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New Ribbon Worm Named After UCSB Scientist

In the world of biology, having a new species named after you is considered one of the greatest honors for a scientist. Just ask Armand Kuris, professor of zoology in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology at UC Santa Barbara.

A new species of worm -- the *Carcinonemertes kurisi*-- has been named for the UCSB professor. "When a species is named after you, that is forever," said Kuris. "It's quite an honor. One hundred years from now, when we're all gone, people will wonder who that Kuris guy was. I also like that it is a pretty worm on a nice crab."

The new species is a tiny, parasitic worm, from two millimeters to five millimeters long. It lives among the eggs of the purple globe crab that makes its home in the shallow waters of sandy beaches from Northern California to Baja California.

Patricia S. Sadeghian, a former student of Kuris, named the species after him in an article in the October 2010 issue of the *Journal of Natural History*.

"I first noticed it in the early 1980's," said Kuris. "I knew it was a ribbon worm and that it was an egg predator. I knew immediately from the circumstances that it was a new species."

Kuris explained that the crab holds eggs in its abdomen, locking them into a place like a little purse. "The eggs are not easy to see, and no one had ever looked," said Kuris. "But it is the kind of thing that I look for."

For years, only Kuris and his student Sadeghian knew about the worm. Sadeghian began her work on the worms in the year 2000, and completed her Master's thesis on them in 2003.

Sadeghian explained that she has always been very interested in taxonomy and describing new species. "The natural history of these worms also intrigued me because their life cycles are dependent on their host," she said. "The species is named in honor of Armand for his tremendous support and enthusiasm towards the study of nemertean egg predators."

Sadeghian is an associate curator with the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History where she has worked since 1996. Kuris is a prominent parasite ecologist who conducts research worldwide. He joined the faculty at UCSB in 1975.

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