

**PUNTIUS CHALAKKUDIENSIS, A NEW COLOURFUL SPECIES OF PUNTIUS
(FAMILY : CYPRINIDAE) FISH FROM KERALA, SOUTH INDIA**

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INTRODUCTION

From the upper reaches of the Chalakkudi river in Trichur District, Kerala State of South India two specimens of a colourful *Puntius* fish were collected in the year 1972 by the junior author, Dr M. P. Thobias. Resembling the popular aquarium fish *Puntius denisonii* Day at first glance, a closer examination revealed that they were quite distinct from *P. denisonii*; they are here described as a new species. The Chalakkudi river, about 145 km. in length, originates from the high, evergreen, tropical mountains of the Anamalai and Nelliampathi ranges of the Western Ghats, flows westwards and finally drains into the Arabian Sea (see Map).

***Puntius chalakkudiensis*, sp. nov.**

Holotype.- F. 3749, Southern Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India, Madras, 125.0 mm SL, Chalakkudi river, Western Ghats, Trichur, Kerala, India, 1972.

Paratype.- 1, F. 3750, 116.0 mm SL, same data as holotype.

Diagnosis.- *P. chalakkudiensis* is distinguishable from all other *Puntius* species by its inferior mouth (terminal or subterminal in all other species) and from *P. denisonii* by the distinctive black blotch on its dorsal fin.

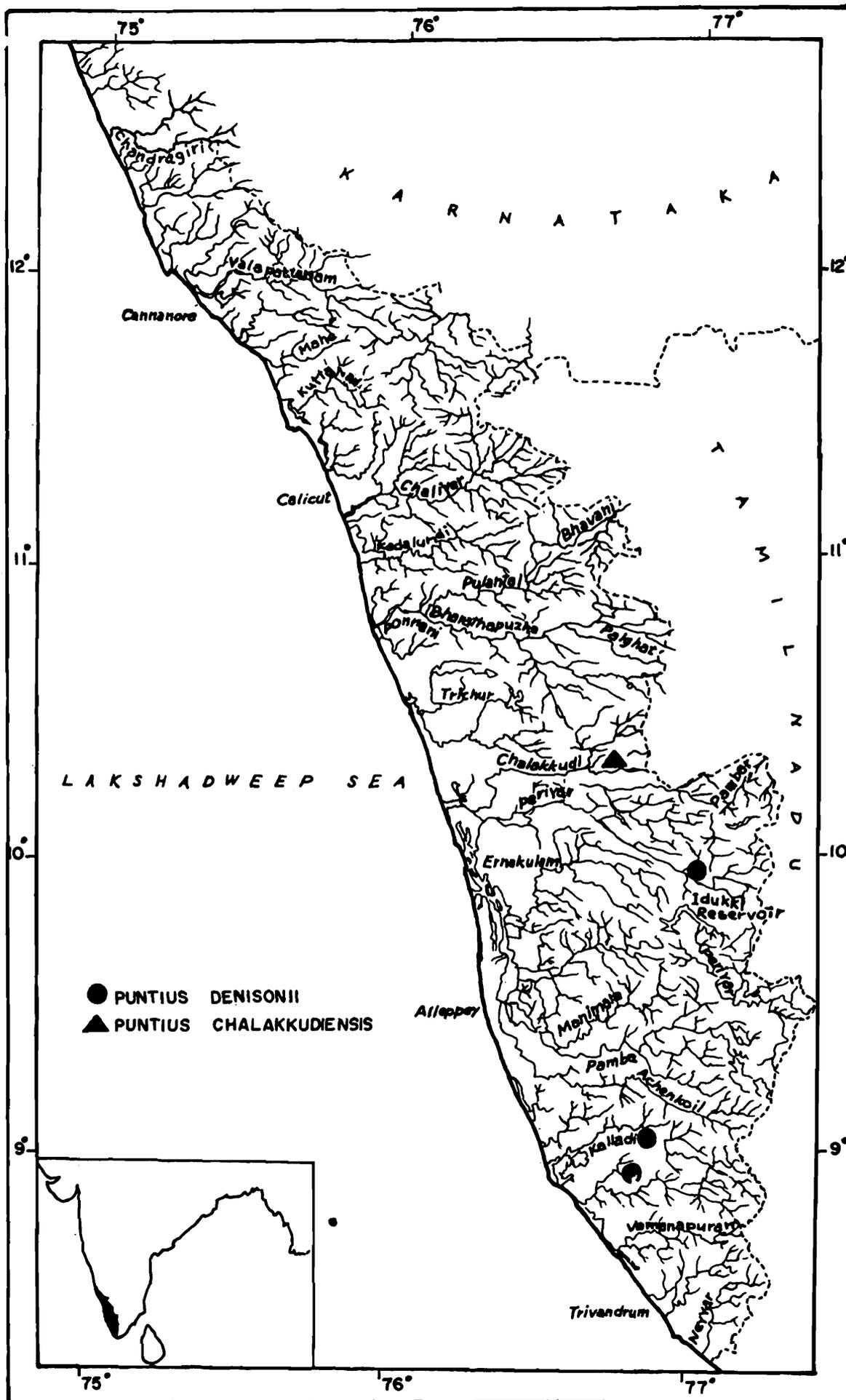
Description.- Proportional measurements in SL: Head 4.51 (4.41-4.61), body depth 3.45, predorsal 2.16 (2.05-2.28), postdorsal 1.87 (1.84-1.90), preventral 1.95 (1.92-1.99), preanal 1.35 (1.34-1.36), distance from pectoral to pelvic origin 3.42 (3.40-3.44), from pelvic to anal 3.88 (3.82- 3.94) and length of body cavity (distance between pectoral base and anus) 1.98 (1.93-2.04).

