

Five New Species of Treefrogs Discovered in Papua New Guinea

Apr 11, 2023 by News Staff

Biologists have described five new species of small treefrogs from hill and lower montane forests in the high rainfall belt that straddles the southern versant of Papua New Guinea's Central Cordillera.



The red-bellied treefrog (*Litoria haematogaster*). Image credit: Steve Richards.

The five new species are named *Litoria daraiensis*, *Litoria gracilis*, *Litoria haematogaster*, *Litoria lisae* and *Litoria naispela*.

They all come from very wet mountain forest areas along the central mountain range of New Guinea and belong to a subfamily of frogs called [Pelodryadinae](#).

Also known as Australian treefrogs, members of this subfamily are [found](#) in the region of Australia and New Guinea, and have also been introduced to New Caledonia, Guam, New Zealand, and Vanuatu.

“New Guinea has the most diverse insular frog fauna in the world, and rates of species discovery and description have increased rapidly in the last two decades,” said Queensland Museum scientist Dr. Paul Oliver and colleagues.

“Pelodryadid treefrogs are the second most diverse family of frogs on the island but their taxonomy, relationships, and especially ecology remain poorly documented.”

“These small tree frogs lay their eggs out of the water, typically on leaves, quite different to your typical treefrog, which lay their eggs directly into water,” they added.

“Tadpoles of one new species, *Litoria naispela*, actually live in water collected in tree hollows, a behavior not previously documented in frogs from New Guinea.”

“*Litoria naispela* also has juveniles that have color and patterning that closely resembles bird droppings — we think this is a form of defensive masquerade.”

“There is still much to learn about biodiversity and museums play an important role in describing and conserving our natural world heritage,” said Queensland Museum Network CEO Dr. Jim Thompson.

“Biodiversity is declining worldwide, but New Guinea remains a world hotspot for many groups, including frogs.”

“By studying the diversity of these regions, our taxonomists can help promote awareness of these riches, and support effort to conserve it.”

The discovery is reported in a [paper](#) in the journal *Zootaxa*.