

New coffee snake species discovered in Ecuador's cloud forests

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Ninia gytudori. Credit: Alejandro Arteaga

Researchers of Khamai Foundation and Liberty University have discovered a new species of coffee snake endemic to the cloud forests of northwestern Ecuador.

Biologist Alejandro Arteaga first found the snake in Ecuador's Pichincha province, while looking for animals to include in a book on the Reptiles of Ecuador.

"This is [species](#) number 30 that I have discovered, out of a target of 100," he says.

Like other coffee snakes, Tudors's Coffee-Snake often inhabits coffee plantations, especially in areas where its cloud forest habitat has been destroyed. It is endemic to the Pacific slopes of the Andes in northwestern Ecuador, where it lives at elevations of between 1,000 and 1,500 m above sea level.



Ninia guyudori from Santa Lucía Cloud Forest Reserve, Pichincha province.

Credit: Jose Vieira



Photographs of some specimens of *Ninia gytudori*: top, from Santa Lucía Cloud Forest Reserve, Pichincha province. Bottom, from Río Manduriacu Reserve, Imbabura province. Credit: Jose Vieira.

While it faces no major immediate extinction threats, some of its populations are likely to be declining due to deforestation by logging and large-scale mining.

The researchers hope that its discovery will highlight the importance of preserving the cloud forest ecosystem, and focus research attention on human-modified habitats that surround it such as [coffee plantations](#) and pastures.



When threatened, individuals of the Tudors's Coffee-Snake (*Ninia guytudori*) flatten the body and tail. Credit: Jose Vieira

The name of the new [snake](#) species honors Guy Tudor, "an all-around naturalist and scientific illustrator with a deep fondness for birds and all

animals, in recognition of the impact he has had on the conservation of South America's [birds](#) through his artistry," the researchers write in their [paper](#), which was recently published in *Evolutionary Systematics*.

"We are trying to raise funds for conservation through the naming of new species. This one helped us protect Buenaventura Reserve," the researchers note.

More information: Alejandro Arteaga et al, A new species of *Ninia* (Serpentes, Colubridae) from western Ecuador and revalidation of *N. schmidti*, *Evolutionary Systematics* (2023). [DOI: 10.3897/evolsyst.7.112476](#)

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