




## Original Article

# Demographic Inference Provides Insights into the Extirpation and Ecological Dominance of Eusocial Snapping Shrimps

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## Abstract

Although eusocial animals often achieve ecological dominance in the ecosystems where they occur, many populations are unstable, resulting in local extinction. Both patterns may be linked to the characteristic demography of eusocial species—high reproductive skew and reproductive division of labor support stable effective population sizes that make eusocial groups more competitive in some species, but also lower effective population sizes that increase susceptibility to population collapse in others. Here, we examine the relationship between demography and social organization in *Synalpheus* snapping shrimps, a group in which eusociality has evolved recently and repeatedly. We show using coalescent demographic modeling that eusocial species have had lower but more stable effective population sizes across 100,000 generations. Our results are consistent with the idea that stable population sizes may enable competitive dominance in eusocial shrimps, but they also suggest that recent population declines are likely caused by eusocial shrimps' heightened sensitivity to environmental changes, perhaps as a result of their low effective population sizes and localized dispersal. Thus, although the unique life histories and demography of eusocial shrimps have likely contributed to their persistence and ecological dominance over evolutionary time scales, these social traits may also make them vulnerable to contemporary environmental change.

**Key words:** crustacean, ddRAD, effective population size, eusociality, historical demography, MOMI2

Eusocial species are often the most abundant members of their community (Wilson 1971, 2012). Their ability to out-compete conspecifics, expand their niches, and assert their ecological dominance over non-eusocial species may be due in part to their ability to cooperate and form complex societies, an idea referred to as the “social conquest hypothesis” (Wilson 2012; Sun *et al.* 2014). Wilson (1987) proposed several population-level qualities of life history and demography that may contribute to the ecological success of eusocial ants and their persistence over evolutionary time. Since all of the more than 13,000 species of ants are eusocial (Holldobler and Wilson 1990), testing these ideas in a comparative framework has been challenging. Moreover, whether these demographic characteristics are shared with other eusocial organisms that exhibit various forms of social complexity and ecological success remains unclear. Although a few comparative studies

have examined whether highly social populations and species have been able to expand their ecological niches (Brooks *et al.* 2017; Majer *et al.* 2018) and geographic ranges (Lin *et al.* 2019) relative to nonsocial ones, the specific life history and demographic characteristics that enable eusocial species to sustain their population densities over long periods of time remain largely unexplored.

Social conquest and ecological dominance may be facilitated or hindered by several life history characteristics specific to eusocial species (Wilson 1987). First, eusocial species exhibit a reproductive division of labor in which only a small subset of the population breeds while the rest of the population are workers that do not breed, but instead cooperatively defend and support the colony. Because of this reproductive division of labor within eusocial societies, the number of reproductives in a population may remain relatively stable

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regardless of any fluctuation in the worker population size, resulting both in high reproductive skew and a more stable  $N_e$  over time (Wilson 1963; Crozier 1979). Second, the ability to cooperatively defend and maintain a stable domicile (Wilson 1987) may further buffer the breeding individuals—and indeed the entire group—from environmental fluctuation, also resulting in more stable  $N_e$  over time.

While eusocial species may exhibit more stable populations than non-eusocial species, their high reproductive skew may also lead to a reduction in effective population size ( $N_e$ ) (Romiguier *et al.* 2014; Hasselmann *et al.* 2015) because the breeding population (reflected by  $N_b$ ) is constrained to mainly a single or few reproductive individuals (i.e. queens). Reduced effective population size can lower the efficacy of purifying selection, reduce heterozygosity and allows for the accumulation of deleterious alleles due to drift, and altogether increase the risk of extinction (Kimura 1983; Lynch *et al.* 1995). In addition, inbreeding within social species can further reduce  $N_e$  (Charlesworth *et al.* 2003; Charlesworth 2009) and render some lineages unstable, resulting in local extinction and even the extinction of some lineages (i.e. the evolutionary dead-end hypothesis) (Bilde *et al.* 2005; Bilde and Lubin 2011; Settepani *et al.* 2017). For example, lineages of social spiders have undergone repeated origins and extinctions, likely due to biased sex ratios and a lack of premating dispersal, which lead to inbreeding, reduced  $N_e$ , and the depletion of genome-wide genetic diversity (Agnarsson *et al.* 2006; Aviles and Purcell 2012; Settepani *et al.* 2017). Indeed, inbreeding that generates low genetic diversity and the potential for colony collapse (Keller and Waller 2002)—often in the face of environmental fluctuation—is surprisingly common in other primitively eusocial species like wood-dwelling termites, thrips, spider mites, and even naked mole rats (reviewed in Aviles and Purcell 2012). Thus, conflicting empirical evidence from insects leads to a paradox in the role that demography plays in social evolution: reproductive division of labor and protection of female reproductives by workers in eusocial species lead to low but stable  $N_e$ , whereas reduced  $N_e$  in eusocial species may also lead to reduced genome-wide genetic diversity and long-term population instability.

Testing the relative importance of these contrasting demographic influences on population stability in eusocial species can be done using coalescent-based methods that infer historical demography. Historical expansions or contractions in population size, as well as population structure and gene flow, leave a measurable signal on the genetic diversity of contemporary populations, which allows for the quantification of the demographic process based on the site frequency spectrum (SFS), a measure of allele frequencies across the genome that can be generated from large-scale sequencing. The effects of demographic processes on the SFS are well studied and have been tested across a range of taxa (Braverman *et al.* 1995; Bustamante *et al.* 2001; Nielsen 2005). Demographic inference is commonly made using a maximum composite likelihood framework that fits the observed SFS to the expected SFS computed under simulated demographic histories (Bustamante *et al.* 2001; Gutenkunst *et al.* 2009; Lukic and Hey 2012; Kamm *et al.* 2017, 2019; Xue and Hickerson 2017). Recent studies have also begun modeling comparative demographic processes across multiple taxa simultaneously (Xue and Hickerson 2017; Barratt *et al.* 2018; Potter *et al.* 2018; Penalba *et al.* 2019; Rincon-Sandoval *et al.* 2019), including eusocial

bees (Lozier 2014) and social spiders (Settepani *et al.* 2017). These and other studies examine relative patterns of  $N_e$  change through time, rather than simply comparing absolute estimates at specific time points (Burgarella *et al.* 2015; Crawford *et al.* 2017; Lynch *et al.* 2017; Baeza *et al.* 2019; Fages *et al.* 2019; Hotaling *et al.* 2019; Titus *et al.* 2019; Vendrami *et al.* 2019; Bertola *et al.* 2020; Bolívar-Leguizamón *et al.* 2020), an approach that would enable us to test alternative demographic scenarios in eusocial lineages in a phylogenetically informed context. Moreover, the broad use of coalescent-based methods has shown their robustness as a population genetic tool and can accurately select models and estimate parameters using as few as 3 individuals and 10,000 to 50,000 single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) loci (Robinson *et al.* 2014; Nunziata and Weisrock 2018). Therefore, it is now feasible to use a multitaxa comparative demographic framework to test long-standing hypotheses underlying how population dynamics influence the ecological consequences of eusociality.

