

Scientists reveal the true identity of a Chinese octopus

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A live individual of *Callistoctopus xiaohongxu*. Credit: Zheng et al.

As they were collecting cephalopod samples in Dongshan island in China's Fujian Province, a team of researchers came across an interesting finding: a new-to-science species of octopus.

Actually, locals and fishermen have long been familiar with the species—but they kept mistaking it for a juvenile form of the common long-arm octopus ('Octopus' minor), whose trade is widespread throughout the country.

Only when a team of scientists from the Ocean University of China collected a batch of specimens misidentified by locals from Dongshan Seafood Market Pier as 'O'. minor to study them, did it become apparent that this was in fact a separate, new species. That's how it got its own name, *Callistoctopus xiaohongxu*, and a scientific description published in the open-access journal *ZooKeys*.

The scientific name *xiaohongxu* is a phonetic translation of the local Chinese name of this species in Zhangzhou, where it was collected. It is a reference to its smooth skin and reddish-brown color, which are among its most distinctive features. At less than 40 g in its adult stage, *C. xiaohongxu* is considered a small to moderate-sized [octopus](#).



A live individual of *Callistoctopus xiaohongxu*. Credit: Zheng et al.

The researchers also note that this is the first new species of the genus *Callistoctopus* to be found in the China Seas.



A net-like web structure on *Callistoctopus xiaohongxu*. Credit: Zheng et al.

More than 130 different cephalopod species are recorded in Chinese waters. The southeast waters of China, due to the influence of strong warm currents, provide ideal environmental conditions to generate abundant marine biodiversity, and the finding of *C. xiaohongxu* further confirms the high diversity of [species](#) in the southeast China sea, the researchers said.

More information: Xiaodong Zheng et al, Morphological description and mitochondrial DNA-based phylogenetic placement of a new species

of *Callistoctopus* Taki, 1964 (Cephalopoda, Octopodidae) from the southeast waters of China, *ZooKeys* (2022). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.1121.86264](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.1121.86264)

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