

# A new spiny frog species discovered in Guangdong, China

FAYETTEVILLE, GA, UNITED STATES, April 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A newly described species of [spiny frog](#), *Quasipaa yunkaiensis*, has been identified from the Yunkaishan National Nature Reserve in Guangdong, China. Distinctive for its large body size, smooth dorsal skin, and absence of typical spiny tubercles, this frog stands apart from other members of the *Quasipaa* genus.

The genus *Quasipaa* is renowned for its spiny characteristics, including keratinized spines on male frogs during breeding. However, ongoing research has revealed cryptic species within this genus, prompting reevaluations of its taxonomy. The latest discovery, *Quasipaa yunkaiensis*, was identified during a herpetological survey in the

Yunkaishan National Nature Reserve, Guangdong, China. Previous studies had hinted at the existence of undiscovered species in the region, but the new species is the first to be formally recognized through both morphological examination and DNA sequencing. This research highlights the diversity within *Quasipaa* and calls for comprehensive genetic studies to resolve its complex taxonomy.

*Quasipaa yunkaiensis*, a new species of spiny frog, was recently described in a study published (DOI: 10.3724/ahr.2095-0357.2025.0031) in [Asian Herpetological Research](#). Discovered in the Yunkaishan National Nature Reserve, Guangdong, China, the frog was identified through a combination of genetic and morphological data. This discovery adds to the understanding of the *Quasipaa* genus, which is known for its distinct keratinized spines and diverse species. The study utilized both mitochondrial and nuclear DNA sequencing to confirm the species' unique status. The research was conducted by scientists from Sun Yat-sen University, the Chengdu Institute of



The female paratype of *Quasipaa yunkaiensis* sp. nov. (SYS a008350) in life: (A) dorsolateral view, (B) dorsal view, (C) ventral view.

Biology, and the Guangdong Yunkaishan National Nature Reserve.

The newly discovered *Quasipaa yunkaiensis* is distinguished by its large body size, with adult males measuring up to 113.8 mm in snout-vent length (SVL), which sets it apart from smaller relatives like *Q. exilispinosa*. Unlike other *Quasipaa* species, *Q. yunkaiensis* lacks spiny tubercles on its ventrolateral body surfaces, a key diagnostic feature of many spiny frogs. Additionally, it has smooth dorsal skin and well-developed nuptial spines only on specific areas of the forelimbs during breeding. Phylogenetic analyses using both mitochondrial (Cyt b) and nuclear (Rag2, Tyr, Rhod) gene sequences have confirmed its position as a unique species, although its exact relationship within the genus remains unclear due to mito-nuclear discordance. This discovery is significant as it expands the known biodiversity within the *Quasipaa* genus, which has seen increased recognition of cryptic species through molecular techniques. The study involved phylogenetic analyses conducted at Sun Yat-sen University, with contributions from the Chengdu Institute of Biology and the Guangdong Yunkaishan National Nature Reserve. These genetic tools not only support the uniqueness of *Q. yunkaiensis*, but also point to the complexity of species boundaries within *Quasipaa*, calling for further studies involving genome-wide data to resolve these ambiguities.

"The discovery of *Quasipaa yunkaiensis* exemplifies the rich, yet underexplored biodiversity within the *Quasipaa* genus," said Dr. Yingyong Wang, one of the study's co-authors from Sun Yat-sen University. "This species not only contributes to the growing list of known spiny frogs but also underscores the complexity of *Quasipaa* taxonomy, which remains challenging due to mito-nuclear discordance. Our study highlights the importance of integrative approaches that combine genetic and morphological data to resolve these taxonomic issues."

This discovery of *Quasipaa yunkaiensis* provides a clearer understanding of the biodiversity in the Yunkaishan National Nature Reserve and underscores the importance of preserving such ecologically sensitive areas. Further research, particularly through genome-wide data, could offer deeper insights into species relationships and contribute to the conservation of the *Quasipaa* genus. The study also opens new avenues for studying the evolutionary dynamics and ecological adaptations of spiny frogs, particularly in response to habitat fragmentation and climate change. Enhanced conservation efforts are crucial to protect these unique species in their natural habitats. Future studies involving more genetic markers will be pivotal for uncovering more cryptic species within this genus.

## References

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