

# Citizen scientists discover new 'snug' in Brunei forest, name it after retiring field center manager

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*Microparmarion sallehi*. Credit: Pierre Escoubas

Semislugs, or 'snugs' as they are affectionately known among mollusk researchers, are like the squatters of the snail world: they do carry a

home on their back but it is too small to live in. Still, it offers a sort of protection, while not getting in the way of the worm-like physique of the slug.

For reasons unknown, on the island of Borneo, which is shared among the countries of Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia, most slugs are of the semislug type. The genus *Microparmarion* there consists of around 10 semislug [species](#), most of which are found in the cooler forests of the mountains. So, when [citizen scientists](#) discovered a *Microparmarion* in the hot lowland forest of Ulu Temburong National Park, Brunei, as part of their expedition, they were surprised.

For the past years, the scientific travel agency Taxon Expeditions, in collaboration with Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) has been organizing biodiversity discovery trips for scientists, students, and laypersons to this forest. On the first trip, in 2018, during a night walk, participant Simon Berenyi, who runs an ethical pest control company in the UK, reached up to a dead leaf suspended over the trail.

Everybody—the other participants, even the resident snail expert—had ducked and passed underneath this dead leaf without so much as giving it a glance. But something on its surface caught Simon's eye. "Oi, is that a slug?" he exclaimed, and picked a slimy, well-camouflaged mollusk off it.



A team of citizen scientists in the Brunei forest, searching for slugs and snails.  
Credit: Pierre Escoubas

At the time, the team's zoologists already suspected it was a new species—nothing like it had ever been found in this corner of the island. But that single specimen was not enough to publish its description as a new species. Over the years, successive expeditions to the same area came up with several more specimens of the same species, which made it clear that it was really a species never seen before.

On the 2022 [expedition](#), a team composed of UBD students Nurilya Ezzwan and Izzah Hamdani and citizen scientist Harrison Wu from Virginia finished the description. Using the portable lab that Taxon Expeditions always carries with them, the team studied the animals'

shell, [reproductive organs](#), and DNA, and prepared a paper for *Biodiversity Data Journal*, where it was published this week.



The locality where *Microparmarion sallehi* was found. Credit: Pierre Escoubas

As usual on Taxon Expedition trips, on the last night the team voted on the scientific name for the new species. With an overwhelming majority, the 'snug' was named after Mr. Md Salleh Abdullah Bat, the field center supervisor, who would retire just weeks after the team left. Mr. Salleh himself agrees that it is indeed a very fitting farewell gift.

**More information:** Menno Schilthuizen et al, A new semi-slug of the

genus *Microparmarion* from Brunei, discovered, described and DNA-barcoded on citizen-science 'taxon expeditions' (Gastropoda, Stylommatophora, Ariophantidae), *Biodiversity Data Journal* (2023).  
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