



Taxonomists in training: the feasibility of learning from the literature, or lack of it.

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A compelling need exists for expanding the taxonomic workforce, particularly in our pursuit of comprehensive biodiversity documentation. The current state of this workforce presents substantial risks to its long-term sustainability with the loss of knowledge and capacity building. Traditional taxonomic training heavily relies on direct mentorship from experts with substantial experience. However, challenges arise when access to such experts is restricted or when dealing with taxonomic groups lacking contemporary resources and treatments. This study explores the feasibility of training novice students in taxonomy, leveraging published literature, and offering minimal mentor guidance to address these challenges. To assess the feasibility of this approach, we developed a structured workflow with the objective of characterising the small wasp genus *Aulacus* (Aulacidae: Hymenoptera) to assist in describing new species by an inexperienced taxonomist. Our results shed light on the myriad of challenges faced by a new taxonomist and paves the way for open dialogue regarding the future of training the next generation of taxonomists in environments where expert guidance may be scarce.

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