

A new species of *Nanochromis* (Teleostei: Cichlidae) from Lake Mai Ndombe, central Congo Basin, Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

Nanochromis wickleri, a new cichlid species from Lake Mai Ndombe in the central Congo basin, is described. The large, deep-bodied species differs from all congeners in the possession of an elevated soft dorsal fin ray count (10–11 vs. 5–8) and by the presence, in adults, of strongly produced membranous fin lappets on the second and third dorsal fin spines. Pending comprehensive phylogenetic analysis *Nanochromis wickleri* is tentatively placed within a morphologically diagnosable subclade of *Nanochromis*, herein named the “*nudiceps* group”.

Key words: *Nanochromis*, Congo Basin, new species

Introduction

Species diversity among the Congolese cichlid genus *Nanochromis* Pellegrin is poorly known, despite the fact that the first species was described more than a century ago and that the group has since attracted considerable attention from the aquarium hobby. The genus was erected by Pellegrin (1904) for the type species *nudiceps* Boulenger, 1899 as a replacement name for the preoccupied *Pseudoplesiops* Boulenger, 1899. As currently understood, *Nanochromis* belongs to a monophyletic group of African cichlids informally named the chromidotilapiines, and is diagnosed by the possession of a characteristically reduced infraorbital series, and an elevated lateral line that is posteriorly contiguous with the dorsal fin base (Greenwood 1987). Five of the nine described *Nanochromis* are known only from the region of the lower Congo rapids between the Malebo Pool and the town of Inga. However, the locality of the type species *N. nudiceps*, is “Kutu”, a small Congolese town located in the inner Congo basin (“Cuvette Centrale”) at the junction of the outlet of