

NOTE ON THE GENUS DIPTERODON.

BY THEODORE GILL.

In 1802, Compté de Lacépède proposed (Hist. Nat. des Poissons, t. 4, p. 165) a genus called *Dipterodon* for six species of spinous-finned fishes belonging to the genera now generally known as *Lutjanus*, *Apogon*, *Aspro*, and *Sciæna*. The only characters assigned were the development of two dorsal fins and the possession of teeth in the jaws. The absolutely worthless character of such a combination will be generally recognized from the names of the constituents.

In 1829, Cuvier, in the second edition of *Le Règne Animal* (t. 2, p. 194) used Lacépède's name *Dipterodon* for a genus of which only a single species was known; that species was a recently discovered one, *D. capensis*, of the Cape of Good Hope; was unknown to Lacépède, and had no relation to any of the species known to him, as Cuvier, in fact, recognized. He remarked that this genus, whose name is taken from Lacépède, does not comprise the same species. Such a system of nomenclature is now universally discarded, and consequently the name *Dipterodon* can not be used in the sense in which it was employed by Cuvier.

During his life-time, Gronovius had obtained the fish subsequently described by Cuvier from the Cape of Good Hope, and had given it in manuscript the name of *Coracinus*. The Gronovian manuscript, however, was not printed until 1854, when it was published under the auspices of Dr. John E. Gray, into whose hands it had in due course come, and of course the new names can only date from that time.

No other names having been given to the genus *Dipterodon* of Cuvier, the Gronovian name of *Coracinus* would have been in place, as Professor Jordan subsequently proposed. Professor Jordan in 1883, in the Proceedings of the U. S. National Museum (vol. 5, p. 573), remarked that "the name *Dipterodon* has been used by Cuv. and Val. for a genus unknown to Lacépède. This transfer of the name is not allowable, and the *Dipterodon* of C. and V. should receive a different name, that of *Coracinus* Gronov. (1854.)"

Unfortunately, however, the use of the Gronovian name, as proposed by Professor Jordan, is precluded by a previous employment of that name in another connection.

In 1831, Pallas, in his *Zoographia Rosso-Asiatica* (vol. 3, p. 255), had proposed a genus distinguished, as he supposed, by the sheath for the spinous dorsal fin, which he called *Coracinus*, referring to it two species living in the Black Sea, the *C. chaleis* and the *C. boops*. These species,

as is now generally recognized, are two well-known fishes occurring in the Mediterranean and the seas of Europe generally, the *C. chalcis* being the *Corvina nigra* of Cuvier, and the *C. boops* of Pallas being the *Umbrina vulgaris* of Cuvier.

The names *Dipterodon* and *Coracinus* having been both used previously, and consequently inallowable for another genus, and no other name having been given to the South African fish, a new designation must therefore be supplied. *Dichistius* is proposed as being applicable. The relations of this fish have to be ascertained by study of the anatomy, materials for which are not yet available in Washington. It does not appear to be closely related to *Pimelopterus*, as generally supposed.