge the gap in biodiversity knowledge.



Taxon Expeditions participants in the rainforest of Maliau Basin, collecting insects with a so-called blacklight trap. Credit: Taxon Expeditions - Iva Njunjic

Having identified a total of three water beetle species new to science, the expedition participants and the local staff of the Maliau Basin Studies Centre voted to name one of them after DiCaprio in honour of his efforts to protect untouched, unexplored wildernesses just like Maliau Basin itself.

"Tiny and black, this new beetle may not win any Oscars for charisma, but in biodiversity conservation, every creature counts," said Taxon Expeditions' founder and entomologist Dr. Iva Njunjic.



An aerial view of the 25-km-wide Maliau Basin in Malaysian Borneo. Credit: Sabah Foundation - Sylvia Yorath

More information: Freitag H, Pangantihon CV, Njunjic I (2018) Three new species of *Grouvellinus* Champion, 1923 from Maliau Basin, Sabah, Borneo, discovered by citizen scientists during the first Taxon Expedition (Insecta, Coleoptera, Elmidae). *ZooKeys* 754: 1-21. [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.754.24276](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.754.24276)

Provided by Pensoft Publishers

Citation: Citizen scientists discover a new water beetle and name it after Leonardo DiCaprio (2018, April 30) retrieved 4 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-04-citizen-scientists-beetle-leonardo-dicaprio.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.