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Lehr Names New Snake Species for Harrison Ford

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Harrison Ford's iconic character Indiana Jones may have a fear of snakes, but a newly discovered species of snake has been dedicated to the actor by an Illinois Wesleyan University biologist.

Robert Harrington Professor of Biology Edgar Lehr and a team of Peruvian biologists including Juan C. Cusi, Maura Fernandez and Ricardo Vera discovered the new snake species during an expedition to Peru in May 2022. The black-bellied reptile with copper eyes was found sunbathing in a swamp in Otishi National Park, more than 10,000 feet above sea level.

"The snake was a big surprise as we did not expect to find a snake in a high elevational swamp," said Lehr. He added that it is rare for new species of snakes to be discovered, with the closest related snake named in 1896.

"Every new species is exciting, and it's important to name it because only the organisms that are known can be protected. We hope that the publication of the new snake species will create awareness of the importance of biodiversity research and the importance of protecting nature," he said.

Officially named Harrison Ford's Slender Snake (or *Tachymenoides harrisonfordi*), this snake joins an ant and spider that also bear Ford's name. After Lehr's team agreed upon the name, the dedication was accepted by Harrison Ford himself.

[In an interview with The Hollywood Reporter](#), Ford joked about the ironic name while advocating for the protection of wildlife.



IWU Robert Harrington Professor of Biology Edgar Lehr and a team of biologists discovered a new species of snake during a May 2022 expedition to Peru. He named the reptile after Indiana Jones actor and conservationist Harrison Ford.



IWU Robert Harrington Professor of Biology Edgar Lehr has contributed to the discovery of more than 100 species of reptiles and amphibians in his career.

"These scientists keep naming critters after me, but it's always the ones that terrify children. I don't understand. I spend my free time cross-stitching. I sing lullabies to my basil plants, so they won't fear the night," said Ford to The Hollywood Reporter. "In all seriousness, this discovery is humbling. It's a reminder that there's still so much to learn about our wild world — and that humans are one small part of an impossibly vast biosphere. On this planet, all fates are intertwined, and right now, one million species are teetering on the edge of oblivion. We have an existential mandate to mend our broken relationship with nature and protect the places that sustain life."

The snake's name was announced in a [publication of the journal "Salamandra" on Aug. 15](#).

"I was surely influenced by the commercial of the new Indiana Jones movie and the fear of snakes of Indiana Jones. Knowing that Mr. Harrison Ford is an active conservationist who actually likes snakes, his voice for nature and his service as vice chair of Conservation International led to the idea of dedicating this species to him," said Lehr.

Ford has served on the board of Conservation International for more than 10 years and has donated 389 acres of his property in Jackson, Wyoming, for a conservation easement to the Jackson Hole Land Trust.

Since Lehr began research in Peru in 1997, he has contributed to the discovery of [more than 100 species of reptiles and amphibians](#). Only three of those discoveries have been snakes.

By Julia Perez