Short communication

Caudal skeleton variations in *Alburnoides* fish species from Iranian water basins.

ABSTRACT

The species in the genus *Alburnoides* is distinguished based on having a combination of some morphological characteristics and different fin ray counts. Most descriptions are based on morphological characteristics and molecular approaches. The species are widely distributed in the Iranian basins. Since osteological structures of fishes provide major biological and ecological information, studying these structures is valuable. The present study was conducted to provide a caudal skeleton variations in *Alburnoides* fish species from Iran for the first time. For this purpose, three specimens of *Alburnoides* species were collected from different basins using the gill net (1mm) and electrofishing device and fixed in 10% buffered formalin. Then, the specimens were cleared and stained with alcian blue and alizarin red for osteological examination. Based on the results, several differences were observed among the species. The caudal shape comparison of *Alburnoides* species from the Inland water of Iran revealed some differences among them including the shape of the epural and rudimentary neural arch. However, ten species of *Alburnoides*, from Iran were not distinguishable based on these osteological characteristics.

Keywords: Inland water Fishes of Iran, Osteology, *Alburnoides*, Ichthyology, Biodiversity.

INTRODUCTION

The genus *Alburnoides* is widely distributed from Europe to Asia Minor and Central Asia [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7). Recently, twelve species were considered to occur in Iranian Inland waters. *Alburnoides eichwaldii* (De Filippi, 1863) from Kura River basin was re-introduced [1] and 11 other species were described: *A. namaki* [1] from a qanat (artificial irrigation channel that tap groundwater through adits) at Taveh, Namak Lake Basin, *A. nicolausi* [1] from the Tigris River drainage, *A. qanati* [2] from the Pulvar River drainage, Kor River Basin, *A. idignensis* [1] from the BideSorkh River, Gamasiab River system, Tigris River drainage, *A. petrubanarescui* [2] from the QasemlouChay, Urmia Basin, *A. holciki* [3] from the Harirud River, *A. tabarestanensis* [4,5] from Tajan River in the southern Caspian Sea Basin, *A. parhami* from BabaAman Stream, Atrak River drainage, *A. coadi* from Namrud River, Hablerud River, Kavir Basin and *A. samiii* from Guilan Province, upper Sefidrud River basin, Tutkabon Stream [5], *A. damghani* [8] from Cheshmeh Ali, Damghan River system. Recently, *Alburnoides* cf. *taeniatus* (Kessler, 1874) was reported from Harirud (Tedzhen) River [9], but revision is needed to illuminate status of some recent described species [10]. Recently, Eagderi et al. showed that *A. parhami*, *A. coadi* and *A. idignensis* were invalid species. They proposed *A. parhami* as a synonym of *A. holciki*, *A. coadi* as synonym of *A. namaki* and *A. idignensis* as synonym of *A. nicolausi* [11].

Although there are many benefits to morphological descriptions, there are also some disadvantages in morphological characters as they are sensitive to environmental changes. Also, molecular approaches are expensive and time consuming. So using different approaches are needed to distinguish *Alburnoides* spp. (described and undescribed) from

Iranian inland waters. Osteological characters are important and valid for identification and classification of fish species, and understanding biological features of fishes such as swimming, feeding and respiration [12,13,14,15,16]. In addition, the skeletal structures contain more biological information that researchers use to distinguish environmental conditions of fish habitats [12]. Osteological characteristics can be utilized in ichthyology studies, especially fish systematics and potentially can resolve some complexities in this context [17].

Since identification of *Alburnoides* species is based on the morphological features that overlap with other members of this genus and due to high diversity and morphological similarity of the members of *Alburnoides*, using osteological data, may help to better understand their taxonomic relationships. Moreover, due to lack of more studies about osteological features of the genus *Alburnoides* in Iran [17], this study was conducted to give some basic results for further comparative osteology and phylogenetic studies of the *Alburnoides* species to draw a clear distinction among them based on osteological characteristics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Three specimens of ten species of *Alburnoides* were collected using gill net and electrofishing from Iranian Basins (Fig.1), then fixed in 10% buffered formalin after anesthetizing in 1% clove oil solution and transferred to laboratory (Ichthyology Museum of Isfahan University of Technology, Isfahan, Iran) for further examinations (Table.1). The

specimens were cleared and stained with Alcian blue and Alizarin red S according to the protocols of Taylor and van Dyke [18] and Sone and Parenti [19] with minor modifications. The cleared and stained specimens were studied using a stereomicroscope (SMP-120 model) and their skeletal elements were dissected and photographed by a digital camera (South Korea, 13Mpx). Drawing of the specimens were performed using CorelDraw X7 software. The terminology of skeletal elements was based on Rojo [20] and Helfman et al. [12].

