



## ***Botia udomritthiruji*, a new species of botiid loach from southern Myanmar (Teleostei: Botiidae)**

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### **Abstract**

*Botia udomritthiruji* **sp. nov.** is described from the Tenasserim River drainage in southern Myanmar. It can be distinguished from congeners by its color pattern, consisting of five dark vertical bars on the body, with the central portion of these bars paler than its edges; with increasing age, the edges of these bars become more irregular and darker, and irregular dark spots on the pale interspaces begin to form, sometimes fusing with the edges of the vertical bars. In morphology, it differs from congeners by a combination of: body depth at anus 23.4–27.7% SL, caudal peduncle depth 15.9–18.7% SL, and 12 dorsal-fin rays. Evidence for considering *B. macrolineata* a junior synonym of *B. dario* and for considering *B. rostrata* a species distinct from *B. almorhae* is also presented here.

**Key words:** Tenasserim, Ostariophysi, Cypriniformes

### **Introduction**

The Botiidae is a group of loaches inhabiting the rivers and streams of southern and eastern Asia. Although there is very strong support for the monophyly of the group (Sawada, 1982; Šlechtová *et al.*, 2006), the higher level relationships of the Botiidae were poorly known until recent studies showed them to be the sister group of all other loaches (Tang *et al.*, 2006; Šlechtová *et al.*, 2007). Until recently, the Botiidae was considered a subfamily of the Cobitidae (e.g. Nalbant, 1963), and morphological data from Sawada (1982) supports this hypothesis with two synapomorphies: (1) modification of the lateral ethmoid to form a movable structure articulating with the orbitosphenoid and (2) posterodorsal edge of supraethmoid-ethmoid complex articulating with the frontals. There has been no detailed study of the phylogeny of cobitoid fishes utilizing morphological data since Sawada (1982), so it is not possible at this point to verify Sawada's hypothesis using morphological data alone. The decision to elevate the Botiidae to family level in this study despite morphological evidence presented to the contrary in Sawada (1982) follows suggestions presented in recent morphological (Nalbant, 2002) and molecular studies (Šlechtová *et al.*, 2006; 2007; Tang *et al.*, 2005; 2006). Botiid loaches are easily characterized by their elongate snouts, the presence of two pairs or barbels at the tip of the snout, strongly forked caudal fins and their strongly compressed bodies; many species are exported in large numbers for the aquarium trade.

Recently, specimens of an unnamed botiid loach from the Tenasserim River drainage in southern Myanmar have been imported for the aquarium trade under the name “emperor botia” or “emperor loach”. Thanks to the assistance of Kamphol Udomritthiruj, I had the opportunity to examine this material and obtain information on the collecting locality. This uniquely patterned loach is herein described as a new species.