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Synodontis acanthoperca, a new species from the Ogôoué River system, Gabon with comments on spiny ornamentation and sexual dimorphism in mochokid catfishes (Siluriformes: Mochokidae)

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Abstract

Synodontis acanthoperca, a new species of mochokid catfish, is described from rapids within the Ogôoué River system of Gabon. This relatively small species (<50 mm SL) is distinguished from all congeners by a distinctive pigmentation pattern that includes a pair of dark patches on the caudal fin and by the presence of hypertrophied opercular spines in sexually mature males.

Key words: Siluriformes, Mochokidae, *Synodontis*, new species, Africa, Gabon, Ogôoué River, spiny ornamentation, sexual dimorphism

Résumé
Synodontis acanthoperca, une nouvelle espèce de poisson-chat de la famille des Mochokidae, est décrite des rapides du système fluvial de l'Ogôoué au Gabon. Cette espèce relativement petite (<50 mm SL) se distingue de tous ses congénères par un patron de pigmentation distinctif qui inclut deux taches foncées sur la nageoire caudale et par la présence d'épines operculaires hypertrophiées chez les males sexuellement matures.

Introduction

The genus *Synodontis* Cuvier, 1816 is the most species rich and widespread genus of mochokid catfishes. As currently recognized the genus contains approximately 120 valid species distributed throughout most of the freshwaters of sub-Saharan Africa and the Nile River system. Larger *Synodontis* species are important food fishes in many parts of Africa and are commonly known as "squeakers" because they readily produce sounds by stridulating their pectoral spines when handled or disturbed. Furthermore many *Synodontis* species are prized ornamental fishes because they have striking pigmentation patterns or display unusual behaviors like an upside down swimming posture.

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