

***Erethistoides sicula*, a new catfish (Teleostei: Erethistidae) from India**

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Abstract

A new species of erethistid catfish, *Erethistoides sicula*, is described from the Brahmaputra River drainage in northeast India. *Erethistoides sicula* differs from both *E. montana* and *E. pipri* in having a longer caudal peduncle (19.6–22.3% SL vs. 14.4–18.4) and shorter pectoral spine (14.6–28.0% SL vs. 30.7–32.1). It further differs from *E. montana* in having a dorsally projecting bony splint on the opercle immediately posterior to its articular facet with the hyomandibula (vs. splint absent) and from *E. pipri* in having a more slender head (13.4–15.1% SL vs. 16.4). The diagnostic characters of *Erethistoides* are discussed and four new synapomorphies are proposed to diagnose the genus.

Key words: *Erethistoides*, Erethistidae, Nepal, Ganges River drainage, South Asia

Introduction

Members of the genus *Erethistoides* are small erethistid catfishes traditionally diagnosed by a strongly depressed head and body and the presence of diverging serrations (antrorse on the distal half and retrorse on the proximal half) on the anterior edge of the pectoral spine. The genus, known from the sub-Himalayan region of the Indian subcontinent, currently includes two nominal species: *E. montana* Hora, 1950 and *E. pipri* (Hora, 1950).

During a recent ichthyological survey of the northern Bengal region in India, specimens of *Erethistoides* were obtained, which upon further study, proved to be an undescribed species. The species is described here as *Erethistoides sicula*, new species. It was also found that the traditional diagnosis of *Erethistoides* is inadequate due to variation in the morphology of the pectoral-spine serrations. Here, four new synapomorphies diagnosing *Erethistoides* are identified and briefly discussed.