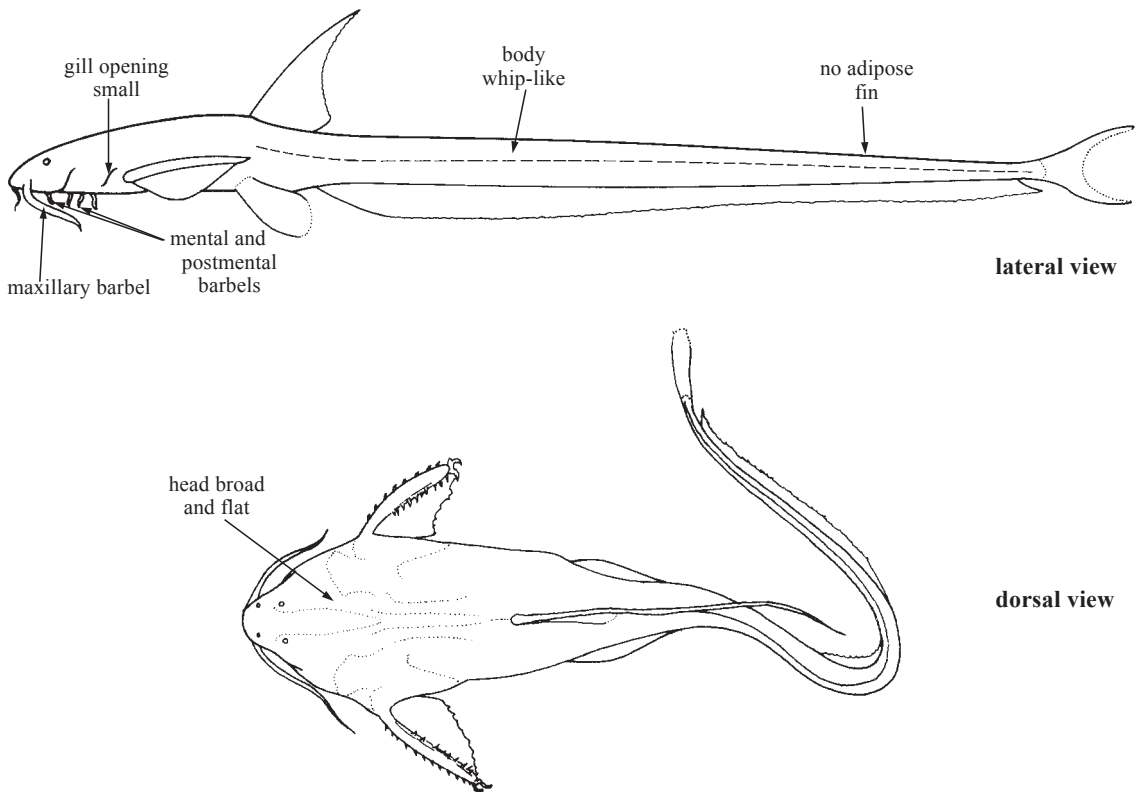


## ASPREDINIDAE

### Banjo catfishes

by C.J. Ferraris, Jr., Portland, Oregon, USA (after Taylor, 1977)

**Diagnostic characters:** Small- to medium-sized fishes (to 40 cm total length). Head and anterior part of body broad and depressed; body long and whip-like posteriorly. Eye minute; anterior and posterior nostrils separated by space greater than nostril diameter. Mouth inferior; maxillary barbel present at corner of mouth, often with additional small barbel (absent in *Platystacus cotylephorus*); **ventral surface of head and abdomen with 2 to 10 pairs of barbels**; **gill opening reduced to tiny slit anterior to pectoral fin**. **Dorsal surface of head with strong, flattened, bony shield**. **Dorsal-fin base short, with weak, flexible spine**; adipose fin absent; **anal-fin base very long, with 50 to 60 soft rays**; pectoral fin low on body, with a strong, serrated spine which can be locked into erect position. Scales absent. **Colour:** back and upper sides beige, brown, or nearly black, sometimes with lighter or darker markings; belly grey, yellowish, rosy, or whitish.



