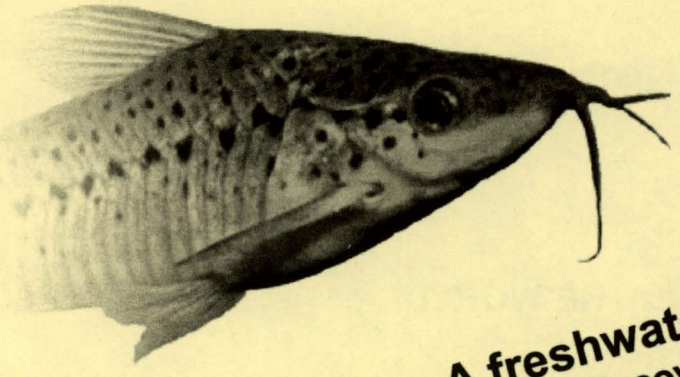
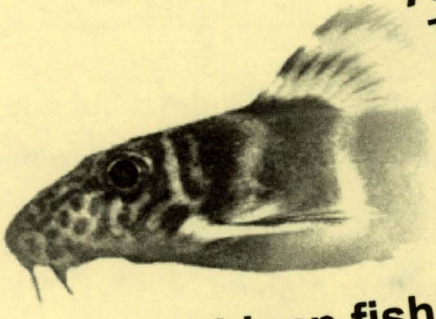
CAT CHAT

The Journal of the Catfish Study Group (UK)

Aquatic lodger
By ian Fuller



A freshwater coelacanth story:
The rediscovery of the giant pancake-headed catfish Pardiglanis tarabinii



African fish leaps for land bugs

'What's New' by Mark Walters

Volume 7 Issue Number 2
June 2006

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The Committee and I apologise for the late delivery of this journal but due to the lack of articles, there would have only been the advertisements to send to you. Without your information, photos or articles, there is no Cat Chat.

Thank you to those of you who did contribute.

Articles for publication in Cat Chat should be sent to:

Bill Hurst
18 Three Pools
Crossens
Southport
PR9 8RA
England

Or by e-mail to: **editor@catfishstudygroup.org** with the subject **Cat Chat** so that I don't treat it as spam mail and delete it without opening it.

HONORARY COMMITTEE FOR THE CATFISH STUDY GROUP (UK) 2006

PRESIDENT
Trevor (JT) Morris

VICE PRESIDENT
Dr Peter Burgess
AquaticsDoctor@aol.com

CHAIRMAN
Ian Fuller
chairman@catfishstudygroup.org

VICE CHAIRMAN/TREASURER
Danny Blundell
treasurer@catfishstudygroup.org

SECRETARY
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secretary@catfishstudygroup.org

SHOW SECRETARY
Brian Walsh
showsecretary@catfishstudygroup.org

ASSISTANT SHOW SECRETARY
Ann Blundell

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
Stuart Brown
membershipsecretary@catfishstudygroup.org

WEB SITE MANAGER
webmaster@catfishstudygroup.org

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Peter Liptrot
bolnathist@gn.apc.org

SOUTHERN REP
Steve Pritchard
S.Pritchard@btinternet.com

CAT CHAT EDITOR
Bill Hurst
editor@catfishstudygroup.org

REFERENCE LIBRARIAN
Bob Barnes

SCIENTIFIC ADVISER
Isaäc Isbrücker

FUNCTIONS MANAGER
Trevor Morris
trevorjtcat@aol.com

SOCIAL SECRETARY
Terry Ward
terryward433@hotmail.com

AUCTION ORGANISERS
Roy & Dave Barton

CAT CHAT

The Committee of the CSG (UK) would like to thank the following companies for their support in the production of this journal

Aquarian • Arcadia • Tetra • King British • Waterlife • Algarde •
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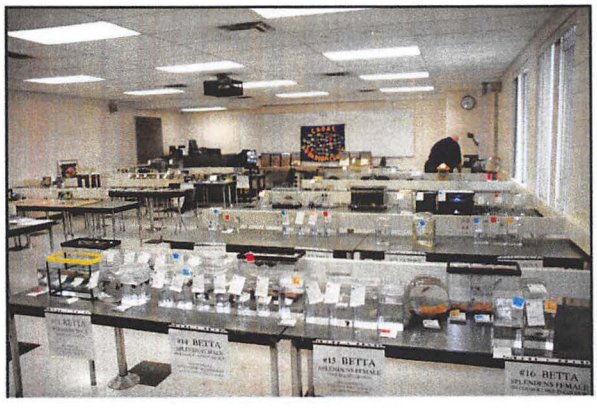
From the Chair

As seems to be the way this year we are running a little late with the magazine, partly our fault with equipment problems and partially yours, yes I am afraid so. If you don't send us material then we have very little to print and I am sure you would like a magazine that only contains adverts and a few words from me. The fact that our printer had been giving us a few problems didn't help, in fact it gave us a little more time to gather more material, without which there would not have been much to read. So if you haven't introduced yourself by way of a "Meet the member" piece why not do it now. We don't want reams of personal history, a photograph and just a few lines to tell us how your interest in Catfish started and any aims or aquatic ambitions you may have.

That's my little moan out of the way, for now. What's been happening with the group over the last thee months? Well, regarding the monthly meetings, I have only be able to attend the April meeting. The presentation for the day was given by Group secretary Adrian Taylor and was a very informative talk on the keeping, breeding and identifying Asian catfishes belonging to the families Erethistes & Akyisidae.

May: I went to Ontario Canada to talk at the Canadian Association of Aquarium Clubs (CAOAC), this year the London Aquarium Society was hosting the event. While I was there I also judged the Catfish sections of their open show.



I was scheduled to talk at the CSG's June meeting, but after the program fixture had been published I received an invitation to visit Norway for the summer meeting of the Grenland Aquarium Club. Danny Blundell kindly agreed to swap dates and give his talk on aquatic photography; my Cory talk will now take place at the July meeting.

The meeting in Norway was definitely one with a difference, the meeting or to be more accurate I should really say social gathering, takes place at a farm owned by one of the members. It is basically a weekend event where members and their families are invited to come and stay, which many did, pitching their tents on suitable patches of ground around the farmhouse. The event itself is as I said a social event with the members talking, drinking beer and eating all manner of food cooked on a very large barbeque. The

club activity itself started on Saturday evening around 10.00pm (Still daylight) with a fish auction, the scene was set for the talks. The makeshift screen, a large sheet of white plastic was pinned up on the side of the house and the projector and laptop plugged in and we were ready to go. By around 12.30 am it was dark enough and the talks got underway. This was definitely a new experience for me and one thing I had not bargained for were the mosquito's, I should have realized that being in a forest close to a couple of large lakes there would be a few biting insects and boy did they bite. Next time I will be taking plenty of insect repellent.

Some of you may be wondering what has happened with the Breeders Award Program that I said would be up and running at the beginning of the year. Well, like most voluntary organizations, getting people to actually work is not easy and all my requests for a volunteer to take on the post of PAB Secretary seem to fall on deaf ears. However, all is not lost and although at this point there has been no official appointment I do have a member who has shown interest in the position. An inaugural meeting has been set to get the program under way and as soon as there is anything further to report, I or the new BAP Secretary will be making the announcements here in the magazine, on the web site and in the CSG forum on Planet Catfish.

