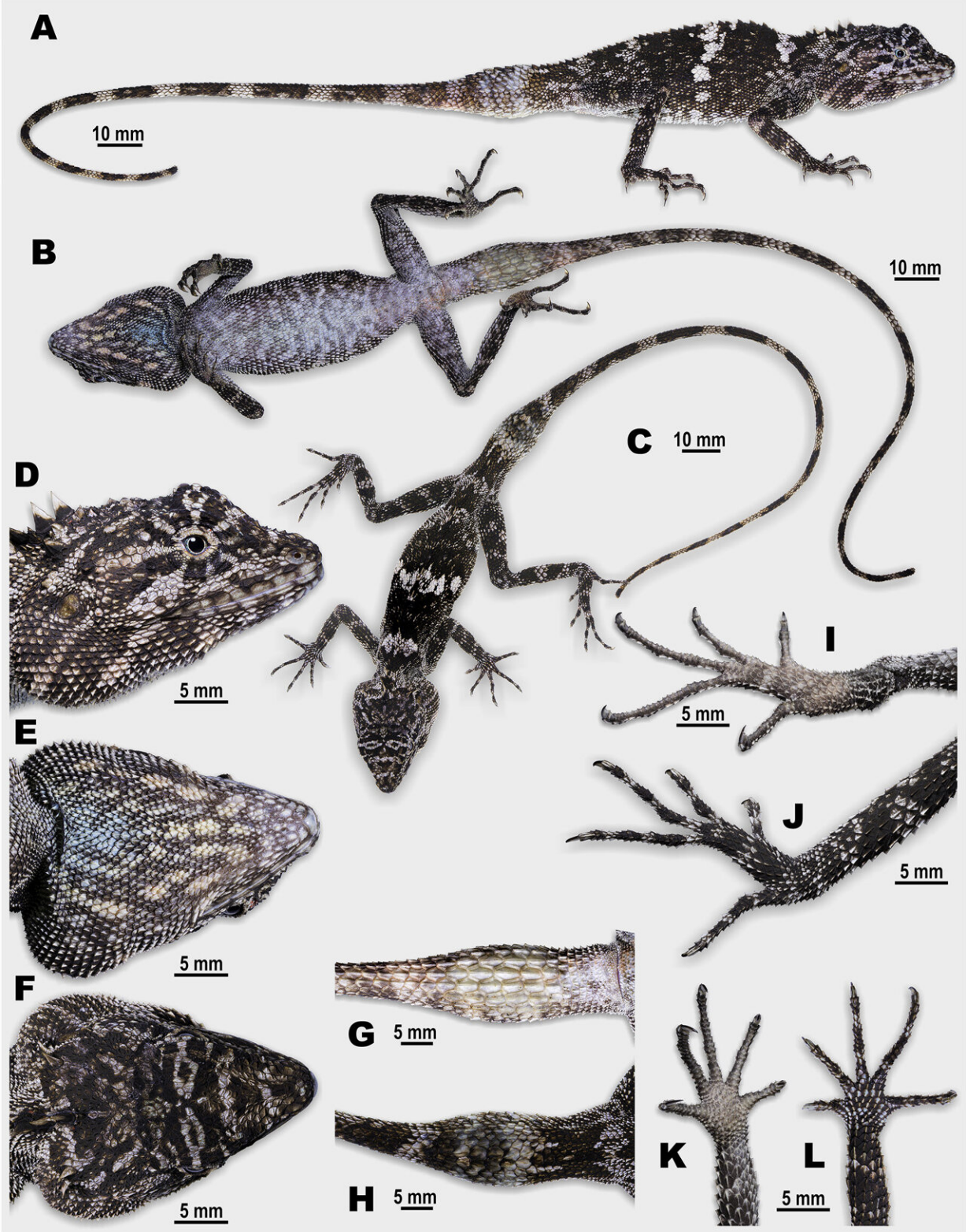


New 'dragon lizard' species with impressive camouflage capabilities found in Southeast Asia

October 19 2023, by Bob Yirka



Holotype of *Laodracon carsticola* Gen. et sp. nov. (NUOL R.2022.01), adult

male, in life A: General lateral view; B: General ventral view; C: General dorsal view; D: Head in lateral aspect; E: Head in ventral aspect; F: Head in dorsal aspect; G: Tail base in ventral aspect; H: Tail base in dorsal aspect; I: Volar aspect of right foot; J: Opisthenar aspect of left foot; K: Volar aspect of left hand; L: Opisthenar aspect of right hand. Scale bar equals to 10 mm for A–C, to 5 mm for D–L. Photographs by Nathanaël Maury. Credit: *Zoological Research* (2023). DOI: 10.24272/j.issn.2095-8137.2023.062

