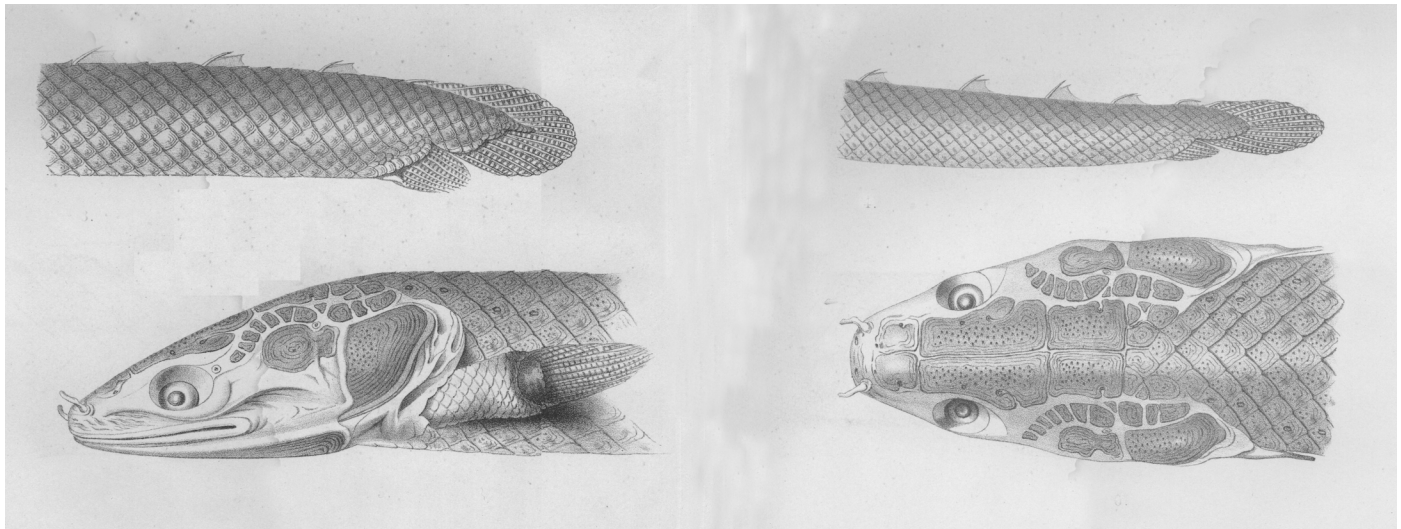


## Order POLYPTERIFORMES

Bichirs

## Family POLYPTERIDAE

Bonaparte 1835



First-published illustration of *Erpetoichthys calabaricus*. From: Smith, J. A. 1866. Description of *Calamoichthys*, a new genus of ganoid fish, from Old Calabar, western Africa; forming an addition to the family Polypterini. Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh 24: 457–479, Pl. 31. [Described and named in 1865, redescribed with illustrations and given new generic name in 1866.]

***Erpetoichthys***

Smith 1865

*erpeto-*, presumably derived from *herpetón* (Gr. ἑρπετόν), creeping animal, reptile or snake, described as “almost serpent-like in its general aspect”; *ichthys* (Gr. ἰχθύς), fish [Smith, wrongly believing *Erpetoichthys* was preoccupied, proposed an unnecessary replacement name in 1866, *Calamoichthys*, by which the genus is sometimes known, from *calamus* (L.), reed, referring to its “cylindrical character”]<sup>1</sup>

*Erpetoichthys calabaricus* Smith 1865 -*icus* (L.), belonging to: Old Calabar River, West Africa, type locality

***Polypterus***

Lacepède 1803

*polý* (Gr. πολύ), many; *pterus*, from *pterón* (Gr. πτερόν) or *ptéryx* (πτέρυξ), fin, referring to multiple dorsal finlets instead of a single dorsal fin

*Polypterus ansorgii* Boulenger 1910 in honor of English explorer and collector William John Ansorge (1850–1913), who collected holotype

*Polypterus bichir* Lacepède 1803 from *Abushir*, its local Arabic name along the Nile River in Egypt (pronounced *buh-sheer* or *bih-sheer*)

*Polypterus congicus* Boulenger 1898 -*icus* (L.), belonging to: the Congo Basin (Stanley Falls), type locality

*Polypterus delhezi* Boulenger 1899 in honor of Belgian artist and naturalist Henri Paul Delhez (1870–1900), who collected holotype and provided life-history notes on bichirs based on interviews with locals; his collections and field observations were useful in the preparation of Boulenger’s six-volume work (1898–1900) on Congo fishes

*Polypterus endlicherii* Heckel 1847 in honor of Austrian botanist Stephan Endlicher (1804–1849), who apparently discovered the species in the fish collection at the Naturhistorisches Museum (Vienna)

*Polypterus mokelembembe* Schiewen & Schäfer 2006 named for Mokele-mbembe, a mythological creature believed by some to be a sauropod dinosaur that survived the extinction of dinosaurs in the central Congo basin, alluding to the archaic nature of bichirs, which most likely are the sister group to the remaining Actinopterygii, and which probably existed at the same time as sauropods

*Polypterus ornatipinnis* Boulenger 1902 *ornatus* (L.), adorned or decorated; *pinnis* (scientific Neo-Latin), finned, referring to black spots on dorsal fin and black bars on pectoral, ventral, anal, and caudal fins

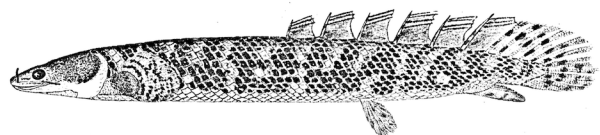
*Polypterus palmas* Ayres 1850 named for Cape Palmas, Liberia, type locality

*Polypterus polli* Gosse 1988 in honor of Belgian ichthyologist Max Poll (1908–1991), who proposed a name for this bichir in 1954 (*P. palmas congicus*, preoccupied by *P. congicus*) but did not describe it

*Polypterus retropinnis* Vaillant 1899 *retro-* (L.), back; *pinnis* (scientific Neo-Latin), finned, referring to origin of dorsal fin behind middle of body

*Polypterus senegalus* Cuvier 1829 -*us* (L.), adjectival suffix: Senegalese (described from Senegal)

*Polypterus teugelsi* Britz 2004 in honor of the late Guy Teugels (1954–2003), Belgian ichthyologist and curator of fishes at the Musée Royale de l’Afrique Centrale, for his “myriad influential contributions to the systematics of African freshwater fishes”



*Polypterus polli*, holotype, 290 mm TL. From: Gosse, J.-P. 1988. Révision systématique de deux espèces du genre *Polypterus* (Pisces, Polypteridae). Cybium 12 (3): 239–245.

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars believe that due to the vagaries of journal publishing in the 1800s, *Calamoichthys* inadvertently predates *Erpetoichthys* (with date changed to 1868) and should be the valid name of the genus. See: Rizzato, P. P. and F. A. Bockmann. 2017. Unraveling a 150 years old controversy: *Calamoichthys* Smith, 1866 is the valid name for the African reedfish (Cladistia: Polypteriformes), with comments about the availability of involuntarily proposed zoological names. *Bionomina* 11: 62–78.

***Polypterus weeksii* Boulenger 1898** in honor of John Henry Weeks (1861–1924), British anthropologist and Baptist missionary, who collected holotype at his mission station in Monsembe, upper Congo River, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo)