

# A new scorpion species adds to the remarkable biodiversity of the Ecuadorian Andes

5 June 2013



This image shows the male holotype of the newly discovered large tail scorpion species *Tityus (Atreus) crassicauda*. Credit: Elise-Anne Leguin

A new species of scorpion *Tityus (Atreus) crassicauda* has been discovered from the extraordinarily biodiversity rich region of the Ecuadorian Andes. The intriguing new species is classed as medium sized, but still around the impressive 5 cm in length. It is distinguished by reddish brown overall coloration, broken by peculiar decoration of 3 longitudinal brown stripes, separated by yellow zones. The study was published in the open access journal *Zookeys*.

The new species belongs to the genus *Tityus*, which is part of the scorpion family Buthidae. This genus, with more than 200 known species, is the most speciose one among all the buthid genera. The animals of this group can range from very small (smaller than 3 cm) to very large species of up to 12 cm in length. All scorpions possess

[venom glands](#) and several representatives of this family, including also species of the genus *Tityus* are also known to produce powerful venom that can be deadly to humans.



This image shows a male *Tityus (Atreus) crassicauda* alive in the field. Credit: Eric Ythier

"Although scorpions can be considered as fascinating animals, the interest shown by people in general is only connected with their [negative reputation](#) as a 'killer of man'. Nonetheless, only a limited number of species probably are actually responsible of serious or lethal incidents. Initially, research on scorpions focused primarily on descriptive taxonomy and general anatomy, followed by some medical research on venom biochemistry. More recently, however, research on scorpions expanded greatly to encompass many aspects of [evolutionary biology](#) of these fascinating species.", comments the lead author of the study, Dr. Wilson R. Lourenço, Muséum national d'Histoire

naturelle, Paris.



This image shows the Ecuadorian Andes -- a remarkable biodiversity hotspot and the home of the new scorpion species. Credit: Eric Ythier

Many authors working on the floras and faunas of the Neotropical region seem to agree that the possible 'epicentre' of global diversity occurs namely in the tropical and subtropical Andean region (the upper Amazon, North of Peru, and most of Ecuador and Southern Colombia). Ecuadorian scorpion fauna remains one of the less well studied among those of South America. The Ecuadorian Andes may in fact have many surprises stored for future studies of the [scorpion](#) fauna there.

**More information:** Lourenço WR, Ythier E (2013) The remarkable scorpion diversity in the Ecuadorian Andes and description of a new species of *Tityus* C. L. Koch, 1836 (Scorpiones, Buthidae). *ZooKeys* 307: 1–13, [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.307.5334](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.307.5334)

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