Additions to the Fish Fauna of River Zhob, Balochistan, Pakistan

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Abstract: A survey of fish fauna of river Zhob (Balochistan) was conducted by the present authors during July to August 2001. As a result, 22 species belonging to fifteen genera, four families and three orders of the Teleostean fishes were collected. Out of these, 10 species are new record from the river Zhob while Mastacembelus paraculis a new record from Balochistan and Discognathus lamta and Discognathus modestus are the new record from Pakistan. Most of the species were comparatively larger in size but Puntius ticto, Barilius pakistanicus, Schistura arjii and Botia lohaccheta were found to be of small size. Species of Cyprinidae Heckel, one species of Schizocypris Regan, Crossochelus Heckel and Tor Gray grow to a large size and are also used locally as food.

Key words: Fish, river Zhob, fauna

INTRODUCTION


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Fish fauna of river Zhob was still poorly known. Thus, to fill the gap of knowledge, a comprehensive study was conducted by the authors to study the fish fauna of river Zhob.

The present study deals with the survey of fishes of river Zhob, yielding 22 species belonging to 15 genera, four families and three orders of the Teleostean fishes out of which 12 species are the new record from the river Zhob and 1 species is new record from Balochistan while two species are the new record from Pakistan.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Fishes were caught through nets at different localities of district Zhob during July 2001 to August 2001.

**Study area**: River Zhob, a largest river of Balochistan originates from Kunder Mountains in between Muslimbagh and Khanmehtarzai and after five kilometer flows northward to Zhob city. Then it flows eastwards and takes a turn toward north near Gawal Haiderzai where it is joined from the south by the Landai and from north by river Ghazlai. A good stream of excellent water known as “Sawara” falls into the Zhob River from the east about thirteen miles from the Kandil junction. Thereafter it still flows, takes a north eastern course and flows northeastern and passes about two miles to the west of Zhob and near Deri (about 29 miles from Sawara junction) enters the hills. Further, about two miles to the south of Mir Ali Khel, it is joined by the SirToi river from the west passing to the north of Mughalkot fort (about 14 miles from Mir Ali khel) and finally falls into the Gomal river near Khajuri kach. The total length of the river Zhob from its origin to its junction with the river Gomal is of about 240 miles.

Fisheries were identified following the keys furnished by Day[24], Mirza and Angivi[25], Mirza and Naik[26] and Mirza and Omar[27].

**Systematic account**: The specimens collected during the present study from River Zhob were belonging to the class Teleostomi, sub-class Actinopterygi, infraclass Neopterygii and division Teleostei.

1. **Super order Ostariophysi**
2. **Order Cypriniformes**
3. **Family Cyprinidae**
4. **Sub family Barbinae**

1. **Discognathus lamta** Hamilton and Buchanan: Day[29] reported this species from Syria and throughout India and Ceylon. This species is being reported here as a first record from river Zhob. It was found very common in Mina bazar, Laka band, Ghosa areas of district Zhob. 15 specimens were collected during the present survey. The larger specmen was observed to be of 12.6 cm in length. These fishes are not consumed as food. Mirza[29] reported this species from Sarab, Balelli, (Quetta District), Band Khasshid Khan, Barshore (Fisbin District) Mastung, Kalat (Kalat District), Sheikh Wasil (Chagi District) of Balochistan.

2. **Discognathus modestus** Day: Day[29] reported it from north India. This is the first record of this species from Pakistan, river Zhob. During present survey, this species was found very common in Mina bazar, Laka band, Ghosa areas. 13 specimens were collected. Specimens were small in size. The largest was being about 14.5 cm in length. This fish is not generally used as for food.

3. **Cyprinon watsoni** Day: This species is one of the commonest fish of the river Zhob. It was usually found in every tributaries of the river Zhob. 49 specimens were collected during the present study. All were of small size and the largest was being of about 17 cm. in length.

4. **Labeo dyocheilus pakistanicus** Mirza and Awan: Mirza and Javed[31] collected this fish from Badenzai, Khajuri kach, Mughal Kot, Narazai and Brunj areas of district Zhob. Jan[29] while surveying fish fauna of river Zhob did not report this species. However, during present survey, two specimens were collected from Badenzai locality. The larger specimen was about 23 cm in length.

5. **Labeo rohita** Hamilton: This species is being reported first time from river Zhob. Four specimens were collected from Badenzai locality during the present survey. Previously, Mirza and Javed[31] and Jan[29] while surveying fish fauna of river Zhob, did not come across this species. It was found to be very clever during the catching time. The larger specimen was 24 cm in length.

