

Spider Surprise

Is it possible for someone to discover a new species? You might think that only happened a long time ago, in a remote jungle or deep under the sea. But in 2024 scientists found a brand new species living right in Arizona. What was this new creature? A tarantula!

The spider was named *Aphonopelma jacobii* in honor of Michael Jacobi, the scientist who discovered it. He found it in the Chiricahua Mountains, where it lives through very cold winters at a high elevation.

Aphonopelma jacobii is small for a tarantula. It is black and grey with bright red hairs on its abdomen. It is the 30th species of tarantula to be found in the United States.

Discovering a new species was a surprise. Dr. Chris Hamilton, who wrote about the spider finding, explained it this way: “With Earth in the midst of a human-mediated extinction crisis, it is astonishing how little we know about our planet’s biodiversity, even for conspicuous and charismatic groups such as tarantulas.”

Unfortunately, it’s not all good news for this newest tarantula type. The forests where the tarantulas live are disappearing due to climate change. Temperatures are increasing and precipitation is decreasing. The mountains are becoming hot and dry, and creatures adapted to the cooler, more humid forests are suffering.

The spiders are also threatened by human development, when people build homes and businesses close to their habitat. The exotic pet trade poses a risk as well. *Aphonopelma jacobii* are rare, beautifully colored, and good-tempered, so people may want to collect them.

Despite these threats, scientists hope that the tarantula species will find a way to survive. A brand-new spider deserves to be around for a long, long time.

Where was the spider found?

- A. Jungle
- B. Mountains
- C. Ocean
- D. Desert

What color hair does the spider have on its abdomen?

- A. Red
- B. Grey
- C. Brown
- D. Black

Who does Dr. Chris Hamilton say created an extinction crisis?

- A. Michael Jacobi
- B. Tarantulas
- C. Humans
- D. People in Arizona

Which is NOT mentioned as a reason that the tarantulas are threatened?

- A. Exotic pet trade
- B. Climate change
- C. Human development
- D. Lack of food

Where was the spider found?

- A. Jungle
- B. Mountains**
- C. Ocean
- D. Desert

What color hair does the spider have on its abdomen?

- A. Red**
- B. Grey
- C. Brown
- D. Black

Who does Dr. Chris Hamilton say created an extinction crisis?

- A. Michael Jacobi
- B. Tarantulas
- C. Humans**
- D. People in Arizona

Which is NOT mentioned as a reason that the tarantulas are threatened?

- A. Exotic pet trade
- B. Climate change
- C. Human development
- D. Lack of food**