Here, we use a group of socially diverse, sponge-dwelling snapping shrimps in the genus *Synalpheus* to explore the demographic consequences of eusociality and to address whether historical  $N_e$  supports a model of demographic stability or instability in eusocial species. *Synalpheus* shrimps in the West Atlantic *gambarelloides* group represent a relatively young lineage that radiated between approximately 5 and 7 Mya (Morrison *et al.* 2004), yet eusociality has evolved independently at least 4 times within this group from pair-forming ancestors (Hultgren *et al.* 2017). Species in this clade exhibit a variety of forms of social organization, ranging from pair-living, to communal breeding (multiple, unrelated mating pairs in the same sponge with mostly equal or slightly male-biased adult sex ratios), to eusociality (1 or a few queens and a larger number of related, non-reproductive workers of both sexes) (Chak *et al.* 2015a, 2015b; Chak and Duffy 2017; Hultgren *et al.* 2017). Eusocial shrimps exhibit life history traits and behaviors consistent with the classical definition of eusociality (Michener 1969; Wilson 1971), including overlapping generations, reproductive division of labor, and cooperative care of young (Duffy 1996; Duffy *et al.* 2002). In addition, eusociality in snapping shrimps likely represents an early stage of eusocial evolution because workers are not sterile (Chak *et al.* 2015a, 2015b). Unlike haplodiploid Hymenoptera, *Synalpheus* shrimps are diploid, similar to termites and mole rats (Duffy 1993, 1996), and eusocial species have extremely large and repetitive genomes likely the result of their demographic histories (Chak *et al.* 2020, 2021). All eusocial *Synalpheus* species have crawling larvae that remain in the natal sponge, in contrast to all but 1 non-eusocial species that have swimming larvae that can disperse from the natal sponge in the water column (Dobkin 1965, 1967; Duffy and Macdonald 2010; Hultgren *et al.* 2021). Despite strong natal philopatry, there is no genetic evidence of inbreeding in *Synalpheus* (Duffy 2003) and relatedness among individuals in eusocial colonies is high but variable (Rubenstein and Duffy, unpubl. data). Although little is known about the mating biology of *Synalpheus* (Hultgren *et al.* 2017), eusocial shrimp appear to avoid inbreeding because of field observation of premating dispersal to nearby vacant sponges (Tóth and Bauer 2007) and their ability to distinguish nestmates from non-nestmates (Duffy 1996; Duffy *et al.* 2002).

There are reports of both ecological dominance and demographic instability in eusocial *Synalpheus* species. The best

available data that are consistent with the ecological dominance of eusocial species over non-eusocial species comes from a field collection of rubble-associated sponges between 1990 and 2004 in Carrie Bow Cay, Belize (11 collecting trips and 139 field days across 14 years) (Macdonald *et al.* 2006). This longitudinal dataset looked at sponge occupancy and the relative abundance of 20 *Synalpheus* species (with >2,000 individuals), the full diversity of *Synalpheus* shrimps on this reef. The 4 eusocial shrimp species in Belize initially contributed to >65% of the quantitative samples, and eusocial species were 17 times as abundant as non-eusocial species (Macdonald *et al.* 2006). Phylogenetically controlled comparative analyses showed that eusocial shrimp species in Belize showed several characteristics of ecological dominance over non-eusocial species in the sampled host sponges. Eusocial species 1) had a higher average abundance in sponges, 2) occupied a larger fraction of individual sponges, and 3) had a wider host range of sponge species (Duffy and Macdonald 2010), even after controlling for the effect of body size. Thus, for close to 2 decades, eusocial *Synalpheus* dominated non-eusocial species among rubble-associated sponges in the vicinity of Carrie Bow Cay, Belize.

Despite their ecological success, however, 3 of the 4 eusocial species at Carrie Bow Cay had become locally extinct by 2012 (Duffy *et al.* 2013). In addition, declines have been seen in 2 eusocial species in Jamaica, with an increase in the number of queenless colonies (Duffy *et al.* 2013), and 1 eusocial species in Panama (Hultgren *et al.* 2017). In these same reefs, pair-living and communal breeding *Synalpheus* species appear to at least be maintaining healthy populations, if not increasing in abundance (Duffy *et al.* 2013). Therefore, despite evidence of sustained ecological success, eusocial *Synalpheus* shrimps have seen recent population declines over much of their range at the same time non-eusocial *Synalpheus* species have remained stable or increased in abundance. These recent population declines could be a snapshot of cycles of extinction–recolonization events that reflect the demographic instability of eusocial species, as has been the case in spiders (Agnarsson *et al.* 2006; Aviles and Purcell 2012; Settepani *et al.* 2017). Alternatively, these declines could also be due to recent environmental changes across the Caribbean (Goldenberg *et al.* 2001; Gledhill *et al.* 2008; Klotzbach 2011; Chollett *et al.* 2012; Palanisamy *et al.* 2012; Rioja-Nieto and Álvarez-Filip 2019), including declines in sponge communities (Smith *et al.* 2016). These environmental changes may impact eusocial species more strongly than non-eusocial species because eusocial species have limited dispersal abilities and may be unable to recolonize extirpated populations. Our historical collection of a small number of eusocial and non-eusocial colonies from these localities provides the only opportunity to use genetic data to infer the historical demographics in some of these now locally extinct species.

