

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF BAGRID FISHES 20. SYSTEMATIC
POSITION OF *MACRONES COLVILLII* GÜNTHER, 1874

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INTRODUCTION

Günther (1874) described *Macrones colvillii* from certain specimens 9 inches long collected from River Tigris, Baghdad by William Henry Colvill. He considered his species as closely related to *Macrones aleppensis* (Günther, 1864) (= *Bagrus haleppensis* Valenciennes, 1839 = *Silurus pelusius* Solander, 1794) and differentiated it by its having a more slender body than *pelusius*, the dorsal spine being as long as head, and the adipose dorsal fin commencing at a distance about equal to the width of base of the dorsal fin. The published figure of *Macrones colvillii* (pl. 8) clearly shows three narrow, white, parallel longitudinal stripes along the body which fact also Günther indicated in his description.

During the course of a systematic revision of the fishes of the genus *Mystus* Scopoli on a world wide basis [= *Macrones* Dumeril (1856) name preoccupied in Coleoptera, Insecta] it was found that the characters of *M. colvillii* agreed more or less with those of *M. pelusius* (Solander, 1794) the type species of this genus, also known from the same watershed of Tigris and nearby areas.

M. pelusius is also characterized by a slender body, dorsal spine equal to head length, adipose dorsal fin commencing at a distance nearly equal to the width of the base of the dorsal fin. Moreover, the three narrow, white, parallel longitudinal stripes along the body is typical of *M. pelusius* and this feature is also shared by *M. colvillii*. As such a doubt arose as to the validity of *M. colvillii* Günther (1874).

In order to clarify the confusing taxonomy of these two species, the type specimen of *M. colvillii* (Günther B. M (N.H) 1874. 4.28 : 6-8, 1875. 1.14 : 19-21) was borrowed from the British Museum of Natural History, London through the kind courtesy of Dr. Gordon Howes. The present paper clarifies the systematic position of *M. colvillii* Günther.

TAXONOMY

The type specimen of *M. colvillii* clearly shows all the characters described by Günther and the three narrow white longitudinal stripes along the body. I have obtained specimens of *M. pelusius* (Solander) from the Baghdad Natural History Museum,

Baghdad through the kind courtesy of Dr. Munir K. Bunni and they are also characterised by a slender body, a dorsal spine as long as the head, a long adipose dorsal fin with a short interspace from the rayed dorsal fin and body with three longitudinal stripes. Comparison of the type specimen *M. colvillii* Günther clearly demonstrates that Günther's specimen is referable to *M. pelusius* and that *M. colvillii* should be merged under *M. pelusius*. A comparison of certain data between the two species as obtained from the aforesaid material is given below :

Mention should be made here of *Mystus halepensis colvillii* described by Hora and Misra (1943) from River Tigris, Baghdad. I have investigated the systematic status of this species also. It is suffice to say here that this subspecies is neither referable to *M. halepensis* (= *M. pelusius*) nor *M. colvillii sensu* Günther 1874. It represents an entirely another

species for which a new name is being given and the report being published elsewhere by Anuradha (1986).

DISCUSSION

Comparison of the body proportions and counts of the two species (Table 1) clearly justifies the conclusion of *M. colvillii* Günther 1874 being a junior objective synonym of *M. pelusius* (Solander 1794). The difference in the body depth in *M. colvillii* and the inter-orbital width is due to the fact that the specimen is lean probably due to under nourishment. Such instances of lean specimens in fishes are not uncommon as cited by Hora and Misra (1938). All other characters including the fin ray and vertebral counts intergrade with each other. *M. colvillii* Günther is thus synonymised under *M. pelusius* (Solander).

TABLE I. Comparison of *Mystus pelusius* Solander and *Macrones colvillii* Günther.

Characters	<i>Mystus pelusius</i>	<i>Macrones colvillii</i>
	Baghdad Natural History Museum (3 examples)	British Museum (Natural History) 1874. 4.28 : 6-8 1875. 1.14 : 19-21 (1 example)
Standard Length	159.43(142.8-171.2)	172.1
Standard Length/Head length	4.66(4.65-4.68)	4.59
Standard Length/Body depth	5.21(4.84-5.57)	8.44
Head length/Eye	4.87(4.58-5.30)	4.81
Head length/Inter-orbital width	3.44(3.37-3.55)	4.26
Length of caudal peduncle/Least height of Caudal peduncle	3.11(2.94-3.39)	3.17
Snout/Inter-orbital width	1.52(1.44-1.58)	1.91
Head Length/Length of dorsal spine	1.10(0.98-1.22)	1.01
Head Length/Maxillary barbel length	0.45(0.40-0.49)	0.43
Dorsal fin	1, 7	1, 8
Pectoral fin	1, 8	1, 8
Anal fin	ii, 8-9	ii, 9
Caudal fin	7+8	7+8
Vertebrae	22+22=44	22+22=44

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* Not seen in original.