Georges Cuvier (1769 – 1832)

By A.W. Taylor.

George Cuvier was a French Zoologist and Naturalist and the elder brother of Frederic Cuvier (also a naturalist). Baron, Georges Léopold Chrétien Frédéric Dagobert Cuvier, to give him his full name and title, was born in Montbéliard, France August 23rd 1769; under the name of Johann Leopold Nicolaus Friedrich Kuefer, the son of a retired army officer that had moved from the Jura mountains area on the French-Swiss border because of religious persecution. After four years studying at the Stuggart academy, where he achieved great acclaim as a student of "Natural Phenomena". He accepted the position of tutor to the family of Comte d'Hericy, and it was through this employment that he met the agriculturist A.H Tessier, and began to study under him. Tessier wrote to his friends in Paris praising Cuvier. After taking up correspondence with the well-known naturalist E. G. Saint-Hilaire, he was offered and accepted in 1795 the post of Assistant to the Professor of comparative anatomy at the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. In the same year the 'Institut de France' was founded and Cuvier was elected as a member. It was at the opening of this institute that Cuvier read his first palaeontological paper, which he published in 1800 under the title 'Memoires sur les espéces d'éléphants vivants et fossiles'.

In 1799 he succeeded L.J.M Daubenton as Professor of Natural History in the College de France,and the following year he published Leçons d'anatomie comparée,which became a classic piece of work, in which he had been aided by A.M.C Duméril in his first two volumes and by G.L Duvernoy in the final three volumes. After visiting the south of France in his duties as commissary of the institute of the Jardin des Plantes, he was chosen 'Perpetual Secretary of the National Institute in the department of the physical and natural sciences' and decided to leave his appointment at the Jardin des Plantes and return to Paris.

It was in Paris that he devoted himself to three lines of inquiry. One dealing with the classification and order of Mollusc's. The second dealing with fossils of reptilia and Mammalia. With the third being the comparative anatomy and systematic arrangement of fishes, publishing many papers during his time there. In the department of fishes Curvier's research began in 1801, finally culminating in the publication along with A Valenciennes a work describing 5000 species of fish called "Histoire naturelle des poissons" in the years 1828-31. However, none of his works gained as many accolades or higher acclaim than his work called "Regne animal distribué d'aprés son organisation, the first edition appeared in 1817. The whole works (9 volumes) except for Insecta, which he co-wrote with P.A Latreille, had been written by Cuvier alone.

In 1808 mainly down to the vast amount of work he did besides his studies into palaeontology and zoology as an official connected to public education, he was placed by Napoleon upon the council of the Imperial University, which he presided over for four years. Prior to the fall off Napoleon in 1814 he had been admitted to the council of state, and this position remained unaffected after Napoleons downfall, and was in fact elected Chancellor of the University.

In 1826 he was made a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, and in 1831 Louis Philippe awarded him the rank of Peer of France, Knight and Baron. In early 1832 he was nominated to the ministry of the interior, but Cuvier was diagnosed with cholera and died shortly after.

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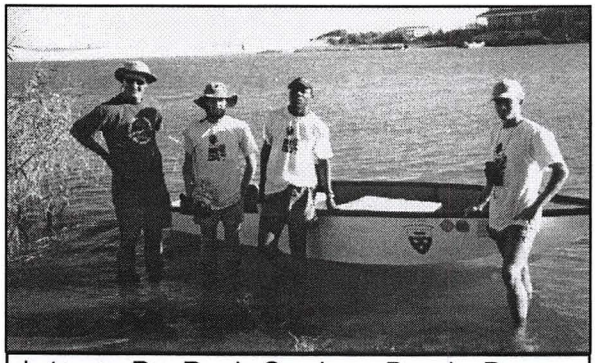
A freshwater coelacanth story: The rediscovery of the giant pancake-headed catfish Pardiglanis tarabinii

Dr Luc de Vos, (Ichthos Member) Ichthyology Dept., National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi



l to r: Dr Paul Cowley, Derek Brown, Raymond Ngubane and Rob Dyer on the East Kleinemonde estuary

Few people know about the large catfish *Pardiglanis tarabinii*, which can best be called the "giant pancakeheaded catfish", referring to its extremely large rounded head. This curious monstrous freshwater fish was only discovered some 30 years ago when the Italian Professor Tarabini Castellani brought a unique specimen of 64 centimetre length to the Florence University Zoological Museum, Italy. During a scientific expedition in Somalia in 1969, the specimen was obtained from a local fisherman who had caught the fish in the Juba River near Gelib Town. According to the locals the fish lives in the mud on the bottom of the river. The strange new specimen was subsequently described as a species in a new genus by a team of three zoologists headed by the famous ichthyologist Prof. Max Poll from the Africa Museum in Tervuren, Belgium. The fish's mouth looks grotesquely wide; so wide that only a head of such prodigious bulk could possibly accommodate it. Flat and pancake shaped, this massive head accounts for nearly 40 % of the fish's body length and is more than twice the width of even the broadest portion of its abdomen. Only the characteristic whisker-like barbels around its mouth, four pairs of these in all, are relatively slight. The authors also mentioned its close relationships with the common wide-headed catfish *Clarotes*.

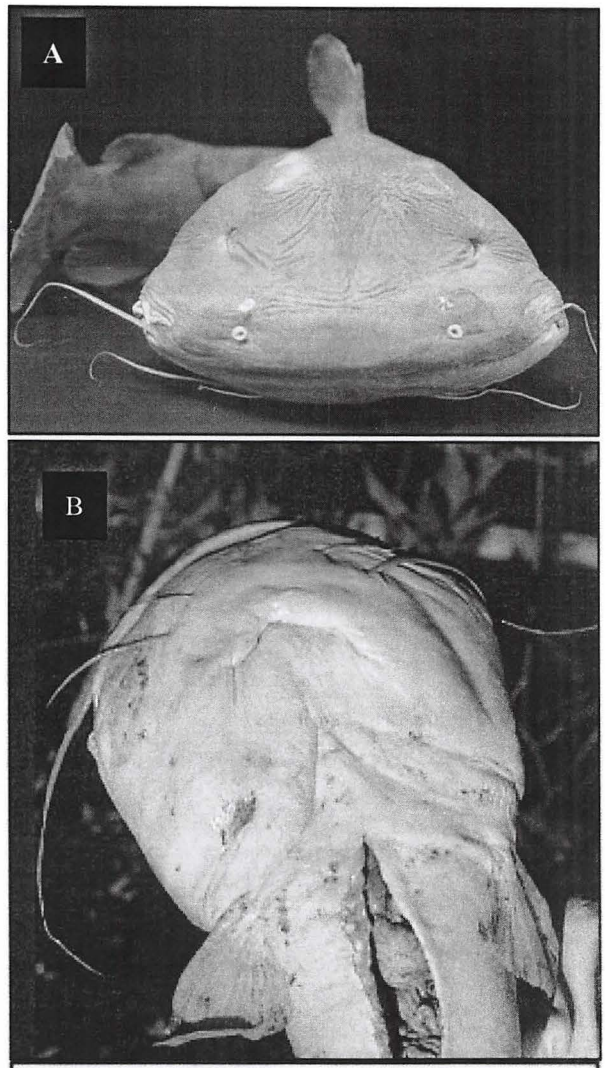
For nearly 30 years since its description nothing was heard about the pancake headed catfish. But following a fish survey of the Lower Tana River carried out in March 2000 by the National Museums of Kenya, as part of the Tana River Primate National Reserve GEF Project, Baomo fishermen told the NMK team that their inventory of fishes for the area was incomplete. "There's one fish you don't have," these fishermen insisted, "and that fish is the large catfish we call *mpumi hwahwa* in the Pokomo language. It's not a common fish, but it is sometimes caught. It has a massive head and it looks very ugly, so nobody here eats it. Whenever one is caught, it is simply thrown away". The NMK team nevertheless, succeeded in extracting a promise that, when next one of these mysterious fish was pulled out of the river, it would be kept for them, intact and in a drum of formalin. They did not wait long. In April 2000, one of the fishermen, Michael Israel Omara, did manage to land one of these giant fish. This male specimen, nearly 90 centimetres long and weighing in at more than 7.5 kilograms was caught in the shallows during the extended recent drought when water levels in the river were exceptionally low. The monster was hooked on the river's sandy bed using fish as bait. This suggests that the species may, in part at least, be a carnivorous scavenger. The stomach of the landed fish was empty. A few months later, again upon reward, a second specimen caught by Michael Omara near Baomo was sent to the Nairobi Museum. This 82 centimetre long fish apparently is a female. The habits of *Pardiglanis* are still something of a mystery. That it frequents the same waters as, and apparently lives in close association with the common wide-headed catfish, *Clarotes*, is obvious. Local fishermen have confirmed this view, adding that both species appear to live side by side in the thick mud on the riverbed. The puzzling aspect is that none of the fishermen has ever, yet, knowingly seen any of the fry, or juveniles, of the giant pancake-headed catfish. This is surprising in that these fishermen are all very familiar with *Clarotes* young, which apparently they see regularly. This could mean one of several possibilities:

