

Megalara garuda: the King of Wasps

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This is a *Megalara garuda*, male. It is also known as the King of Wasps. Credit: Dr. Lynn Kimsey, Dr. Michael Ohl

A new and unusual wasp species has been discovered during an expedition to the Indonesian island of [Sulawesi](#).

It was independently also found in the insect collections of the [Museum für Naturkunde](#) in Berlin, where it was awaiting discovery since the 1930s, when it had been collected on Sulawesi. The new species is pitch-black, has an enormous body size, and its males have long, sickle-shaped jaws. The findings have now been described in the open access journal [ZooKeys](#).

The species belongs into the [digger wasp](#) family, which is a diverse group of [wasps](#) with several thousands of species known from all over

the world. Female digger wasps search for other insects as prey for their young and paralyze the prey by stinging it. Prey selection is often species specific, but the [prey](#) of the new species is unknown. With its unusual body size and the male's jaws, the new species differs from all known related digger wasps, so much so that it was placed in a new genus of its own, *Megalara*.



This is a close view of the enormous jaws of the male wasps. Credit: Dr. Lynn Kimsey, Dr. Michael Ohl

The new genus name is a combination of the Greek [Mega](#), meaning large, and the ending of [Dalara](#), a related wasp genus.

Lynn Kimsey (UC Davis) and Michael Ohl (Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin), who discovered the giant wasp simultaneously and have worked on it in collaboration, named the species after [Garuda](#), the national symbol of Indonesia, a part-human, part-eagle mythical creature known as the King of Birds in Hindu mythology.

Since this [species](#) has never been observed alive, nothing is known about

its biology or behavior. The males of *Megalara garuda* are distinctly larger than the females, and bear very long jaws. As can be deduced from other insects with large jaws, it is likely that the males hold the females with it during copulation. It is also possible that they use the [jaws](#) for defense.

More information: Kimsey LS, Ohl M (2012) *Megalara garuda*, a new genus and species of larrine wasps from Indonesia (Larrinae, Crabronidae, Hymenoptera). ZooKeys 177: 49-57. [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.177.2475](#)

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