Aperioptus pictorius Richardson 1848 is a senior synonym of Acanthopsoides molobrion Siebert 1991, and Aperioptus is a senior synonym of Acanthopsoides Fowler 1934 (Cypriniformes: Cobitidae)

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Abstract

Aperioptus pictorius was described by Richardson in 1848 with limited textual information but with an illustration sufficient to confirm the species as one currently recognized as Acanthopsoides molobrion making Aperioptus a senior synonym of Acanthopsoides Fowler 1934 and A. pictorius a senior synonym of Acanthopsoides molobrion Siebert 1991. Species to be recognized in Aperioptus in addition to A. molobrion are A. gracilis (Fowler 1934), A. gracilentus (Smith 1945), A. delphax (Siebert 1991), A. hapalias (Siebert 1991), and A. robertsi (Siebert 1991). Aperioptus also is a senior synonym of Neacanthopsis Smith 1945, type species Neacanthopsis gracilentus.

Key words: Acanthopsoides, Neacanthopsis, Teleostei, loaches

Aperioptus pictorius was described by Richardson (1848) with a line drawing and the following text:

“Of this fish I can give no details. There were two specimens which I unfortunately placed in the hands of the artist before I had examined them, except very cursorily. While he was employed in sketching, he put them into a plateful of water for the purpose of expanding their fins more perfectly, and forgetting that he had not returned them into the spirits, they were thrown out and lost. The general aspect of the fish is that of a slender Galaxias, but there are no teeth on the jaws. The orifice of the mouth is a narrow vertical oval, which is restricted on the sides by membranous processes. The figure is of the natural size. Hab. Borneo.”

Although the lack of type specimens and the limited text in the original description has caused confusion over the identity of A. pictorius, the name has appeared several times in print. It was listed by Gunther (1868), and Popta (1906) listed A. pictorius as a species found in Sarawak. Vaillant (1902) revised the diagnosis of Aperioptus, but did so based on his description of Aperioptus megalomycter, now considered valid as Ellopistoma megalomycter (Vaillant 1902) and placed in the family Ellopistomatidae (Bohlen & Šlechtová, 2009; Chen, et al., 2009). Weber and de Beaufort (1916:238–239) described A. pictorius as a species of “doubtful systematic position and habitat” and reproduced the figure from Richardson's (1848) original description. Roberts (1972) expressed the opinion that the original description of A. pictorius was insufficient to identify the species, and most recently Kottelat (2012) treated Aperioptus and A. pictorius as questionable synonyms of Acantopsis and Acantopsis dialuzona, respectively.

Although Richardson's text provides little diagnostic information, the accompanying figure, which Richardson noted was of the same approximate size as the two specimens he examined, is more informative. The figured specimen (Fig. 1) is long and slender with a somewhat elongated snout and many small dark spots on the upper side from the head to the caudal peduncle. All of these characteristics are consistent with those of species now assigned to the genus Acanthopsoides Fowler 1934 as described mostly recently by Siebert (1991a).