

A new species of mountain pit viper from China

June 11 2024



Ovophis jenkinsi. Credit: Xianchun Qiu

Yunnan, China is a biodiversity hotspot, with many new reptile species discovered in the region in recent years. It is also where a research team from China found a new species of medium-sized venomous snake,

known as a mountain pit viper.

"We checked specimens of the [[snake](#)] genus *Ovophis* collected by Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences and Beijing Forestry University in Yingjiang, Yunnan in 2008, and found that these specimens were different from all known similar species. We collected some new [specimens](#) from Yingjiang in 2023 and finally determined that this population represents a [new species](#)," the researchers explained.

The new species was named *Ovophis jenkinsi* in honor of herpetologist Robert "Hank" William Garfield Jenkins AM (September 1947–September 2023), who had "a passion for snakes, especially pit vipers, and helped China, along with many Asian countries, complete snake census, conservation, and management projects," the team writes in their study, which was [published](#) in the journal *ZooKeys*.

Ovophis jenkinsi is generally dark brownish-gray, but some individuals can be deep orange-brown, and has trapezoidal patches on its back. "It is usually slow-moving but shows great aggression when disturbed," the researchers explain after observing the snake's behavior. "When threatened, these snakes inflate their bodies to make themselves appear larger and strike quickly."



A specimen of *Ovophis jenkinsi* from Yingjiang, Yunnan, China. Credit: Xianchun Qiu



A specimen of *Ovophis jenkinsi* from Yingjiang, Yunnan, China. Credit: Zhongwen Jiang



The only known habitat of *Ovophis jenkinsi*, the tropical montane rainforest in Yingjiang, Yunnan, China. Credit: Xiaojun Gu

There are no records to date of humans being bitten by this species.

Like many other species, this snake is endemic to China's Yingjiang County, which means it is currently found only there. "It is not difficult to find this species in the wild, they are active mainly in the autumn and prefer cool, humid, and even rainy nights, probably to avoid competition with other snakes," the researchers say, suggesting it might feed on [small mammals](#).

"We will be collecting more information about *O. jenkinsi* in the future, including their appearance, distribution, and habits, to improve our

understanding of this species," the researchers say in conclusion.

More information: Xian-Chun Qiu et al, A new mountain pitviper of the genus *Ovophis* Burger in Hoge & Romano-Hoge, 1981 (Serpentes, Viperidae) from Yunnan, China, *ZooKeys* (2024). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.1203.119218](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.1203.119218)

Provided by Pensoft Publishers

Citation: A new species of mountain pit viper from China (2024, June 11) retrieved 18 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-06-species-mountain-pit-viper-china.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.