



***Pethia longicauda*, a new species of barb (Teleostei: Cyprinidae) from the northern Western Ghats, India**

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Abstract

Pethia longicauda, a new cyprinid fish, is described from Hiranyakeshi River, Krishna drainage, Maharashtra, India. It can be distinguished from congeners based on a combination of characters including: a long caudal peduncle, incomplete lateral line, absence of barbels, upper lip thick and fleshy, distinct lateral fold on snout, 22–24 scales in lateral series, 5–6 lateral-line pored scales, nine predorsal scales, 9–10 prepelvic scales, 15–17 preanal scales, ½3/1/3½ transverse scales, 11–15 pairs of serrae on the distal half of the last unbranched dorsal-fin ray, 11–13 branched pectoral fin rays, 4+26 total vertebrae, 4+5 predorsal vertebrae, 4+13 abdominal and 13 caudal vertebrae, body iridescent silver in color with a black humeral spot, two black blotches on caudal peduncle and dorsal fin usually without any color bands or blotches but in breeding males with two rows of minute, indistinct black spots.

Key words: Maharashtra, freshwater fish, molecular phylogeny, osteology, taxonomy

Introduction

Fishes of the genus *Pethia* are characterized by small adult size (usually less than 50 mm SL, exceptionally to 80 mm SL), absence of rostral barbels, maxillary barbels usually absent or if present minute, last unbranched dorsal-fin ray stiff and serrated, 3 to 4 unbranched and 8 branched dorsal-fin rays, 3 unbranched and 5 branched anal-fin rays, 11–13 precaudal and 13–16 caudal vertebrae, lateral line complete, interrupted or incomplete with 19–24 scales in lateral series (except *Pethia sharmai* (Menon & Rema Devi, 1993), which has 40–41 scales) and color pattern consisting of a black blotch on caudal peduncle with other black blotches, spots or bars on body (Pethiyagoda *et al.* 2012; Knight 2013). The genus, endemic to south Asia, currently comprises of 36 species across India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Myanmar (Pethiyagoda *et al.* 2012; Knight 2013; Dishma & Vishwanath 2013; Gurung *et al.* 2013; Kottelat 2013; Katwate *et al.* 2014). In India, the genus is represented by 24 species, out of which eight are endemic to the Western Ghats (Katwate *et al.* 2014).

The true diversity of the genus *Pethia* in India, however, is still underestimated for two reasons. Firstly, several areas, especially in the northern part of Western Ghats, are still unexplored (Dahanukar *et al.* 2011); and secondly, several nominal species apparently comprise of species complexes. *Pethia ticto* (Hamilton, 1822) has long been treated as a widely distributed species found throughout the Indian subcontinent (Hora *et al.* 1939; Jayaram 1991). However, recent taxonomic work has suggested that *P. ticto* is a species complex comprising several distinct species (Beevi & Ramachandran 2005; Linthoingambi & Vishwanath 2007; Mercy & Jacob 2007; Knight *et al.* 2012; Katwate *et al.* 2014), with *P. ticto* sensu stricto possibly restricted to the Ganges watershed. Taxonomic validation of several reports of *P. ticto* from the Western Ghats, therefore, is likely to result in the description of new species.

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