- Adult *Pardiglanis* have migratory habits and juvenile fish do not share the adult habitat.
- Juveniles are very cryptic, being virtually unnoticed by fishermen.
- Fry and juveniles could so closely resemble those of *Clarotes* as to be virtually indistinguishable.

- This giant fish could simply be a monstrous phenotype, or perhaps even a special morph, in the life cycle of *Clarotes*, with which it is known to cohabit.

The fossil skeleton of Pardiglanis
(Nairobi Museum, Palaeontology Division collections)

The latter theory seems improbable, however, given the extremely solid and well-developed cranial bone structure evident in the three Museum specimens. But nothing can be ruled out as impossible until we have had the chance to study this fish properly. Rare instances of head widening have been reported in some other claroteid catfish species of the genus *Chrysichthys*, among older adults of both sexes. But this phenomenon, where it has occurred (and it has never been observed in *Clarotes*), has not been anywhere near the scale that could explain the huge discrepancy in head size between *Clarotes* and *Pardiglanis*. We are very eager, now, to get our hands on a live specimen, as this would enable us to show the fish in the aquarium section of the Nairobi Snake Park, and, maybe, to learn more of its habits.



The specimen of Pardiglanis collected in April 2000 from the Lower Tana River, NMK Ichthyology Dept. collections
(slide A: view of head, slide B: underside of head)

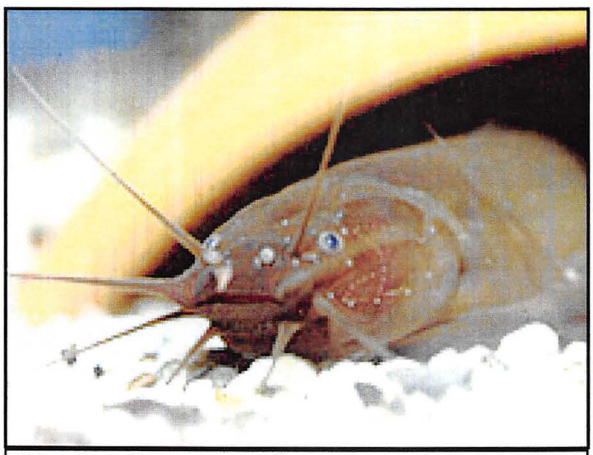
Although currently restricted to the Juba and Tana River systems in Somalia and Kenya, it appears *Pardiglanis* once had a larger distribution. A complete 96 cm fossil claroteid specimen from East Turkana (Nairobi Museum, Palaeontology Division collections), age about 3,4 million years, indeed seems to correspond in detail with *Pardiglanis*. It suggests that the fish has been around for a very long time, and that, like that other, rather better known marine 'living fossil', the coelacanth, it has changed little over the intervening millennia. Like the coelacanth, the pancake-headed catfish has also been re-discovered only recently.

For more information, contact:
Luc De Vos, Ichthyology Dept., NMK,
Email:
" Luc de Vos" <nmk@museums.or.ke>

African fish leaps for land bugs

By Rebecca Morelle
BBC News science reporter

Scientists have described a fish that can hunt and catch its prey on land. The eel catfish, *Channallabes apus*, is found in the muddy swamps of the tropics of western Africa.



"The first time we saw it, we were amazed - it was really spectacular"
Sam Van Wassenbergh, University of Antwerp

The 30-40cm-long (12-16in) fish is able to propel itself out of the water and bend its head downwards to capture insects in its jaws.

The Belgian researchers, writing in the journal Nature, hope this discovery will help to explain how fish moved from sea to land millions of years ago.

The fish tilts its head downwards to engulf its prey

Beetle eater

With a small head and a long, flexible body, *C. apus* has an eel-like appearance. The fish's diet provided the scientists with the first clue to its remarkable behaviour - it mainly eats beetles which are found on land.

After an expedition to study the fish in its swampy habitat in Gabon, Africa, the team brought some of the animals back to Belgium for further research.

They placed the fish in a specially designed aquarium with both wet and muddy areas, mimicking *C. apus's* natural environment.

"We pointed high-speed video cameras towards the place where we had left the prey and waited until the fish was hungry enough to leave the water and catch it," explained Sam Van Wassenbergh, an author on the Nature paper and a biologist from the University of Antwerp, Belgium.

"The first time we saw it, we were amazed - it was really spectacular."

A local fisherman in the Gabon holds up a specimen of *C. apus*

The fish captures its prey by propelling itself onto the shore, raising the front part of its body and bending its head downwards over the insect.

Usually, the fish uses suction to feed underwater; but because air is much less dense than water, the fish needs to employ a new strategy to catch its food.

"The way it positions its head prevents the prey from being pushed away," said Mr Van Wassenbergh. "This way it can place its jaws over the prey; and when it is strongly between the jaws, the fish will return to the water where it can further ingest the insect."

C. apus has a specially adapted spine which gives it extra flexibility, allowing it to tilt its head. The fish uses the rest of its long body to maintain stability while it is out of the water.

