

11 new species found in central Vietnam

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by Leonid Averyanov, AP

In this photo released by WWF, shown is an orchid, one of 11 new species of plants and animals that scientists have discovered in Vietnam, including a snake, two butterflies and five orchid varieties. The Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) said Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2007, the new species were found in a remote region known as the "Green Corridor" in Thua Thien Hue, a province in central Vietnam. (AP Photo/WWF, Leonid Averyanov, HO)

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Scientists have discovered 11 new species of plants and animals in Vietnam, including a snake, two butterflies and five orchid varieties, the World Wide Fund for Nature said Wednesday.

The new species were found in a remote region known as the "Green Corridor" in Thua Thien Hue province in central Vietnam, the international conservation group said.

"You only discover so many new species in very special places, and the Green Corridor is one of them," Chris Dickinson, the WWF's chief technical adviser in the region, said in a statement.

The new snake species, the white-lipped keelback, generally lives near streams and eats frogs and other small animals, the WWF said. It has a yellow-white stripe along its head, red dots on its body and can grow to more than 30 inches long.

The new butterfly species are among eight discovered in Thua Thien Hue since 1996. One is a "skipper," a butterfly that flies in a quick, darting motion.

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Three of the new orchid species are leafless, which is unusual for orchids, the WWF said. The other new plant species include one in the aspidistra family, which produces a black flower and can subsist in low light, and an arum, which produces yellow flowers surrounded by funnel-shaped leaves.

"It's great news for Vietnam," said Bernard O'Callaghan, Vietnam program coordinator for the World Conservation Union. "The jungles and mountains of Vietnam are fascinating places and they continue to surprise scientists."

The WWF said all the new species are exclusive to tropical forests in Vietnam's Annamites mountain range. It said all the species in the area are under threat from illegal logging, hunting and development.

(http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-09-26-957747886_x.htm)