To explore the relationship between demography and eusociality, we generated genome-wide SNP data using double digest restriction-site-associated DNA sequencing (ddRADseq) and performed demographic inference to compare long-term demographic patterns in 4 eusocial species from each of the 4 independently evolved eusocial lineages and 8 non-eusocial congeners (including 5 communal breeding and 3 pair-forming species). Using inferred historical  $N_e$ , we then calculated average  $N_e$  over multiple time points, assuming the same mutation and recombination rates across species

(Schraiber and Akey 2015), and 3 population stability metrics (see Material and methods). Ultimately, linking demography to social evolution through population genetic approaches (Rubenstein *et al.* 2019) not only has the potential to uncover the demographic factors that may have enabled some eusocial species to come to dominate the ecosystems in which they occur, but it may also help explain why some eusocial species or lineages go extinct over both evolutionary and ecological time scales. Here, we show that eusocial species had lower but more stable effective population sizes across 100,000 generations than non-eusocial species. These results suggest that stable population sizes may enable competitive dominance in eusocial shrimps and likely contribute to their persistence and ecological success over evolutionary time scales, but their low effective population sizes and localized dispersal may also make eusocial species vulnerable to contemporary environmental change.

## Materials and methods

### Sampling and study species

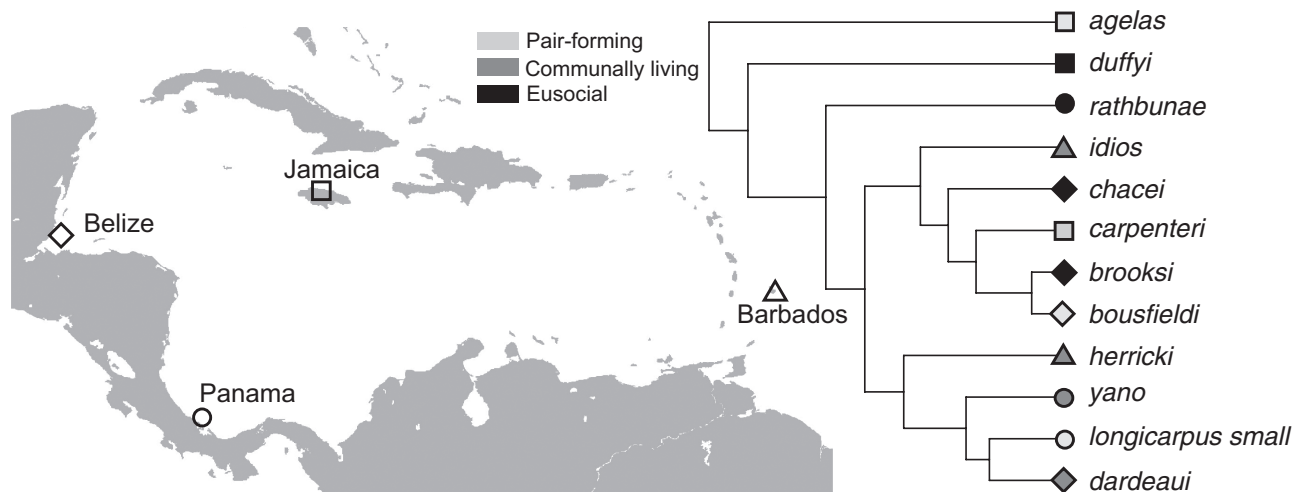
We sampled 12 species of *Synalpheus* snapping shrimps from 4 sites in the Caribbean (Belize, Barbados, Jamaica, and Panama) between 2004 and 2012 (Table 1, Supplementary Table S1, and Fig. 1). A detailed collection protocol has been reported previously (Macdonald *et al.* 2006). For each species, we sampled 7 to 8 females from the same site with eggs or visible ovarian development to ensure that we were sampling breeding individuals. We sampled females from different sponges whenever possible. Since each sponge represents a single colony for eusocial species, sampling from different sponges ensured that we had a more complete representation at each site. For the demographic inference to be comparable across species, we only used individuals collected within a 5-year period. Due to time constraint, and the fact that several species have gone locally extinct (Duffy *et al.* 2013), we were limited to 12 species and 7 to 8 females from different colonies, enough for confident demographic inference (Robinson *et al.* 2014; Nunziata and Weisrock 2018). Despite this limitation, the sampled species included 3 pair-forming, 5 communal breeding, and 4 eusocial species. The 4 eusocial species included 1 species from each of the lineages that independently evolved eusociality in the genus. Two eusocial species (*S. brooksi* and *S. chacei*) were from Belize where, before the recent population decline, they dominated their habitat over non-eusocial species based on abundance, sponge occupancy, and host ranges (Duffy and Macdonald 2010). Local population extinctions and declines were observed from field surveys for the eusocial species, *S. chacei* from Belize, *S. duffyi* from Jamaica, and *S. rathbunae* from Panama (Duffy *et al.* 2013). Our samples included 8 non-eusocial species that showed stable or increasing populations from the same 3 sites (Duffy *et al.* 2013).

We extracted genomic DNA using several walking legs from alcohol-preserved specimens and followed the protocol in Peterson *et al.* (2012) for ddRADseq (see Supplementary Material). We used *Stacks v2.1* (Rochette *et al.* 2019) to demultiplex and clean raw reads (process\_radtags: reads with phred score <10 were discarded) and perform de novo mapping of paired-end reads (denovo\_map.pl with the parameters  $T = 6$ ,  $m = 3$ ,  $M = 3$ , and  $n = 2$ ). We adjusted the minimum proportion of individuals in a population (i.e. a species, since

**Table 1.** Population genetic statistics for each *Synalpheus* species.

<i>Synalpheus</i> species	Social organization	Collection country	Sample size	$H_{\text{obs}}$ (all sites)	$H_{\text{obs}}$ (variant sites)	Inbreeding coefficient ( $F_{\text{IS}}$ )	Mean kinship coefficient
<i>agelas</i>	Pair	Jamaica	8	0.22	0.44	0.29	-2.05
<i>bousfieldi</i>	Pair	Belize	8	0.20	0.50	0.32	-2.74
<i>longicarpus small</i>	Pair	Belize	8	0.22	0.60	0.12	-1.70
<i>carpenteri</i>	Communal	Jamaica	8	0.23	0.45	0.30	-1.46
<i>dardeau</i>	Communal	Belize	9	0.23	0.34	0.26	-0.53
<i>herricki</i>	Communal	Belize	8	0.22	0.67	0.14	-0.90
<i>idios</i>	Communal	Jamaica	7	0.18	0.19	0.54	-0.71
<i>yano</i>	Communal	Barbados	8	0.20	0.28	0.45	-0.93
<i>brooksi</i>	Eusocial	Barbados	8	0.19	0.38	0.13	-0.14
<i>chacei</i>	Eusocial	Panama	8	0.20	0.31	0.16	-0.22
<i>duffy</i>	Eusocial	Panama	8	0.22	0.45	0.21	-1.19
<i>rathbunae</i>	Eusocial	Panama	8	0.26	0.45	0.14	-0.26

Mean individual observed heterozygosity ( $H_{\text{obs}}$ ) is the percentage of heterozygous sites across all sites or variant sites only. Pair: pair-living, communal: communal breeding. Kinship coefficients with negative values indicate unrelated relationships.



