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***Schistura maculosa*, a new species of loach (Teleostei: Nemacheilidae) from Mizoram, northeastern India**

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Abstract

Schistura maculosa, a new species of loach, is described from Tuingo and Pharsih Rivers, tributaries of Tuivai River (Barak drainage) in Mizoram, northeastern India. It is distinguished from other closely related *Schistura* species in having an axillary pelvic lobe; an incomplete lateral line; 20–30 narrow black bars on the body; 3–4 rows of black spots horizontally across the dorsal-fin; a slightly emarginate caudal-fin, with 5–7 rows of black spots more or less regularly arranged vertically on rays across the fin, and 8+8 branched caudal-fin rays.

Key words: benthic, Brahmaputra basin, Ichthyofauna, Kawlben

Introduction

Loaches of the genus *Schistura* McClelland are small benthic fishes characterized by a moderately arched mouth; lower lip with a median interruption, but not forming two triangular pads; a color pattern consisting of more or fewer regular bars; usually a black bar (sometimes dissociated) at the caudal-fin base; dorsal-fin with one or two black marks along its base; no acuminate scales on caudal peduncle; and caudal-fin truncate to forked. The genus is widely distributed throughout Asia, Europe and parts of Ethiopia (Kottelat, 1990). Currently, there are almost 200 nominal species in the genus (Kottelat, 2012), eleven of which are known from the two major drainages of Mizoram, northeastern India, namely *S. aizawlensis* Lalramliana, *S. chindwinica* (Tilak & Hussain), *S. kanjupkhulensis* (Hora), *S. koladynensis* Lokeshwor & Vishwanath, *S. multifasciata* (Day), *S. porocephala* Lokeshwor & Vishwanath, *S. savona* (Hamilton), *S. scaturigina* (McClelland), *S. sikmaiensis* (Hora), *S. tirapensis* Kottelat and *S. vinciguerrae* (Hora) (see Kar & Sen, 2007; Karmakar & Das, 2007; Lalramliana, 2012; Lokeshwor & Vishwanath, 2012, 2013). The taxonomic status of some of these species, however, is doubtful.

A recent ichthyofaunal survey conducted along the Tuingo and Pharsih Rivers, tributaries of the Tuivai River (Barak drainage), Mizoram, north-eastern India included a *Schistura* species that differs from other species of the genus already reported from the basin. A comparison of this material with congeners revealed it to belong to an unnamed species, which is described herein as *Schistura maculosa*.

Material and methods

Specimens were preserved in 10% formalin and later transferred to 70% alcohol. Counts and measurements were made on the left side of specimens following Kottelat (1990), with the exclusion of total length, and the addition of body depth taken at anal-fin origin. Measurements were made point to point with digital calipers to the nearest 0.1 mm. Measurements, except standard length, are given as proportions of standard length (SL). Sub-units of the head are presented as proportions of dorsal head length (DHL). Fin rays were counted using a stereomicroscope. For vertebral counts, four specimens were cleared and stained following the method of Taylor and Van Dyke (1985).