

**BLACK BULLHEAD (*ICTALURUS MELAS* RAFINESQUE,
1820) (PISCES: OSTARIOPHYSI: BAGROIDAE),
A NEW SPECIES OF FISH RECENTLY FOUND
IN ROMANIAN WATERS**

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L'auteur a identifié des exemplaires appartenant à *Ictalurus melas* Rafinesque, 1820, dans la rivière Ier (nord-ouest de la Roumanie), et – par la suite – dans le Barcău, signalant la présence de cette espèce dans les eaux roumaines, d'où n'était connu que *I. nebulosus* (Le Sueur, 1819). Il est d'avis que les populations de *I. melas* proviennent de Hongrie, où l'espèce a été importée en 1980 et sa présence à l'état sauvage a été signalé en 1997, dans le bassin du Körös (Criş). Sa présence est donc plus que probable dans les trois rivières Criş.

Keywords: *Ictalurus melas*, Romanian fish fauna

In the spring of 1997 amateur fishermen from Ier Valley mentioned to us the capture of some specimens of bullhead darker in colour than the anterior ones.

It was subsequently proved that they belong to the black bullhead species (*Ictalurus melas* Rafinesque, 1820). The species was afterwards found in the Barcău river, too.

We can consider that the Romanian fish fauna was enriched with a new species, because the wide spread off bullhead - untill now - in our waters belongs to the brown bullhead species (*Ictalurus nebulosus* Le Sueur, 1819).

Both species have North-American origin. The first European import of bullhead occured in 1871 in France (Spillmann, 1961). Then, in 1880 and 1885, Germany made great imports of this fish.

For a long time it was considered that the new fish belonged to the brown bullhead species. The first specimen of black bullhead in Europe was identified in Holland in 1936 (Pintér, 1989). Then, Spillmann (1967) had

the opinion that all the European population would belong to the same, last mentioned species. But specialists from Central and Eastern Europe considered that the specimens from this area belong to the first species (Bănărescu, 1964, 1980-81; Holèik, 1972).

The cause of these controversies is the resemblance between the two species. Another reason is that the features that make possible the distinction between the two species in their native place - the number of anal rays and the aspect of the pectoral spine (Jordan and Eversman, 1896; Slastenenko, 1957; Hubbs and Lagler, 1964; Scott and Crosman, 1969; Trautman, 1957) - are not as different in the European populations. That's why that Hungarian authors considered the Central European populations of brown bullhead to be a new subspecies: *Ictalurus nebulosus pannonicus* (Harka and Pintér, 1990)

The brown bullhead was first noticed in Hungary in 1902 (Pintér, 1989) and in Romania in 1934 (Antonescu, 1934, 1938).

In 1980 the black bullhead was imported into some Hungaryan fisheries from Italy (Pintér, 1989). Probably it was there that it escaped and reached the basin of the Criş river (Harka, 1997). Then it naturally spread Romanian waters, too (Fig. 1). Up to the present, besides the rivers Ier and Barcău, the species can very probably be found in the water of the three Criş rivers.

The difference between the two species in Central European waters may be summed up if we take into account the following features (Harka, 1997):

1. the flanks of the brown bullhead have spots or nebulosities while the flanks of the black one are uniformly coloured;
2. the mature black bullhead has a vertical light stripe on the posterior edge of the tail, which is not present at the brown one;
3. in the brown specimens both the rays and the membrane of fins are uniformly coloured, while at the black ones the rays are lighter and the membrane is smoky, darker than the body itself;
4. the browns' abdomen is white or bone-coloured, unlike the blacks' abdomen, which is yellow.

Besides, we may add that the posterior edge of the brown specimens' pectoral spine is obviously toothed while the black species has uniform and fine spine-teeth (Fig. 2).

It is interesting to notice the ascendancy of the black species, which is tending to replace the initial populations of the browns.