From sea to land

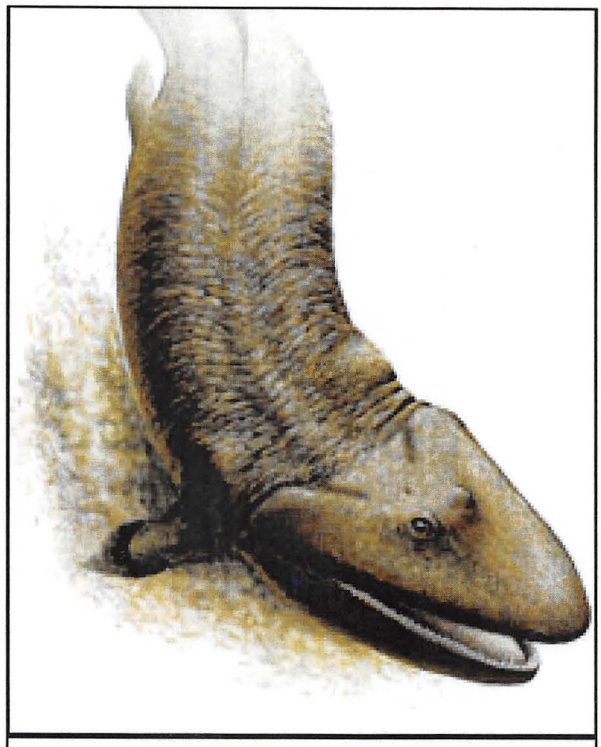
The best studied fish that feeds on land is the mudskipper. It feeds using a similar method to the catfish, but can use its pectoral fins to hop onto land and to lift and lower its head.

The researchers hope the discovery of another species of land-going fish will help shed light on how sea creatures evolved into land-living tetrapods during the Devonian Period, about 400 million years ago.

They say *C. apus* bears similarities to fossils found from this period, including the recently described *Tiktaalik rosea*.

This creature, found in Arctic Canada, may be a "missing link" between sea and land-living animals.

"[*T. rosea*] had a neck that appears to be quite mobile, and strong fins. If you ask me if it could feed terrestrially in a similar way to catfish or mudskippers - I would say it probably could," said Mr Van Wassenbergh.



Arctic fossils mark land move

RARE MANDARIN CAT

THIS exotic-looking creature is a mandarin catfish, taken by Andy Wilson from Cambridge on a recent trip to Spain's River Ebro. The rare 8olb specimen fell to a live eel hookbait and was one of four cats taken by Andy during a three-day visit to the prolific venue, the biggest of which scaled 84lb.

The self-employed company executive enjoyed three days' fishing with his father and brother under the watchful eye of Tarragona- based guiding company Ebro Valley Angling.

Courtesy of The Angling Times

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Norway, an outdoor meeting. Brrr!

Canada, Open Show

'What's New'

by Mark Walters

This second quarterly article presents abstracts for four scientific papers and references to another six papers for which further details are available.

Catfish sightings:

Following on from the list of unusual or new species available in the hobby, the following have been sighted:

Corydoras weitzmani, C. spiluris, C, gracilis, C. blochi, C. kanei, Pseudohemiodon sp., P. apithanos, Aspidoras lakoi, Hemiloricaria sp.

Selected scientific papers:

Rapp Py-Daniel, LH and J Zuanon (2005) - Description of a new species of Parancistrus from the rio Xingu. **P. nudiventris** is believed to be a close relative of the Rubber plec, P. aurantiacus

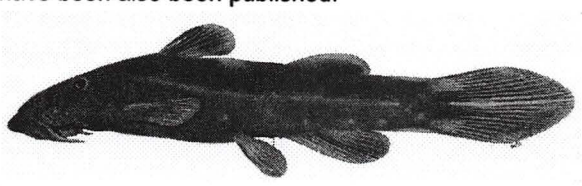
Armbruster, J. (2005) - The loricariid catfish genus **Lasiancistrus** has been revised and two new species have been described. The paper lists 16 species in the genus, but classes only four of these as valid - schomburgkii, heteracanthus, caucanus and guachorote. The remainder will have to be reclassified. The revision also includes descriptions of two new species of Lasiancistrus, L. tentaculatus and L. saetiger, which bring the total number of valid species in the genus to six.

AC Ribeiro et al (2005) - Description of **Otothyropsis marapoama**, a new genus and species of Hypoptopomatine catfish from Rio Tiete basin, south eastern Brazil.

Ng, HH & RM Bailey (2006) - Chiloglanis productus a new species, is described. It is easily distinguished from congeners in having a colour pattern consisting of a pale midlateral stripe on a purplish grey body and without any other distinct pale patches or bands, and by the nature of its sexual dimorphism in caudal fin shape.

Chiloglanis productus

Papers describing new species in the following Genus have been also been published:



Baryancistrus – (Werneke, D. C. et al 2005)

Hemiancistrus – (Werneke, D. C. et al 2005)

Myoglanis – (Do Nascimiento, C., and J. G. Lundberg. 2005)

Hypoptopoma – (Gauger M. F. W., and P. A. Buckup. 2005)

Pseudobagrus - (Li, J., X. Chen, and B. P. L. Chan. 2005)

Brachyplatystoma – (Lundberg, J. G., and A. Akama.2005)

If you have any sightings you would like to share or would like to track down a paper, contact me for the full reference: mark.walters@ic24.net.

Acknowledgement is made to Planet Catfish and the All Catfish Species Inventory (ACSI) database for the original source of information on papers

April 12, 2006

A previously undiscovered African catfish has a rare but important ability: When it can't find food in the water, it slithers onto land to eat crickets. By some accounts, the out-of-water hunting method used by the fish helps explain why fish first crawled out of the sea millions of years ago.

Fish that use their fins to "walk" across dry land have been making new recently -- witness the headlines the so-called snakehead fish has gotten since it turned up in Maryland, Virginia and other areas.

It used to be a scientific article of faith that fish never hunted for prey on land. But recently, a catfish expert named Sam Van Wassenberg left some food on a flat dry surface near a fish tank full of long brown African catfish -- which then leapt out of the water to get food.

Some fish experts say these may just be the kind of skills that helped draw fish like-creatures known as tretrapods out of the water more than 400 million years ago.

John Lundborg, curator of icthyology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Phildelphia, says the African catfish, described in the current issue of *Nature*, have been around for a mere 55 million years. That means the fish isn't literally a missing link to the first creatures to emerge from the sea. But experts say the fish is a living example of the way it might have happened.

And there's more!

By Bill Hurst

A short while ago, in the December 2005 Cat Chat, I showed an image of a hybrid Corydoras. Since I removed the microglanis, I now have about 30 more hybrids, of various sizes.

I couldn't bring myself to separate the two adults because they had been together for over 10 years. I am now interested to see if the offspring will breed.

I appreciate that hybrid fish are not everyone's cup of tea but as it initially occurred by accident (from my point of view) and the two fish involved appear to be compatible, I saw no reason to split them up.

It may help to explain why there are so many Corydoras of similar appearance in different 'groups'. E.g. I can't foresee C panda breeding with C schwartzi.

Mummy and Daddy
Front: the female C panda. Rear: the male C melini

Three of the offspring, the small one showing, just over the head of the front one, in the background.

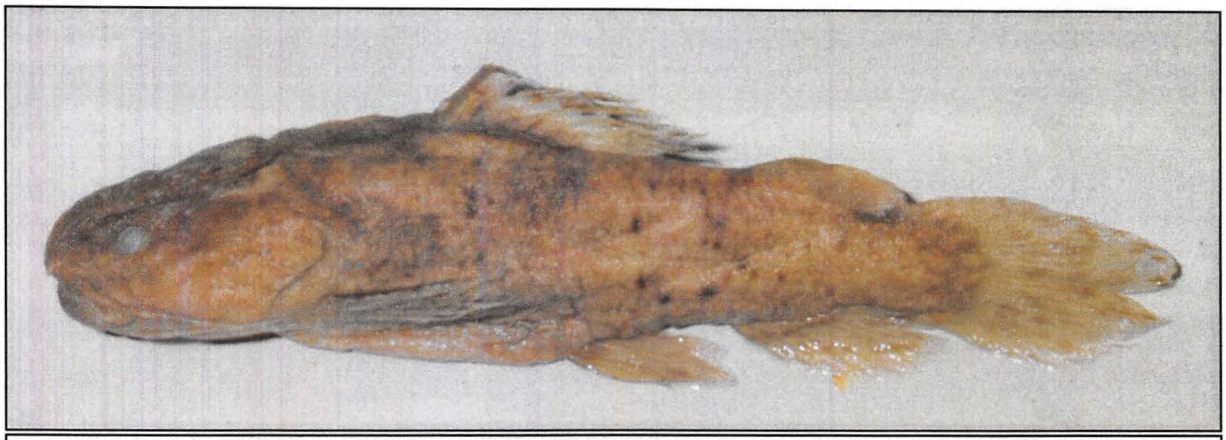
Note how the different patterns of the adults appear to have merged into the juveniles and joined the C panda dorsal and caudal spots with the C melini dorsal stripe. Both adults have an eye band and this has been retained in the youngsters. Both hatched earlier this year but I don't know what size they will grow to yet.

Microglanis variegatus Eigenmann & Henn, 1914

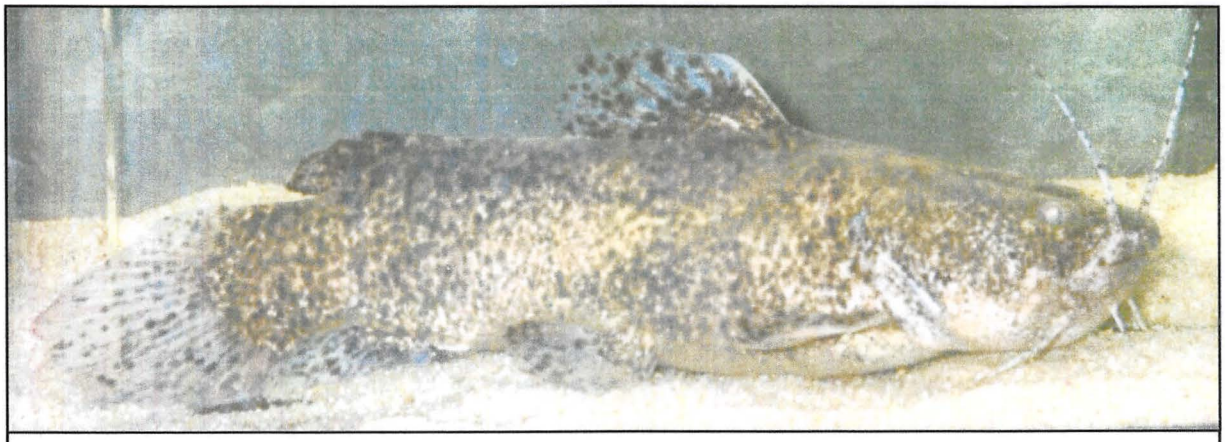
Steven Grant

Images courtesy of FMNH except where indicated

These pictures were omitted from the last journal and are to be included as part of the article under the same title



"*Batrochoglanis villosus* paratype BMNH 1911.10.31.59 - Image by Steven Grant"



"*Batrochoglanis villosus* - Image by Steven Grant"

Results of the EGM

At the AGM 2005, it was proposed by Mr S Pritchard to remove the (UK) from the title of the Catfish Study Group (UK) in order to encourage an international involvement.

Unfortunately at the next AGM, in accordance with the rules, members had not been informed earlier of the proposal and therefore did not have the opportunity to vote on this matter. As a result of this oversight, the EGM was called for to resolve the proposal and all members were duly informed in sufficient time to respond.

The E.G.M was held on the 24th June 2006 at Highfields Working Men's Club, Darwen, Lancashire, England.

The count and result was witnessed as being correct by all present.

The result is as follows: - 75% of all ballot papers received voted in favour of removing (UK) from the Catfish Study Group (UK).

With effect from the AGM January 2007 the title will be Catfish Study Group and all documentation etc will be amended accordingly.

2007 A.G.M Notification of a proposal to a change in the constitution,

"In order to maintain continuity, all Elected committee members must be resident of Great Britain". Proposed by Mr B. Hurst & seconded by Mr B Barnes.

CATFISH STUDY GROUP (UK)

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Auction

Normal Entry Rules Apply

(No painted fish; Name & Tel No on electrical goods; suitable containers for livestock etc. If unsure of the rules, ask when booking)

Starts 1300 hrs

Booking in: Telephone: 01942 248130

or from 1030 hrs on the day

Canteen

(Hot & Cold food. Tea, Coffee, Cold drinks)

Information - Displays - Plenty of seating

Details from:

Show Secretary:	Brian Walsh	Tel: 01254 776567
Auction Manager:	Roy Barton	Tel: 01942 248130

CSG Show Classes

1. Aspidoras.
2. Brochis.
3. Corydoras group A up to 55 mm SL. (females).
4. Corydoras group B over 55 mm SL. (females).
5. Corydoras Types. C-numbers and unidentified. *
6. Scleromystax.
7. AOV Callichthyidae. Calichthys; Dianema; Hoplosternum; Megalechis; Lepthoplosternum.
8. Aspredinidae.
9. Auchenipteridae.
10. Bagridae.
11. Doradidae.
12. Loricariidae. Up to 130 mm SL.
13. Loricariidae. Over 130 mm SL.
14. Loricariidae. L & LDA numbers up to 130 mm SL.*
15. Loricariidae. L & LDA numbers over 130 MM SL.*
16. Mochokidae. Up to 130 mm SL.
17. Mochokidae. Over 130 mm SL.
18. Pimelodidae. Up to 100 mm SL.
19. Pimelodidae. Over 100 mm SL.
20. AV Cold water Catfish. **
21. AOV Catfish. South American.
22. AOV Catfish. African.
23. AOV Catfish. Asian.
24. Pairs. Corydoradinae
25. Pairs. Loricariidae. Including L & LDA numbers.
26. Pairs. AoV South American.
27. Pairs. AV African.
28. Pairs. AV Asian.
29. Breeders. Corydoradinae.
30. Breeders. Loricariidae, including L & LDA numbers.
31. Breeders. AoV South American.
32. Breeders. AV African.
33. Breeders. AV Asian.
34. Family Class. Pair & Breeders. Adults should be placed in their respective Pairs class and juveniles in their respective Breeders class, the points are added together and then halved.
35. Breeders Master Class. 1 entry = 3 separate species of juvenile fish.

*Corydoradinae and Loricariidae species with an L or LDA number that have been described or positively identified should be entered in the named species class.

** Because of current legislation we can only accept entries for the AV Cold Water Catfish on production of a valid licence.

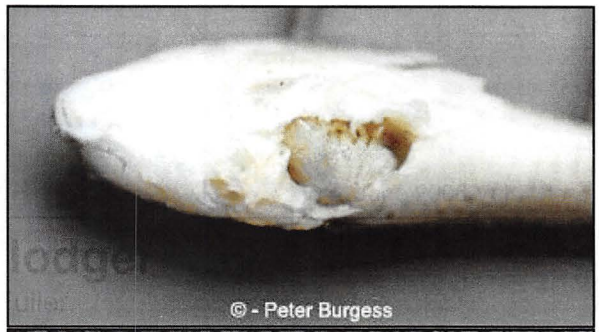
Aquatic lodger

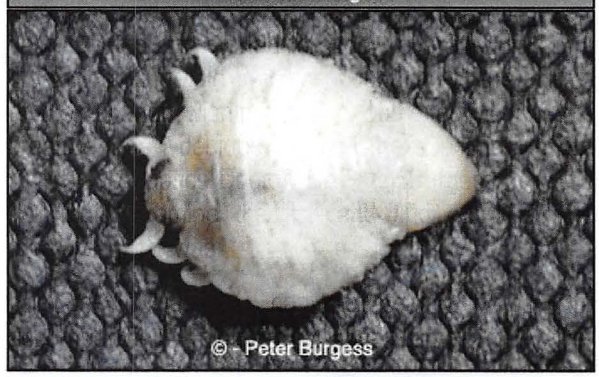
By ian Fuller

A month or two ago I purchased a small group of *Corydoras gracilis*, it was extremely difficult to determine the sexes, but it looked like at least one of the four was a female. This is a small species that comes from the Rio Madeira system in the state of Rondônia, Brazil and is a fish that I have been lusting after for a very long time and when they do turn up in the trade they are usually very expensive, very careful selection is required to ensure that the best specimens are chosen, as well as choosing both males and females. In my case I had very little choice because there were only four left, I decided to take all four even though one of them appeared to have a slightly distended belly, which I first thought was either a ripe female or it had been first in the food queue, little did I know! But was soon to find out, in fact It was a mere three weeks later when the gruesome truth emerged; well to be exact it didn't exactly emerge but showed its presence when the specimen with the distended belly died.

Still not realising that the death of the fish could be anything other than that caused by stress through the trauma of being captured and the possible drastic changes of water conditions that it was probably subjected to. This particular species is known to be very difficult to acclimatise. The fish had not long died and save for the milky eyes was in a remarkably fresh condition, I removed the body and was about to put it into a vial of ethanol to preserve it, before sending it to Dr Martin Taylor at Bangor University to add to his collection of material for his DNA work on Corydoradinae Catfishes. When the body was in the net I noticed some movement in the belly, for a second I thought that the fish was not actually dead, but then realised that there was in fact something actually inside it. The anus of the fish was somewhat distended measuring about four millimetres in diameter and there looked to be some sort of creature moving around inside. Now I was both intrigued and worried at the same time, intrigued to find out what it was, but worried that the other three fish in the group were carrying similar creatures. With the aide of a magnifying glass I had as close a look as I could and was able to see what looked like three or four whitish tentacles and a horn like structure. I placed the dead fish in a small container of water and left it for a while to see if the creature would vacate its host, but after an hour there were no signs that it was ever likely do so. I then took the dead fish complete with its lodger and put it into a vial of ethanol, this did not go down at all well with the dead fishes passenger, it could be seen very agitated and started to expel several squirts of a creamy looking fluid before succumbing to the effects of the ethanol. wishing to find out exactly what the creature was I decided to send the specimen to our very own Aquatics Doctor. Dr Peter Burgess to see if he would examine the fish and find out what the creature inside was.

The result was, as can be seen by the two accompanying pictures, quite amazing. After examining the fish and removing its lodger, Peter tells me the creature inside is a parasitic isopod crustacean of which there are hundreds of species, this one possibly a type of Cymothid of which several species have been described from South American catfishes and other fishes, some were found living in the mouth cavity, others in the hind gut, where with their biting/ sucking mouth parts they feed on their hosts, with death of the host usually being the end result, although in some of the larger host species those that inhabit the mouths eventually eats away the tongue, the fish in many instances surviving the ordeal and utilises the parasite as a replacement tongue.

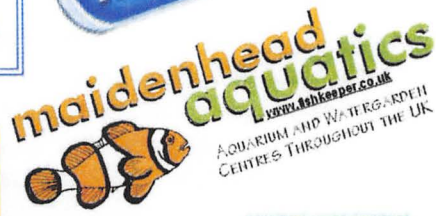


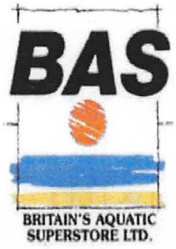


This particular parasite measures 7 mm long by 5.5 mm wide, which in this case is equivalent to having something the size of a football inside of you, not a pleasant thought at all. The one good thing about these types of parasites is that they are only likely to appear on wild caught fish.

CATFISH STUDY GROUP

2006 Open Show sponsors





SNIPPETS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

GABORONE - In Setswana culture, human waste is never touched. It is filth at its worst. The thought of eating something that has had contact with human waste is also repugnant to say the least.

Although Water Utilities Corporation has announced that November 1 to January 30, 2005 is non-fishing season in all its dams of Bokaa, Shashe, Letsibogo and Gaborone, some people continue to sell fresh fish at Old Naledi in Gaborone.

So where do they catch these fish? Apart from Gaborone Dam, there are no other significant fishing areas around Gaborone where people can catch large stocks of fish. Metsimaswaana River, which feeds Gaborone Dam, is also dry. So again, where do the Old Naledi people catch their fish? The answer has since revealed itself: some people from Gaborone have opened a fish market using fish caught in the Phakalane sewerage ponds.

These deep ponds produce the bream and barber, but the most common harvest here is the catfish. The Gaborone City Council introduced the fish into the Phakalane sewerage ponds as they play an important role in the ecological system of sewerage.

The catfish particularly, unlocks aquatic weeds, which block sewerage pipes, by eating these weeds.

Introducing catfish into sewerage ponds also helps reduce the smell because the fish likes to feed on human waste. The catfish also plays an important role by reducing harmful water-borne diseases caused by micro-organisms in the water.

Catfish farming is a rapidly growing industry in Botswana. The fish has many favourable attributes unlike other species, it is: hardy, can be bred artificially, eats practically all foods, is fast-growing and provides a large, white fillet..

Old Naledi is the only main market for fish selling in Gaborone. They range from bream to barber or catfish. Prices range from P5 for a small fish to P15 for a larger piece of fish.

Allegations from reliable sources say the first people to fish at the ponds (Phakalane) were the Zimbabweans and that they sold the fish with other locals at Old Naledi. However, some Batswana soon joined the Zimbabweans for the same business.

It was not until recently that the residents of Old Naledi learnt with shock that some of the fish they eat come from Phakalane sewerage ponds. This was after the drowning in the ponds, of a Ramotswa man who was residing at Old Naledi.

He drowned while fishing for commercial purposes in the ponds. Ofentse Mabotseng's ordeal came when he was canoeing to remove his fish net, which was full of fish.

After a long period of waiting for him to emerge with the big catch, his two friends saw the boat floating alone on top of the water and reported the incident to the police. He was discovered dead after a massive three-day search.

