



<http://dx.doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.3780.3.2>

<http://zoobank.org/urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:AFB77705-1519-413D-96CD-25EDE68A6C73>

Descriptions of three new species of *Marcusenius* Gill, 1862 (Teleostei: Mormyridae) from South Africa and Mozambique

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Abstract

Morphological and genetic studies of mormyrid fishes belonging to the genus *Marcusenius* from South Africa and Mozambique revealed four species of which three are described as new. *Marcusenius pongolensis* is widespread throughout the Incomati, Pongola and Kosi river systems, and sparsely represented in the Limpopo River system in South Africa. *Marcusenius krameri* sp. nov. is endemic to the Limpopo River system, and is the sister taxon of *M. caudisquamatus* sp. nov. from the Nseleni and Mhlatuze river systems in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. The Ruvuma specimens were well differentiated from all southern and eastern African species of *Marcusenius*, and are therefore recognised as *M. luombesi* sp. nov. Phylogenetic analysis of the mitochondrial cytochrome *b* gene showed that the three new species and *M. altisambesi* form a monophyletic lineage that is sister to a group containing *M. pongolensis* and *M. macrolepidotus*. *Marcusenius krameri* and *M. luombesi* seems to prefer slow flowing reaches of rivers, whereas *M. pongolensis* and *M. caudisquamatus* seems to mainly inhabit rapid flowing sections of rivers with a rocky substrate. A key to the southern African species of *Marcusenius* is provided.

Key words: DNA barcoding, cytochrome *b*, genetics, genotypes, identification key, *Marcusenius*, morphology, Mozambique, South Africa, species descriptions

Introduction

Mormyrids have been of widespread research interest ever since Lissmann (1951) discovered that they produce and receive weak electric signals for the purposes of mating, communication and object-location (e.g. Lissmann & Machin 1958; Bennett 1971; Kirschbaum 1975; Szabo & Fessard 1974; Hopkins 1981, 1986, 2009; Kramer & Westby 1985; Bastian 1986; Hanika & Kramer 2000; Werneyer & Kramer 2005; Carlson *et al.* 2011). The electric organs of these fishes, located in the caudal peduncle, generate an electric signal, referred to as the electric organ discharge (EOD) that is often species-specific and has been used as a taxonomic character in systematic studies of this group (Alves-Gomes & Hopkins 1997; Boden *et al.* 1997; Moritz *et al.* 2009, Kramer *et al.* 2012; Kramer 2013a; Kramer *et al.* in press).

The genus *Marcusenius* is the largest genus of the Mormyridae, currently with 37 valid species, widely distributed from the Nilo-Sudan (Boden *et al.* 1997) to South Africa (Kramer *et al.* 2007). Since the systematic revision by Taverne (1971; 1972), many new species have been described (e.g. Bigorne & Paugy 1990; Boden *et al.* 1997; Kramer *et al.* 2007). Kramer (2013b) added a new species from West Africa, while Kramer and Wink (2013) described another from the Cunene River on the border between Angola and Namibia. Kramer *et al.* (2007) discovered that there are at least five species in southern Africa rather than a single widespread species. These are *M. macrolepidotus* (Peters, 1852) from the Lower Zambezi River; *M. angolensis* (Boulenger, 1905) from Cuanza River in Angola and *M. pongolensis* (Fowler, 1934) from the Incomati, Pongola, Kosi and Mhlatuze rivers in South Africa; they also described *M. devosi* from Kenya's Tana River and *M. altisambesi* from the Upper-Zambezi and Okavango river systems.

yielded congruent results with EODs, confirming its usefulness as a systematic character (Kramer *et al.* 2007; 2012; Kramer & Swartz 2010; Kramer & Van der Bank 2011).

