

New reptile on the block: A new iguana species discovered in China

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Calotes wangi. Credit: Huang et al

A new iguana joins Asia's rich reptile fauna, officially described as new to science in the open-access journal [ZooKeys](#).

"From 2009 to 2022, we conducted a series of field surveys in South China and collected a number of specimens of the *Calotes versicolor* species complex, and found that the population of what we thought was *Calotes versicolor* in South China and Northern Vietnam was a new undescribed species and two subspecies," says Yong Huang, whose team described the new species.

Wang's garden lizard (*Calotes wangi*) is less than 9 cm long, and one of its distinguishing features is its orange tongue.

"*Calotes wangi* is found in subtropical evergreen broad-leaved forests and tropical monsoon forests in southern China and northern Vietnam, mostly in [mountainous areas](#), hills and plains on [forest edges](#), [arable land](#), shrub lands, and even urban green belts. It is active at the edge of the forest, and when it is in danger, it rushes into bushes or climbs tree trunks to hide. Investigations found that the lizards lie on sloping shrub branches at night, sleeping close to the branches," says Yong Huang.

It is active from April to October every year, while in the tropics it is active from March to November or even longer, and eats a variety of insects, spiders, and other arthropods.



Calotes wangi. Credit: Huang et al

For now, the researchers estimate that the new species is not threatened, but they do note that in some areas its habitat is fragmented.

"In addition, their bodies are used medicinally and the lizards are also eaten," they write in their research paper.

This is why they suggest that the local government strengthen the protection of their ecological environment and pay close attention to the [population dynamics](#).

More information: Yong Huang et al, Taxonomic review of the *Calotes versicolor* complex (Agamidae, Sauria, Squamata) in China, with description of a new species and subspecies, *ZooKeys* (2023). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.1187.110704](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.1187.110704)

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