**Fig. 1.** Collection sites and evolutionary relationships among 12 sponge-dwelling snapping shrimps in the genus *Synalpheus* used for comparative demographic inference. Each shape corresponds to a different sampling locality. The color of each shape corresponds to the form of social organization (white: pair-living, gray: communal breeding, and black: eusocial). The map is modified from Wikimedia Commons under CC BY-SA 3.0.

all samples of each were collected from 1 population) required to process a locus for that population ( $r$ ) to be 0.5 to 0.875 in *populations* in the *Stacks* pipeline to obtain around 20,000 SNPs per species (range = 19,778 to 52,898). We calculated mean individual and site missingness using *VCFTools* v0.1.16 (Danecek *et al.* 2011).

### Genetic diversity and kinship

We calculated several statistics to summarize the genetic diversity at the individual level, and to quantify the levels of inbreeding and kinship among females, each from different sponges within the same collection site. First, we estimated observed heterozygosity ( $H_{\text{obs}}$ ) for each sample from *populations* in the *Stacks* pipeline and took the mean  $H_{\text{obs}}$  for each species. We also calculated  $H_{\text{obs}}$  based on variant sites only. We calculated the averaged inbreeding coefficient ( $F$ ) across individuals for each species using

*VCFTools* v0.1.16 (Danecek *et al.* 2011). An individual is fully inbred when  $F = 1$  and fully outbred when  $F = 0$  (Wright 1922). Finally, we used *King* v2.1.6 (Manichaikul *et al.* 2010) to calculate the genome-wide relatedness between each female within a species. We took the mean kinship coefficient between pairs of individuals (1 female per sponge) for each species. For each genetic statistic (mean  $H_{\text{obs}}$ ,  $F$ , and mean kinship coefficient), we performed phylogenetic mixed model regressions using the R package *MCMCglmm* v2.29 (Hadfield 2010) to test whether they differed according to the form of social organization (pair-forming vs. communal breeding vs. eusocial) or eusociality (eusocial vs. non-eusocial), while controlling for phylogenetic non-independence between species (see [Supplementary Material](#)). We used a Bayesian consensus tree of *Synalpheus* species, constructed with 16S, 18S, and COI sequence data (Chak *et al.* 2017).

## Demographic inference

We examined changes in  $N_e$  through time by generating confidence intervals around the main features of the model (i.e. relative changes, overall size changes, directionality, and broad patterns in demographic history) through bootstrapping simulated data under the best-model demographic scenario (Gattepaille *et al.* 2013).

Within species, for pairs of individuals that were closer than third-degree-related (>25%, based on kinship coefficients >0.089), we randomly removed 1 individual using *VCFtools* v0.1.16 (Danecek *et al.* 2011). In total, we removed 2 individuals from *S. rathbunae* and 1 individual each from *S. agelas*, *S. carpenteri*, and *S. chacei*. We then extracted 1 random SNP per locus using the script *vcfparser.py* (Silva *et al.* 2018) to generate a vcf file for demographic inference analysis using *MOMI2* v2.1.16 (Kamm *et al.* 2017, 2019), a model-based method that infers demographic parameters by fitting the expected SFS under a set of user-defined parameters to that of the observed data. We used 11,890 to 26,148 SNPs per species (median = 18,175, Supplementary Table S1) for demographic inference. Initial  $N_e$  was set at  $1e + 6$  and maximum  $N_e$  at  $1e + 21$  for all species (see Supplementary Material). We ran 300 random starts to find the model with the highest log-likelihood. We further ran 300 bootstraps, each with 50 random starts to find the model with the highest log-likelihood support.

For comparative purposes, we inferred  $N_e$  from  $T$  fixed time ranges across  $G$  generations for all species. Preliminary analyses showed that estimating  $N_e$  at fixed time ranges (e.g. 1 to 20, 21 to 40, 41 to 60, and 61 to 80 thousand generations) gave better model support than estimating  $N_e$  at fixed times (e.g. 20, 40, 60, and 80 thousand generations) (Supplementary Fig. S1). To find the best specification of model parameters  $T$  (number of time ranges) and  $G$  (maximum number of generations), we ran 7 models that differed in  $T$  (4, 6, and 8) and  $G$  (60, 80, and 100 thousand). We did not estimate  $N_e$  changes that were less than 10,000 generations apart because our preliminary analysis showed that the order of magnitude that we can estimate change among the 12 species was about 10,000 generations (see Supplementary Material). For each species, we compared the support for each parameter set using delta AIC (Akaike 1998). The model with delta AIC = 0 had the best support and models with delta AIC < 3 were considered to be equally supported best models.

The model that estimated  $N_e$  4 times across 100,000 generations (i.e.  $T = 4$  and  $G = 100,000$ ) was most frequently supported across species under the criteria of delta AIC < 3 (Supplementary Table S2). Estimated values of  $N_e$  from this model were generally within the 95% confidence interval of the bootstrap estimates (Supplementary Fig. S2), indicating that the patterns were consistent across 300 different subsets of SNPs. Assuming several generations per year, a time scale of roughly 100,000 generations is likely to span most of the Holocene. We ran additional analyses to show that our results remained robust even after removing 2 species that may have less power due to potentially high ancestral effective population sizes (see Supplementary Material). We also conducted a sensitivity analysis by estimating  $N_e$  6, 9, and 10 times across 100,000 generations (despite having lower likelihood scores in these models) to test whether the number of  $N_e$  estimates may affect the patterns observed in the comparative analysis below (see Supplementary Material).

Model-free demographic inference methods explore an unrestricted parameter space but require a large number of SNPs (Liu and Fu 2015). We performed a model-free analysis using *Stairway Plot 2* (Liu and Fu 2015, 2020), though with a much smaller subset of 6 species where the number of SNPs was adequate for this analysis, to test whether the results are consistent with those observed in the comparative analysis below (see Supplementary Material).

