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# Fungus Manipulates Spiders Into “Zombie” State

## Description

Fungi, often overlooked in the tapestry of life, play a crucial role in ecosystems worldwide. From decomposing matter to forming symbiotic relationships, fungi are silent architects of nature.

A recent discovery of a fungus on a spider sheds light on these remarkable organisms. Scientists found a new species of fungus, *Gibellula attenboroughii*, named after Sir David Attenborough. Dr. Harry Evans led the research, uncovering this unique fungus during the BBC Winterwatch series in Northern Ireland.

Morphological and molecular evidence confirmed a novel species, linking it to Sir David Attenborough due to his contributions to natural history programming. The infected spiders, including *Metellina merianae* and *Meta menardi*, exhibited unusual behavior, reminiscent of “zombie-ant fungi” in ants in Brazil’s rainforest.

The study, published in *Fungal Systematics and Evolution*, revealed hidden diversity in the genus *Gibellula* in the British Isles. Fungi like *Gibellula attenboroughii* might impact spider populations significantly, regulating their numbers and playing a crucial role in ecosystem stability.

The discovery underscores the importance of studying fungi, providing insights into ecological dynamics and potential industrial or pharmaceutical applications. By honoring Sir David Attenborough, the study celebrates curiosity and the interconnectedness of scientific discovery and public engagement.

Understanding how *Gibellula attenboroughii* manipulates spiders could unlock broader ecological insights. This newfound fungus offers a gateway to profound research and a deeper appreciation of the intricate connections in the natural world.

## CATEGORY

1. Sci/Tech - LEVEL6

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## Author

aimeeyoung99