

New Philippine record of south american sailfin catfishes (Pisces: Loricariidae)

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Abstract

A taxonomic and biogeographic study of the introduced suckermouth armored catfishes locally known as “janitor fish” is briefly described. Specimens were collected from five sites in the Laguna de Bay basin and were examined for 19 meristic and 37 morphometric characters and other external features including coloration. Results were compared with existing literature on fishes in the family Loricariidae. Examination revealed that specimens of janitor fish, previously reported as *Hypostomus plecostomus*, actually belong to the genus *Pterygoplichthys*, family Loricariidae. Collected specimens consisted of two species—*Pterygoplichthys disjunctivus* and *Pterygoplichthys pardalis*. Both species were collected from the five sites except in Pasig River where only *P. disjunctivus* was collected.

Key words: Janitor fish, *Pterygoplichthys*, sailfin catfishes, Laguna de Bay, Philippines, introduced species

Introduction

In 2002, news reports of an introduced suckermouth armored catfish being caught in the waters of Laguna de Bay were published. The reports said that the fish was proliferating in the lake and was interfering in fishing-related activities. Apparently, the fish was being blamed for the decrease in the marketable fish catch from the lake either by replacing the usual fishes harvested or by destroying fishing nets and cages. Some national and local government agencies have also expressed concern over this problem because of the possible negative effects the fish may have on the lakes ecosystem.