Some residents of Old Naledi were shocked to learn how their compatriot died. "We have not been aware about the source of the fish because we all along thought they catch the fish from Gaborone Dam", said one resident who did not want to be named.

"Nna ga ke je ditlhapi tsa maŠ" (I don't eat fish from the sewerage ponds), said another resident who claimed that she had never bought one after hearing the story. However, some fishermen have since denied that they fish from the ponds.

One of the popular Gaborone fisherman, Kitso Khoti, said in most cases when it is a non-fishing season, they fish at Oliphant's Drift.

He said he was still fishing at Gaborone dam because he was not aware that it was a non-fishing season. Another fisherman, Malinka Motlhabani, admitted that they have heard about some people who sell fish from Phakalane sewerage ponds but said in most cases, they tell people not to buy them because it is an unfair business to other people who sell fish, which comes from fresh water.

In most cases, these fisherman spend most of their time at the ponds watching nets or if not, they go there in the early hours while it is still dark to collect their fish. After collection, they are transported to Old Naledi for selling.

To prove that some people are using the ponds, Broadhurst police station is also inundated with reports of people that had been assaulted and robbed at the sewerage ponds ‹ some while illegally fishing there.

Even the people of Broadhurst have always known about the illegal fishing but had never alerted the police.

Former Princess Marina Hospital Superintendent, Dr Howard Moffat, dismisses the Setswana beliefs that anything that has had contact with human waste is filthy. He pointed out that even our rivers are polluted with waste such as dead dogs, human waste, animal carcass, to name a few, than sewerage ponds but people continue to catch fish from these rivers.

Dr Moffat said there is nothing unhealthy with the fish from sewerage ponds as long as it is washed and cooked thoroughly. "They can only be dangerous if they are not washed and cooked thoroughly," said the experienced medical doctor.

Dr Moffat said fish from sewerage ponds if not thoroughly washed and cooked, can cause infection such as typhoid - an infection that leads to diarrhoea. He said the waste in sewerage ponds is not much different from natural water bodies such as in our rivers and lakes.

Hence, the fish from the sewerage ponds is safe for human consumption BOPA

USA SIX MILE — A 52-pound flathead catfish caught in Hartwell Lake didn't survive long as a family pet. The mammoth creature hauled in by Clarence Reid died just days after the fish, dubbed "Big Fin," was placed inside a 2,100-gallon decorative yard pond with a waterfall and nearby gazebo.

The fish received notoriety earlier this month in media services from as far away as India for landing in the Creek Bend Drive pond and not the family's skillet. Mr. Reid said he could not bring himself to fry up what became a pet. A family funeral was held for the catfish.

"Zach really liked having him around," Mr. Reid said. "We couldn't eat him."

Zachary McAlister, 7, Mr. Reid's cousin and a student at Six Mile Elementary, was fishing in a Keowee River section of Hartwell Lake with Mr. Reid and nephew Austin Reid, 13, a student at Westminster Middle School, when the monster fish took a bite out of the cut bait.

It took a 30-minute battle to get the catfish in the boat, but the short ride home was enough for the fishermen to forget their hunger pangs and to let their newfound love for the animal persuade them to put the prize in the pond. "I named him Big Fin," Zach said.

Zach still has plenty of pets around the Reid house, including dogs, cats and a goat.

Mr. Reid's wife, Deborah, said the fish was ugly, but it could stay in the pond. If it got too big for the pond, Ms. Reid said she was going to get a new, bigger pond.

Mr. Reid said he still is trying to catch a bigger catfish, at night, to avoid the sweltering hot days, but the late thunderstorms can be a bit unnerving.

"I don't mind the rain so much. It's that thunder and lightning that you don't want to be around," Mr. Reid said.

The state record flathead catfish tips the scales at 79

USA LANGLEY, Virginia - The United States Central Intelligence Agency once built a mechanical dragonfly to carry a listening device but found small gusts of wind knocked it off course so it was never used in a spy operation.

The agency also tested a 600mm-long rubber robot catfish named Charlie capable of swimming inconspicuously among other fish and whose mission remains secret.

Charlie and the dragonfly were among spy gadgets displayed at CIA headquarters in an exhibit to mark the 40th anniversary of the directorate of science and technology. It is not open to the public.

"Charlie's mission is still classified, we can't talk about it," Toni Hiley, curator of the CIA museum, told Reuters on a tour of the exhibit. "All we can say is he's our work on aquatic robotic technologies."

USA LAKE EUFAULA, Okla. (AP) _ The discovery of bright, reddish-purple eggs in young catfish caught last month in Lake Eufaula in the Deep Fork and North Canadian arms has stumped wildlife experts.

State and federal officials say they've never seen anything like it. And from what they have learned after inquiries were dispatched nationwide, nobody else has either.

The mystery has spawned curiosity and concern. The curious are digging through research material looking for clues that might help explain why and how this oddity occurred. The concerned are conducting tests on the fish in which the unusual eggs were found, trying to rule out the possibility of an environmental threat.

``I first heard about this phenomenon about two weeks ago," said Garland Wright, regional fishery supervisor for the central region of the Oklahoma Wildlife Department.

``It's strange to see these reddish-purple eggs" instead of the bright yellow eggs normally found, Wright said. The phenomenon has only been observed in young, female bluecats, almost all of which were caught in the Deep Fork Creek arm of the lake near Fountainhead State Park. Wright said some Kansas fishermen reported finding some of the reddish-purple eggs in fish caught near No Name Creek on the North Canadian arm of the lake.

The eggs were first reported by Rochelle Miller of Checotah. Miller, a biology major at Northeastern State University, said her boyfriend, James Mosley, showed her some of the eggs he found inside a catfish he and some friends caught during the first week of May on trotlines.

``They were fluorescent purple," Miller said of the eggs. ``I thought he was joking, and we threw those out." But Miller's interest grew greater with the discovery of each new fish they found filled with the oddly coloured eggs. ``There was no outward appearance that would lead you to believe there was something wrong with the fish," Miller said. ``But when you cut them open you could tell immediately."

Miller said she is concerned about what impact, if any, this abnormality might have on the future of Lake Eufaula's fisheries, a question to which nobody seems to have an answer.

Both Miller and Wright say unravelling this mystery has been difficult because of the void of information. Miller said her research on the topic, which she hopes to explore in-depth while earning her biology degree, has turned up few clues. Wright said his inquiries sent to colleagues across the nation have resulted with more questions. ``This does not mean it (egg discoloration) never has happened before," Wright said. ``We just don't know if it ever has."

Wright said his efforts to solve this mystery have been hampered because the only eggs he has seen had been frozen. Based upon what he has seen, Wright said he suspects the discoloration was caused by reabsorption of undeposited eggs back into the body of fish.

``That's just a theory that might explain what we have found," Wright said. ``That's where we are right now unless we get some fresh eggs."

But the chance of finding fresh eggs is getting slimmer because the spawning season for bluecats is winding down.

Wright said he and others from the Wildlife Department recently spent three days ``shocking up" fish in areas of Lake Eufaula known to have produced fish with the strange eggs. He said several fish were examined, but none of the specimens produced the reddish-purple eggs.