## Phylogenetic comparative analysis

Due to the uncertainty in determining absolute  $N_e$  values, we reported on broad demographic trends and relative changes in  $N_e$  (Burgarella *et al.* 2015; Crawford *et al.* 2017; Lynch *et al.* 2017; Baeza *et al.* 2019; Fages *et al.* 2019; Hotaling *et al.* 2019; Titus *et al.* 2019; Vendrami *et al.* 2019; Bertola *et al.* 2020; Bolivar-Leguizamon *et al.* 2020). From the best fit model with the highest log-likelihood, we used the  $N_e$  values estimated across 10,000 to 100,000 generations for each species. We calculated the average  $N_e$  across time (mean  $N_e$ ), as well as 3 population stability metrics for comparative analyses: 1) the coefficient of variation of  $N_e$  across times (CV) to quantify the variation of  $N_e$  that is independent of mean  $N_e$ , where a smaller value indicates greater population stability; 2) the ratio of minimum  $N_e$  to mean  $N_e$  (min/mean  $N_e$ ), where a larger value indicates a less severe population bottleneck, and thus greater population stability; and 3) the number of times that 2 consecutive  $N_e$  estimates had less than 1 order of magnitude difference (no. of <1-order change), where a larger value indicates less drastic changes in  $N_e$ , and thus greater population stability. We did not include the  $N_e$  estimate at time 0 (i.e. the most recent  $N_e$ ) in our analysis because this estimate was strongly correlated with the initial  $N_e$  that we specified in *MOMI2* (data not shown). Further, demographic inference based on ddRAD may not adequately reflect recent population changes (Lozier 2014) unless the sample size per population was very large (>30) (Nunziata and Weisrock 2018; Marandel *et al.* 2020). We used the Shapiro–Wilk’s test to check for normality, ultimately log-transforming mean  $N_e$ , CV, and min/mean  $N_e$ .

We performed phylogenetic mixed model regressions using *MCMCglmm* (Hadfield 2010) as described in Supplementary Material. Briefly, we tested whether the 4 metrics of population size and stability differed according to the form of social organization (pair-forming vs. communal breeding vs. eusocial) or eusociality (eusocial vs. non-eusocial), while controlling for phylogenetic non-independence between species and treating collection site as a random factor. We performed the same analyses using the demographic metrics calculated from the median of 300 bootstraps  $N_e$  estimates. We also performed a similar analysis using the eusociality index, which captures the degree of reproductive skew within a group and has been used to measure the level of eusociality in *Synalpheus* and other invertebrates (Keller and Perrin 1995; Duffy and Macdonald 2010). This index makes no a priori assumption of social phenotype, avoiding misclassification of a species’ social organization and better capturing the continuum of social diversity among species (Sherman *et al.* 1995). The eusociality index was calculated as  $E = 1 - ((2 \times \text{NOF})/\text{CS})$ , where CS is the colony size and hence the total number of individuals in a sponge and NOF

is the number of ovigerous females in a sponge based on data from [Chak et al. \(2017\)](#). Therefore, species with high values of the eusociality index have greater reproductive skew.

## Results

### Genetic diversity and kinship

We generated >312 million paired-end reads with a median of 2.7 million reads per sample (i.e. 7 to 8 breeding females for each of 12 *Synalpheus* species). De novo mapping using *Stacks* generated 19,788 to 52,898 SNPs per species (median = 24,307, [Supplementary Tables S1 and S3](#); SRA accession: SAMN14351547 to SAMN14351641). Mean  $H_{obs}$  based on all sites or just variant sites did not differ among species exhibiting the 3 forms of social organization (pMCMC > 0.19, [Supplementary Fig. S3](#), [Supplementary Tables S4 and S5](#)): the percentage of heterozygous sites across all sites ranged from 0.19% to 0.23% across species, which is similar to that observed in nonsocial spiders ([Settepani et al. 2017](#)) and other non-*Synalpheus* shrimps ([Yuan et al. 2018](#)). Moreover, there were low levels of inbreeding in all species: the inbreeding coefficients ( $F$ ) were positive and ranged from 0.12 to 0.54 across species ([Supplementary Fig. S3](#), [Table 1](#)). Although some social species are highly inbred due to a lack of premating dispersal ([Bilde and Lubin 2011](#)), eusocial *Synalpheus* species were instead significantly more outbred than communal breeding species (pMCMC = 0.032), but only marginally more outbred than non-eusocial (pair-living and communal breeding combined) species (pMCMC = 0.062) ([Supplementary Table S4](#)). Finally, mean average kinship coefficients were negative for all species, meaning that breeding females across sponges were unrelated to each other ([Supplementary Fig. S3](#), [Table 1](#)). However, kinship coefficients were significantly higher in eusocial species than in pair-forming species and non-eusocial species (pMCMC = 0.0003 and 0.02, respectively; [Supplementary Table S4](#)).