RESULTS

The caudal skeleton of *Alburnoides* consists of six hypural, one parhypural and epural, and one uroneurals. The haemal spines of preurals 1 and 2 were wide. These characteristics were similar in all studied specimens. Caudal fin was just different in the shape of epural and rudimentary neural arch. We found eight different structures in the caudal fin of *Alburnoides* species. The epural has three shapes including triangular in the *A. namaki* and *A. damghani* (Fig. 2-A) irregular form *A. nicolausi* and *A. idignensis* (Fig. 2-H), bar-like (the other shape in Fig. 2). Moreover, the rudimentary neural arch has a more different shape such as single or two-branched, having neural foramen, without neural foramen (Fig. 2). In the caudal fin structure of our samples, we found different states of epural and rudimentary neural arch together in Fig. 2. Also, we found same structure in the *A. namaki* and *A. damghani* (Fig. 2A), *A. namaki* and *A. petrubanarescui* (Fig. 2C), and two different types in the *A. holciki* (Fig. 2B) and *A. qanati* samples (Fig. 2D). Moreover, we found more different structures in the *A. qanati*, *A. tabarestanensis*, *A. idignensis* and *A. holciki* (Fig. 2E), *A. namaki* and *A.*

tabarestanensis (Fig. 2F), *A. eichwaldii* and *A. samiii* (Fig. 2G) and *A. nicolausi* and *A. idignensis* specimen (Fig. 2H).

DISCUSSION

Morphological and mitochondrial genetic data revealed that *Alburnoides* has twelve species in Iranian Basins. The caudal skeleton of fishes has been used for taxonomic studies by workers since more than 100 years ago [21,22,23,24,25,26,27]. Osteology is still an important instrument in fish systematics [28,29,13,14,15,16,30,31.32.33,34,35,36,37,38]. The main role of the caudal peduncle in the best performance in swimming, such as increasing the acceleration and speed of swimming at the beginning of swimming. Morphological differences in the caudal peduncle lead to more efficiency of swimming (lowering the cost of metabolism) and increasing the power of moving forward along the river. This diversity also occurs in the bony structures of the caudal fin [39]. In the present study, high diversity was observed in the caudal fin skeleton and it seems to be due to the adaptation of these fish species to different environmental conditions. In our study, not only *Alburnoides* species had structurally different caudal fins in different basins but also had different structures among populations. However, the observed differences are not due to the different ages of the samples. Because in Cyprinid fish, the caudal fin becomes fully bony at 14 weeks after hatching [41].

CONCLUSIONS

According to our results, it seems there was no special structure in the caudal fin of the *Alburnoides* species as species identification traits. Also, we cannot use this osteological structure for the identification of members of this genus in the Iranian basins.

Although, less information exists about the osteological features of the genus *Alburnoides* [17]. Also, recently the comparison of populations of different *Alburnoides* species based on molecular characteristics resulted in clarification of their phylogenetic relationships and introduced new species [41,42, 8]. It seems, using different types of data are needed to better describe different species of the *Alburnoides* from Iranian inland waters.

Table1. List of samples.

N	Species name	Basin	N	Species name	Basin
1	*A. holciki*	Hari River	6	*A. eichwaldii*	Caspian Sea
2	*A. damghani*	Kavir	7	*A. samiii*	Caspian Sea
3	*A. qanati*	Fars	8	*A. petrubanarescui*	Urmia
4	*A. namaki*	Namak	9	*A. idignensis*	Tigris
5	*A. tabarestanensis*	Caspian Sea	10	*A. nicolausi*	Tigris

Fig1. Iranian Basins [43].

