

US MARKETS CLOSED In the news

▲ Dow Jones -3.03% ▲ Nasdaq -4.1% ▲ S&P 500 -3.37% ▲ META -4.15% ▲ TSLA -2.7% ▲ BABA -1.88%



INSIDER

Subscribe

China is guarding ancient bat caves against journalists and scientists seeking to discover the origins of the coronavirus

Bill Bostock Dec 30, 2020, 10:59 AM



Download the app



Ecologists collect data from a wrinkle-lipped free-tailed bats on site lab near the Khao Chong Pran Cave on September 12, 2020 in Ratchaburi, Thailand. Lauren DeCicca/Getty Images

< HOMEPAGE

Subscribe

variants of COVID-19, The Associated Press reported.

The caves in Yunnan Province, south China, are where scientists hope to find evidence of how the coronavirus evolved in bats.

But samples taken recently by scientists were confiscated, the AP said, adding that police blocked access to roads and sites around the caves in late November.

Journalists with the AP and the BBC said they encountered roadblocks and met people hired to keep them away from the caves.

The cabinet must vet all research papers based on evidence from the caves in Beijing, the AP said, "under direct orders from President Xi Jinping."

[Visit Business Insider's homepage for more stories.](#)

lived in an attempt to control research into the outbreak, [The Associated Press reported.](#)

The caves, located in China's southern Yunnan Province, are thought to hold the key to understanding how the novel coronavirus evolved in bats. They have yielded information about other [coronaviruses before.](#)

In 2017, scientists tracked down the bats responsible for the 2003 SARS outbreak there. The region also played host to the 2012 discovery of RaTG13, a close variant of the coronavirus, which a study in February found to [share 96% of its genetic makeup.](#)

But China is taking steps to safeguard the site and control who gets access, The AP said, adding that a team of its journalists were tailed by security services and refused entry into one of the caves.

Authorities also confiscated samples taken by a team of scientists on a recent trip to the caves and police blocked access to roads and sites around the caves in late November, the AP said.

keep us out" and that a truck was abandoned in the road to block their convoy.

Some scientists are allowed in though most are affiliated with the Chinese military, the AP said.

All research papers based on evidence from the caves must be submitted to a task force overseen by the government in Beijing "under direct orders from President Xi Jinping."

Chinese President Xi Jinping. Getty

Bats are well known for carrying a plethora of viruses that do not make them sick. A [2019 study](#) found that one bat can carry more than 200 coronaviruses.

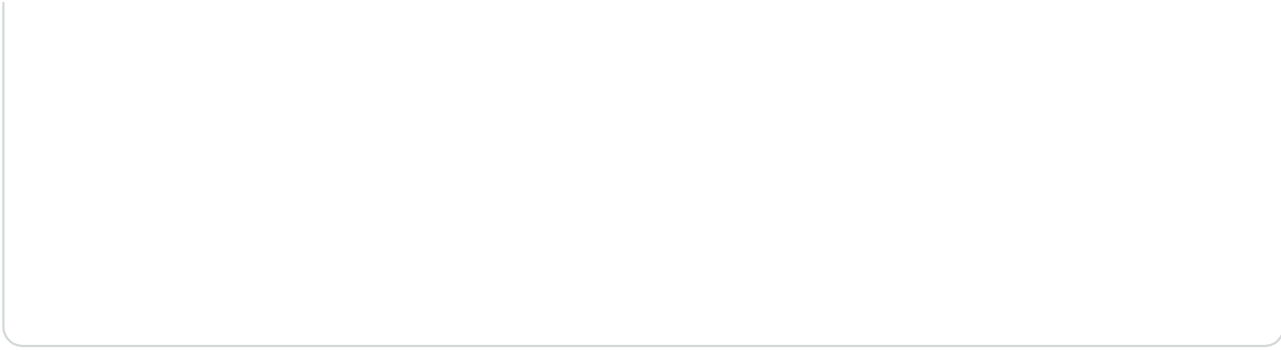
Another coronavirus was discovered in the bats from the Yunnan caves in 2019, as Business Insider's Aylin Woodward [previously reported](#).

The study published in the journal Current Biology identified a previously unknown coronavirus named RmYN02 "that's 97.1% similar to SARS-CoV-2" that was found between May and October 2019.

Many of the samples taken from the caves have been transferred to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the BBC said, a facility at the center of a baseless conspiracy theory that accused it of leaking the coronavirus from a lab.

The lab denies the theory.

 **KEEP READING**



NOW WATCH: What coronavirus symptoms look like, day by day

More: [News UK](#) [China](#) [coronavirus](#) [wuhan](#) 





* Copyright © 2022 Insider Inc. All rights reserved. Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our

[Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Policy](#) and [Cookies Policy](#).

[Contact Us](#) | [Sitemap](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Commerce Policy](#) | [Advertising Policies](#) | [CA Privacy Rights](#) | [Coupons](#)

| [Made in NYC](#) | [Jobs @ Insider](#)

[Stock quotes by finanzen.net](#) | [Reprints & Permissions](#)

International Editions:

[INTL](#) | [AS](#) | [AT](#) | [DE](#) | [ES](#) | [IN](#) | [JP](#) | [MX](#) | [NL](#) | [PL](#) | [ZA](#)