# Lepidocampa sikkimensis, a New Diplura of the Eastern Himalaya: The Soil's Microscopic Hexapod

Research paper: Zootaxa 5741(3), publication date 7 January 2026 - Government press release: PIB Kolkata, 16 February 2026
Prelims - Environment, Biodiversity and Taxonomy

## Why in the News

According to PIB's press release of 16 February 2026, scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered a new species, **Lepidocampa sikkimensis**, of the soil-dwelling microscopic arthropod group **Diplura** from the eastern Himalaya. The press release ties it to Ravangla in Sikkim and Kurseong in West Bengal.

### The Main Point to Remember:

According to the abstract, *L. sikkimensis* was described from the eastern Himalayan region. The earlier taxonomic work on Indian Diplura was of **1977** (*Lepidocampa juradii bengalensis*). In this very study, that subspecies was rediscovered after decades, and **its DNA barcodes** were made available for the first time in the world.

**Lepidocampa sikkimensis**
Eastern Himalaya; Diplura (Campodeidae)

**Rediscovery**
L. juradii bengalensis (described in 1977) from two places in West Bengal

**For the first time**
DNA barcodes of L. juradii bengalensis

Diagram: original table.

## What Is in the Research Paper?

The research paper is titled "Description of a new species of Lepidocampa Oudemans, 1890 (Diplura: Campodeidae) from Eastern Himalayan regions and molecular identification of Lepidocampa juradii bengalensis from West Bengal, India". According to the abstract, *Lepidocampa sikkimensis* sp. nov. (Campodeidae) was described from eastern Himalayan regions. The most recent taxonomic work on Indian Diplura is of 1977, in which *L. juradii bengalensis* (Rani and Mitra, 1977) was described.

In the current study, this subspecies was rediscovered after decades from two different geographic places in West Bengal. According to the abstract, GenBank had COI sequences

of only *L. weberi*, and this study gave DNA barcodes of *L. juradii bengalensis* for the first time in the world. Because information on Indian Diplura is scattered and old references are hard to find, the authors have also given an updated list of Indian Diplura with references.

According to the PIB press release, the research team was led by Dr Surajit Kar, the specimens were found near Ravangla (Sikkim), and information from Kurseong (West Bengal) shows the species may be more widely spread in the eastern Himalaya. According to the press release, 17 species were recorded in India earlier, and Diplura play a role in maintaining the nutrient cycle and structure in the soil.

## Where Does Confusion Happen in the Exam?

"The first description by an Indian team" and "all 17 species were described by foreign researchers" are PIB's claims; the abstract makes no such claim. Similarly, the abstract's "DNA barcodes for the first time" are for *L. juradii bengalensis*, while PIB says it for an "Indian *Lepidocampa* species". In the exam, trust the abstract's wording.

## Direction of Preparation from Past Questions:

Statement-based questions have appeared in the official General Studies Paper-I of UPSC Prelims 2023. So prepare the basis of species, place and identification separately. The questions below are **original practice**, not actual PYQs.

## Prelims Style: Practice Questions

### 1. On the basis of the research paper's abstract about Lepidocampa sikkimensis, consider the following statements:

1. It was described from eastern Himalayan regions.
2. The earlier taxonomic work on Indian Diplura was of 1977.
3. According to the abstract, DNA barcodes of L. juradii bengalensis were already present in GenBank.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

See answer and reason
**Answer: (b) Only two.** Statements 1 and 2 are in the abstract. Statement 3 is wrong; according to the abstract, this very study gave this subspecies's DNA barcodes for the first time.

**2. According to the abstract, whose COI sequences were the only ones available in GenBank earlier?**

(a) Lepidocampa weberi

(b) Lepidocampa sikkimensis

(c) Lepidocampa juradii bengalensis

(d) None

See answer and reason
**Answer: (a).** According to the abstract, GenBank had COI sequences of only *L. weberi*.

**3. What kind of creature is Lepidocampa sikkimensis?**

(a) A wingless, soil-dwelling microscopic arthropod

(b) A flying insect

(c) An aquatic fish

(d) A herbivorous mammal

See answer and reason
**Answer: (a).** The press release describes it as a wingless, soil-dwelling microscopic arthropod.

## Sources:

1. Zootaxa 5741(3): Description of a new species of Lepidocampa (Diplura: Campodeidae) from Eastern Himalayan regions and molecular identification of Lepidocampa juradii bengalensis from West Bengal, India, 7 January 2026.
2. PIB: ZSI Discovers New Soil-dwelling micro-Arthropod in Kurseong & Ravangla in Eastern Himalayas, 16 February 2026.
3. UPSC: Prelims 2023, question format.