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A new species of *Limatulichthys* Isbrücker & Nijssen (Loricariidae, Loricariinae) from the western Guiana Shield

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Abstract

Limatulichthys nasarcus n. sp. is described as a new species based on 15 specimens from the Ventuari and Caura Rivers in Southern Venezuela. The new species can be distinguished from its only congener, *L. griseus*, by the presence of anterior abdominal plates half the size of those at center of abdomen (vs. plates similar in size); distinct spots less than half of diameter of naris across entire dorsum, including snout and head (vs. indistinct dorsal spots larger or equal than diameter of naris); lateral portions of head and opercle with dark well-defined spots larger than those on dorsum (vs. spots on lateral portions of head and opercle equal in size to those on remainder of body); snout profile in dorsal view broadly rounded (vs. acutely triangular); head longer (21.4–24.2 SL vs. 17.7–21.0%); and anal fin longer (15.7–18.0 SL vs. 13.7–15.6%). Distinctiveness of the two species is further supported by their non-overlapping distribution in multivariate morphospace. The disjunct distribution of *L. nasarcus* across both the Caura and Ventuari rivers exclusive of the main Orinoco River channel contributes to a growing body of evidence supporting the historical connection between headwaters of these drainages. The hypothesized existence of a ‘proto-Berbice’ paleodrainage provides one explanation for such a connection.

Key words: *Limatulichthys*, Neotropics, taxonomy, Ventuari, Caura

Resumen

Limatulichthys nasarcus n. sp. es propuesta como una nueva especie a partir de 15 ejemplares provenientes de los ríos Ventuari y Caura al sur de Venezuela. La nueva especie puede ser distinguida de su único congénere, *L. griseus*, por la presencia de placas abdominales anteriores la mitad del tamaño que aquellas en el centro del abdomen (vs. placas de tamaño similar); manchas bien definidas, menos de la mitad del diámetro de las narinas, distribuidas en el dorso, incluyendo hocico y cabeza (vs. manchas grandes poco definidas en dorso, hocico y cabeza, más grandes o de igual tamaño al diámetro de las narinas); manchas oscuras bien definidas en las porciones laterales de la cabeza y opérculo más grandes que aquellas en el dorso (vs. manchas en las porciones laterales de la cabeza y opérculo del mismo tamaño a aquellas presentes en el dorso); perfil dorsal del hocico ancho, redondo (vs. extremadamente triangular); cabeza más larga (21.4–24.2 SL vs. 17.7–21.0%); y aleta anal más larga (15.7–18.0 SL vs. 13.7–15.6%). La diferenciación de ambas especies es soportada por su no superposición en la distribución en el morfoespacio multivariado. La distribución disyunta de *L. nasarcus* a lo largo tanto de los ríos Caura y Ventuari exclusivo del canal principal del río Orinoco contribuye a la creciente, y ya existente evidencia apoyando una conexión histórica entre las cabeceras de estos drenajes. La existencia hipotética de una paleocuenca “proto-Berbice” ofrece una explicación para dicha conexión.

Palabras clave: *Limatulichthys*, Neotrópico, taxonomía, Ventuari, Caura

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