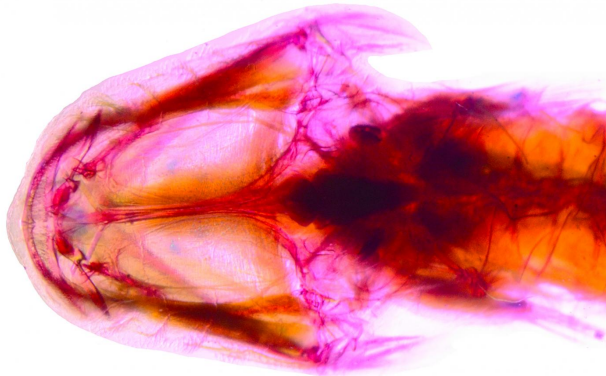


Researchers discover first sleeper goby cavefish in Western Hemisphere

30 June 2016



The Oaxaca Cave Sleeper has not been collected or seen in more than 20 years and lives in a cave system threatened by damming. Credit: Stephen Walsh, USGS

Researchers have described a new genus and species of cavefish from Mexico - the Oaxaca Cave Sleeper. It has not been collected or seen in more than 20 years and lives in a cave system threatened by damming. Less than 0.5 percent of all fish species are cave-adapted and most of them are endangered because their cave habitats are limited and vulnerable to environmental threats.

This [new species](#), *Caecieleotris morrissi*, is a sleeper goby in the family Eleotridae, and is the first cave-adapted member of this group to be found in the Western Hemisphere. All previous cave-adapted members of this family are from the Indian Ocean.

There are only 13 known individuals of this new species, which were all taken during one collecting event. The researchers examined and compared them to other known species and ultimately created a [new genus](#) for the species, because it does not resemble other known sleeper gobies. The Oaxaca Cave Sleeper is morphologically

adapted to the cave environment. It does not have eyes or pigment, but it has a shovel-shaped head and well-developed sensory papillae, which contain its taste buds. Curator of Fishes at the LSU Museum of Natural Science Prosanta Chakrabarty and U.S. Geological Survey Research Fish Biologist Stephen Walsh discovered and described the Oaxaca Cave Sleeper. Their research was published in *Copeia* this month. Chakrabarty presented a TED talk on this research recently.

Individuals of this new species have been kept preserved in [natural history](#) collections for more than 20 years, waiting to be described. Despite being potentially extinct, natural history museums saved this new species from being completely unknown. This new [species](#) calls attention to the importance of natural history museums like the LSU Museum of Natural Science.



The Oaxaca Cave Sleeper has not been collected or seen in more than 20 years and lives in a cave system threatened by damming. Credit: Stephen Walsh, USGS

More information: A New Genus and Species of Blind Sleeper (Teleostei: Eleotridae) from Oaxaca, Mexico: First Obligate Cave Gobiiform in the Western Hemisphere, *Copeia*: pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/70173915

Clues to prehistoric times, found in blind cave fish, TED talk: www.ted.com/talks/prosanta_chakrabarty_discovered_a_new_species_of_blind_cave_fish

Provided by Louisiana State University

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