



PHOTO: GORDON YONG/NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

## T.rex ant turns out to be a timid ant

An ant named after the fierce, carnivorous dinosaur *Tyrannosaurus rex* has been observed alive for the first time – and it failed to live up to the dinosaur’s fearsome reputation.

*Tyrannomyrmex rex* is a timid, finicky eater, new research shows. The ants can, however, turn to cannibalism in times of need.

Until now, these Asian ants were a complete mystery to science, despite being discovered more than 20 years ago, reported *LiveScience.com*.

No one had ever collected more than a single specimen, and no one had ever observed a *T. rex* ant alive for an extended period of time, according to the website.

So, when National Geographic Young Explorer and entomologist Mark Wong and his colleague Gordon Yong, an entomologist at the National University of Singapore, stumbled upon the ants’ hideaway in March last year while surveying Singapore’s forested Mandai area, they knew they had something important.

Once back in the lab, these ants with a fearsome name proved quite timid, reported National Geographic. In petri-dish “cafeteria experiments” aimed at determining the ants’ diet, Mr Wong and Mr Yong found that the ants often froze up and ran away when other organisms came close, it said.

“I had a good laugh when I saw them respond in this manner to little millipedes, mites, smaller ants and basically whatever prey I tried to offer them,” Mr Wong was quoted by National Geographic as saying. “They wouldn’t even get close to honey – and only gently prodded a honey droplet with their antennae.”