

Threatened fishes of the world: *Ossubtus xinguense* (Jégu 1992) (Characidae: Serrasalminae)

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Common names: eaglebeak pacu (US), Adlerschnabel-pacu (GER), pacu-capivara, pacu-tromba-de-anta (BRA). **Conservation status:** Endangered. **Identification:** D 21–23, A 23–26, vertebrae 38. The body is ovoid. The profile of the snout is blunt. Among the serrasalmins this species is characterized by a series of synapomorphies linked to its uncommon rotation of the head plan during the early stages of life. The mouth is terminal in postlarval stage, slightly downturned in specimens of around 30 mm SL and strictly ventral in specimens larger than 50 mm SL. The lower edge of the eye is located very dorsally of the commissure of the mouth. The premaxillary has five teeth in the labial series and two in the lingual series. The two median teeth of the labial series are reduced to very short canines. The lower jaw has four incisiform teeth on a single series. The pectoral fins are placed in a very low position on the sides. There are 19–21 branched rays on the dorsal fin and 22–25 on the anal fin. The number of scales in the lateral line varies from 81 to 88 to the hypural. There are 36–42 series of circumpeduncular scales. There are 11–16 postpelvic serrae of which 5–9 pairs of spines are found around the cloaca, but there are no prepelvic serrae. The number of branchiospines varies from 9–10 on the upper branch of the first branchial arch and from 11 to 16 on the lower branch. Maximum SL about 176 mm. **Distribution:** The presence of *Ossubtus xinguense* is confirmed in Xingu basin (Pará, Brazil) but restricted to the rapids area around Altamira city. **Abundance:** Unknown, but apparently rare. **Habitat and ecology:** *Ossubtus xinguense* is a strictly rheophilic species. Young specimens of up to 40 mm SL could be observed in schools of 20–30 individuals, sheltered under broad stones in the rapids near Altamira. Large specimens can be captured by castnet in the rapids. The feeding of this species is unknown because of the low number of specimens captured since its original description. In aquaria, the species exhibits high territoriality which results in a strong aggressiveness towards their congeners. Specimens observed in ornamental fish trade companies in Manaus and destined to be exported presented an advanced emaciated condition, probably resulting from prolonged starvation. This species is parasitized by a highly host-specific isopode of the family Cymothoidae. **Reproduction:** Unknown. **Threats:** *O. xinguense* is an endemic species whose distribution area is restricted to the rapids of Xingu River around Altamira City. Its odd shape and its recent introduction into the international aquarium trade (Glaser 2000: p. 59) may translate into an increase in demand for the species among aquarists. In addition, the planned construction of a large hydroelectric plant in the lower Xingu River at the limit of the rapids and the main Amazon floodplain would result in highly negative impacts to the population of *O. xinguense* and numerous other rheophilic (and apparently endemic) fish species occurring in the Xingu River rapids. **Conservation actions:** The commercial exploitation of this species for the aquarium trade is currently forbidden and should be maintained until more scientific data on its general and reproductive biology is gathered. At the same time, an information campaign among fishermen involved in the aquarium trade should be launched. **Conservation recommendations:** It is imperative to immediately begin studies on the main biological characteristics of this species, chiefly to obtain more information about its biotope and reproductive biology. It is also important to protect the species's expected distribution area from mining activities and other sources of habitat degradation such as damming.



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