

'Miniature' mountain creature with 'squeaker'-like call discovered as new species

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A "squeaker"-like sound pierced the air of a mountain forest in Rwanda. The call came from a "miniature" creature sitting on the forest floor. Scientists found the source of the sound—and discovered a new species.

J. Maximilian Dehling ventured into the Nyungwe Forest on several trips between 2010 and 2018, he wrote in a study published Oct. 23 in the journal [Diversity](#). During these surveys, a "very small" [frog](#) caught his attention.

He found six of these "miniature" frogs and, taking a closer look, discovered a new species: *Arthroleptis nyungwensis*, or the Nyungwe squeaker frog.

The Nyungwe squeaker frog is considered "miniature," reaching about 0.6 inches in length, the study said. It has a "slender" body, "long" legs and roughly textured, or "shagreened," skin.

Photos show the Nyungwe squeaker frog. It varies in color but generally has a brown-red body with small white dots speckled across its sides. The frog's underside is a lighter brown with two distinct yellow-orange stripes on its belly.

Nyungwe squeaker frogs were found in "moist leaf litter of closed-canopy montane forest" between elevations of about 5,900 feet to about 7,200 feet, the researcher said. The frogs were "rarely at the forest edge" and seen active during the day and night.

Dehling heard Nyungwe squeaker frogs making three [different sounds](#). He described its primary "squeaker"-like call to McClatchy News in an email. "The call sounds like a very short, very high-pitched whistle," he said.

The frog also makes a "trill"-like sound, used as an "aggressive call," and a "brief whistle," possibly used as a "courtship call," the study said.

The new species was identified by its size, coloring, call, skin texture and body shape, the study said. DNA analysis found the new species had at

least 4.6% [genetic divergence](#) from other squeaker [frogs](#). No females of the new species were studied.

Dehling found the new species in two forests of southern Rwanda.

He named the [new species](#) after Nyungwe Forest National Park, the area where it was first discovered, the study said. This park is about 110 miles southwest of Kigali, the capital city.

Rwanda is a landlocked country in east-central Africa. It borders Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, Burundi to the south and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west.

More information: J. Maximilian Dehling, A New Miniature Species of *Arthroleptis* (Anura: Arthroleptidae) from Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, *Diversity* (2023). [DOI: 10.3390/d15101104](https://doi.org/10.3390/d15101104)

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