Sequence analysis of the mitochondrial *cyt b* gene confirmed that specimens of *M. krameri*, *M. caudisquamatus* and *M. lucombessi* were distinct from each other (0.9–3.5% divergence, see Table 2) and all three species are distinct from *M. pongolensis* and *M. macrolepidotus* (2.0–5.8% divergence) (Figure 4). The level of *cyt b* genetic divergence between all the analysed species (0.9–6.8%) are comparable with species-level differences in other mormyrids, such as *Marcusenius* species assessed by Kramer *et al.* (2007) (1.5–8.5%), *Petrocephalus* species assessed by Lavoué *et al.* (2008) (1.5–14.5%) and by Kramer *et al.* (2012) (0.8–4.2%). Based on a molecular clock by Burrige *et al.* (2008) used in other mormyrid taxa such as *Pollimyrus* Taverne, 1971 (Kramer *et al.* in press), the divergences of the new species from their most recent ancestor (*M. altisambesi* of the Upper Zambezi) possibly occurred between 3.4 to 6.0 million years ago. The basal position of *M. altisambesi* within this group is consistent with the hypothesis that the Upper Zambezi discharged to the Indian Ocean through the Limpopo valley until about 2 million years ago (Moore & Larkin 2001; Skelton 2001). The geological reviews in Moore and Larkin (2001) and Stankiewicz and de Wit (2006) show that the headwaters of the lower Zambezi captured the middle Zambezi via the Kariba Gorge, where the middle Zambezi captured the Upper Zambezi via the Batoka Gorge, creating the present course of the main Zambezi River. This could explain the isolation of the three species in South Africa, but further research is required to understand relationships among all the *Marcusenius* species.

Acknowledgements

The research was funded by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF, grant no. FA200705100020). We are grateful to the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency and their staff for their assistance and logistical support. We particularly thank Andre Hoffman, Francois Roux and the late Johan Engelbrecht for discussions and assistance in the field. Richard Simelane, Geelbooi Mashilo and Mpho Ramoejane also assisted in the field. We also thank landowners in the KZN, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces for access to their properties. We are also grateful for the assistance and advice given by Roger Bills, Albert Chakona and Taryn Bodill from SAIAB. Bernd Kramer (Zoological Institute, University of Regensburg, Germany) assisted in the field and helped to initiate this project. Gavin Gouws assisted with analysis and reviewed the manuscript. The authors acknowledge that opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication generated by the NRF supported research are that of the authors and that the NRF accepts no liability whatsoever in this regard.

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APPENDIX 1. Additional material of the genus *Marcusenius* occurring in eastern and southern African river systems observed for vertebral and gill raker counts.

- M. angolensis* (Boulenger, 1905): SAIAB 84751, 11: 83–143 mm SL, Cuanza River, above confluence with Kawa River. SAIAB 84768: 105 mm SL, same collection data as previous lot. SAIAB 84707, 3: 107–124 mm SL, Lucala River. SAIAB 84735: 120 mm SL, Kawa River.
- M. altisambesi* Kramer, Skelton, Van der Bank & Wink, 2007: SAIAB 79136, 7: 129.3–180.0 mm SL, Lisiliki River, Upper Zambezi system. SAIAB 98584, 21, Kalimbeza channel backwater, Upper Zambezi System.
- M. devosi* Kramer, Skelton, Van der Bank & Wink, 2007: SAIAB 79138 (holotype), 102.5 mm SL, Tana River. SAIAB 79139 (Paratypes), 9: 96.6–116.7 mm SL, Tana River.
- M. livingstonii* (Boulenger, 1899): SAIAB 35825, 6. Lifune River, Lake Chiuta System. SAIAB 50153, 7: 49.1–60.8 mm SL, Pool in stream bed above Lake Chikukutu. SAIAB 73882, 116.6 mm SL, Rovuma River. SAIAB 73883, 3: 82.4–105.7 mm SL, Rovuma River. SAIAB 35797, 4, Njerwa Beach, Lake Chiuta System. SAIAB 73853, 3: 44.1–64.6 mm SL, Nandanda River, Lugenda System.
- M. macrolepidotus* (Peters, 1852): SAIAB 61603, 4, Lagoon behind sugar fields, Lower Zambezi system. SAIAB 67369, 25: 69.4–148.1 mm SL, Lucite River, Lower Zambezi System. SAIAB 64835, 2: 135–140 mm SL, Maputo River, Maputo System.
- M. multsquamatus* Kramer, 2013: SAIAB 59455, 5: 123.6–156.4 mm SL, Ruacana River, Cunene system. SAIAB 186772, 7: 80.0–124.0 mm SL, Cunene system. SAIAB 59458, 2: 113.9–137.9 mm SL, Ruacana Gorge, Cunene system. SAIAB 28065, 3, Canal at Mahanene, Cunene System. SAIAB 87287, 180 mm SL, Cunene Lagoon, Cunene System.