Amblyceps cerinum, a new catfish (Teleostei: Amblycipitidae) from northeastern India

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Abstract

Amblyceps cerinum, a new South Asian amblycipitid catfish species, is described from the Brahmaputra River drainage in northern West Bengal, India. The new species can be distinguished from congeners in having a combination of upper jaw longer than lower, incomplete lateral line terminating beneath posterior insertion of dorsal fin, length of adipose-fin base 32.4–38.3% SL, caudal peduncle length 21.9–24.5% SL, caudal peduncle depth 9.2–11.2% SL, 41–44 post-Weberian vertebrae, posterior end of adipose fin separated from dorsal procurrent caudal-fin rays by distinct notch, and truncate caudal fin. The taxonomic status of A. tenuispinis is also discussed and a neotype designated for this species.

Key words: Siluriformes, Sisoroidea, Brahmaputra River, South Asia

Introduction

The genus Amblyceps currently contains 15 described species of small-bodied, elongate catfishes, which are found in fast moving streams and rivers of Southeast Asia, Pakistan, and India. Amblyceps species can be distinguished from confamilials (the genera Liobagrus, Nahangbagrus, and Xiurenbagrus) by the presence of double folds of skin on the upper and lower lips, pinnate rays on the abaxial margin of the procurrent and median caudal-fin rays [although these are lacking in some Indian species according to Linthoingambi & Vishwanath (2008)], and a number of osteological characters described by Chen & Lundberg (1995) and also detailed by Ng & Kottelat (2000). However, both of these studies predate the description of Nahangbagrus and to date, no osteological studies have been performed for this genus, nor is the absence or presence of the double skin folds on the lips or pinnate rays on the caudal fin elements mentioned in its description (Hao & Binh in Hao 2005).

The distributional ranges of the other amblycipitid genera are mostly disjunct from that of Amblyceps, with Liobagrus being found in China, Taiwan, Japan, and the Korean peninsula, and Xiurenbagrus being restricted to the Pearl River basin of southeastern China. Nahangbagrus, described from the Red River basin of northern Vietnam, comes closest to sympatry with Amblyceps, which contains several species that are found in the Mekong Basin (A. caecutiens, A. carinatum, A. serratum; Ng & Kottelat 2000; Ng 2005; Ng & Wright 2009). This genus was distinguished from Amblyceps by its truncate caudal-fin margin (vs. deeply forked). However, several species of Amblyceps, including A. apangi, A. murraystuarti, and A. torrentis possess a truncate caudal-fin margin, leaving little in the way of characters to reliably distinguish Amblyceps from Nahangbagrus. The description of Nahangbagrus is such that additional potentially diagnostic characters are difficult to determine, and the type material from this genus was unavailable to us for study. Should additional specimens become available, further studies are necessary to confirm the validity of this genus and to provide a more complete diagnosis from its confamilials.