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## ECU PROFESSOR PAYS HOMAGE TO NEIL YOUNG THROUGH NAMING OF SPIDER

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Greenville – Canadian rock singer-songwriter Neil Young is well known for his distinctive guitar work and tenor voice. Acoustic rock and hard rock are what most people would think of when refereeing to the well-known artist. However, Young is also an outspoken advocate for environmental issues, and one East Carolina University professor has paid tribute to Young in a way that will endure for perpetuity.

Dr. Jason E. Bond, associate professor of biology in Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, recently discovered and named a new species of arachnid after the famous singer.

While conducting research within the widely distributed trapdoor spider genus, in late 2007, Bond discovered a new species of trapdoor spider. Bond located the species in Jefferson Co., Ala., and has named it *Myrmekiaphila neilyoungi*.

In direct response to his discovery, and in collaboration with Norman I. Platnick, curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, Bond and Platnick published “A Taxonomic Review of the Trapdoor Spider Genus *Myrmekiaphila* (Araneae, Mygalomorphae, Cyrtacheniidae),” in December 2007.

Bond’s choice to name *Myrmekiaphila neilyoungi* after an artistic, cultural icon is distinctive and creates a lasting memory.

“There are rather strict rules about how you name new species, and these rules are outlined in the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature,” Bond says. “As long as these rules are followed you can give a new species just about any name you please. With regards to Neil Young, I really enjoy his music and have had a great appreciation of him as an activist for peace and justice.”

Bond, who received his doctoral degree in evolutionary systematics and genetics from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, classifies himself as a spider systematist and taxonomist.

“Systematics is a subdiscipline of evolutionary biology that is largely interested in the evolutionary relationships of organisms and how that relates to our system of classification. As a taxonomist, I describe and classify new species. In my case – spiders.”

According to Bond, spiders in the trapdoor genus are distinguished on the basis of differences in genitalia. This is considered a morphological species concept. That is to say, if a spider in the genus looks different from others based on its genitalia, it is considered to be a separate, identifiable species.

With supporting DNA data examined in his lab, Bond has verified the fact that *Myrmekiaphila neilyoungi* is an identifiable separate species of spider within the trapdoor genus. And with his discovery and subsequent naming, *Myrmekiaphila neilyoungi* will honor the singer for the indefinite future.

While at ECU, Bond has taught general biology, biology of terrestrial arthropods, phylogenetic theory, and advanced topics in evolutionary biology and phylogenetic theory. Prior to coming to ECU in 2002, he served as a

research associate in the department of zoology, division of insects, at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

For additional information about his research, please contact Bond at 252-328-2910 or [bondja@ecu.edu](mailto:bondja@ecu.edu).

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