



A new species of *Crenicichla* (Perciformes: Cichlidae) from the Ventuari River, Upper Orinoco River Basin, Amazonas State, Venezuela

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Abstract

We describe a new species of the genus *Crenicichla* Heckel, 1840, from the Ventuari River, a tributary of the Orinoco River in southern Venezuela. *Crenicichla zebrina* is distinguished from all other species in the genus by its unique coloration pattern, including the combination of a large, dark, vertically oriented, more or less oval-shaped humeral spot, and thin, dark bars, separated by narrow, vertical, yellowish bars extending between the dorsal and anal fin base on the caudal half of the body. *Crenicichla zebrina* is included in the putative *C. acutirostris* group (9 species) and represents the only species in the group known to date from the Orinoco basin.

Key words: *Crenicichla*, new species, Orinoco, Ventuari River, Venezuela

Resumen

Se describe una especie nueva de *Crenicichla* Heckel, 1840, del Río Ventuari, un tributario del Río Orinoco al sureste de Venezuela. *Crenicichla zebrina* se distingue de todas las demás especies en el género por un patrón único de coloración que consiste de barras verticales oscuras separadas por finas barras de color amarillento que se extienden desde la aleta dorsal hasta la base de la aleta anal; en combinación con una mancha humeral vertical, grande y oscura, más o menos ovalada. *Crenicichla zebrina* pertenece al grupo putativo *C. acutirostris* (9 especies) y representa la única especie del grupo conocida hasta hoy en la cuenca del Orinoco.

Palabras claves: *Crenicichla*, especie nueva, Río Orinoco, Río Ventuari, Venezuela

Introduction

The predatory genus *Crenicichla* Heckel, 1840 (pike cichlids) is the most diverse genus of South American cichlids next to *Apistogramma*, comprising 78 valid species in cis-Andean South America (Kullander 2003; Kullander & Lucena 2006; Lucena 2007). Previously thought to be a basal Neotropical genus related to *Cichla* (Stiassny 1987, 1991; Kullander 1998), *Crenicichla* has recently been found to be related to *Apistogramma* and *Satanoperca* within the South American clade Geophaginae (Farias *et al.* 2000; López-Fernández *et al.* 2005a, b). The monophyly of *Crenicichla* has not been completely established, as some molecular evidence fails to separate it from the closely allied genus *Teleocichla* (Farias *et al.* 2000; HLF *et al.* Unpubl.).