



***Trichomycterus santanderensis*: A new species of troglomorphic catfish (Siluriformes, Trichomycteridae) from Colombia**

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Abstract

Trichomycterus santanderensis, described as a new species of troglomorphic catfish, was collected from the cave “El Puente” located in the upper Lebrija River basin of the Santander Department of northeast Colombia. The new species has light-red pigmentation, a first pectoral ray as long as the pectoral fin, and variable reduction in eye size. A comparative analysis with other troglomorphic species from South America and epigeal species from northern Colombia is presented.

Key words: Catfish, Trichomycteridae, Troglomorphic, Colombia, Siluriformes, Caves

Introduction

The Family Trichomycteridae is a diverse group of small- to medium-sized freshwater catfishes. The taxon’s geographic range extends from Costa Rica to the Patagonia region of Argentina (Campanario & de Pinna, 2000). In South America, members of this family are found in the Pacific and Atlantic basins, and within the Andean mountain range from sea level to 4500 m (Nelson, 2006). Approximately 173 species in 41 genera and 8 subfamilies have been described (de Pinna & Wosiacki, 2003). With some 100 nominal species (de Pinna, 1992), *Trichomycterus* is the most diverse genus in the family and among the most taxonomically problematic genera of continental fish in South America. Its monophyletic status has been questioned by de Pinna (1989).

The Trichomycteridae is one of the most successful groups to occupy cave habitats. It currently contains eight troglomorphic species: *Ituglanis bambui* Bichuette & Trajano, *I. epikarsticus* Bichuette & Trajano, *I. passensis* Fernández & Bichuette, *I. ramiroi*, Bichuette & Trajano, *Silvinichthys bortayro* Fernández & de Pinna, *Trichomycterus chaberti* Durand, *T. itacarambiensis* Trajano & de Pinna and *T. spelaeus* Do Nascimento, Villarreal & Provenzano (DoNascimento, 2005). Species of *Trichomycterus* restricted to caves have been reported in the Umayalanta Cave in Bolivia (*T. chaberti*) by Durand (1968), Olhos d’Água Cave in Brasil (*T. itacarambiensis*) by Trajano & de Pinna (1996) and Punto Fijo Cave in Venezuela (*T. spelaeus*) by DoNascimento *et al.* (2001). In Colombia, 20 species have been reported in epigeal environments, and there is one unpublished report of a subterranean population of a non-troglomorphic species (Sket, 1988). This paper describes a new troglomorphic species of *Trichomycterus* from the cave “El Puente”, in the upper Lebrija River basin of the Santander Department, Colombia (Fig. 1).