

The first cave-dwelling centipede from southern China

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A living specimen of the newly described species *Australobius tracheoperspicuus*.
Credit: Hui-qin Ma

Chinese scientists recorded the first cave-dwelling centipede known so far from southern China. To the amazement of the team, the specimens collected during a survey in the Gaofeng village, Guizhou Province, did not only represent a species that had been successfully hiding away from biologists in the subterranean darkness, but it also turned out to be the

very first amongst the order of stone centipedes to be discovered underground in the country.

Found by the team of Qing Li, Xuan Guo and Dr. Hui-ming Chen of the Guizhou Institute of Biology, and Su-jian Pei and Dr. Hui-qin Ma of Hengshui University, the new cavedweller is described under the name of *Australobius tracheoperspicuus* in the open-access journal *ZooKeys*.

The new [centipede](#) is quite tiny, measuring less than 20 mm in total body length. It is also characterised with pale yellow-brownish colour and antennae comprised of 26 segments each. Similar to other cave-dwelling organisms which have evolved to survive away from sunlight, it has no eyes.

In their paper, the authors point out that Chinese centipedes and millipedes remain poorly known, where the statement holds particularly true for the fauna of stone centipedes: the members of the order Lithobiomorpha. As of today, there are only 80 species and subspecies of lithobiomorphs known from the country. However, none of them lives underground.

In addition, the study provides an identification key for all six [species](#) of the genus *Australobius* recorded in China.



A holotype of the newly described species *Australobius tracheoperspicuus* (male).
Credit: Hui-qin Ma



The cave where the new species (*Australobius tracheoperspicuus*) was discovered. Location: Gaofeng village, Guizhou Province, southwest China. Credit: Hui-qin Ma

More information: Qing Li et al, *Australobius tracheoperspicuus* sp. n., the first subterranean species of centipede from southern China (Lithobiomorpha, Lithobiidae), *ZooKeys* (2018). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.795.28036](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.795.28036)

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