

***Rita macracanthus*, a new riverine catfish (Teleostei: Bagridae) from South Asia**

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Abstract

A new species of bagrid catfish of the genus *Rita* is described from the Indus River drainage in South Asia. *Rita macracanthus* differs from all congeners in having a unique combination of the following characters: dorsal spine reaching to middle of adipose-fin base; pectoral-spine length 28.7–30.0% SL; depth of caudal peduncle 7.6–8.4% SL; maximum length of premaxillary tooth band 4.8–6.4 times its maximum width; eye diameter 6.9–8.7% HL; interorbital distance 39.4–44.1% HL; dorsal surface of head between eyes and supraoccipital covered with thin skin wherein the underlying bone is visible; two distinct vomerine tooth patches with rounded peg-like teeth. The new species has been identified up until now as *Rita rita*, but is distinguished from that species in having longer dorsal and pectoral spines, a more slender caudal peduncle, and a longer premaxillary tooth band.

Key words: *Rita*, Bagridae, Indus River, new species

Introduction

Bagrid catfishes of the genus *Rita* Bleeker, 1854 are found in large rivers throughout the Indian subcontinent and Myanmar, and are capable of reaching sizes to 1500 mm TL (Talwar and Jhingran, 1991), although mature specimens of ca. 200–300 mm SL are more commonly encountered. The genus is diagnosed by the following synapomorphies (Mo, 1991): single pair of mandibular barbels, elongated Weberian apparatus firmly sutured to the basioccipital, and the sensory canal on the posttemporal enclosed within the bone. *Rita* and its sister taxon *Nanobagrus* Mo, 1991 are the sister group to all other members of Bagridae (Mo, 1991). The most recent review of *Rita* was provided by Ferraris (1999) in his redescription of *R. sacerdotum* Anderson, 1879 in which five valid species of *Rita* were recognized: *R. rita* (Hamilton, 1822), *R. gogra* (Sykes, 1839), *R. kuturnee* (Sykes, 1839), *R. chrysea* Day, 1877 and *R. sacerdotum* Anderson, 1879.