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Review of the African catfish genus *Andersonia* (Teleostei: Siluriformes)

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Abstract

Fishes of the catfish genus *Andersonia* (Amphiliidae, Doumeinae) are distributed widely across the northern sub-Saharan portion of Africa that is called the Nilo-Sudan Bioregion. Recent literature indicated that either one or two species of *Andersonia* occur in the four drainage basins (upper Niger, upper Nile, Omo, and Lake Chad) in which the genus has been found. Our study failed to find any differences in the samples from those basins, as we therefore treat them as populations of a single species, *A. leptura*, which is redescribed based on extensive series of specimens from across its range. The genus *Andersonia* is retained as valid at this time, based on the lack of clear evidence of the phylogenetic position of *A. leptura* within the Doumeinae. However, a broader sampling of taxa, especially among species currently placed in the genus *Phractura*, may require a change to that assignment.

Key words: Amphiliidae, Doumeinae, Nilo-Sudan Bioregion

Introduction

Andersonia leptura was proposed by Boulenger (1900) to accommodate a single small-sized specimen of a previously unnamed genus and species of amphiliid catfish from Sudan. Although Boulenger reported that the new form resembled species of *Phractura*, he distinguished it from members of that genus by having a spine at the anterior margin of the dorsal and adipose fins, a more posteriorly placed dorsal fin situated dorsal to the pelvic fin, a single pair of mandibular barbels, and edentulous jaws. As discussed below, subsequent studies have found that only some of those purported differences were accurate.

Soon thereafter, Werner (1906a) proposed the name *Slatinia mongallensis*, in a published abstract for a monograph on the fishes of the Nile River basin, based on three specimens collected in the White Nile River in Sudan. Werner compared his material to the description of *Andersonia leptura* and noted that *Slatinia* had two sets of mandibular barbels rather than the one reported for *Andersonia.* Although initially treated as a distinct genus and species, Werner apparently discovered that Boulenger's original report of only a single set of mandibular barbels in *Andersonia* was erroneous (see comments by Boulenger, 1907: 392, footnote). In a full account of the species, which appeared later in the same year, Werner (1906b) identified his sample as *Andersonia leptura*, with *Slatinia mongallensis* as a synonym. Subsequent discoveries of populations identified as *Andersonia leptura* were reported from the Omo River basin (Pellegrin, 1935) and the upper Niger River basin (Daget, 1959).

A second species of *Andersonia* was named by Boulenger (1918) based on a single specimen that originated in the Shari River of the Chad River basin in what was then French Equatorial Africa. The species was identified as *A. brevior* (n. sp.) in the introductory comments to that paper, but *A. pellegrini* in the account of the species. Boulenger (1918: 427) reported that *A. pellegrini* was distinguished from *A. leptura* by "the smaller eye and the different proportions of the [supra-] occipital process" (bracketed addition ours).

The two species of *Andersonia* were accepted as distinct by several authors (see synonymy, below) with material from the Nile River system, the Omo-Turkana basin and the Niger basin identified as *A. leptura* and that from the Chad basin as *A. pellegrini*. Blache *et al.* (1964) alternatively noted that proportional eye size for a sample of specimens from the Chad basin varied to a degree that it overlapped the size reported by Boulenger (1900) for *A.*

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