

## Description of *Cathorops mapale*, a new species of sea catfish (Siluriformes: Ariidae) from the Colombian Caribbean, based on morphological and mitochondrial evidence

RICARDO BETANCUR-R.<sup>1–2</sup> & ARTURO ACERO P.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Biological Sciences, Auburn University, 101 Cary Hall, Auburn, AL 36849, USA.  
E-mail: betanri@auburn.edu.

<sup>2</sup> Naos (molecular laboratory), Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Apartado 2072, Balboa, Panamá.

<sup>3</sup> Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Instituto de Ciencias Naturales), Cerro Punta Betín, A.A. 1016 (INVEMAR), Santa Marta, Colombia. E-mail: aacero@invemar.org.co.

### Abstract

A new species of sea catfish (Ariidae), *Cathorops mapale*, is described from the central and southwestern Colombian Caribbean coast. The species is distinguished from other *Cathorops* species from the western Atlantic by the following combination of features: 20–24 anterior gill rakers on first gill arch, 18–21 anterior gill rakers on second gill arch; maxillary barbels 27.8–39.3% standard length; medial head groove long and deep, extending posteriorly almost to supraoccipital keel. This species has been widely misidentified as *C. spixii* (Agassiz), a species known from Brazil to the Guianas. Based on mitochondrial evidence (cytochrome *b* and ATP synthase 8/6), *C. mapale* is more closely related to the eastern Pacific *C. fuerthii* (Steindachner) species group (2.2–2.8% sequence divergence) than to the *C. spixii* clade (5.9–6.2% sequence divergence). *C. mapale* is distinguished from the *C. fuerthii* group by having higher anterior gill raker counts on the first (14–15 in the *C. fuerthii* group) and second (15–17 in the *C. fuerthii* group) gill arches, and by having a smaller mouth (8.3–10.6% standard length in *C. mapale* and 11.0–11.6% standard length in the *C. fuerthii* group).

**Keywords:** *Cathorops mapale*, Ariidae, sea catfishes, Colombian Caribbean, mitochondrial genes

### Introduction

The family Ariidae (sea catfishes) is one of the two groups of siluriforms that have extensively invaded marine waters and the only one widespread on the world's tropical continental shelves. The nomenclature of the family has remained in a chaotic state because its