

## A new species of Tardigrada, *Platicrista ramsayi* sp. nov. from the páramo of Volcán Chiles, Ecuador

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### Abstract

A new species of Eutardigrada, *Platicrista ramsayi* sp. nov., is described from moss samples collected at high altitude on Volcán Chiles in the Ecuadorian Andes. This species differs from all others previously described in the genus by having only oblique cuticular bars on the first three pairs of legs. *Platicrista affine* (Mihelčič, 1951) is formally designated as a *nomen dubium*. An amendment to the diagnostic characters for *Platicrista itaquasconoide* is proposed. A key to the species of the genus is presented.

**Keywords:** Tardigrada, Hypsibiidae, *Platicrista ramsayi* sp. nov., Ecuador, Volcán Chiles, páramo, taxonomy, new species, key to *Platicrista*, *Platicrista affine* (Mihelčič, 1951) *nomen dubium*

### Introduction

The genus *Platicrista* Pilato, 1987 was erected during the redescription of the then polyphyletic genus *Diphascion* Plate, 1889 (Pilato 1987). Originally Pilato transferred three species into the new genus: *Platicrista angustata* (Murray, 1905) as the type species; plus *Platicrista affine* (Mihelčič, 1951) and *Platicrista itaquasconoide* (Durante & Maucci, 1975). Two further new species have since been described in the genus, *Platicrista cheleusis* Kathman, 1990 and *Platicrista horribilis* Kaczmarek & Michalczyk, 2003. The former being described from Vancouver Island, Canada and the later from Tehijn Cagan Nuur National Park, Mongolia.

During an ongoing study into high altitude or high latitude tardigrade communities, three specimens of a new species were found in unidentified moss cushions. The mosses were collected from the páramo on Volcán Chiles, on the Ecuadorian side of the international border with Colombia (Fig. 1). Páramos are high altitude ecosystems in South America, typified by nutrient poor soil types, in high rainfall areas above the upper tree-line. The plant communities in this páramo are typified by bunch grasses such as