

New species of fly named after Singanallur Tank

The insect has been named Asphondylia singanallurensis

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A new species of fly, which was recently identified by researchers at the Singanallur Tank, has been named after the water body.

The insect was named *Asphondylia singanallurensis* in the research paper published in the Zootaxa journal in March 2020. The authors said in the paper that they collected the leaves of jujube shrub (*Ziziphus jujuba*) growing near the Singanallur Tank during their field visits between 2015 and 2018, that contained leaf galls (abnormal growth on leaves) on the surfaces.

The leaves were dissected in a laboratory and the causative agent for the galls was identified to be a fly from the Cecidomyiidae family, which are commonly known as gall midges.

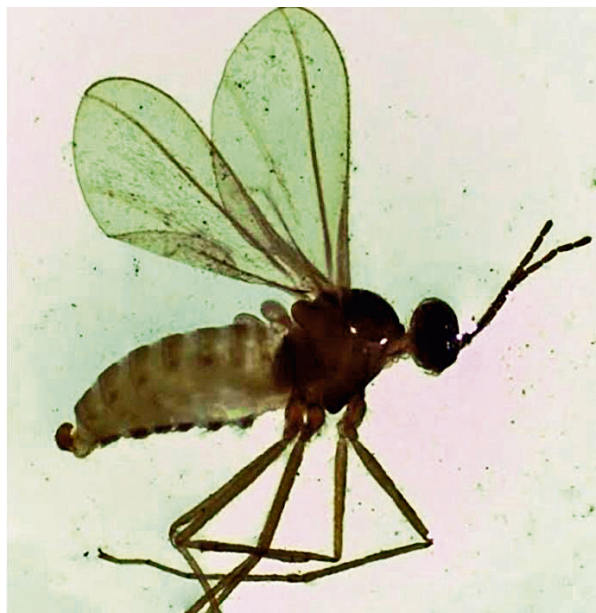
Upon further research which also involved DNA sequencing, the insect was confirmed to be a unique species, according to the

research paper.

The paper was authored by Duraikannu Vasanthakumar and Radheshyam M. Sharma from Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) - Western Regional Centre (WRC) in Pune, Senthilkumar Palanisamy from the Department of Genetic Engineering, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur and Vinny R. Peter from Centre for Urban Biodiversity Conservation and Education (CUBE).

Mr. Vasanthakumar, Senior Zoological Assistant at ZSI - WRC Pune, said there were about 396 different species of flies under the Cecidomyiidae family prior to the discovery of this new species.

“This particular species has only been reported from Singanallur Tank so far,” he told *The Hindu* on Sunday. Despite the abundance of the jujube shrub (*ilanthai* in Tamil) in the Western Ghats region, this particular fly has not been reported anywhere so far.



Asphondylia singanallurensis

Further research regarding the ecological parameters and the life cycle of *Asphondylia singanallurensis* are being carried out, he noted.

According to Ms. Peter, four more insects have been recently found at Singanallur Tank by

researchers and efforts to ascertain whether these are unique species are under way.

In 2017, the Coimbatore Corporation declared the 288-acre Singanallur Tank as a biodiversity conservation zone owing to its rich biodiversity.