In the last issue of *Catch and Culture*, one of the most common group of species was described, fish belonging to the genus *Henicorhynchus*. This genus includes some of the most important species in terms of fisheries and livelihoods of riparian communities.

In this issue, we go to the opposite "extreme" and focus on some of the most rare and elusive species within the same family, Cyprinidae. Rare fish species are difficult to write about because most often very little is known about them. This supplement is therefore also a request to readers of *Catch and Culture* to contribute any information they might have about these species. We will return to that at the end of the Supplement. First, let us briefly introduce some rare species.

Two of the species that qualify as some of the rarest among Mekong fishes are *Aaptosyax grypus* and *Luciocyprinus striolatus*. Apart from being members of the same taxonomic family, they are not closely related. However, they share some interesting characteristics: they are rare, large and predatory.

**Mysterious *Aaptosyax grypus***

*Aaptosyax grypus* is possibly the most rare, and least known, species of the Mekong River. Its distribution range is concentrated around a stretch of the Middle Mekong mainstream from Kratie (Cambodia) in the south to the mouth of the Mun River on the border between the Lao PDR and Thailand. However, in the past its distribution may have covered a larger area. Local fishers in Loei have reported that the species used to occur there but that it has not been encountered for more than 10 years. It is therefore believed to have disappeared from this part of the river. One of the main reasons for its decline is the increased use of monofilament gillnet fisheries in the Mekong River. As a fast-swimming predator of the middle and upper water levels, it would be particularly vulnerable to this type of fishing gear. In addition, since its distribution area appears to be centred around the mouth of the Mun River, it may also have been effected by the Pak Mun dam.

*Aaptosyax grypus* can reach a length of 130 cm and weights of at least 30 kg. It is easily recognised from other members of the family. The main distinguishing character is a large knob in the lower jaw fitting into a notch in the upper jaw. Other features include a well-developed adipose eye-lid.

**Large *Luciocyprinus Dwell in Deep Pools***

*Luciocyprinus striolatus* is a large predator living in deep pools within large mountain rivers in the upper sections of the Mekong Basin, in the Lao PDR and PR China (from where it was scientifically described in 1986). It is distinguished from the only other member of the genus by the 5-8 longitudinal black stripes on the body of the adult. Fishers have reported that this species can grow up to 150 cm. Its large size and wide mouth have provided for a fierce reputation. For instance, it has been referred to as the "monkey-eating fish". Although it is highly unlikely that monkeys constitute part of its diet, such stories certainly add to the mystery that is already fueled by the rarity of the fish.
Because it is extremely difficult to obtain any significant data on rare species through conventional fisheries surveys, *Catch and Culture* would like to encourage its readers who have information about these species to send it to the Editor, *Catch and Culture*, MRC Fisheries Programme, MRC Secretariat, P.O. Box 1112, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Tel: (855-23) 720-979; Fax: (855-23) 720-972; e-mail: mrcs@mrcmekong.org

Actually we are most interested in all fish seen anywhere within the Mekong Basin, at markets or landing sites, in people's homes, and so on. We are compiling recent photographs of each species. Please send us your photographs with information on where the picture was taken and where the fish was caught. All photographs will be returned to the owners.

Contributed by the Assessment of Mekong Fisheries Component of the MRC Fisheries Programme

*Head of a Luciocyprinus striolatus.*

*Large Luciocyprinus striolatus live in deep pools.*