



Peru's *Dendrobates captivus* (above) measures slightly more than half an inch long at maturity, considerably smaller than other poison frogs.



Peru's Tiny Gems No scientist had seen a live *Dendrobates captivus* since 1929. Museum specimens of the poison frog, says herpetologist Evan Twomey, appeared “gray with lighter gray spots.” So when Twomey, Jason Brown, and Justin Yeager—grad students of National Geographic grantee Kyle Summers—ventured into the Peruvian jungle to track down the thumbnail-size amphibian, they weren't sure what they'd find. The frog's remote habitat had “prevented any sane biologists from rediscovering it,” Brown says. Near a mountain stream, one of their guides spied the elusive amphibian and told Yeager, whose yells brought Twomey and Brown running from a quarter mile away. Within hours, they'd collected a dozen of the brightly spotted frogs. *D. captivus* captured, they photographed and measured them, observed their behavior, recorded their calls—and let them hop away. —Margaret G. Zackowitz

Critter News

Brown fat, though not poetically named, is a vital tissue that helps all newborn mammals keep warm—all except for pigs, it seems. Piglets, which scientists believe lack brown fat, regulate their body temperature by shivering. Researchers at Sweden's

Uppsala University have demonstrated that some 20 million years ago, a genetic mutation in the ancestor of today's pigs and wild boars shut down the protein found in brown fat that's crucial for converting the fat into body heat. Most likely, the scientists

speculate, this early pig species existed solely in warm climates for hundreds of generations. Today, pigs are the only hoofed animals known to build nests before giving birth, suggesting that pigs adapted to the mutation as they expanded their geographic range.