

New genus of wasp named after Soligas

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In news– The scientific community has named a new genus of wasp after Soliga, who are the indigenous community of Biligiri Rangan Hills in Karnataka, in recognition of their conservation of forests and biodiversity.

About new genus of wasp-

- These specimens were collected 15 years ago, as a part of ATREE's Western Ghats Insect Inventory Program.
- Additional specimens of the same species were collected from the secondary wet forest habitat of Nagaland.
- **The species is named as 'ecarinata' denoting the absence of ridges** in certain body regions and this new insect is strikingly colourful and distinct from all its relatives.
- **This new wasp belongs to the subfamily Metopiinae of Darwin wasps family Ichneumonidae.**
- The subfamily Metopiinae has 862 species in 27 genera including two fossil genera, most of those are seen only in Palaearctic region, Neotropical and Nearctic regions.
- **This is the second genus of this subfamily reported from India and the first from South India.**
- **The entomologists at Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), decided to name the new genus as *Soliga ecarinata* in an acknowledgement of the Soliga lifestyle which is rooted in the philosophy of sustainability** since ancient days and is the mantra in modern times.

Soliga community-

- Soliga, also spelled Solega, Sholaga and Shōlaga, is an

ethnic group of India.

- The Soliga tribe trace their origin to Karayya, son of Lord Male Mahadeshwara, swamy of Male Mahadeshwara Hills, Karnataka.
- Its members inhabit the **mountain ranges mostly in the Chamarajanagar district of southern Karnataka and Erode district of Tamil Nadu.**
- **There are five sub groups of Soligas:**
 - **Male Soliga:** Kannada speakers residing in Karnataka.
 - **Urali Soliga:** Kannada and Tamil speakers, residing in border areas of Tamil Nadu.
 - **Pujari group:** reside in Maleya Mahadeshwara Hills.
 - **Kadu Soliga:** reside near Bandipur Forest.
 - **Burude Soliga:** reside in Heggadadevanakote Taluk and Kodagu.
- The Soliga **speak Sholaga, which belongs to the Dravidian family.** Under Indian law, they are **recognized as a scheduled tribe**, they have a population of around 40,000.
- Since time immemorial, Soligas have led a semi-nomadic life and **were engaged in shifting cultivation.**
- **Nearly 50% of the Soligas (meaning those who originated from Bamboo) income is from sustainable harvesting** of minor forest produce.
- They **live in podus or settlements** of 10 to 50 thatched huts. Each of their headmen is highly knowledgeable with respect to nature and traditional, sustainable agriculture.
- **Soligas practice subsistence agriculture for their sustenance.** The indigenous cropping systems, animal rearing and other agriculture activities are in tune with the rituals of the tribes.
- Soligas are also known for their **rich knowledge on soil fertility** and eco-friendly agricultural practices.
- **Traditionally Soliga depended on collecting a wide range**

of non-timber forest products (NTFP), small game hunting and shifting cultivations for their livelihood.

- But, once the BRT was designated as a wildlife sanctuary, shifting cultivation and hunting were completely banned and the Soligas were allocated small pieces of land to practice settled agriculture.
- However, they retained the right to collect NTFP and were allowed to remain inside the forest though it was declared as a tiger reserve.

Note:

- B.R. Hills in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka falling under the confluence of the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats and the unique geographical positioning and diversity of habitats makes BRT one of the richest areas for biodiversity in India