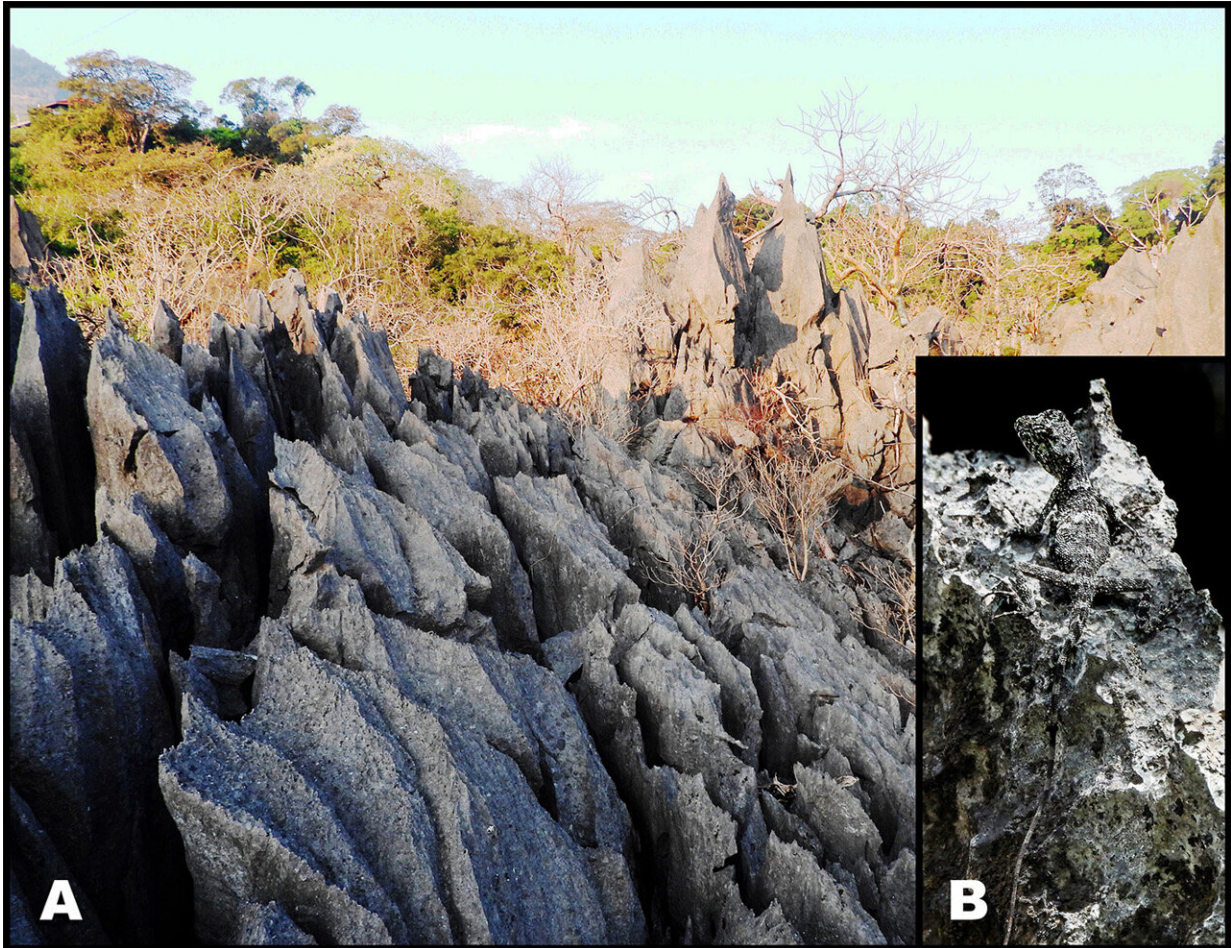
An international team of biologists, animal management specialists, geneticists and forestry managers has discovered a new species of "dragon lizard" in Laos—one with very impressive camouflage capabilities. In their paper [published](#) in the journal *Zoological Research*, the group describes how the lizards were found and what they learned from two samples they captured.

So called "dragon lizards" have been known in parts of Laos for many years—they are of the Agamidae family and as their name suggests, slightly resemble fictional dragons. The new species was found living on the pinnacles of an outcrop of limestone in what is known as a karst landscape in Khammouan Province.

The first was spotted by a photographer from the National University of Laos who was out looking for exotic birds late last year. A guide escorting tourists there for zipline rides spotted a second one climbing around on the rocks soon thereafter. The second lizard was eventually captured, as was another when the team of researchers visited the site. Both have been extensively examined.

The lizards have impressive camouflage capabilities—their black and gray scale patterns match the rocks upon which they climb. The researchers note that unless they move, it is almost impossible to spot them. Both specimens were approximately 15 centimeters long. They

also had blue/gray eyes and some red and blue spots and rough skin, an asset for a creature that climbs around on coarse rock.



Natural habitat of *Laodracon carsticola* Gen. et sp. nov. in Nam Sanam-Phou Pha Marn PPA., Khounkham Dist., Khammouan Province, central Laos A: Macrohabitat of the new species on karst pinnacles. B: A specimen of *Laodracon carsticola* Gen. et sp. nov. in situ (not collected) showing disruptive camouflage that hides the lizard while it perches on limestone. Photographs by Santi Xayyasith. Credit: *Zoological Research* (2023). DOI: 10.24272/j.issn.2095-8137.2023.062

They also had unique swollen tail bases. Genetic testing showed the lizards to be of an entirely new genus belonging to the subfamily Agamidae. The team named it *Laodracon carsticola*, and suggest the common name Khammouan karst [dragon](#). Initial study of the [lizards](#) suggests they survive on ants.

Karst habitats are typically home to caves and hills due to [underground water](#) dissolving the rock, resulting in the creation of homes for a wide variety of creatures—such habitats are known for their rich diversity.

The researchers also spoke to locals in the area who said the lizard was rare—none had seen it anywhere but on the outcrop upon which it was officially observed.

More information: Saly Sitthivong et al, Hiding on jagged karst pinnacles: A new microendemic genus and species of a limestone-dwelling agamid lizard (Squamata: Agamidae: Draconinae) from Khammouan Province, Laos, *Zoological Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.24272/j.issn.2095-8137.2023.062](#)

© 2023 Science X Network

Citation: New 'dragon lizard' species with impressive camouflage capabilities found in Southeast Asia (2023, October 19) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-10-dragon-lizard-species-camouflage-capabilities.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.