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Article

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Hemitaeniochromis brachyrhynchus, a new species of cichlid fish from Lake Malaŵi, with comments on some other supposed members of the genus (Teleostei: Cichlidae)

MICHAEL K. OLIVER[1]
[1]522 Route 148, Killingworth, CT 06419, USA. E-mail: anagenys@gmail.com

Abstract

Hemitaeniochromis brachyrhynchus, an anatomically distinctive and apparently rare new cichlid, is described and illustrated from specimens collected at two widely separated localities within Lake Malaŵi. It is easily distinguished from *H. urotaenia*, type species of the genus, by its narrow lacrimal bone which is only one-third of the orbit length, a character thought to be unique not only in *Hemitaeniochromis* but among all known Lake Malaŵi cichlids. The genus *Hemitaeniochromis* Eccles & Trewavas (1989) is redefined to allow provisional inclusion of this new species. Two species placed in *Protomelas* by Eccles & Trewavas (1989) [*P. insignis* (Trewavas) and *P. spilopterus* (Trewavas)] were recently transferred to *Hemitaeniochromis* by some authors, without much evidence. The generic placement of these controversial taxa, and of several undescribed species known only from underwater photographs, is briefly reconsidered.

Key words: melanic pattern, paedophage, taxonomy, *Mylochromis, Otopharynx, Protomelas*

Introduction

Comprising fully 5% of all known vertebrate species, the perciform family Cichlidae includes close to 3,000 species counting both described forms and those that are known but undescribed. About two-thirds of cichlids are found in Africa, the large majority of them endemic to the lakes of the Great Rift Valley. Lake Malaŵi alone is home to at least one-fourth of all known cichlids—a decade ago, estimates of its cichlid fauna ranged from 700 (Turner *et al.* 2001) to 800 species (Snoeks 2001), and a more recent work (Konings 2007) mentions 843 species, of which about 400, in 58 genera, have been formally described (Oliver 2012).

In their ambitious revision of the haplochromine cichlids (other than mbuna) endemic to Lake Malawi, Eccles and Trewavas (1989) erected 23 genera distinguished chiefly by possession of different melanic color patterns and by their trophic specializations. One of these new genera was the monotypic *Hemitaeniochromis*, proposed to accommodate a distinctively marked piscivorous predator originally named *Haplochromis urotaenia* by Regan (1922). *Hemitaeniochromis* was characterized by unicuspid outer teeth in the upper and lower jaws, spaced about a tooth's width apart, and by a specific modification of the primitive haplochromine color pattern of vertical bars and two horizontal stripes. In *Hemitaeniochromis* the stripes predominate, the bars being indistinct; the supralateral horizontal stripe is reduced to a series of spots on the anterior upper flanks where it crosses the faint vertical bars, and the midlateral stripe is usually uninterrupted on the posterior half, but continues anteriorly as a row of spots, again at the intersections with bars, ending several scales behind the operculum. There is also a row of dorsal midline spots adjacent to the dorsal-fin base. Nine additional species, most known only from photographs, have been referred to *Hemitaeniochromis* by some workers (Turner 1996; Duponchelle & Ribbink 2000; Snoeks & Hanssens 2004; Konings 2007), but several of these species do not share the derived melanic pattern of interrupted stripes characteristic of *H. urotaenia* and some have dentition of unknown type.

While sorting Lake Malaŵi cichlids in the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University, specimens that I had collected with colleagues in 1980, I recently came upon an adult individual with a melanin pattern resembling that of *Hemitaeniochromis*, but with the preocular part of the head strikingly modified. The fish was not a

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