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Great Basin National Park News Release

Release Date: Immediate
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Date: March 23, 2011

New Freshwater Shrimp Discovered in Cave at Great Basin National Park

Deep in a muddy cave in Great Basin National Park, park staff found tiny amphipods, also known as freshwater shrimp, moving about a pool of water. A cave biologist and amphipod specialist determined that the amphipods were a new species to science. They recently described and named the White Pine amphipod (*Stygobromus albapinus*) in an article in *Subterranean Biology*.

“The whole genus is eyeless and white, and they live in underground waterways,” said cave biologist and lead author Steve Taylor of the Illinois Natural History Survey. “Because they are in water and water is scarce, they are vulnerable to changes in water use practices.”

The White Pine amphipod is only known from one park cave, Model Cave. Dr. Taylor added, “We don’t expect it to have a distribution greater than the Snake Range. It is highly unlikely to occur in adjacent mountain ranges.”

Even within the cave, it appears to be very particular about its habitat. “We had to make several trips into Model Cave, crawling over one-quarter mile each way, in order to have just the right water levels to find this amphipod,” said park ecologist Gretchen Baker.

The White Pine amphipod joins other species that are endemic to Great Basin National Park caves, including two millipedes and a springtail found recently, along with a harvestman and pseudoscorpion. It is likely that additional new species will be added to this list once taxonomic experts are found.

Acting Superintendent Tod Williams stated, “This discovery adds to the diverse biota known from Great Basin National Park. It highlights the need to protect all habitats unimpaired, as we are still learning about what lives in them.”

For more information about this new species, as well as other Biodiversity Discovery events at Great Basin National Park such as the upcoming Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants) Bioblitz August 1-3, please visit the park website: www.nps.gov/grba.

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