

to me and shared that he was working on a Georgia millipede checklist and monitoring the iNaturalist database for what he referred to as ‘odd things,’” VanOtteren said. “He shared that there were, at the time, two known Pyrgodesmid millipede species documented in the state, and that the individual I photographed was clearly neither of those species.”

VanOtteren returned to the site with his two daughters and collected some specimens for Andrew. After verifying what VanOtteren had found, Andrew asked him to contribute his photos and a written description of the environment in which he’d found them to an academic paper.



For his part, Andrews is a masters student at Georgia College & State University working on his thesis — studying and documenting millipede biodiversity in Georgia. He keeps an eye on iNaturalist for those he doesn’t recognize, which is how he connected with VanOtteren.

“It, like many other understudied species, doesn’t have a common name. Imagine having to come up with a common name for all 2 million-plus described species,” Andrew said. “*C. ornata* is one of the most widespread species in the genus and has probably been moved around quite a bit by birds and people. At this point it’s just about all over the tropics. It is, like so many other species, an unfortunate consequence of global trade.

Like many species, this millipede likely made its way to the U.S. via cargo ship. East Asia’s climate is very similar to South Georgia and Florida’s, which made it easy for the *Cryptocorypha ornata* to adapt.

Andrew’s paper, co-authored by GCSU Professor Bruce Snyder and citing VanOtteren, was published on Dec. 20 in *Insecta Munda* and titled “First report of the millipede genus *Cryptocorypha* Attems, 1907 in the Americas.”

It’s not the first time VanOtteren has contributed to the study of the natural world. Also this year, he took the first known photo of a living specimen of the bee species *Epeolus packeri*. He also recorded the first known appearance of two bird species in Georgia, Hammon’s flycatcher and the lesser nighthawk.

His nature photographer is prolific on the iNaturalist platform, where he’s documented over 1,500 species in Glynn County. Of those, his photos were the first time 65 had been recorded in the platform’s database.