Efforts to solve this mystery, however, haven't been halted. Wright said fish in which the eggs were found were sent last week to the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to be tested for possible contamination by pesticides or heavy metals.

Wright said he doesn't suspect contamination is the culprit: ``We just want to rule out that possibility." With regard to public safety and any precautions about eating the fish with the mysterious eggs, Wright declined to make a recommendation.

``I cannot tell you if they would be safe to eat," Wright said, stopping short of saying the fish are unsafe. Monty Elder, a spokeswoman for the Department of Environmental Quality, said it could take some time before any results are available.

``The tests the Wildlife Department is requesting are not the kind of tests we regularly conduct," Elder said. ``But we're going to be working with the Department of Wildlife to determine what kind of testing is necessary and what we can do to get that done."

USA The purple flag was flying on Clearwater Beach on Thursday warning swimmers of dangerous marine life in the water. But instead of being stung by a stingray, an 11-year-old girl was attacked by a dead catfish - sort of.

At 1:45 p.m., witnesses say a group was playing around on the sand when a man in the party picked up a dead fish and started swinging it around. Then he let it go. The fish flew through the salty air and stuck in the back of an 11-year-old girl, another member of the same group. Witnesses say the spine of the 2- to 3-pound catfish, probably a gaff-topsail, hit the girl between her shoulder blades.

She started crying. Her mother started cursing. And a team of lifeguards came running. They administered oxygen to the victim and called for medical help. Fire-fighters and paramedics from Clearwater's Rescue 45 and Engine 46 responded, and cut off the fish's body. They left the spine attached because removing it would have further damaged the girl's skin and tissues since its edge is serrated.

She was transported to Morton Plant Hospital, where the spine was removed by a doctor. "It sounds like it was a topsail catfish," said Gary Morse, spokesman for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. "Those spines are very painful."

The dead fish was probably a victim of Red Tide, which has hit south Pinellas beaches in recent days. Tides and changing winds have pushed the dead fish northward, although Clearwater Beach has a low concentration, according to Scott Willis, a spokesman for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

"Red Tide hasn't been too bad until today," said chief lifeguard Joe Lain. "This morning, we buried a dead 40-pound grouper in the pet cemetery."

He indicated a mound of recently disturbed sand on the beach where people often bury fish and pets.

The algae bloom couldn't have come at perhaps a worse time.

Sheila Cole, the executive director of the Clearwater Beach Chamber of Commerce said hotel rooms this weekend are almost sold out. She expects thousands of people to travel to the beach over the long holiday.

Cole spoke with Clearwater lifeguards Thursday, who told her the dead fish are being drawn in from beaches further south.

"We're getting a bad rap because of the currents and the winds and the storms," Cole said. "There's no Red Tide. The dead fish are being pushed up here."

Bill Morris, the city's marine and aviation director, said city crews rake the sand clean each morning, picking up dead fish and other debris from the night before.

Lifeguards will caution beachgoers of the algae bloom, Morris said, but they have no plans to close the beach. He doesn't know how it will affect the typical stream of beach visitors.

"It's not really a good weekend to have this happen, publicity wise," he said.

INDIA A new species of erethistid catfish from the Pseudolaguvia genus has been described from the Brahmaputra River drainage in India.

The fish has been named Pseudolaguvia ferula by ichthyologist (and Practical Fishkeeping contributor) Heok Hee Ng of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.

The description, which has just been published in the systematics journal Zootaxa, explains that the new catfish was collected in a 1km wide section of the fast flowing Tista River in West Bengal.

Ng says that the new Pseudolaguvia is unusual in the genus in that it has a terete (round and tapering) head rather than a depressed head:"It can be distinguished from congeners in having a terete (vs. depressed) head and body, manifested in the narrower head width (17.1–19.1% SL vs. 19.4–23.4), a smaller anterior fontanel (about one third the length of the frontals vs. at least half the length), and very faint, poorly contrasting cream bands that are sometimes absent on some individuals (vs. sharply contrasting cream bands on a brown body). "The species gets its name "ferula" from the latin word for rod, as the terete head of the fish makes it considerably narrower than other erethistids in the genus.

Three other Pseudolaguvia have also been recorded from the Brahmaputra drainage: P. foveolata, P. ribeiroi and P. shawi. The species was discovered by Andrew Arunava Rao.

For more details on the new catfish see the paper: Ng, HH (2006) - Pseudolaguvia ferula, a new species of sisoroid catfish (Teleostei: Erethistidae) from India. Zootaxa, 1229: 59–68 (2006).

CATFISH STUDY GROUP (UK)

Sunday 19 November 2006

Autumn Auction

Starts at 1300 hrs
at
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Booking in from 1030 hrs on the day
Pre-book by telephone on 01942 248130

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Rules:

Items for the fishkeeping hobby only.

All Electrical Goods must have a Name and Telephone number on them, together with the condition of the item i.e. Spares, Working Order, Faulty etc..

All plants and fish to be auctioned should be in clear plastic bags, or jars large enough for them. Large fish may be offered in plastic containers/buckets. Fish should be identified (Common or Latin names). 'Painted' fish will not be auctioned.

There is a 15% commission to the Catfish Study Group on all sales. Payments to vendors will be made at the interval or at the end of the Auction.

The CSG is in no position to accept responsibility for the condition of any item sold at the auction or to exchange any item purchased. If in doubt, bid for an item 'as seen'. The vendor's name will be available to the purchaser, in the event of a problem, on the day only.

CATFISH STUDY GROUP

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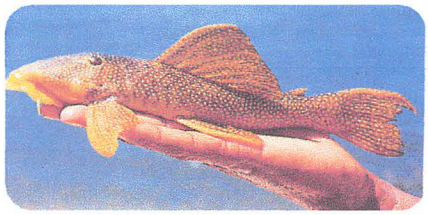

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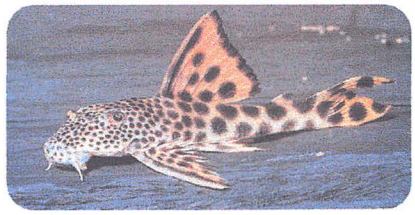

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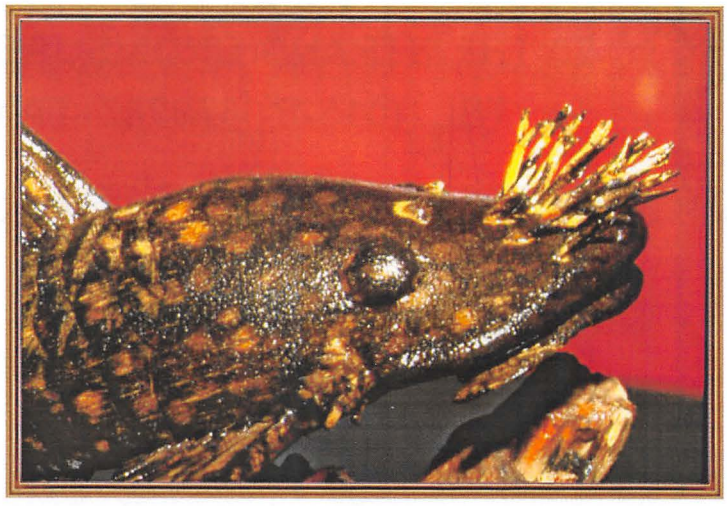

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