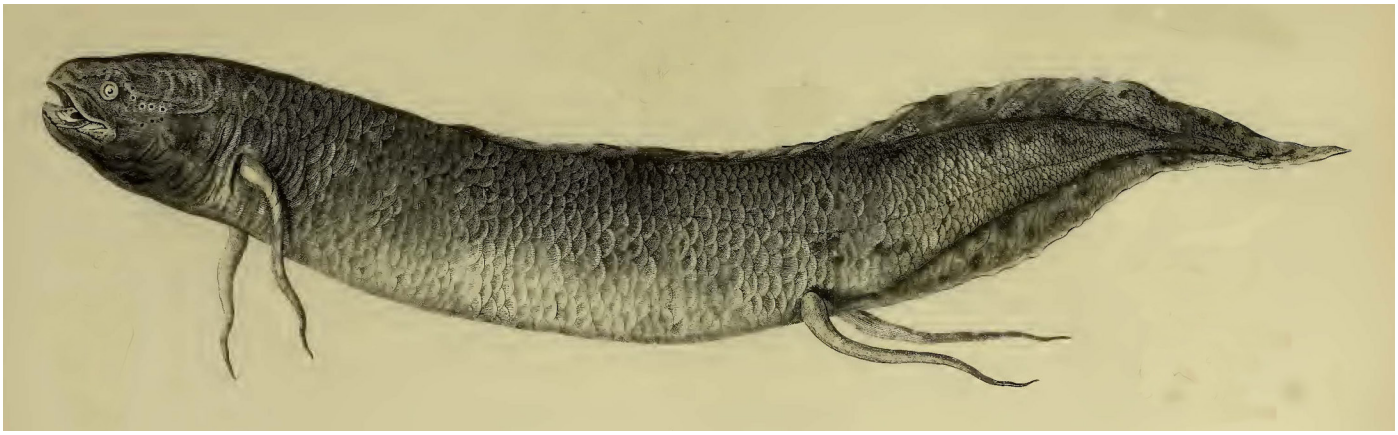
Order CERATODONTIFORMES

African Lungfishes

Family **PROTOPTERIDAE**

Peters 1855



First-published image of *Protopterus annectens*. From: Owen, R. 1840. Description of the *Lepidosiren annectens*. Transactions of the Linnean Society of London 18 (pt 3) (art. 20): 327–361, Pls. 23–27. [Name dates to an announcement published the year before.]

Protopterus

Owen 1839

prṓtos (Gr. πρῶτος), first; *pterus*, from *pterón* (Gr. πτερόν) or *ptéryx* (πτέρυξ), fin, referring to the "rudimental filiform" pectoral and ventral fins of *P. annectens*, "indicative of a transition from the abdominal to apodal families" of fishes

***Protopterus aethiopicus* Heckel 1851** *-icus* (L.), belonging to: Aethiopia, classical Greek term for the upper Nile region, where it occurs

> ***Protopterus aethiopicus congicus* Poll 1961** *-icus* (L.), belonging to: referring to the middle and upper Congo River, where it occurs
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> ***Protopterus aethiopicus mesmaekersi* Poll 1961** in honor of Is. Mesmaekers, commander of the port of Boma (Democratic Republic of the Congo), for facilitating the shipment of lungfish specimens and their mucus cocoons

***Protopterus amphibius* (Peters 1844)** *amphí* (Gr. ἀμφί), on both sides or double; *bíos* (Gr. βίος), life, i.e., living a double life, allusion not explained, perhaps reflecting the belief at the time that lungfishes were amphibians, and/or to the fact that this species lives in water during the rainy season and in a "sheath of leaves" (translation) during the dry season

***Protopterus annectens* (Owen 1839)** Latin for linking or joining, presumed to be a connecting link between cartilaginous and "Malacopterygian" (soft-finned) fishes, e.g., *Polypterus* (bichirs) and *Lepisosteus* (gars)

> ***Protopterus annectens brieni* Poll 1961** in honor of friend and zoological colleague Paul Brien (1894–1975), Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium), who studied the ecology and reproductive biology of *P. dolloi*, and who collected some of the type material

***Protopterus dolloi* Boulenger 1900** in honor of Belgian paleontologist Louis Dollo (1857–1931), whose 1895 appraisal of lungfish phylogeny interpreted their evolution in ecological terms (as a specialization for living in oxygen-poor water), and hypothesized that they evolved from Devonian "crossopterygians" (primitive lobe-finned bony fishes believed to be the forerunner to four-legged vertebrates, or tetrapods)