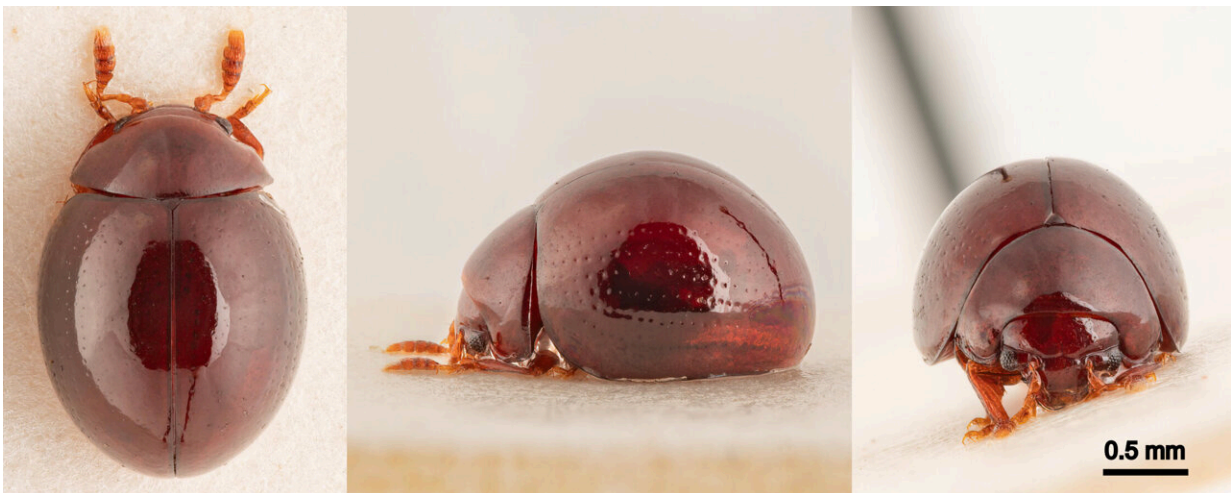


'Tiny, beautiful, and completely unknown animals': Citizen scientists discover new beetles from the Borneo forest

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Clavicornaltica mataikanensis. Credit: Taxon Expeditions—Holm Friedrich

The undiscovered small beetles in the tropical rainforest are probably endless. But that did not discourage citizen scientists on expeditions to the Ulu Temburong forest in Borneo to keep adding them to scientific records, one at a time. Together with a team of researchers, they published a new species, *Clavicornaltica mataikanensis* in [Biodiversity](#)

[Data Journal](#).

The minute, two-mm-long leaf beetle that lives on the [forest floor](#) is the latest discovery of Taxon Expeditions, which organizes scientific field trips for teams consisting of both scientists and lay people. Unlike other science/adventure trips, Taxon Expeditions organizes real scientific expeditions for lay people, guiding them in the discovery of new species of animals, by focusing on the thousands of "little things that run the world."

Clavicornaltica mataikanensis, named for the stream Mata Ikan ("fish eye") that runs in the valley where it was found, is one of a plethora of tiny beetle species that live in the leaf litter of tropical forests—and most of them have not yet been scientifically described and named. At 2 mm long, the flea beetle is actually one of the largest among its relatives—which might explain why so little is known about their ecology and diversity.

The field trip, in which local students and researchers also took part, gave untrained lay people the opportunity to participate in the study of this hidden world of biodiversity and in the process of naming and publishing [new species](#). Participant Lehman Ellis, from the US, says it was "exciting and beautiful" to be part of the discovery.



Citizen scientist Eleonora Nigro in the field lab working on the publication.
Credit: Taxon Expeditions—Iva Njunjić

Entomologist and founder of Taxon Expeditions, Dr. Iva Njunjić, says, "We introduce the general public to all these tiny, beautiful, and completely unknown animals and show them that there is a whole world still to be discovered."



Citizen scientists, students, and researchers working together in the rainforest.
Credit: Taxon Expeditions—Sotiris Kountouras

More information: Sean Otani et al, A new, unusually large, *Clavicornaltica* Scherer, 1974 flea beetle from Borneo, described and sequenced in the field by citizen scientists (Coleoptera, Chrysomelidae, Galerucinae), *Biodiversity Data Journal* (2024). [DOI: 10.3897/BDJ.12.e119481](https://doi.org/10.3897/BDJ.12.e119481)

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