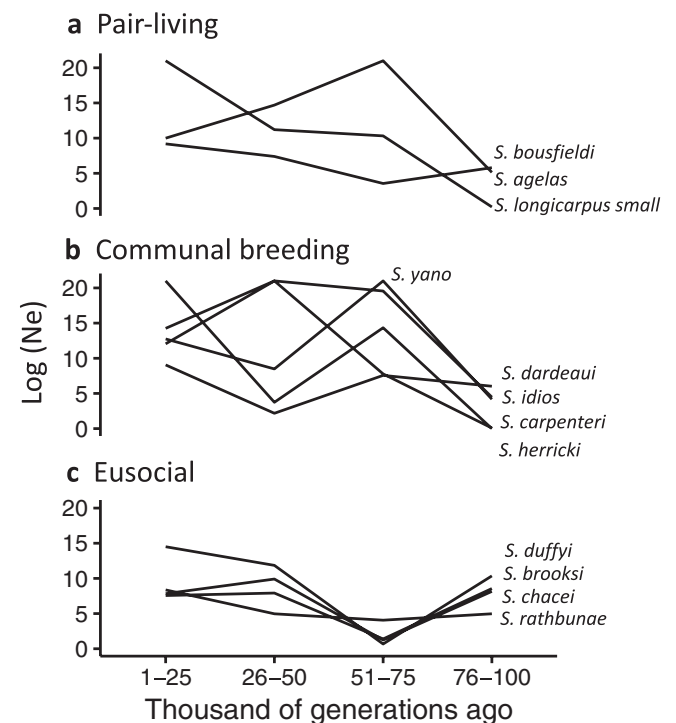
### Demographic inference and stability

We found that  $N_e$  values were generally higher and more variable through time in pair-living and communal breeding species, whereas  $N_e$  values were lower but more stable through time in eusocial species ([Fig. 2](#)). The relative trends of historic  $N_e$  were calculated using 3 population stability metrics using inferred historical  $N_e$  from the best fit model with the highest log-likelihood. We then used phylogenetic mixed models implemented in *MCMCglmm* ([Hadfield 2010](#)) to compare these demographic metrics using both a continuous measure of eusociality (eusociality index) and across discrete social categories ([Chak et al. 2017](#)). Importantly, the eusociality index captures the reproductive skew within a group ([Keller and Perrin 1995](#); [Sherman et al. 1995](#); [Duffy and Macdonald 2010](#)), making no a priori assumption of social phenotype. Our results confirmed the above patterns in 3 of 4 metrics of population size and stability: as the eusociality index increased (hence stronger reproductive skew), mean  $N_e$  decreased, CV decreased, and min/mean  $N_e$  increased, though no. <1-order changes did not vary (pMCMC = 0.018, 0.031, 0.025, and 0.63, respectively, [Fig. 3](#); [Supplementary Table S5](#)). We observed qualitatively similar results using discrete social categories, though the limited number of species in each social category likely contributed to the marginal

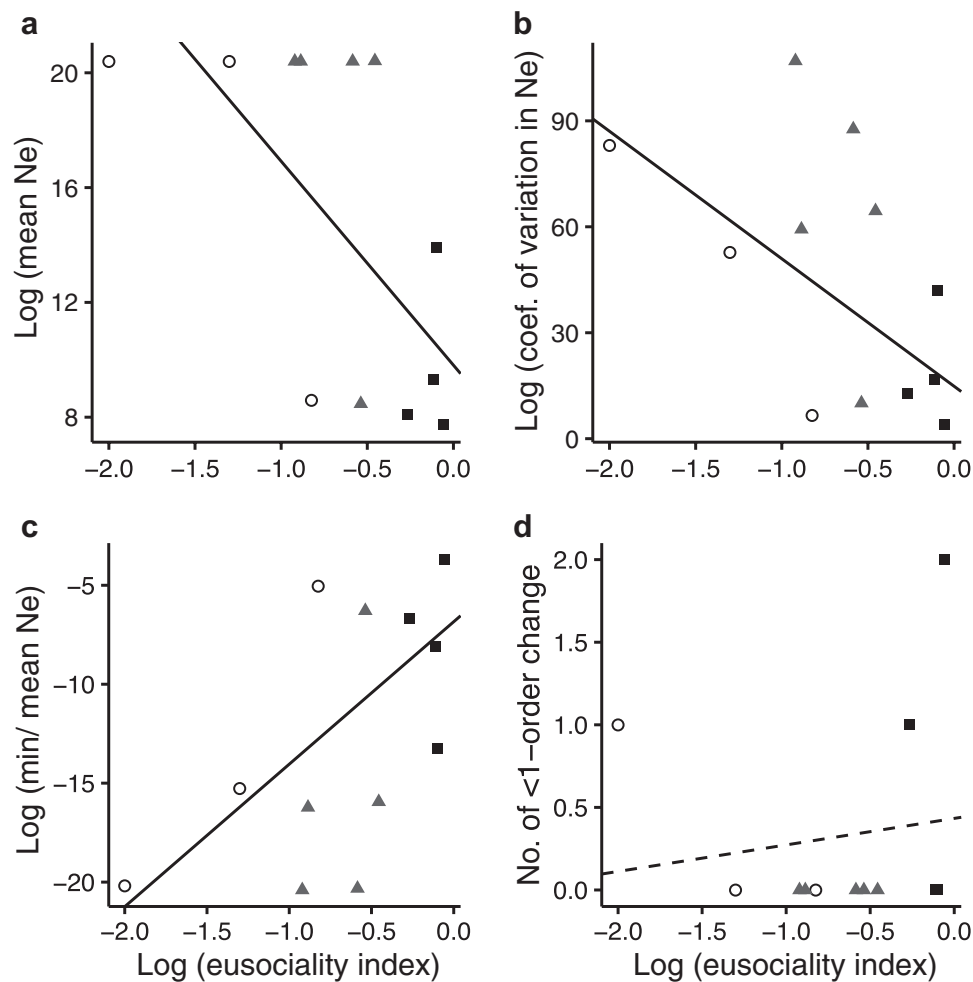
levels of statistical significance. Specifically, eusocial species had significantly lower mean  $N_e$  than non-eusocial species (pMCMC = 0.021), as well as marginally lower CV, higher min/mean  $N_e$ , and higher no. of <1-order difference in  $N_e$  values than non-eusocial species (pMCMC = 0.055, 0.058, and 0.076, respectively, [Fig. 4](#); [Supplementary Table S5](#)). Analyses using the median demographic metrics across bootstrap estimates showed similar trends, but lacked statistical significance ([Supplementary Fig. S4](#)), likely because much smaller subsets of SNPs were used in these analyses. Analyses based on models with more than 4  $N_e$  estimates (6, 8, and 10 estimates) resulted in the same, though nonsignificant, trends between demographic metrics and eusociality index ([Supplementary Fig. S8](#)). While these models had lower likelihood support than the models with 4  $N_e$  estimates, their results suggest that the pattern observed is not limited to models with 4  $N_e$  estimates. Finally, we also found the same, though nonsignificant, trends when calculating continuous  $N_e$  in *Stairway Plot 2* using the 6 *Synalpheus* species with large enough SNP datasets ([Supplementary Figs. S9 and S10](#)). Together, our results suggest that eusocial shrimp species have lower but more stable  $N_e$  through time than their non-eusocial relatives.

## Discussion

Cooperation among individuals of the same species leading to the formation of complex societies is thought to have enabled eusocial animals to become ecologically dominant in the areas where they occur, sometimes comprising more than half of the biomass in a given terrestrial ecosystem ([Wilson](#)



**Fig. 2.** Best model estimates of  $N_e$  across 100,000 generations in 12 *Synalpheus* species exhibiting different forms of social organization (a: pair-living, b: communal breeding, c: eusocial). Each line represents  $N_e$  for a species, with species label on the right. Bootstrap estimates are shown in [Supplementary Fig. S2](#).

