



## ***Triplophysa waisihani*, a new species of nemacheiline loach from Northwest China (Pisces: Balitoridae)**

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### **Abstract**

*Triplophysa waisihani*, a new species of nemacheiline loach, is described from the Kax River, a tributary of the Ili River drainage in Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of Northwest China. It can be assigned to the *T. labiata* species group characterized by having widely separated anterior and posterior nostrils and no breeding tubercles on the sides of the head. *Triplophysa waisihani* resembles *T. labiata* and *T. herzensteini*, but differs from both in cephalic sensory-canal pattern and the structure of the gas bladder; from *T. labiata* in the structure of the pelvic girdle and absence or presence of the fourth basibranchial; and from *T. herzensteini* in the shape of the anal fin.

**Key words:** *Nemacheilinae*, Ili River drainage, Northwest China

### **Introduction**

Nemacheiline loaches are small benthic fishes common in Europe, Asia and northeastern Africa. They occur in a great variety of habitats, but are particularly abundant in swift-flowing hill streams where they are typically found living amongst stones (Kottelat, 1990; Golubtsov *et al.*, 1995; Kottelat & Freyhof, 2007). At present, this subfamily comprises of 33–35 genera and more than 500 species (Kottelat, 1990; Zhu, 1989, 1995; Bănărescu & Nalbant, 1995; Nalbant & Bianco, 1998; Sreekantha *et al.*, 2006; Prokofiev, 2007). It is represented in China by 15 genera and more than 180 species (unpublished data). Many nemacheiline loaches have been described by Chinese workers in the past 10 years (Chen, 1999; Wang & Li, 2001; Chen *et al.*, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2007; Du *et al.*, 2008), and there are undoubtedly many more species awaiting formal description.

The Ili River has its source in eastern Tian Mountain. It flows westward through Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture of Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of Northwest China and Almaty Province of Southeast Kazakhstan, and finally drains into the Balkhash Lake in Kazakhstan. The river has a total length of around 1,440 km. In China, the Ili River runs for about 440 km and has a catchment area of about 56000 km<sup>2</sup>, which is drained by three main tributaries: Kax River, Kunes River and Tekes River. There are 32 fish species currently reported from the Ili river drainage in China. Among these, ten are indigenous species from seven genera of Cyprinidae, Balitoridae and Percidae, the remaining species being non-native (Ren, 1998). The indigenous fish composition of the Chinese portion of the Ili River drainage is depauperate and is similar to that of the nearby Tibetan region (Ren, 1998). To date, four species of nemacheiline loaches have been recorded from the Ili River drainage in China, *viz.* *Triplophysa strauchii* (Kessler, 1874), *T. stoliczkae* (Steindachner, 1866), *T. dorsalis* (Kessler, 1872) and *Barbatula labiata* (Kessler, 1872) (Zhu, 1989; Ren, 1998).