Proportional measurements in HL: width of head 1.81 (1.73-1.89), its depth 1.38 (1.34-1.42), snout length 2.48 (2.44-2.53), eye 4.17 (3.92-4.43), interorbital width 2.76 (2.64-2.89).

One pair of maxillary barbels, 1.15 (1.13-1.17) in eye diameter, reaching to middle of eye when stretched. Mouth small, semicircular, inferior, width of mouth 2.36 (2.33-2.39) in width of head. Height of caudal peduncle 1.78 (1.77-1.80) in its length.

Fins.- Dorsal fin II, 8; ventral 1,7 ; anal fin II, 5; pectoral 1,15; caudal 19. The free margin of the dorsal fin is concave and commences slightly in front of the ventral; it is situated nearer snout than caudal base; predorsal distance 1.15 (1.08-1.23) in postdorsal distance; length of dorsal fin 1.09 (1.06-1.13), pectoral fin 1.25 (1.21-1.30), ventral 1.26 (1.25-1.27), anal 1.40 (1.35-1.45), caudal fin 0.80 (0.79-0.82) in head length.

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Map of Kerala showing collection spot

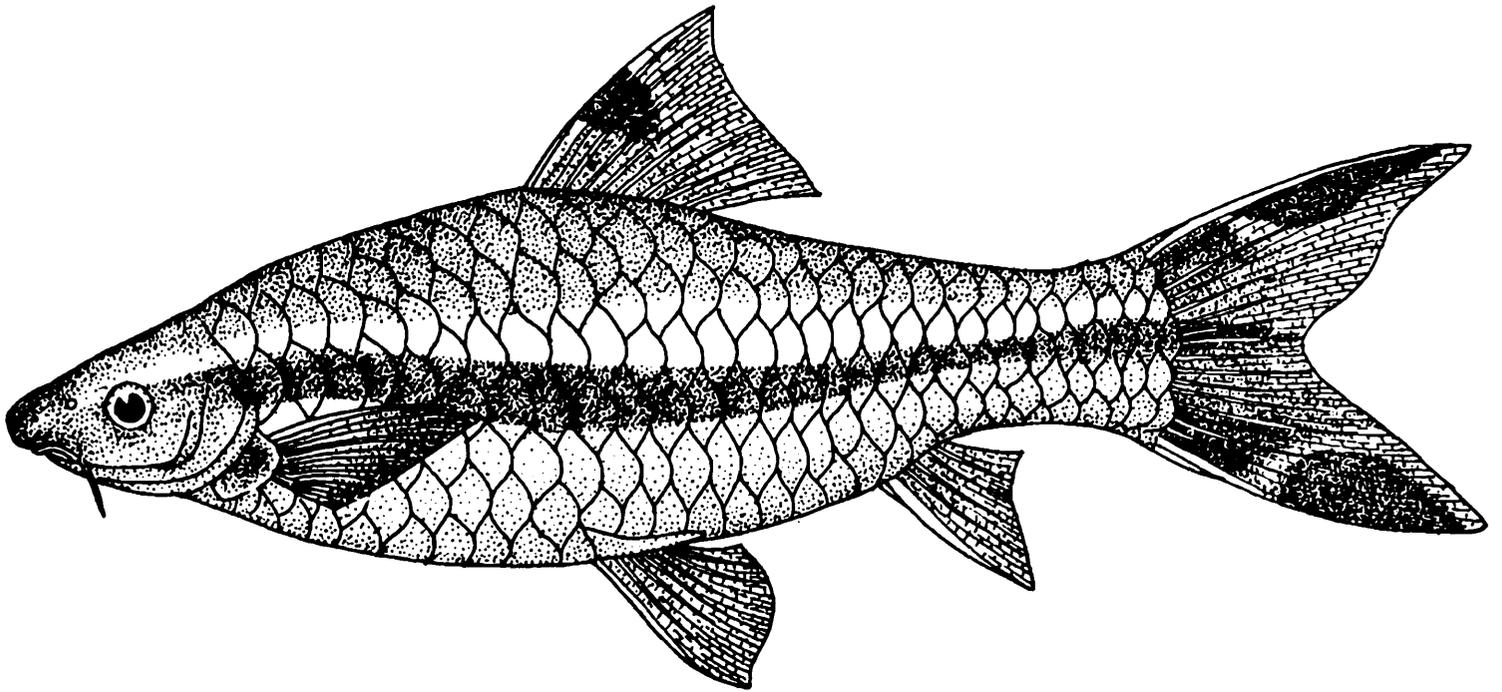


Fig. 1. Lateral view of *P. chalakkudiensis* sp. nov. (125.0 mm SL)

Scales.-Lateral line scales 28; $5/2\frac{1}{2}$ - 3 scales in a transverse series from base of first dorsal fin spine to base of first anal fin spine; 9 scales before the origin of dorsal fin.

Gill rakers. - 10 gill rakers on the first gill arch.

Colouration. - Body silvery with a black band from the snout to the base of the caudal fin; a pale scarlet stripe above this; caudal fin with an oblique dark band crossing the posterior third of each lobe; dorsal with a dark mark in the middle of the outer surface extending upto the second branched rays.

Comparison. - As mentioned earlier, this fish bears resemblance to *P. denisonii*. However, it can be easily distinguished by the inferior position of its mouth, the longer snout and the distinctive black blotch on the dorsal fin.

Distribution. - Chalakkudy River, Western Ghats, Kerala, South India.

Etymology. - Named after the river where it is found.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are grateful to Dr J. R. B. Alfred, Director, Zoological Survey of India and Dr P. T. Cherian, officer incharge, Southern Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India, Chennai, for providing necessary facilities.

REFERENCE

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