

***Apteronotus caudimaculosus* n. sp. (Gymnotiformes: Apteronotidae),
a sexually dimorphic black ghost knifefish from the Pantanal,
Western Brazil, with a note on the monophyly of the *A. albifrons*
species complex**

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Abstract

Apteronotus caudimaculosus, a new species of ghost knifefish with males having greatly elongated snouts, is described from the Pantanal wetlands, Paraguay River basin in Western Brazil. It is distinguished from its congeners by two light bands encircling the caudal peduncle, the first caudal band with irregular spots throughout its development. The presence of two light bands can be used to identify a monophyletic clade in Gymnotiformes, the so-called *A. albifrons* species complex. This group comprises *A. albifrons*, *A. caudimaculosus* and at least six undescribed species. An artificial key to identification of species currently in *Apteronotus* (*sensu stricto*) is provided.

Key words: Fish, new species, Apteronotidae, Pantanal, black ghost knifefish, secondary sexual dimorphism

Introduction

Presently, fifteen species are included in the genus *Apteronotus*. They can be identified by the following features (Albert, 2001): (1) body surface deep brown or black with a white mid-dorsal stripe and white mental and caudal patches; (2) elongate posterior limb of the anguloarticular; (3) surface of cranial bones solid, not pitted; (4) behavior of inhabiting upland streams, small rivers and lagoons; (5) premaxilla gracile, scroll-shaped in adults, with two or fewer teeth.

Apteronotus albifrons (Linnaeus, 1766) is the most widespread apteronotid species, occurring from Napo River in Equador to rivers in the state of Maranhão, Brazil, and from the Orinoco River to the state of Rio Grande do Sul in Southern Brazil. There are no records of the species in the trans-Andean region (Albert, 2001) and eastern coastal rivers