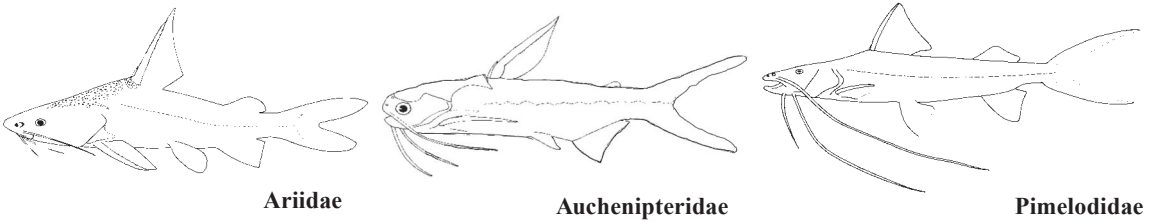
**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Marine and estuarine species of banjo catfishes are bottom-dwelling fishes with peculiar mode of egg incubation. The females carry eggs attached by a short stalk (cotylophore) to underside of body. Most of the approximately 36 species of Aspredinidae (Friel, 1994) are confined to fresh water. Those occurring in salt water are confined to the lowland, muddy coast of northern Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and northeastern Brazil, where they occur in the sea, in estuaries, and in tidal portions of rivers. Banjo catfish are occasionally taken by shrimp trawlers, sometimes in great numbers. Near Cayenne they are caught in fish traps made of stakes driven into the mud of tidal areas. *Aspredo aspredo* and *Aspredinichthys tibicen* are both commonly seen in the Georgetown market, where they are known as "banjaman", although their flesh is apparently not highly esteemed as food.

**Remarks:** Diagnosis applies only to those species found in marine and estuarine habitats.

**Similar families occurring in the area**

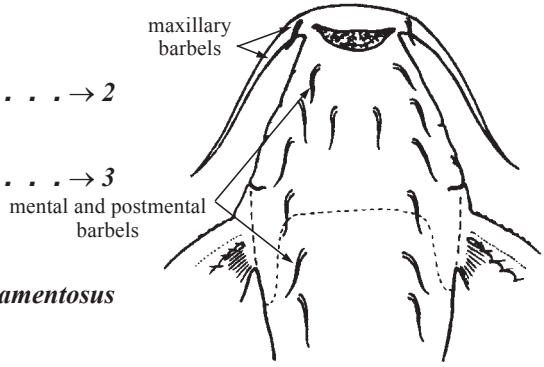
Other marine and brackish water catfishes that occur in northern South America can be distinguished by having a much stouter body, larger eyes and gill openings, and the presence of an adipose fin. Additional distinguishing characters of marine representatives of each of the following catfish families include:

- Ariidae: short anal-fin base; anterior and posterior nostrils close together; dorsal fin with stout spine anteriorly.
- Auchenipteridae: head shield bones swollen, with honeycomb-like surface; anal-fin base short; anterior and posterior nostrils close together; dorsal fin with stout spine, spine with swollen base.
- Pimelodidae: body not depressed; dorsal fin usually with stout spine (absent in *Hypophthalmus*); maxillary barbel extends well past opercular margin; eye lateral or ventrolateral.

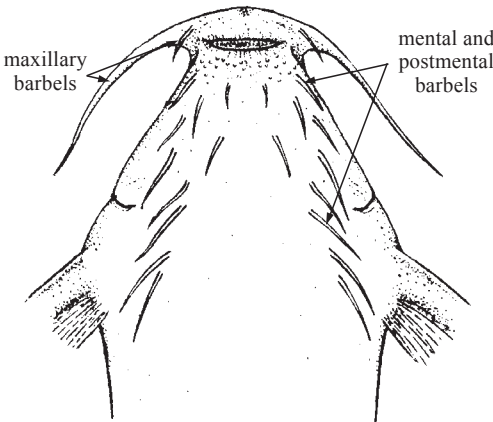


**Key to the species of Aspredinidae occurring in the area**

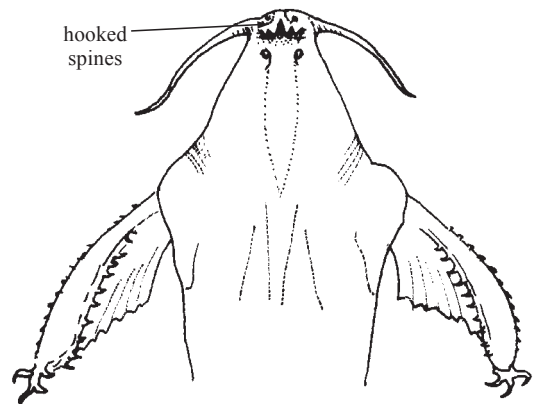
- 1a. Seven or more pairs of barbels or small tentacles on ventral surface of head and abdomen; maxillary barbel without basal membrane (Figs 1, 2) . . . . . → 2
- 1b. Only 2 pairs of barbels on ventral surface of head, none on abdomen; maxillary barbel joined to head by membrane at base (Fig. 3) . . . . . → 3
- 2a. Tip of snout smooth, without hooked spines; about 7 pairs of mental and postmental barbels (Fig. 1) . . . . . *Aspredinichthys filamentosus*
- 2b. Tip of snout with 4 broad, hooked spines (Fig. 3); about 10 pairs of mental and postmental barbels (Fig. 2) . . . . . *Aspredinichthys tibicen*