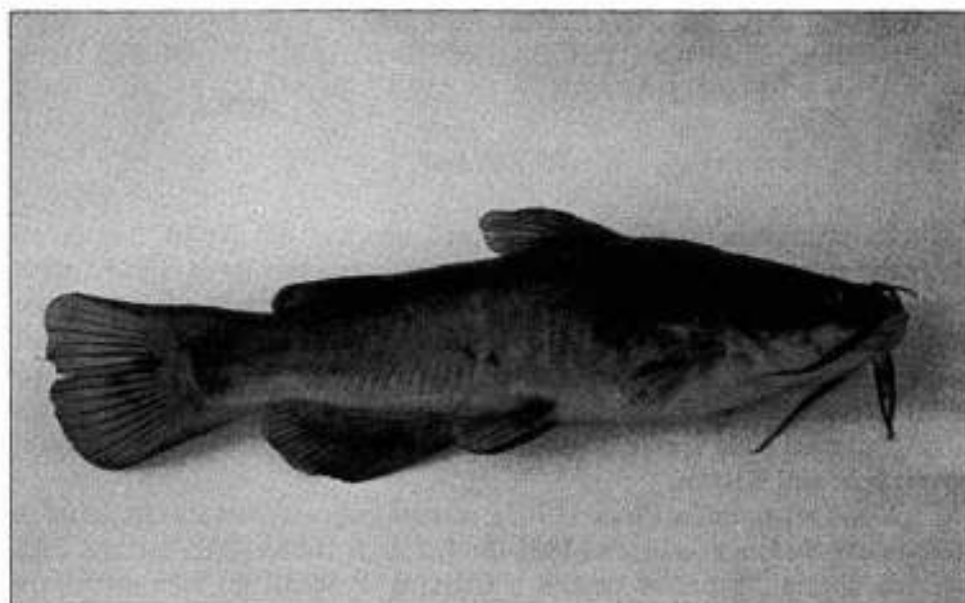


Fig. 1 - Black bullhead captured in the Ier river

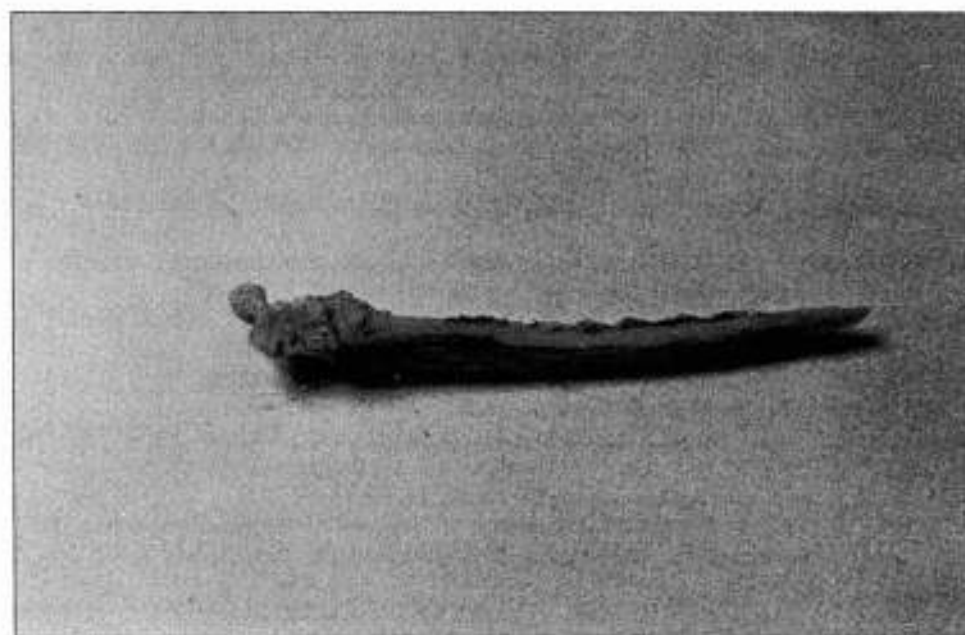


Fig. 2 - The pectoral spine of the black bullhead.

SOMNUL-PITIC-NEGRU (*ICTALURUS MELAS* RAFINESQUE, 1820)
(PISCES: OSTARIOPHYSI: BAGROIDAE), O SPECIE DE PEȘTE
RECENT APĂRUTĂ ÎN APELE ROMÂNIEI

REZUMAT

În primăvara anului 1997 pescarii sportivi din Valea Ierului au semnalat apariția unor exemplare de somn pitic mai închise la culoare decât cele obișnuite anterior. La determinare, acestea s-au dovedit a fi indivizi de somn-pitic-negru (*Ictalurus melas* Rafinesque, 1820). Datorită faptului că somnul pitic existent deja în apele noastre aparține speciei *Ictalurus nebulosus* (Le Sueur, 1819), putem considera că fauna ihtiologică a țării s-a îmbogățit cu o nouă specie de pești. Ulterior, am constatat prezența acestei specii și în râul Barcău.

După relatarea lui Pintér (1989), somnul-pitic-negru a fost importat în heleșteiele din Ungaria în anul 1980 din Italia, iar Harka (1997) semnalează apariția speciei în partea ungară a Crișului. Probabil de aici specia s-a răspândit pe cale naturală și în apele noastre. Ca atare este probabilă prezența speciei și în cele trei Crișuri.

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