



WWF for a living planet®

Backgrounder

New Species discovered in Vietnam's Annamite Mountains

Animals

- **Snake** – White-lipped keelback (*Amphiesma leucomystax*): This snake species is a small black snake with white stripe; this is reflected in the name that refers to leucos meaning white and mystax meaning either a moustache or an upper lip, a reference to the white broad stripe extending across the upper lip of this species.

Location: This snake was recorded during surveys in the Green Corridor. However, in comparison to other snake specimens, it was regarded that this new animal occurred in a range of locations in Vietnam from Ha Tinh to Thua Thien Hue province.

- **Butterflies** – at least one new species, and one new genera of butterflies have been discovered. A new species of skipper from the genus *Zela*, has been described.

One new genus, from the subfamily *Satyrinae* is being confirmed by two experts, who are looking for a research grant to look at this and other butterfly specimens found in the Annamite mountains and elsewhere in Vietnam, for the comprehensive collections in the British Museum. The record of a new genus is of particular significance as it shows the higher level of uniqueness in these rich forests. Two other new species were recorded in Vietnam for the first time.

Since 1996 eight new species have been described from Hue province making this one of the most interesting areas because of existing, quite unique, lowland forest, and the high peaks of Bach Ma National Park.

Plants

- **Orchids** – Five new species described, four awaiting description.

Anoectochilus annamenis - A rare creepy shade-loving species with a beautiful multicolored pattern on the leaves, the species name refers to the location of collection in the Annamites mountain chain, also known in Vietnam as the Truong Son Mountains. Flowers whitish, sepals dull brown, densely haired, leafy floriferous stem; leaf blades deep velvety green, olive-green to nearly black with reticulate network of pink nerves

above, uniform dull pink-purple below them; sepals (protect buds, less showy than petals) are olive-brown to dull reddish-brown; lip (center, showy part) is white with light green fringes; flower March through May.

Gastrodia theana – A very rare leafless orchid which has no chlorophyll and lives on decaying matter, similar to many fungal species, the species name is in honor of the discoverer, a young Vietnamese botanist called Pham Van The. Flowers are bell-shaped, hardly open, fleshy, slightly flattened from ventral side; sepals and petals roughly varicose outside (irregular warty dorsal ridge-like keel rising toward plant apex); petals salmon-pink, thin, fleshy, very small, sometimes hardly visible, which are shorter than the sepals; lip is green with salmon-red apex and base; flower March through April; this rare, strictly endemic plant is a typical element of the aboriginal warm-loving lowland flora of central part of Vietnam.

Lecanorchis vietnamica - Also a rare leafless orchid living on dead and decaying matter, it is another species known only from closed primary forest in Hue province, and named after the country of origin and is likely to be only found from this area of Vietnam.. Vertical, rigid, gray-brown, thin rhizome; slender, erect, straight or slightly flexuous, very brittle, deep chestnut-purple to nearly black stem, with nearly distant broad, short bracts (leaf-like parts); thick gray-brown roots at base; flowers in zigzag axis; floral bracts greenish-brown, short and broad; flowers hardly open, with sepals and petals light-brown, olive-brown, yellow-brown to nearly white, with three indistinct veins; lip forming inflated sac-like nectar in a three-lobed apex; flowers from March through May; endemic to low mountain areas of central Vietnam.

Oberonia huensis - Named after the province of origin, it is a beautiful flowering orchid likely to be restricted to lowland forest in Vietnam. Laterally compressed, fleshy, flat, straight or slightly falcate leaves; numerous narrowly-triangular acute to acuminate bracts; flowers in middle part arranged spirally or in close irregular whorls and placed in distant regular whorls toward the apex, each with 7-9 flowers; flowers are bright red to red-brown, widely opening; sepals and petals rounded, sub-similar; three-lobed, long and wide lip; fruit narrowly flat and egg shaped; flowering March through June; name denotes location close to Hue City, central Vietnam.

Saccolabiopsis viridiflora - A species found in the canopy named after its red colored flowers, it is a rare species endemic to the region. This genus has not been recorded in Vietnam prior to this survey. Short stem with 3-6 close leaves in two rows on either side; stem covered by overlapping leaf sheaths, with numerous clustered, twisted roots at basal part; many flowers that are odorless and widely opening; sepals and petals spreading, light green in oblong-elliptic and rounded fashion; lip is broadly trumpet-shaped with three lobes that are white to light greenish with green spot at the center; name refers to predominant flower color; flowering March through April; growing on thin twigs and leather-like perennial leaves in terminal zone of tree and shrub canopies.

- **New orchid species – awaiting description**

There are at least four more orchids that are awaiting description, and will be published by the end of the year.

- **Arum – *Cryptocoryne vietnamica***

Cryptocoryne vietnamica is a new species of arum plant (Family Araceae) which was collected in the Green Corridor area. Arum plants have a flower which is enclosed by a sheath-like hood. This one has beautiful yellow flowers.

- **Aspidistra plants**

Two new *Aspidistra* plants from the Ruscaceae family, have been discovered during the WWF surveys. The large dark blue *Aspidistra* has remarkable flowers, which are almost black, has been named *Aspidistra nicolai* in honour to the late Nicolai Arnautov, who was the senior gardener in St. Petersburg Botanical Gardens and for many years responsible for the cultivation of the *Aspidistra* collection there. The other *Aspidistra* has not yet been named but has delicate yellow flowers.

In addition to these, a paper published in 2005 described an additional six new species of *Aspidistra* plants from the province, these were actually collected by an expedition in 1996 and reared in the Munich botanical gardens until they could be described by an expert. This again shows the need for scientific and taxonomic research into biodiversity rich areas in the Annamite mountains, such as the Green Corridor area in Hue province, in order to discover the amazing, hidden, wealth of new species, including potential new medicinal, economically important, species.

Aspidistra atroviolacea H.-J. Tillich,
Aspidistra foliosa H.-J. Tillich,
Aspidistra geastrum H.-J. Tillich,
Aspidistra lateralis H.-J. Tillich.
Aspidistra petiolata H.-J. Tillich

Notes:

- The WWF Green Corridor project conducted surveys of plants and animals, including birds, fish, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians and mammals - in particular of gibbons and red-shanked doucs. These reports are published and shown on www.huegreencorridor.org
- The new species were discovered between 2005 and 2006.
- Details about the species and other biodiversity discoveries can be found at www.huegreencorridor.org