

## NOTE ON THE GENUS FELICHTHYS OF SWAINSON.

BY  
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The name *Felichthys* of Swainson has been ignored by common consent until recently. It has been lately restricted by Dr. and Mrs. Eigenmann to the auchenipterine genus called *Pseudaucheniapterus* by Bleeker. This is, however, inadmissible, and if it must be used at all it is clearly to the one generally called *Ælurichthys* it must be referred.

In 1838, Swainson, in "The Natural History and Classification of Fishes," etc. (vol. 1, p. 343), proposed the genus *Breviceps* for the *Silurus bagre* of Bloch and for that alone. "In this," he claimed, "the caudal fin is also innate [as in *Synodontis*]; but the points are not extended like those of the first dorsal and pectoral rays, which reach to a very considerable length; the head is particularly short and obtuse, with the eyes very remote; and there are only two pairs of cirri, one of which is very short. The upper jaw is slightly longer than the under; it is very large, and armed with numerous sharp teeth, very small, placed in two broad rows in the upper jaw, and in one on the under; finally, the tongue is very large, thick, and rounded."

This definition (except as to the dentition\*) is essentially applicable to the *Silurus bagre* although not truly diagnostic.

In 1839, Swainson, in the second volume of the same work (vol. 2, p. 189), still used the name *Breviceps* for the same genus, but in the later "general arrangement" (vol. 2, p. 305) there was substituted for *Breviceps*, "a name already used in Erpetology," a new name, *Felichthys*. The genus was redefined as having the "head short, very obtuse, depressed, anal fin lengthened; vent central; caudal forked," and two species were referred to it, (1) "*F. filamentosus*,† Bl. pl. 365," and (2) "*F. nodosus*, Bl. 368, f. I."

No attention was subsequently paid to the genus. The hybrid nature of the name would be regarded by some as objectionable, and the perfect ignorance of the composer has caused many to ignore the man completely. Perfectly as I agree with those who execrate the character of his work, I must, nevertheless, agree with those others who consider that the work itself, having been duly published, must receive due attention.

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\*The anterior of the two rows is intermaxillary; the posterior vomero-palatine.

†*Felichthys filamentosus* is described as a new species in Appendix (p. 392). It is *F. marinus*.

In 1862, Dr. von Bleeker retained the name *Pimelodus* as the designation for the genus generally called *Elurichthys*, and would have referred *Felichthys* to it as a synonym.

In 1882, Professor Swain (Proc. Acad. Nat. Sc., Phila., p. 281) proposed to use *Felichthys* as the name for the genus called in 1840 by Cuvier and Valenciennes *Auchenipterus*.

In 1888 and later, Dr. and Mrs. Eigenmann, in their excellent memoirs on the South American Nematognaths,\* accepted Swainson's name *Felichthys* for the genus first defined by Bleeker, in 1862, under the name *Pseudauchenipterus* and typified by the *Silurus nodosus* of Bloch.

The fault with all the authors cited is that they have neglected to refer to the early portions of Swainson's work. If they had done so, they would have perceived that Swainson's name should be restored to the *Silurus bagre*, and, in that case, replace the generally accepted name *Ailurichthys* or *Elurichthys*. I presume there will be no difference of opinion as to the propriety of this course, and indeed Dr. and Mrs. Eigenmann would doubtless be the first to recognize the status. It is, therefore, desirable that the change should be made as speedily as possible.

The synonymy of the genus may be summarized as follows:

#### FELICHTHYS.

##### Synonymy.

*Breviceps* Swainson, Nat. Hist. Fish., etc., v. 1, pp. 323, 343 (incl. *Silurus bagre* Bl.), 1838. (Not *Breviceps Merrem*, 1820.)

*Felichthys* Swainson, Nat. Hist. Fish., etc., v. 2, p. 305, 1-39 (substitute for *Breviceps*, but with *Silurus nodosus* Bl. added).

*Ailurichthys* Baird and Girard, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sc., Phila., v. 7, p. 26, 1854.

*Elurichthys* Gill, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sc., Phila., 1863, p. 172, 1863. (Adopted by Günther, Steindachner, Cope, Jordan, Gilbert, Goode, Bean, et al.)

*Pimelodus* Bleeker, Atlas Ich. Indes Neerland, v. 2, p. 8, 1862.

Four species of the genus are known, viz:

1. F. BAGRE=*Silurus bagre* Linn, 1766.
2. F. MARINUS=*Silurus marinus* Mitchell, 1814.
3. F. PANAMENSIS=*Elurichthys panamensis* Gill, 1863.
4. F. PINNIMACULATUS=*Elurichthys pinnimaculatus* Steind, 1876.

##### SUMMARY.

- (1) The genus *Breviceps* was based solely on the *Silurus bagre* and upon the examination of an actual specimen whose dorsal and pectoral fins were illustrated.
- (2) The name *Felichthys* was formally "substituted for *Breviceps*, a name already used in Erpetology."
- (3) Inasmuch as *Felichthys* was rigorously substituted for *Breviceps*, the same species was necessarily the type of each.
- (4) The name *Felichthys* must take precedence of subsequently proposed names for the same type, e. g., *Ailurichthys* or *Elurichthys*.

\*Proc. Cal. Acad. Sc. (2), vol. 1, p. 152, 1883; Occ. Papers Cal. Acad. Sc., vol. 1, p. 285, 1890.