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Endangered, extinct, or elusive: *Crenicichla* (*Lacustria*) *pezzii*, a new species from the *Crenicichla* species community in the lost rapids of the Passo Fundo River, Uruguay River basin, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (Teleostei: Cichlidae)

Carlos A. S. Lucena*, Sven Kullander and Bárbara Calegari*****

The Passo Fundo River is a strongly meandering left bank tributary of the upper Uruguay River basin in Brazil. The river is blocked by hydroelectric plants with dams of which the UHE Monjolinho, operational since 2009, is the most recent. The lower Passo Fundo River is also now part of the Foz do Chapecó dam inundating a large stretch of the Uruguay River valley. Collections from the Passo Fundo River conducted between 1996 and 2012 recorded five species of *Crenicichla* (*Lacustria*) endemic to the Uruguay River basin belonging to *Crenicichla missioneira* species group, including the new species herein described – *Crenicichla* (*Lacustria*) *pezzii*. An outstanding character of *Crenicichla pezzii*, new species, is the unique colour pattern of the male, composed of small dark spots covering body and fins. *Crenicichla pezzii*, new species, is most similar to *Crenicichla jurubi* from further upstream in the Uruguay River basin but distinguished by the presence of dark spots on the cheek in the male vs. absent; post-temporal ocellus consistently present vs. absent; and molariform pharyngeal teeth absent vs. present. *Crenicichla pezzii*, new species, was collected in rapids in the Passo Fundo River, now obliterated by the Monjolinho hydroelectric power plant, and since 2009 has not been recorded from the Monjolinho area – when the plant became operational – and everywhere else, and may now be extinct. Other species of *Crenicichla* recorded from the lower Passo Fundo River and/or the lower part of the tributary Erechim River are *C. celidochilus*, *C. hadrostigma*, *C. minuano*, *C. missioneira*, and *C. tendybaguassu*.

Introduction

Pike cichlids of the genus *Crenicichla* Heckel,1840, comprise 22 predominantly large predatory species with major representation in southern South American rivers (Varella et al., 2023). Lucena & Kullander (1992) reported on species of *Crenicichla* from the upper and middle Uruguay River basin in Brazil and Argentina. They found a mix of endemic and widespread species among which five

* PUCRS, Museu de Ciências e Tecnologia, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Avenida Ipiranga, 6681, CEP 90619-900, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.
E-mail: lucena@pucrs.br (corresponding author)
** Department of Zoology, Swedish Museum of Natural History, POB 50007, SE-104 05 Stockholm, Sweden.
E-mail: sven.kullander@nrm.se
*** Natural History Museum Vienna, Vienna, Austria; Natural History Museum Bern, Bern, Switzerland.
E-mail: barbara.calegari@nhm.at

The apparent absence of *Crenicichla pezzii* outside its known locality can likely be attributed to a lack of collecting effort or undocumented records. Similarly, its restricted distribution may simply reflect undersampling in the upper Uruguay River basin. Notwithstanding, *Crenicichla pezzii* now has a name and can be looked after.

Comparative material. Brazil: Santa Catarina: Uruguay River basin: *Crenicichla jurubi*: MCP 40958, 1, 128.1 mm SL; Concórdia, Peixe River at Volta Grande.

Syntopic analysed species of *Crenicichla* and *Saxatilia* from Passo Fundo River, Uruguay River basin, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil: *C. celidochilus*: MCP 46761, 2, 118.7–127.3 mm SL; Nonoai, downstream UHE Monjolinho and MCP 47330, 2, 14.6–151.4 mm SL; Erechim River. — MCP 46766, 1, 150.0 mm SL; Benjamin Constant do Sul, Erechim River.

C. hadrostigma: MCP 44278, 2, 39.2–69.3 mm SL; Nonoai, UHE Monjolinho.

C. minuano: MCP 21128, 1, 90.3 mm SL; Nonoai, mouth of Arroio do Tigre. — MCP 40269, 1, 269.0 mm SL; and MCP 47333, 1, 126.9 mm SL; Entre Rios do Sul, Erechim River. — MCP 43220, 1, 134.0 mm SL; MCP 43984, 1, 43.4 mm SL; and MCP 54595, 4, 48.3–109.5 mm SL; Nonoai, UHE Monjolinho. — MCP 46758, 3, 44.5–52.3 mm SL; Nonoai, Erechim River.

C. missioneira: MCP 20199, 1, 87.2 mm SL; and MCP 53175, 1, 71.6 mm SL; Nonoai, Arroio do Tigre. — MCP 43221, 3, 104.0–206.0 mm SL; MCP 43987, 7, 41.2–59.3 mm SL; MCP 44255, 2, 50.2–187.6 mm SL; and MCP 44276, 1, 86.6 mm SL; Nonoai, UHE Monjolinho. — MCP 46759, 1, 142.2 mm SL (tissue); Benjamin Constant do Sul, Erechim River. — MCP 46762, 1, 136.1 mm SL; Nonai, downstream UHE Monjolinho. — MCP 47332, 1, 168.6 mm SL; Nonai, Erechim River.

C. tendybaguassu: MCP 47522, 2, ca. 131–167 mm SL; Nonoai, above confluence of Passo Fundo River and Erechim River.

Crenicichla sp. 'p': specimens not definitely identified, on account of preservation state, closest to *C. missioneira*; all specimens collected near or within the Passo Fundo dam between 1996 and 1998: MCP 19750, 2, 105.9–167.6 mm SL; Entre Rios do Sul, below dam at Linha Gaboarte. — MCP 19751, 12, 35.7–98,3 mm SL; and MCP 21132, 1, 123.5 mm SL; Entre Rios do Sul, UHE Passo Fundo. — MCP 19752, 5, 84.4–118.2 mm SL; Alto Alegre. — MCP 19754, 1, 167.6 mm SL; MCP 19774, 4, 107.0–265.0 mm SL; MCP 21134, 4, 105.9–229.7 mm SL; UFRGS 1747, 1, 118.0 mm SL; UFRGS 1748, 1, 141.0 mm SL; and UFRGS 1749, 1, 110.0 mm SL; Ronda Alta, UHE Passo Fundo. — MCP 55017, 1, 223.0 mm SL; Nonoai, locality of Goio-Ên, mouth of Uruguay River.

Saxatilia lepidota: MCP 31783, 5, 119.1–143.3 mm SL; Passo Fundo, downstream dam of Corsan. — MCP 46754, 1, 65.3 mm SL; Campinas do Sul, Carafá stream. — MCP 21133, 1, 34.9 mm SL; Entre Rios do Sul, Rio Passo Fundo dam.

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