

PROC. BIOL. SOC. WASH.
97(2), 1984, pp. 462-472

A NEW CATFISH OF THE GENUS *EPAPTERUS*
(SILURIFORMES: AUCHENIPTERIDAE) FROM THE
ORINOCO RIVER BASIN

Richard P. Vari, Susan L. Jewett, Donald C. Taphorn,
and Carter R. Gilbert

Abstract.—A new species of auchenipterid catfish, *Epapterus blohmi*, is described from the central portion of the llanos of the Orinoco River basin. It is distinguished from *E. dispilurus* and *E. chaquensis*, the only other described species of the genus, by the presence of a dusky band that extends across the dorsal portion of the procurent caudal-fin rays and dorsal lobe of the caudal fin. The congeneric species have a discrete pigmentation patch in the center of each caudal-fin lobe. Meristic and morphometric differences further separate the species. Both *E. blohmi* and *E. dispilurus* demonstrate pronounced sexual dimorphism in the form of the anterior rays of the anal fin, position of the urogenital opening, form of the dorsal-fin spine, and the degree of ossification of the maxillary barbel. *Epapterus dispilurus*, previously known only from the upper Rio Solimões is reported from the central portion of the Rio Amazonas basin. The known range of *E. chaquensis*, described from Argentina, is extended into Paraguay.

Among the fishes described by Cope (1878) based on the Orton collection of fishes from the Peruvian Amazon was a monotypic genus of auchenipterid catfish, *Epapterus*, that was distinguished by its endentulous jaws, lack of an adipose dorsal fin, and high number of anal-fin rays. Only two subsequent collections of the single contained species, *E. dispilurus*, were reported on during the next century. *Euanemus longipinnis*, described by Steindachner (1881) from the Peru-Brazil border region, was placed into the synonymy of *Epapterus dispilurus* by Eigenmann and Eigenmann (1888) who, in a subsequent paper (1890), redescribed *E. dispilurus* on the basis of Steindachner's specimens. More recently, Fowler (1939) recorded a single specimen from Cantamana in the Río Ucayali drainage of Peru. The other citations of *E. dispilurus* were typically literature compilations based on the above records. A second species, *Epapterus chaquensis*, endemic to the Río Paraguay basin, was described from the Chaco Province of Argentina by Risso and Risso (1962). Recent collecting activities in the central portions of the llanos (savannas) of the Orinoco River basin have revealed a third species of *Epapterus*, described herein, that is evidently broadly distributed in the sampled region.

Vertebral counts were taken from radiographs and include all free elements posterior of the Weberian apparatus inclusive of the complex terminal vertebra. Numbers in parentheses after a particular vertebral count are the number of specimens with that count. The anteriormost two anal-fin rays of males are not apparent when counts are made directly from the specimen but can be seen on radiographs. Greatest body depth was taken slightly anterior of the anal-fin origin. Gill-raker, branchiostegal ray, and rib counts were taken from cleared and stained specimens. Length of the maxillary barbel and subunits of the head are presented