



A. macmasteri or A. viejita

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GOLD FORM

A. macmasteri or A. viejita

Mike Wise

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The home page of Martin and TomC

Apistogramma Species List By Species-Groups/Complexes August, 2011

Compiled by Mike Wise

The genus *Apistogramma* is one of the most species-rich genera of cichlid fishes in South America. Only the genus *Crenicichla* can compete with it in numbers of species. Presently, Dr. S. O. Kullander lists 62 (plus 6 additional new) described species as valid, but there are probably more than twice as many presently undescribed species that have entered the hobby over the past 30 years. In addition, a large number of distinct populations (often called "forms") and color morphs exist that may or may not be species in their own right. This leads to problems in deciding which are valid species. I tend to be more of a "splitter". I do this for two reasons. First, I feel that we need to avoid crossing different populations in the hobby as much as possible. Many of these populations are extremely rare and not yet studied. Once crossed with other similar populations many of these possible species could be lost to the hobby. If they turn out to be populations of the same species, then no real harm is done, but if they turn out to be distinct species, then we lose species purity in the hobby due to unintentional hybridization. Second, genetic studies indicate that the genus *Apistogramma* is not only evolving very rapidly (Faries, et al., 2001), but that genetically distinct species can be almost indistinguishable from each other (Ready, et al., 2006).

I have been compiling lists of *Apistogramma* species since 1985, first for the *Apistogramma* Study Group and now for several web based apisto sites. The following list is my opinion of which species are distinct and separate, and which are merely geographic populations. My list is based on information provided to me by apistophiles from all over the world. It is strongly influenced by the works of Kullander, Koslowski and preliminary genetic work by Miller and Schilwehen. I doubt that others with an extensive knowledge of the genus will agree completely with this list, yet I feel it is accurate for the most part. It will undoubtedly change – as it has in the past – as new data appear. I am always interested in others opinions. Such discussions can only improve our understanding of the many species of *Apistogramma*.

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A DESCRIPTION OF APISTOGRAMMA SPECIES-GROUPS

by Mike Wise

In 1996 I gave a talk at the 15th annual weekend convention of the Northeast Council of Aquarium Societies entitled "Description, Distribution and a Proposed Phylogeny of *Apistogramma* Species-Groups". Later, I wrote an article under the same title for the *Leechville Aquarist* (Wise, 1996). It proved very popular and many other aquarium society journals reprinted it. Due to the amount of new information concerning species of *Apistogramma* that became available over the next ten years, I updated the paper in 2002. It was published on the web site of the Apistogramma Study Group. During the past decade, still more data on *Apistogramma* species, from both scientists and hobbyists, have been published. These include genetic phylogenetic discoveries (Miller & Schilwehen 2003; Ready et al. 2006) that were not available until just a few years ago. New introductions and collecting locality data for both described and undescribed species has greatly expanded. All of this new data makes it possible to have an even better understanding of the *Apistogramma* species-groups, their patterns of distribution, and seemingly how the many different species of *Apistogramma* arose from one another.

At this time, it is generally accepted that there are between 60 and 69 valid scientifically described species of *Apistogramma*. Over 200 additional undescribed species-forms have been reported in hobby-oriented literature. Some of these undescribed species-forms, however, are probably geographic variants of already known species. Nevertheless, I feel confident in saying that at least 200 different species of *Apistogramma* are distributed throughout the many of the river systems in tropical South America east of the Andes. With so many different species, it is virtually impossible to make a positive identification without some means of breaking the genus down into manageable parts.

History

With ever more species being discovered, and the potential for the number to expand dramatically, it early became obvious that the genus *Apistogramma* needed to be broken down into various species-groupings in order to more easily identify individual species. Mieskes (1962) originally erected species groups based on different eye diameters and nose lengths. Although others thought that this was an artificial grouping (e.g. Goldstein, 1970), Mieskes's groupings remained the basis for identifying *Apistogramma* for almost 20 years. Kullander (1980) proposed a more natural grouping of the genus, based on many more shared characteristics. He listed seven species-groups and several species that were then not assignable to species-groups. Schilwehen (1982) was the first to recognize that most species groups had a regional pattern of distribution. He proposed nine species-groups plus additional, non-assignable, species. Koslowski (1985) originally published the list of species-groups most apistophiles have used for the past 30+ years. He also subdivided some species groups, calling these divisions "complexes". He originally had seven groups and nine complexes, plus species not assigned to these. Koslowski (2002) expanded the number to 13 species-groups and 16 complexes. In their preliminary genetic studies, Miller & Schilwehen (2003) largely confirmed

<http://apisto.sites.no/>

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Mike Wise says:

- ▶ I would say that most apisto keepers are in error. Most apisto keepers worldwide have never seen the true *A. viejita* alive. In the 35 years of keeping dwarfs, I've seen live specimens of *A. viejita* only once. Once you see it, it is obvious that it is different from *A. macmasteri*. I suggest that people interested in understanding the difference between the two species should read my description at the Cichlid Room Companion web site. The following is a Q&D (quick and dirty) aid:

If it doesn't have a bright red edge on the dorsal fin – it isn't *A. viejita*.

If it has caudal fin extensions – it isn't *A. viejita*.

If it is deep bodied (high backed) – it isn't *A. viejita*.

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... THE REAL A. viejita

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... THE REAL A. viejita

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The picture in the headline shows the lower part of Rio Pacaya, National Reserve of Pacaya Samiria, Peru

Home

About our
copyright

Apistogramma
information

Apisto news

Articles

Faq

Introduction to
Apisto

Articles

Contact us

Fish Profiles

Apistogramma

Characidae

Corydoras

Lebiasinidae

Loricariidae

Other dwarfs

Guestbook

Latest changes

Links

Login

Slide shows

Welcome to our fish site



A. pertensis -the true holotype form



A. biteniata (Rio Tigre)



A. cf. escazuoides (Rio Curaray 2012)

We are two ornamental fish hobbyists, living in the southern part of Norway.

Martin is the one who knows how to make a website. He is not keeping any fish for the moment.

TomC is keeping lots of Apistogramma and Lebiasinidae (pencilfish). He has collected fish in the Peruvian Amazon on several occasions.

Here you will find stuff concerning dwarf-cichlids (mostly Apistogramma), characins (mostly Lebiasinidae =pencil fish), and a few others.

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