**Fig. 1 ventral view**  
*Aspredinichthys filamentosus*

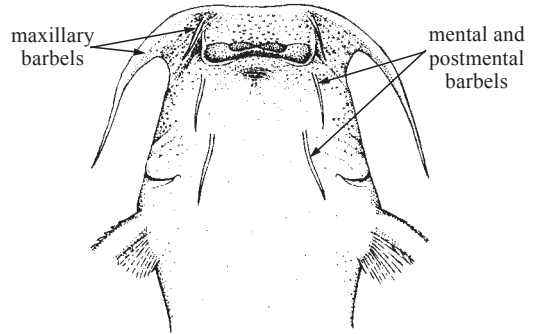


**Fig. 2 ventral view**  
*Aspredinichthys tibicen*



**Fig. 3 dorsal view**  
*Aspredinichthys tibicen*





- 3a. Maxillary barbel with small accessory barbel at base; no ridges on side of body except for lateral line (Fig. 4); coloration usually plain  
 . . . . . *Aspredo aspredo*
- 3b. Maxillary barbel without accessory barbel; 3 or 4 longitudinal ridges along side of body; coloration usually mottled. . . . . *Platystacus cotylephorus*



**Fig. 4** ventral view  
*Aspredo aspredo*

**List of species occurring in the area**

The symbol  is given when species accounts are included.

-  *Aspredinichthys filamentosus* (Valenciennes, 1840).
-  *Aspredinichthys tibicen* (Valenciennes, 1840).
-  *Aspredo aspredo* (Linnaeus, 1758).
-  *Platystacus cotylephorus* Bloch, 1794.

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Mees, G.F. 1987. The members of the subfamily Aspredininae, family Aspredinidae in Suriname (Pisces, Nematognathi). *Proc. Konin. Nederl. Akad. Weten., ser. C, 90(2):173-192*.

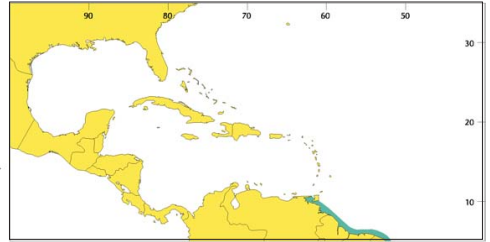
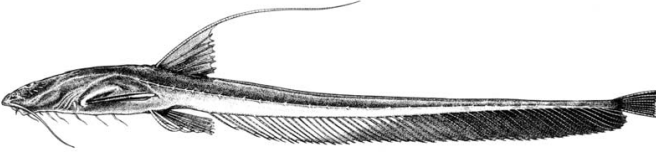
Taylor, W.R. 1977. Aspredinidae. In *FAO Species Identification Sheets, Western Central Atlantic (Fishing Area 31), Vol. 1*, edited by W. Fischer. Vol. 1. Rome, FAO (unpaginated).

***Aspredinichthys filamentosus*** (Valenciennes, 1840)

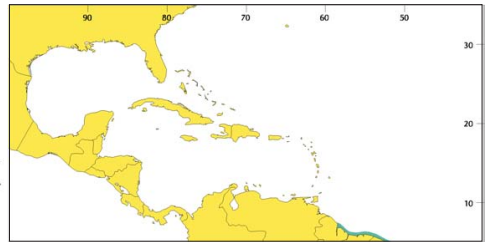
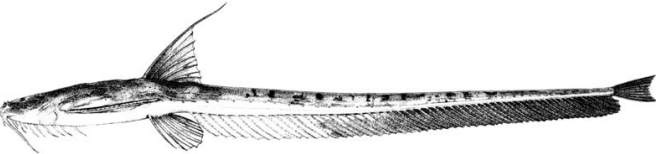
ADF

**En** - Sevenbarbed banjo; **Fr** - Claqueur sept-barbes; **Sp** - Bagre roncador sietebarbas.

Maximum size to 22 cm total length; commonly to 15 cm. Found in estuaries and river mouths over mud bottoms. Distributed from Guyana to the mouths of the Amazon River, Brazil.

***Aspredinichthys tibicen*** (Valenciennes, 1840)**En** - Tenbarbed banjo; **Fr** - Claqueur dix-barbes; **Sp** - Bagre roncador diez barbas.

