



On a record of *Puntius gelius* (Hamilton, 1822) (Teleostei: Cypriniformes: Cyprinidae) from Tamil Nadu

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Fishes of the genus *Puntius* are prolific and are known to occupy all niches (Jayaram 1999). These fishes have been well studied and have been exploited for the aquarium trade and transported throughout the world. One such fish is *Puntius gelius*, which was first described by Hamilton-Buchanan (1822) in his work on the fishes of the river Ganges. In the same work he also described another fish very similar to *P. gelius* but for the characteristic spots on fin bases, called *P. canius* which was later synonymized as *P. gelius* by Day (1878). *P. gelius* is a colorful fish which grows to a maximum of 5cm in length (Menon 1999). Though this fish was described more than a hundred years ago and has since been exported throughout the world by the ornamental fish trade, it is not very popular among hobbyists in India (Talwar & Jhingran 1991).

P. gelius is described as elongated with body depth 3 to 3.5 times in the total length. It has fairly large scales which are dotted and an incomplete lateral line which ceases after the fifth or the sixth scale. The body is honey-colored with a black band over the tail anterior to the caudal fin and another less distinct one behind the

base of the caudal fin. The dorsal fin is yellowish with a black spot at the base and so are the ventral and the anal fins (Hamilton-Buchanan 1822; Day 1878). *P. gelius* has been recorded from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Bangladesh (Day 1878; Menon 1951; Talwar & Jhingran 1991; Jayaram 1999; Menon 1999). According to Menon (1999) the species is rare.

During a fish survey I collected, *P. gelius* (Image 1) from slow flowing water with a muddy substrate and abundant aquatic vegetation in the Chembarampakkam tank situated in the outskirts of Chennai. The specimens collected matched perfectly with the description given by Hamilton-Buchanan (1822) and Day (1878). The reason for this fish not being recorded in the earlier works can be attributed to its small size and rare occurrence.

Attempts to document the ichthyofauna in and around Chennai have been on for the past one-hundred years. One of the first works was done by Raj (1916) followed by Venkateshwarulu et al. (1975), Raghunathan (1978), Devi et al. (1999) and recently by Daniels & Rajagopal (2004). *P. gelius* has not been recorded in any of these works. Interestingly the range of *P. gelius* extends further south as there is an unpublished report of the species from Paravanar River, Cuddalore District in eastern Tamil Nadu (T.J. Indra, pers. comm.).

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Image 1. *Puntius gelius* collected from Chembarampakkam.

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