

## GONORHYNCHIFORMES – milkfishes

Order Gonorhynchiformes is placed in the large fish group Ostariophysi, together with Cypriniformes (carps), Characiformes (characins), Siluriformes (catfishes), and Gymnotiformes (American knifefishes). The ostariophysan fishes, comprising *ca.* 28% of all-known living fish species (Nelson, 2006), possess specialized anterior 3–5 vertebrae and rib(s), known as "Weberian apparatus."

The structure of this apparatus in gonorhynchiform fishes is primitive and less specialized than the other 4 ostariophysan orders. In the Gonorhynchiformes, 37 recent species are known in the World (Nelson, 2006), and, of these, only a single species, *Chanos chanos*, has been recorded from the Mekong.

*Chanos chanos* (Forsskal, 1775)

**Family:** Chanidae (FC: 098)

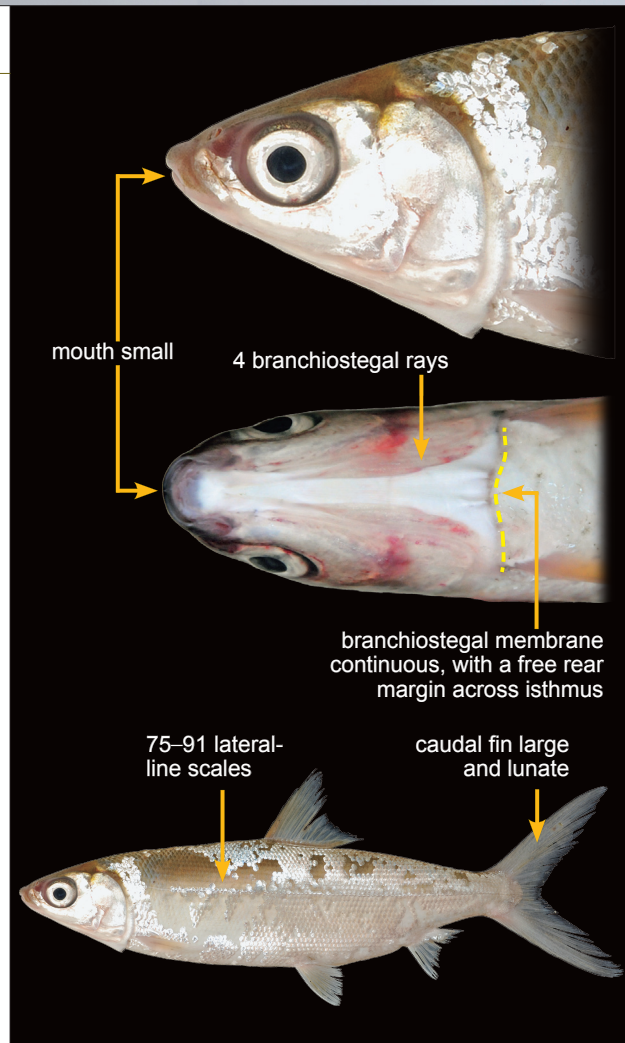
**Size:** 150 cm TL (Kottelat *et al.*, 1993: 25).

**Distribution:** Mekong Basin in Vietnam (?Cambodia); Indo-Pacific and eastern Pacific.

**Notes:** A large, silvery active swimmer, found in coastal marine waters, estuaries and rivers. It is a very important fish for aquaculture in coastal regions of Southeast Asian countries, and it is commonly known as "milkfish". Rainboth (1996b) noted "Probably rare in Cambodia, with Mekong inhabitants occurring mostly in the Vietnam delta," and Vidthayanon (2008: 46) expressed this species as a "regularly visitor to the Delta." Photographed specimen shown here was taken from a market in B n Tre, southern Vietnam; a photograph in the next page shows marketed fish of *Chanos chanos*, taken at a market in Koh Kong, western Cambodia, where this fish appears to be common.

This fish is similar to some cyprinids in general appearance, but it differs in having 4 branchiostegal rays (*vs.* 3 in cyprinids). Its large and lunate caudal fin, small mouth, small scales, nearly straight lateral line running through the midlateral body and continuous branchiostegal membrane with a free rear margin across the isthmus readily distinguish it from other similar fishes.

The authorship of the scientific name follows Fricke (2008).



CTU-P 5336 [photo: HVM (lateral-view photograph) and KS (ventral-view photograph)]





Marketed fish of *Chanos chanos* (Koh Kong, Cambodia, photo: KS)