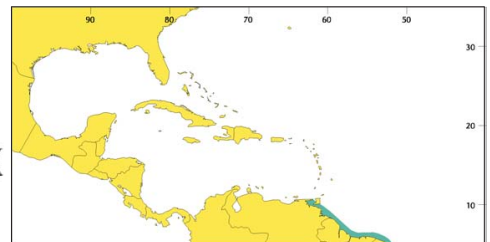
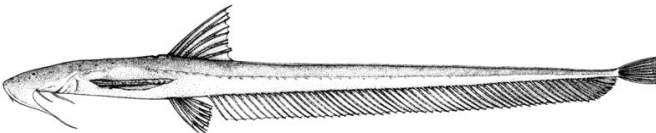
Maximum size to 18 cm total length; commonly to 15 cm. Found in estuaries and river mouths over mud bottoms. Distributed from Guyana to the mouths of the Amazon River, Brazil.

***Aspredo aspredo*** (Linnaeus, 1758)

ADR

**En** - Banjo; **Fr** - Croncron; **Sp** - Chicharrita.

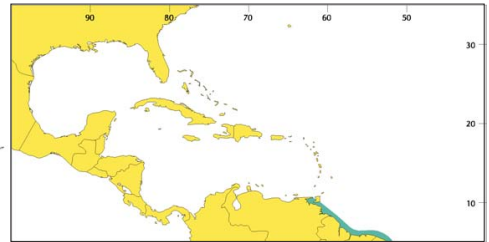
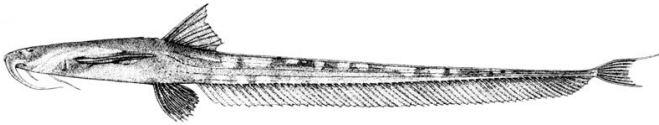
Maximum size to 40 cm total length; commonly to 35 cm. Found in estuaries and river mouths over mud bottoms. Distributed from the Gulf of Paria, Venezuela to the mouths of the Amazon River, Brazil.



***Platystacus cotylephorus* Bloch, 1794**

**En** - Banded banjo (AFS: Whiptail banjo catfish); **Fr** - Croncron rayé; **Sp** - Chicharrita rayada.

Maximum size to 20 cm total length; commonly to 15 cm. Found in estuaries and river mouths over mud bottoms. Distributed from the Gulf of Paria, Venezuela to the mouths of the Amazon River, Brazil.