6. **Cirrhinus reba** Hamilton and Buchanan: This species is being reported for the first time from river Zhob and was found to be very common in Mina bazar and Ghosa localities. Previously Mirza and Javed[31] and Jan[29] while
surveying fish fauna of river Zhob did not report this species. During the present survey, 9 specimens were collected. Larger specimen was of 13.8 cm in length. This species has a less economic value since local people usually do not eat it.

7. Cirrhinus sp. 1

8. Cirrhinus sp. 2: Two and four specimens of Cirrhinus sp.1 and Cirrhinus sp. 2 were collected, respectively from Badenazai locality during the present survey. Previously, Cirrhinus nigra was reported from Mir Ali khol (Zhob) area by Mirza and Javed[22] and Jan[23]. However, the present collection of species 1 and species 2 were found quite different among themselves as well as from their known species of the genus Cirrhinus Cuvier viz., C. cirrhosus Bloch, C. fulvene Sykes, C. macrops Steindachner, C. mirgi Hamilton and Buchanan, C. reba Hamilton and Buchanan. Here these unidentified species are considered as a new recorded from river Zhob. However, further studies are required in this direction.

9. Puntius ticto Hamilton: During the present survey, eleven specimens of this species were collected from Vialka locality of river Zhob. This is the first record of this species from river Zhob. Mirza and Javed[23] and Jan[22] while surveying fish fauna of river Zhob did not come across of this species. This species was found to be a rare species in the river Zhob. Adult specimens were very small in size and the largest one was 63 cm in length.

10. Crossocephalus latius Hamilton: During the present survey, 18 specimen of this species were collected from Badenazai and Mir Ali khol areas of river Zhob. However Mirza and Javed[23] and Jan[22] while studying fish fauna of river Zhob did not report this species. In the present collection the largest specimen was measured to be of 15.2 cm in length. The local inhabitants consume this fish generally as a food.

11. Aspidoparia sp. Heckel: This species is very rare in the river Zhob. Mirza and Javed[22] and Jan[22] did not come a cross this genus from river Zhob. However, here, for the first time this species is being reported from river Zhob. Two specimens 1 male and 1 female (13.6 cm in length) were caught during the present survey from Vialka locality. During study, male and female of this species were found swimming together.

12. Barilus paskistanicus Mirza and Sadiq: This species is very common and is found almost throughout the river Zhob. These fishes are small in size (10 cm). One of the basic taxonomic characters of this species is the presence of black bars (4 to 9) extending from the backside to the lateral line of the body. This fish has a little economic importance. It is a beautiful fish and can be used for ornamental purposes.

13. Tor putitora Hamilton: The common mahszer (Tor putitora) or Himalayan mahszer of South Asia. It is very common in the Zhob river. The largest specimen was measured to be 19 cm in length. Its head being longer than the width of the body. Larger scales are represented by the cross lines, is the important diagnostic feature of this fish. During the present survey, the author did saw a specimen in Mir Ali khol area of about one meter in length. The meat of this fishes is very testy and with out bones, also people like to eat it very much.

14. Tor (Naziritor) zhobensis Mirza: The Zhobi mahszer (Tor (Naziritor) zhobensis) was described from the river Zhob by Mirza[8]. It was subsequently reported from N.W.F.P. by Mirza and Javed[6]. This is also a common species in river Zhob. It is also of large size fish and consumed as for food by the local people. These fishes are small in size and the largest was being about 15.4 cm in length. This species like the Himalayan mahszer, during the dissection the author did saw, the stomach of this fish was found filled with algae, insects and macrophytes. Its breeding period starts from the June Mirza and Javed[19].

Subfamily Schizothoracinae

15. Schizocypsis sp.: This species is rare in the river Zhob. Mirza and Javed[24] and Jan[22] reported Schizocypsis brucei from all localities of the river Zhob. Nine specimens of the genus Schizocypsis sp. collected during the present survey from Brunj and Vialka areas of river Zhob were found to be quite different with S. brucei. Hence it appears to be a new species.

16. Schizopygopsis stolzkae Steindachner: This species is also common in the river Zhob. However, Mirza and Javed[24] and Jan[22] did not report this species from the river Zhob. During the present survey, eighteen specimens of this species were collected from Mina bazar, Deragai and Brunj areas of the river Zhob. It is the first record of this species from river Zhob. The largest specimen of this species was 8.7 cm in length. This fish is usually consumed as food by the inhabitants of the areas.

