

First record of the loach fish *Turcinoemacheilus kosswigi* in the basin of Euphrates River, with first observations on habitat and behaviour

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Abstract. The loach fish *Turcinoemacheilus kosswigi* Bănărescu & Nalbant, 1964 (Balitoridae), formerly believed to be an endemic species in the basin of Tigris River, was recorded for the first time in the upper Euphrates River basin. This extension of its recorded range makes it likely that it has been overlooked in other parts of the Euphrates-Tigris system. *T. kosswigi* seems to be a habitat specialist living on coarse gravel beds in fast-running water. Its ability to attach to hard substrate even outside the water has to be understood as an adaptation to this habitat.

Kurzfassung. Die Schmerlenart *Turcinoemacheilus kosswigi* Bănărescu & Nalbant, 1964 (Balitoridae), bislang nur aus dem Einzugsgebiet des Tigris bekannt, wurde zum ersten Mal im Becken des oberen Euphrat nachgewiesen. Diese Erweiterung des belegten Verbreitungsgebietes weist wohl auf ein weites Vorkommen im Euphrat-Tigris-System hin. *T. kosswigi* scheint ein Habitatspezialist für schnell überströmte Grobkiesbänke zu sein. Die Fähigkeit zum Anheften an den Untergrund, auch ausserhalb des Wassers, ist als Anpassung an diesen Habitat zu verstehen.

Key words. Anatolia, Turkey, faunistics, zoogeography, Balitoridae, habitat specialist, adaptation.

Introduction

The loach *Turcinoemacheilus kosswigi* Bănărescu & Nalbant, 1964 (Balitoridae: Nemacheilinae) was originally described from the upper part of the Tigris River in Anatolia (BĂNĂRESCU & NALBANT 1964). Subsequently, NALBANT & BIANCO (1998) recorded two more localities, both within the Tigris River system. NALBANT (1998) mentioned specimens of *T. kosswigi* from the Upper Tigris drainage area without giving definite localities. From these records, *T. kosswigi* was believed to be restricted to the Tigris River system (KURU 1996). *T. kosswigi* is the only member of the genus *Turchinoemacheilus* and is morphologically distinct from all other members of the family Balitoridae (BĂNĂRESCU & NALBANT 1964). It is not known to what extent the species' characteristic morphology reflects adaptations to its habitat, since information on its ecology and biology is absent. The only note on the habitat of this fish is given by KURU (1996) as 'clean waters with gravel bed'.

In the present note we report a record of *T. kosswigi* in the Euphrates River system together with observations on the habitat and on the behaviour of the fish in an aquarium.