

The Klingon newt is named after an alien species from the *Star Trek* series (right).



Spotting New Species

Researchers recently discovered more than 160 species in Southeast Asia.

Believe it or not, scientists think there could be thousands of species on Earth that have not yet been discovered. Each year, researchers from around the world travel to Southeast Asia to search for new types of animals or plants. According to a recent report from the World Wildlife Fund, 2015 was a very successful year. Explorers discovered more than 160 new species in the region.

The new species were found in an area called the Greater Mekong region. It's known for its **biodiversity**. Scientists have discovered more than 2,000 new plant and animal species there since 1997.

Word to Know

biodiversity (bye-oh-dih-VUR-sih-tee) *noun*. the variety of plants and animals that live in a region



One of these scientists is Olivier Pauwels, who is from Belgium. He and his team explored the jungles of Phuket (poo-KET) Island in Thailand in 2015. They discovered a new dragon-like lizard, nicknamed the Phuket dragon. (Some of the other animals discovered in the region in 2015 are shown on this page.)

Yet it's not all good news for the region. An increase in construction projects has destroyed the habitats of many species. Poachers also pose a threat to wildlife there.

Pauwels says it's important to search for new species. They can't be protected if we don't know they exist.

"There will be many more cool species for kids to discover, as long as we protect the forests and waters that they call home," he says.



Phuket dragon



Woolly-headed bat



Rainbow-headed snake

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