



Media only: Elisabeth King (507) 212-8216; kingb@si.edu
Sean Mattson (507) 212-8290; Mattsons@si.edu

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Two new species of sea catfish named

A group of scientists from Panama, Colombia, Brazil and Puerto Rico have described two new species of sea catfish in the genus *Ariopsis*, in a report published in the journal *Zootaxa*.

Based on a specimen from Casaya Island in Panama's Las Perlas archipelago, they named the first new species, Jimenez's Sea Catfish, *Ariopsis jimenzi* for Máximo Jiménez Acosta, a zooarchaeology technician in archaeologist Richard Cooke's lab at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Jiménez drew attention to the possible existence of a new species based on his examination of bone characteristics in specimens formerly originally believed to be *A. seemanni*, or the Colombian shark catfish. His observation that the bones belonged to a new species was immediately confirmed by molecular analysis.

The second new species was named the New Granada sea catfish, *Ariopsis canteri*, for Diego Canter Ríos (1984-2007), a young and talented Colombian ichthyologist who died in a traffic accident near Santa Marta, Colombia along with three other biology undergraduates. He collected the data on the new species and also worked on this group of catfish for part of his bachelor's thesis in marine biology.

The zoologists in the team — Alexandre Marceniuk from Brazil's Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi; Arturo Acero of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and Ricardo Betancur of the University of Puerto Rico — constructed a family tree showing how the eight different species in the genus *Ariopsis* are related.

The genus *Ariopsis* is hard to classify because different species may be almost identical in appearance. Researchers used both the morphology (shape) of the parts of the fishes' bodies and molecular biology (genetic relationships based on mitochondrial DNA analysis) to classify this difficult group.

The eight species they describe as members of this genus are:

The Mayan sea catfish, Bagre maya, *Ariopsis assimilis*

New Granada sea catfish, Chivo cabezón, *Ariopsis canteri* (new species)

Hardhead sea catfish, Bagre boca chica or Bagre gato, *Ariopsis felis*
Tete sea catfish, no Spanish name, *Ariopsis gilberti*
Blue sea catfish, Cominata azulada, Bagre cuatete, *Ariopsis guatemalensis*
Jimenez's sea catfish, no Spanish name, *Ariopsis jimenezi* (new species)
Canchimala sea catfish, Canchimala blanca, *Ariopsis simonsi*
No English name, Congo Prieto or Musengue (in Panama), *Ariopsis seemanni*

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, headquartered in Panama City, Panama, is a part of the Smithsonian Institution. The Institute furthers the understanding of tropical nature and its importance to human welfare, trains students to conduct research in the tropics and promotes conservation by increasing public awareness of the beauty and importance of tropical ecosystems. Website: www.stri.si.edu. Promo video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9JDSIwBegk>.

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Marceniuk, A. P., Acero, A. P., Cooke, R. and Betancur R. 2017. Taxonomic revision of New World genus *Ariopsis* Gill (Siluriformes: Ariidae), with description of two new species. *Zootaxa*.