Order CERATODONTIFORMES

African Lungfishes

Family PROTOPTERIDAE

Peters 1855

Protopterus

Owen 1839

prótos (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

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) amphibί (Gr. ἁμβί), on both sides or double; bios (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)