

SYNODIDAE: CORRECT NAME FOR LIZARDFISH FAMILY

ABSTRACT

The family name Synodontidae based on the African freshwater catfish *Synodontis* Cuvier, 1817, is not applicable to the lizardfishes, the correct family name for which is Synodidae, based on *Synodus* Scopoli, 1777.

THERE are two families of unrelated fishes to whom the same family name - Synodontidae (based on *Synodontis* Cuvier, 1817, the type-genus of the family of African freshwater catfishes) - continues to be applied by many taxonomists as well as by fisheries scientists: the marine, warmwater lizardfishes *Synodus* (Gronow) Scopoli, 1777; *Saurida* Valenciennes, 1849; *Trachinocephalus* Gill, 1861, and the African freshwater catfish family comprising *Synodontis* Cuvier, 1817 and *Mochokus* Joannis, 1835.

Nineteenth century taxonomists placed the lizardfishes in Scopelidae (Günther, 1864; Playfair and Günther, 1866; Day, 1878; Klunzinger, 1879). Jordan (1905; also 1923) was one of the first to transfer them (incorrectly) to Synodontidae. Regan (1911 a, 1911 b) did a rather surprising thing in the course of one year: he used the name Synodontidae for lizardfishes as well as for the African catfish family in his

two publications respectively. After Regan (1911 a), a large number of authors from different parts of the world continue to report or describe lizardfishes under Synodontidae (Jordan *et al.*, 1913; Jordan, 1923; McCulloch, 1929; Norman, 1935; Hildebrand, 1946; Schultz *et al.*, 1953; Munro, 1955; Perlmutter, 1961; Lagler *et al.*, 1962; Greenwood *et al.*, 1966; Bailey *et al.*, 1970). It was Berg (1940) who used the name Synodidae (based on *Synodus* (Gronow) Scopoli, 1777, the type-genus of the lizardfish family) for the first time for lizardfishes, but relatively few taxonomists (e.g., Fowler, 1956; Smith and Smith, 1963) have followed him.

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The African genera *Synodontis* and *Mochokus* were earlier placed in Siluridae (Günther, 1864; Playfair and Günther, 1866; Boulenger, 1907, 1911), but Regan (1911 b) correctly used the name Synodontidae for them, although almost simultaneously (and incorrectly), he used it (1911 a) also for lizardfishes. Though Berg (1940) implicitly made the position clear, some taxonomists, mainly American, refer to the African catfish family as Mochokidae (Axelrod and Schultz, 1955; Frey, 1961; Lagler *et al.*, 1962; Greenwood *et al.*, 1966), rather than place the lizardfishes in Synodontidae.

S. DUTT

Department of Zoology,
A. U. Postgraduate Centre,
Guntur 522005 (A. P.), India.

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