



***Akysis bilustris*, a new species of catfish from southern Laos (Siluriformes: Akysidae)**

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Abstract

Akysis bilustris, new species, is described from the Xe Kong drainage (a subdrainage of the Mekong River) in southern Laos. It is distinguished from congeners in having a unique combination of the following characters: eye diameter 14.0–17.5% HL, serrae on posterior margin of pectoral spine 2–3 and longer than half width of spine, pectoral fin reaching to or overlapping pelvic-fin base (length 24.5–29.3% SL), adipose-fin base length 14.3–18.3% SL, body depth at anus 11.4–13.8% SL, caudal-peduncle length 19.6–23.4% SL, caudal-peduncle depth 6.7–9.2% SL, caudal fin emarginate, and vertebrae 30–31.

Key words: Mekong River drainage, freshwater fish, Ostariophysi

Introduction

The sisoroid catfish genus *Akysis* is a group of small (ca. 20–60 mm SL) catfishes with tuberculate skin found in fast-flowing streams and rivers in Southeast Asia; its geographical range is defined by the Irrawaddy River drainage to the west, the rivers draining the eastern face of the Annam Cordilleras in central Vietnam to the east, the upper Mekong drainage in China to the north and the Citarum River drainage to the south. *Akysis* is diagnosed by the combination of: anterior margin of the pectoral spine with a notch visible dorsally, the nasals with expansions beyond the canal-bearing region, the snout not extending or only slightly extending anterior to the margin of the lower jaw, rendering the mouth terminal or very slightly subterminal, the narial openings relatively small and separated by a distance greater than the base of the nasal barbel, and the caudal fin truncate, emarginate or weakly forked (de Pinna, 1996; Ng & Kottelat, 1998). There is much undiscovered diversity within the genus, highlighted by the fact that almost three-quarters of the known diversity (17 of 23 species) have been described within the last two decades.

The purpose of this study is to describe a new species of *Akysis* from the Mekong River drainage in southern Laos. The material that represents the new species was collected during ichthyological surveys in Laos and initially identified as *A. ephippifer*, a species described from Cambodia (Kottelat, 2001). Comparison with *A. ephippifer* and other congeners from the Mekong River drainage and elsewhere revealed enough differences to warrant its recognition as a species.

Material and methods

Measurements were made point-to-point with dial calipers and recorded to 0.1 mm. Ng & Dodson (1999) are followed for all measurements and counts. Institutional codes follow Ferraris (2007).