

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11164/zootaxa.3920.3.4>
<http://zoobank.org/urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:F8EA6C31-68BA-4EF2-BA44-63275B0A315A>

***Nematocharax costai* Bragança, Barbosa & Mattos a junior synonym of *Nematocharax venustus* Weitzman, Menezes & Britski (Teleostei: Characiformes: Characidae)**

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Abstract

Analysis of morphometric and meristic data from specimens obtained from various river basins along the distribution of *Nematocharax venustus* revealed intraspecific variation among geographically isolated populations. A comparative analysis of these data with data from the original description of *N. costai*, in addition to data obtained from the holotype and topotypes of the species, showed broad overlap and absence of morphological features supporting the recognition of two species within *Nematocharax*. Characters previously used to distinguish *N. costai* from *N. venustus*, such as presence of hooks or spinules on dorsal and pelvic fins, number of hooks on anal-fin rays, occurrence of a pink horizontal mark on the caudal peduncle, number of supraneurals, and coloration of the pelvic-fin filament, are not useful to distinguish the two putative species. Thus, *N. costai* is considered herein as a junior synonym of *N. venustus*. Presence of a complete lateral line and length of fin-filaments of *N. venustus* are briefly discussed and a current overview of the distribution of the species is given. In view of the proposed synonymy of a so recently described species and aiming to avoid problems of similar nature in the future, we also take the opportunity to reinforce herein the importance of the examination of large population samples and of intraspecific variation of secondary sexual features.

Key words: taxonomy, intraspecific variation, coastal rivers, sexual dimorphism

Resumo

Análise de dados morfométricos e merísticos de espécimes obtidos de várias bacias hidrográficas ao longo da distribuição de *Nematocharax venustus* revelou variação intraespecífica de caracteres entre populações isoladas geograficamente. A análise comparativa destes dados com os dados contidos na descrição original de *N. costai*, em conjunto com dados obtidos do holótipo e topótipos da espécie, revelou ampla sobreposição com os dados de *N. venustus* e consequente ausência de características morfológicas sustentando o reconhecimento de duas espécies em *Nematocharax*. Caracteres previamente usados para distinguir *N. costai* de *N. venustus*, tais como ocorrência de espinhos ou espínulas nas nadadeiras dorsal e pélvicas, número de raios na nadadeira anal com espinhos, ocorrência de uma mancha horizontal de coloração rosea no pedúnculo caudal, número de supraneurais e colorido do filamento pélvico, não são úteis para distinguir as duas supostas espécies. Assim, *N. costai* é considerada sinônimo junior de *N. venustus*. A extensão da linha lateral e o comprimento dos filamentos das nadadeiras de *N. venustus* são brevemente discutidos e uma síntese atual da distribuição da espécie é dada. Tendo em vista a sinonimização proposta de uma espécie tão recentemente descrita e com o objetivo de evitar tais problemas em futuros casos, nós aproveitamos também a oportunidade para reforçar aqui a importância de uma ampla análise de amostras da população e atenção especial para variação intraespecífica de características sexuais secundárias.

Palavras-chave: Taxonomia, variação intraespecífica, rios costeiros, dimorfismo sexual

were produced by José L. O. Birindelli, Osvaldo T. Oyakawa, Telton Ramos, and Rafael O. Abreu. Photograph of the dorsal-fin spinule was produced by Túlio F. Teixeira and of the anal-fin hooks and supraneurals by Luciana R. Martins. Permission for collecting specimens was granted by IBAMA. The last author was supported by FAPESP (2012/00840-6).

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