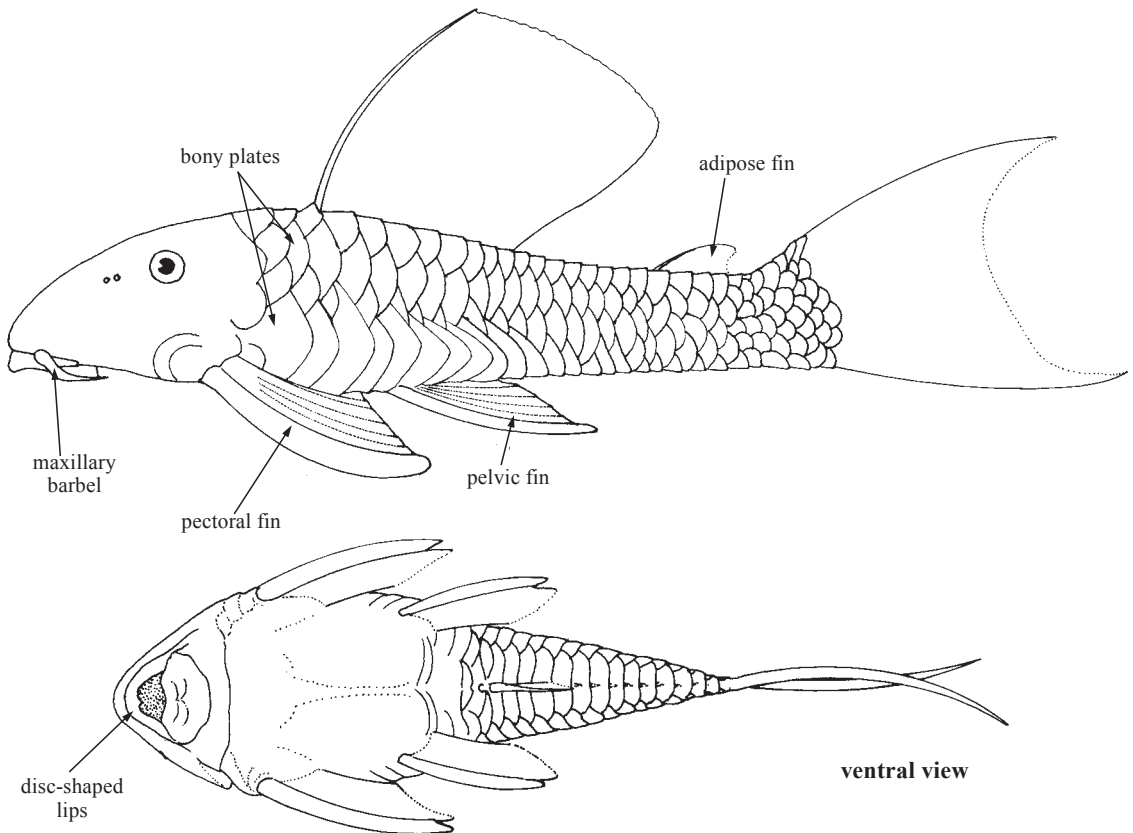


## LORICARIIDAE

### Suckermouth armoured catfishes (mailed catfishes, plated catfishes)

by C.J. Ferraris, Jr., Portland, Oregon, USA

**Diagnostic characters:** Small to medium-sized fishes (to 75 cm total length). Head depressed, but sometimes only slightly so, lower surface of head and body flattened. Snout rounded to elongate and pointed, anterior and posterior nostrils close together, their margins nearly touching; posterior nostril with flap along anterior margin, located near eye; **mouth completely inferior with broad, disc-shaped lips**; **jaw teeth usually curved and bifurcated at tip**; functional jaw teeth in a single series; no teeth on palate; gill membranes united to isthmus, the openings restricted to sides of head; **only 1 pair of barbels present, at corner of mouth**; **barbel united basally with oral disc**. Dorsal fin short, usually with a tiny spine followed by a longer, somewhat flexible second spine and several soft rays; adipose fin present or absent, if present, consisting of a bony spine followed by a thin membrane; caudal fin varying in shape from deeply forked to nearly truncate; pectoral fin close to ventral profile, with a more or less pungent spine which can be locked into erect position; pelvic fin with 6 soft rays, the first thickened and simple, the others branched; anal-fin base short. **Scales absent, but most or all of body covered with overlapping bony plates often armed with tooth-like spines.** **Colour:** yellowish olive through dark brown to bluish black, often with dark brown or black spots on back and sides; lighter below.



**Habitat, biology, and fisheries:** Armoured catfishes are inhabitants of fresh waters, but a few are restricted to lowland areas with slow-flowing muddy water and sometimes venture into the salty estuaries; they may, therefore, appear in catches taken in estuarine waters from Central America to Brazil.

#### Similar families occurring in the area

All other catfishes (marine and brackish water representatives only): body not covered with overlapping bony plates; 1 or more barbels present on ventral surface of head.

**Key to the species of Loricariidae listed as living in and about lowland river mouths in the area**

- 1a. Adipose fin absent . . . . . → 2
- 1b. Adipose fin present . . . . . → 3
  
- 2a. Snout margin without spines or bristles; tail region long, depressed, with a single series of bony plates on sides; surface of lips covered with papillae and tentacles . . . . *Loricaria cataphracta*
- 2b. Snout margin with numerous short spines or bristles; tail region short and slender, with more than 1 series of isolated lateral plates; surface of lips smooth . . . . . *Acanthicus hystrix*
  
- 3a. Depth of caudal peduncle contained 1.4 to 1.7 times in distance between bases of dorsal and adipose fins; body covered with dark, vague spots or blotches that do not extend onto belly . . . . . *Hypostomus plecostomus*
- 3b. Depth of caudal peduncle contained 2 to 2.4 times in distance between bases of dorsal and adipose fins; body covered with large, well defined, dark spots that extend onto belly . . . . . *Hypostomus watwata*

**List of species occurring in the area**

- Acanthicus hystrix* Spix and Agassiz, 1829. Maximum size to 53 cm SL. Amazon river basin and coastal rivers of the Guianas.
- Hypostomus plecostomus* (Linnaeus, 1758). Maximum size to 50 cm SL. Coastal rivers of N South America.
- Hypostomus watwata* Hancock, 1828. Maximum size to 45 cm SL. Coastal rivers of the Guianas.
- Loricaria cataphracta* Linnaeus, 1758. Maximum size to 30 cm SL. Amazon river basin and coastal rivers of the Guianas.

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Boeseman, M. 1976. A short review of the Surinam Loricariinae; with additional information on Surinam Harttiinae, including the description of a new species (Loricariidae, Siluriformes). *Zoo. Meded.*, 50(11):153-177.

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