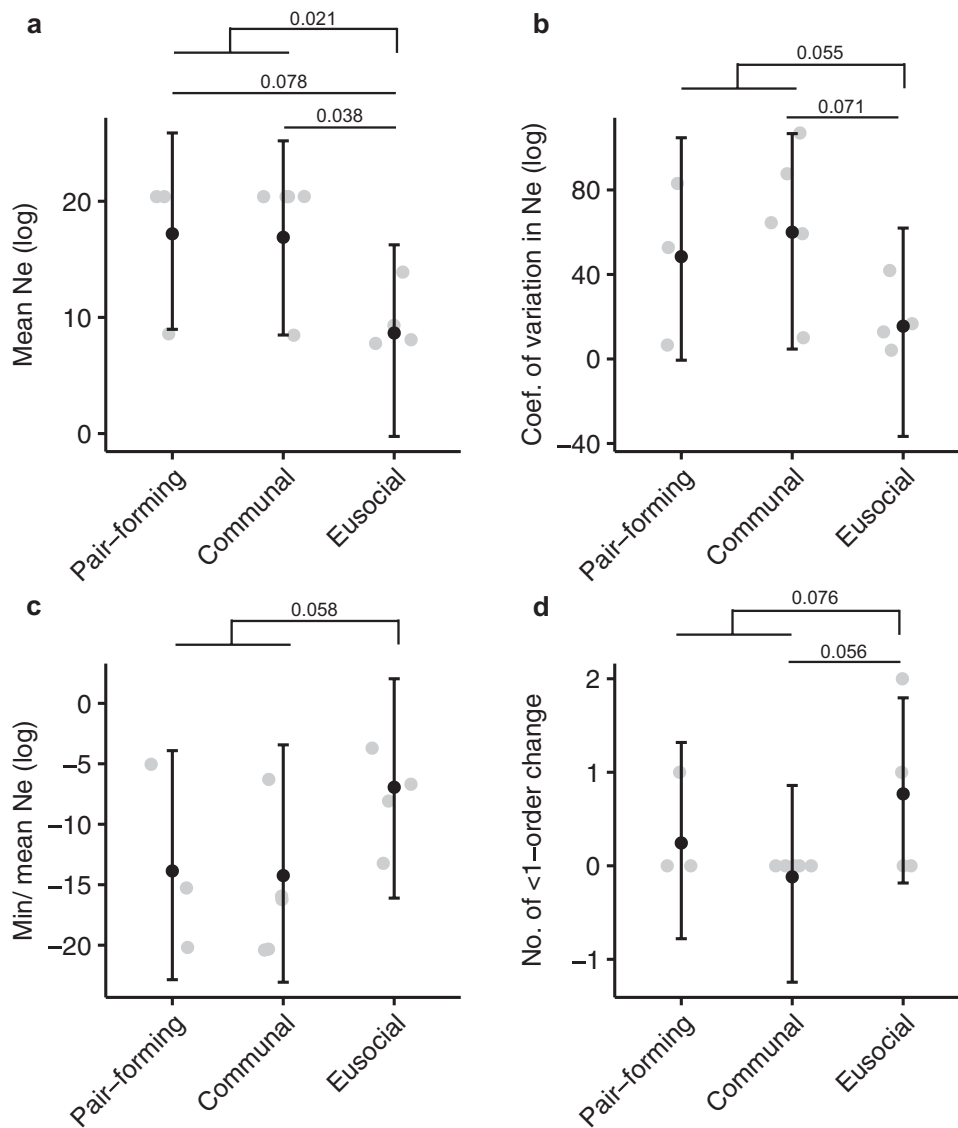


**Fig. 3.** Relationships between the eusociality index and metrics of population size and stability in 12 *Synalpheus* species: (a) mean effective population size ( $N_e$ ) across time, (b) coefficient of variation in  $N_e$ , (c) min/mean  $N_e$ , and (d) no. of <1-order change in  $N_e$ . Symbols represent raw values: open circles = pair-forming species, gray triangles = communal breeding species, dark squares = eusocial species. Solid and dashed lines represent significant and nonsignificant regression slopes predicted using Bayesian phylogenetic mixed models, respectively. Eusocial species have higher reproductive skew and higher values of the eusociality index than non-eusocial species.

2012). Although the peculiar demographic characteristics of eusocial societies such as low effective population size have been suggested to both help and hinder their ecological success, empirical tests of these ideas have largely been lacking. Using historical demographic inference to determine whether eusocial species are more or less demographically stable than their non-eusocial relatives (Wilson 1987), we examined the relationship between demography and eusociality in a socially diverse clade of *Synalpheus* snapping shrimps where eusocial species are known to be ecologically dominant over non-eusocial species in their sponge hosts (Macdonald *et al.* 2006; Duffy and Macdonald 2010). We found that eusocial *Synalpheus* snapping shrimps, across 4 independently evolved eusocial lineages, consistently had lower but more stable  $N_e$  through time than non-eusocial species. Although our analysis cannot infer recent changes in  $N_e$  and  $N_e$  change at short evolutionary time scales (e.g. Bechsgaard *et al.* 2019), the observed long-term population stability in eusocial shrimp species supports the idea that cooperation may help eusocial species to better defend and maintain their domiciles. Furthermore, Wilson (1987) argued that a critical criterion for ecological success was

population density that could be sustained for long periods of time. Our results are consistent with this idea, adding to field observations demonstrating that, for close to 2 decades, eusocial *Synalpheus* were more ecologically dominant than their non-eusocial relatives in terms of relative abundance, sponge occupancy, and host breadth in rubble-associated sponges in a Belizean reef (Macdonald *et al.* 2006; Duffy and Macdonald 2010).