2. Family Cobidae
Subfamily Botinae

17. Botia lohacheta Chaudhuri: This species is very rare in the river Zhob. Mirza and Javed[24] did not mention this species in the final report. However, Jan[22] reported it from Mir Ali khol and Narazai area of the river Zhob. During the
present survey two specimens were collected from Viahla area. The largest specimen was to be measured in 15.4 cm in length. This fish is locally known as “commando machli” or “cheetah machli”. It is not consumed as for food.

3. Family Sisoridae

18. Glyptothorax naziri Mirza and Naik: This species is quite common in the river Zhob and in its tributaries. 21 specimens were collected from Ghosa, Viahla, Narazai, Laka band and Mina bazaar during present study. The larger specimen was about 13.3 cm in length. The people do not use it for food.

19. Schistura kessleri Gunther: This species is also rare in the river Zhob. During the present survey two specimens of this species were found in Mina Bazar locality of river Zhob. Previously, Mirza and Javed[11] and Jan[22] did not report this species from the river Zhob. This is the first record from river Zhob. It is also beautiful fish and can be used for ornamental purposes.

20. Schistura arfi Mirza and Banarescu: During the present survey 17 specimens of this species were collected from Laka band and Ghosa areas of river Zhob. It is a beautiful fish and can be used for ornamental purposes.

2. Super order Acanthopterygii
3. Order Mastacembeliformes
1. Family Mastacembelidae

21. Mastacembelus panceulus or Gro-age Lacepede: This species appears to be a new record from Balochistan. Only one specimen of it was collected from Viahla locality of river Zhob. This species size very small and measured total length 10 cm. Mirza and Javed[11] and Jan[22] could not record it from river Zhob. Local people also do not consume this fish so it has a little economic importance.

22. Mastacembelus armatus or Bahn Lacepede: During present survey only four specimens of this species were collected from Viahla and Mina bazaar localities of river Zhob. Previously, Mirza and Javed[11] and Jan[22] also reported it from this river. The largest specimen was about 39 cm in length. Local people usually do not consume these fishes therefore it has a little economic value.

DISCUSSION

Previously Mirza and Javed[22] reported 22 specie viz., Barilius modestus, Barilius pakistanticus, Barilius vagina, Cirrhinus mrigala, Crossochelis diplocheilus, Cyprinon watsoni, Gara gotylia, Laboe dero, Laboe dyocheilus pakistanticus, Naziritor zhobensis, Racoma labiata, Schizocarpus brucei, Schizothorax plagiostomus, Tor putitora, Botia birdi, Noemacheilus corica, Schistura arfi, Schistura punjabensis, Schistura pakistantica, Glyptothorax naziri, Glyptothorax punjabensis, Mastacembelus armatus belonging to five families namely: Cyprinidae, Cobidae, Noemacheilidae, Sisoridae, Mastacembelidae from Zhob river.

Jan[22] reported 19 species from Zhob river in which 17 were old record and only two species namely Salmondostoma baccala, Botia lohachata were new record.

During present survey 22 species were collected. Out of them, ten species namely, Schizopogopos stolizae, Schizocarpus sp, Laboe rohit, Cirrhinus sp. I, Cirrhinus sp. II, Aspidoparia sp; Cirrhinus reba, Puntius ticto, Schistura kessleri and Discognathus lamta are a new record from Zhob river and one species namely Mastacembelus panceulus for the first time from Balochistan province and one species and Discognathus modestus is recorded for the first time from Pakistan. Remaining ten species are those already recorded from river Zhob.

Out of this, the following species were found to be of the larger size and are locally consumed as for food: Tor (Naziritor) zhobensis Mirza, Tor putitora Hamilton, Schizopogopos stolizae Steind, Schizocarpus sp., Crossocellus latius Hamilton, Cyprinon watsoni Day, Laboe dyocheilus pakistanticus Mirza and Awan, Laboe rohita Hamilton-Buchanan.

The river Zhob is the only river in Pakistan in which the two species of mahsher, viz., Naziritor zhobensis Mirza and Tor putitora Hamilton were found through out the years and are quite common. So this river can be regarded as a mahsher paradise[11]. However, during the present study six more species namely, Tor (Naziritor) zhobensis Mirza, Tor putitora Hamilton, Schizopogopos stolizae Steind, Schizocarpus sp., Crossochelis latius Hamilton and Cyprinon watsoni Day were recorded and were found to be more common.

REFERENCES