

Three new *Parananochromis* species (Teleostei, Cichlidae) from Gabon and Cameroon, Central Africa

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Abstract

Parananochromis axelrodi, *P. brevirostris* and *P. ornatus*, three new cichlid species, are described from Gabon and southern Cameroon. *Parananochromis axelrodi* is a deep-bodied species differing from congeners in a combination of morphometric and meristic characters. *Parananochromis brevirostris* and *P. ornatus* are distinguished by the presence of four elements in the infraorbital series versus five elements in congeners. *Parananochromis brevirostris* differs from *P. ornatus* in lacking chest squamation and in the presence of a weakly-developed pharyngeal pad (versus well-developed pad and scaled chest in *P. ornatus*).

Key words: *Parananochromis*, new species, South Cameroon, Gabon

Introduction

The cichlid genus *Parananochromis* was erected by Greenwood (1987) to accommodate three species formerly placed in *Pelmatochromis* and *Nanochromis*. These species were *P. longirostris* (Boulenger, 1903) designated as the type of *Parananochromis*, *P. caudifasciatus* (Boulenger, 1913), and *P. gabonicus* (Trewavas, 1975). Although the precise relationships of this taxon remain problematical our current understanding is that *Parananochromis* belongs to the chromidotilapiine lineage. This assemblage currently comprises seven genera united by the possession of several derived anatomical features, including the presence of a visor-like pad on the roof of the buccopharynx just anterior to the upper pharyngeal bones, tuberculate gill-rakers on the outer row of the first gill arch, and the absence of microbranchiospines on the second to fourth gill arches (Greenwood 1987; Stiassny 1991). *Parananochromis* are readily distinguished from the chromidotilapi-