The lower  $N_e$  in eusocial shrimp species is consistent with results from Romiguier *et al.* (2014), who found evidence supporting reduced  $N_e$  in eusocial insects, including low genetic polymorphisms and high nonsynonymous/synonymous (dN/dS) ratios that are more in line with vertebrates than other insects. In *Synalpheus*, mitochondrial genomes also show increased synonymous substitution rates and high dN/dS ratios (Chak *et al.* 2020). Therefore, our results are similar to those in eusocial insects showing that reproductive division of labor and high reproductive skew can lead to lower  $N_e$  in eusocial species (Romiguier *et al.* 2014; Hasselmann *et al.* 2015). Although species with low mean  $N_e$  may be more susceptible to extinction due to reductions in genetic diversity and high genetic load (Newman and Pilson 1997), this does



**Fig. 4.** Metrics of population size and stability across 12 *Synalpheus* shrimp species exhibiting different forms of social organization. Eusocial species have lower mean effective population size ( $N_e$ ) across time (a), but more stable values of  $N_e$  across generation time as indicated by lower CV (b), higher min/mean  $N_e$  (c), and higher no. <1-order change (d). Gray dots are raw values, black dots are posterior mean predicted using Bayesian phylogenetic mixed model, bars are the 95% posterior distributions, and the numbers show pMCMC values, which are twice the probability that the posterior distribution of the difference is above or below zero.

not seem to be the case in eusocial snapping shrimps, at least in the period where we can confidently infer effective population sizes. In eusocial species, the reproductive division of labor and cooperative defense may buffer the breeding individuals from environmental fluctuation, hence stabilizing  $N_e$ ; this could alleviate the detrimental effects of having low  $N_e$  in eusocial species and reduce the risk of extinction. Also, eusocial *Synalpheus* species may exhibit premating dispersal (Tóth and Bauer 2007) and inbreeding avoidance (Duffy 1996; Duffy *et al.* 2002), hence do not appear to suffer from inbreeding like some social species that lack premating dispersal (Bilde and Lubin 2011; Aviles and Purcell 2012). Furthermore, our demographic inference assumed constant mutation rates across species, but recent analyses based on mitochondrial genes in 8 *Synalpheus* species found that eusocial species have lower synonymous substitution rates (Chak *et al.* 2020). Although the pattern in mitochondrial genes may not reflect those in the nuclear genome, assuming a lower mutation rate for eusocial

species would further reduce the  $N_e$  estimates for eusocial species, hence exaggerating instead of contradicting the pattern of lower  $N_e$  in eusocial species observed here.

Moreover, we found no evidence of population bottlenecks, cyclical patterns of expansion, or contractions of  $N_e$  in eusocial shrimp species, as found in other primitively eusocial animals (Aviles and Purcell 2012). Instead, eusocial shrimp species appear to be more demographically stable than non-eusocial species, a conclusion that remains robust whether we consider social organization as a categorical or continuous variable. Our results agree with recent ecological models showing that primitively eusocial species have higher reproduction and lower extinction probabilities than solitary nesters (Field and Toyozumi 2020).

Although eusocial *Synalpheus* are the ecologically dominant shrimp species among their sponge hosts (Macdonald *et al.* 2006; Duffy and Macdonald 2010), eusocial species in Belize, Panama, and Jamaica have either gone locally extinct



or declined significantly in abundance in recent years, while non-eusocial species have remained stable or increased in abundance over the same timeframe (Duffy *et al.* 2013). Our findings that eusocial *Synalpheus* species had stable effective population sizes over evolutionary time, as well as the absence of any evidence of population bottlenecks or cyclical patterns of expansion or contractions of  $N_e$ , together suggest that these recent, widespread population declines are unprecedented in the last 100,000 generations, spanning most of the Holocene. The contemporary population declines could instead be due to recent environmental changes across the Caribbean including warming sea surface temperatures (Chollett *et al.* 2012), ocean acidification (Gledhill *et al.* 2008), rising sea levels (Palanisamy *et al.* 2012), increased hurricane activity (Goldenberg *et al.* 2001; Klotzbach 2011), and declines in sponge communities (Smith *et al.* 2016). These changes may impact eusocial species more strongly than non-eusocial species because of their limited ability to disperse. Although our sampling did not allow us to infer about recent demographic changes, our results are consistent with other evidence that eusocial species likely disperse less than non-eusocial species because they have the highest levels of relatedness (Supplementary Fig. S3) across females from different sponges within a local population (collection site). This pattern was also seen previously using allozymes (Duffy 1993) and is strongly supported by life history observations that all eusocial species have crawling larvae that remain in the natal sponge, whereas non-eusocial species have swimming larvae that can disperse from the natal sponge in the water column (Dobkin 1965, 1967; Duffy and Macdonald 2010). Hence, eusocial shrimp species may be less able to disperse and recolonize host sponges after recent population crashes than non-eusocial species. Thus, although eusocial *Synalpheus* species have been ecologically dominant in parts of the Caribbean for decades (Macdonald *et al.* 2006; Duffy and Macdonald 2010) and demographically stable for thousands of years, they appear more susceptible to population collapse and extinction in the face of increased rates of anthropogenic-driven environmental disturbance.

In conclusion, our results suggest that for at least 100,000 generations, spanning thousands of years, eusocial shrimp populations in the Caribbean have been more stable than those of non-eusocial species. This is supported by a signature of lower and more stable  $N_e$  in eusocial shrimps compared with non-eusocial species, and no evidence of cyclic population contractions or extinctions in eusocial species that would indicate population instability. Therefore, the long-term demographic stability in eusocial snapping shrimp is likely one of the key factors in promoting their ecological dominance among the community of sponge-dwelling shrimps, an idea that has been proposed but not tested for eusocial insects that have come to dominate much of the terrestrial world. The recent extirpation of ecologically dominant eusocial species at several Caribbean sites presents a sharp contrast to this long-term history, and may be driven by anthropogenic changes in combination with their lower  $N_e$  and limited dispersal ability. Thus, the same demographic and life history characteristics of eusocial shrimps that make them successful over evolutionary time scales also render them vulnerable to recent global change. Ultimately, studying changes in demography through time will not only help us to understand the long-term population dynamics of social

organisms, it may also provide critical insights into how social species will cope in the face of increasing climate change and habitat loss.

## Supplementary material

Supplementary material is available at *Journal of Heredity* online.

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## Conflict of interest statement

None declared.

## Data availability

Supporting data are available from the Supporting Information. Sequence reads were deposited in NCBI's Sequence Read Archive (accession numbers: SAMN14351547 to SAMN14351641). Additional data is available in Figshare (<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.15205701.v1>).

## Authors' contributions

DRR and SEH designed the study. STCC and SEH performed the experiment, conducted analyses, and drafted the manuscript. All authors collected specimens and revised the manuscript.

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