



***Glyptothorax malabarensis*, a new catfish (Teleostei: Sisoridae) from the Western Ghats of Kerala, India**

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Abstract

Glyptothorax malabarensis, a new species of the Asian catfish family Sisoridae, is described from a hill stream of an upper tributary of the west-flowing Valappattanam River drainage of Kerala State, India. It is distinguished from its congeners in Peninsular India by the following combination of characters: body depth 19.6–9.9% SL, caudal peduncle length 14.3–14.7% SL and caudal peduncle depth 12.4–12.7% SL (caudal peduncle depth 86.4–88.1% of its length); thoracic adhesive apparatus approximately pentagonal, as long as broad, without a median depression; skin of head and body minutely granulated; and a coloration in life consisting of a black background with three flesh-red or orange transverse bands on body, in preservative changing to dark grey with black mottling and three yellowish-white transverse bands.

Key words: Sisoridae, new species, Valappattanam River, Western Ghats

Introduction

Sisorid catfishes of the genus *Glyptothorax* Blyth are benthic inhabitants of torrential waters of rivers and streams in montane and submontane parts of tropical Asia. The members of the genus are adapted to attach themselves to rocks and boulders against strong currents by means of a thoracic adhesive apparatus comprising grooves and folded pleats of skin parallel or oblique to the longitudinal axis of the body. The genus has a wide distribution, ranging from Turkey and Syria in the west, to India and China in the east, and extending further southeastward to Indonesia. With 84 nominal species, *Glyptothorax* are the most speciose genus of catfishes in Asia (Eschmeyer *et al.*, 1998, Ng, 2005); 67 species were treated as valid by Thomson & Page (2006).

Jayaram (2006) in his review of *Glyptothorax* from South Asia recorded 32 species, of which 25 were from India, a tally consistent also with Thomson & Page (2006). An updated assessment, based on a perusal of literature, reveals that there is considerable diversity within the genus in India, with 35 valid species (Viswanath & Linthoingambi, 2007; Gopi, 2007; Eschmeyer & Fricke, 2010). Of these, 25 are considered endemic to India, of which eight are restricted to peninsular India.

The Western Ghats are a north-south orientated range of mountains that border the west coast of the Indian peninsula, serving to divide the east and west-flowing drainages of this region. The Western Ghats are part of a Global Biodiversity Hotspot (Myers *et al.*, 2000) with an especially high incidence of endemic fish taxa (Dahanukar *et al.*, 2000).

The scientific team of the Zoological Survey of India, Calicut Station, in a faunal exploratory survey of the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary in Kannur District, Kerala, South India, made an incidental collection of three specimens of a distinctive *Glyptothorax* from the Urutty Stream, an upland tributary of the west-flowing Valappattanam River drainage in northern Kerala, at Pottichapara. The species is described here as *Glyptothorax malabarensis*, a new species.