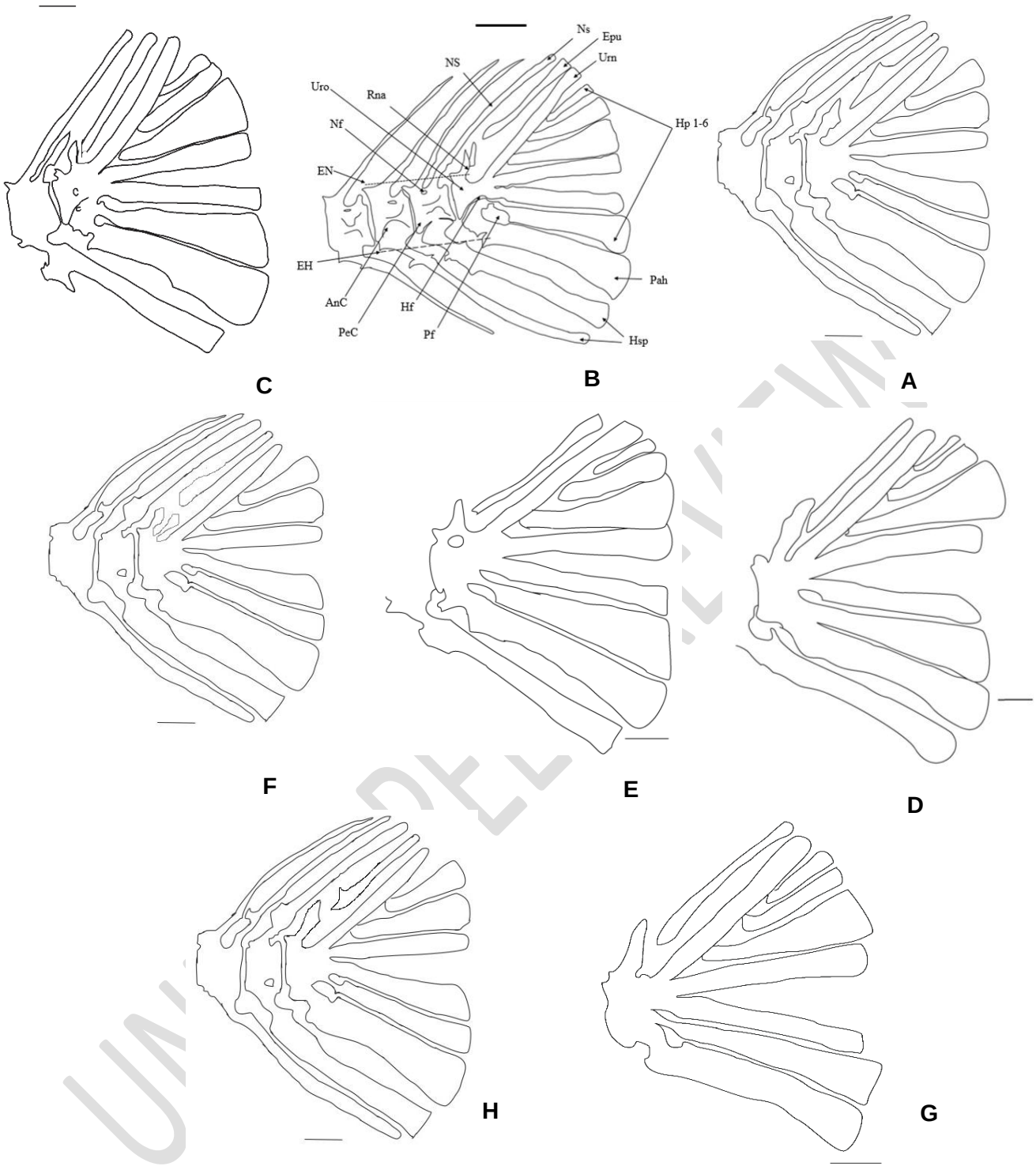

Fig2. Lateral view of caudal fin skeleton in *A. holciki* (AnC: Antepenultimate Centrum; EH: Epihemal; EN: Epineural; Epu: Epural; Hp 1-6: Hypural Plates 1-6; Hsp: Hemal Spine; NS: Neural Spine; Pah: Parhypural; PeC: Antepenultimate Centrum; Rna: Rudimentary Neural Arch; Urn: Uroneural; Uro: Urostyle).

Availability of data and materials: Voucher specimens are available (the museum of the University of Technology, Isfahan, Iran) as described in the text.

Consent for publication: Not applicable.

Ethics approval consent to participate: the authors followed the ethical standards of the "The Isfahan University of Technology ethics committee" on laboratory animal experimentation.

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