

Family Bagridae

Bagrid catfishes

Bagridae is a family of approximately 16 genera and 225 species widely distributed in Asia. *Bagrus*, is found only in Africa. All other African genera formerly included in the Bagridae are now placed in different families. In Asia, bagrids exhibit a wide range of body shapes and sizes. The giant Indian catfishes of the genus *Sperata*, which reach 2000 mm total length, represent one extreme, while the 29 mm SL dwarf leaf-litter dwellers, such as the *Nanobagrus immaculatus* from Borneo, represent the other. All large- and medium-sized bagrids are sought for commercial species, several

of which are valued for aquaculture. *Mystus*, with approximately 52 valid species, is the largest genus in the family, comprising mostly middle-sized and morphologically generalised species. One species, *M. gulio*, is known to frequently enter brackish and marine waters, with records from the coast of Pakistan, situated not far from the border with Iran. Other species are strict freshwater inhabitants. *Mystus* species exhibit only moderate tolerance to low water temperatures, with most species being abundant in the lower reaches of the Euphrates and Tigris (*M. pelusius*) and warm springs (*M. cyrusi*, *M. misrai*). **Further reading.** Ferraris 2007 (diversity); Nelson et al. 2016 (diversity).

Key to species of *Mystus* in West Asia

1a - No stripes on flank; eye below dorsal head profile, not protruding.

..... *M. misrai*

1b - Flank with a wide, dark-brown, mid-lateral stripe, followed by a wide silvery stripe above and below, a narrow silvery line along lateral midline; eye at or slightly above dorsal head profile, usually protruding.

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2a - Maxillary barbel not reaching to pelvic origin; adipose with a steep slope at its origin.

..... *M. cyrusi*

2b - Maxillary barbel reaching to or beyond of pelvic origin; adipose with a gentle slope at its origin.

..... *M. pelusius*



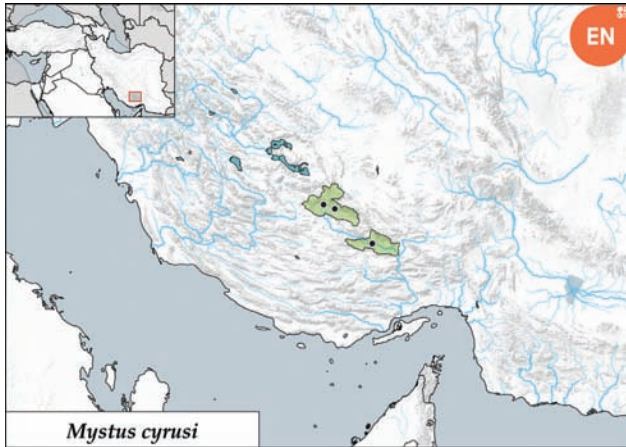
Mystus cyrusi; Golabi spring; Kol drainage, Iran; ~90 mm SL.

Mystus cyrusi

Common name. Kol zugzug.

Diagnosis. Distinguished from other species of *Mystus* in West Asia by: ● maxillary barbel not reaching to or beyond pelvic origin / ● adipose base length 31–37 % SL, with a steep slope at its origin / ● head depth 17–22 % SL / ● caudal peduncle

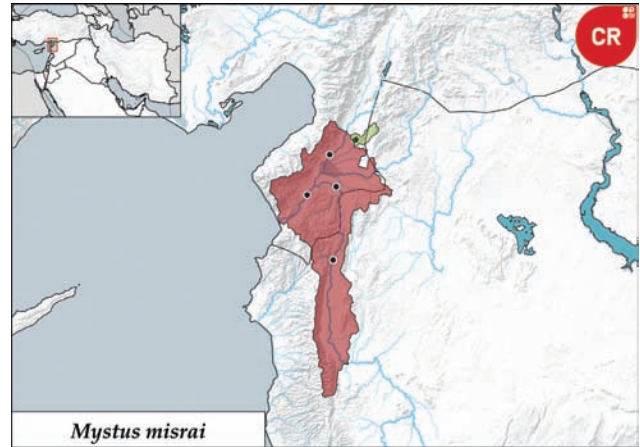
depth 10–13 % SL / ● 12–14 gill rakers / ○ usually a wide, brown, mid-lateral stripe, followed by a wide silvery stripe above and below mid-lateral stripe, and a silvery line along lateral midline in life and preserved individuals / ○ eye situated at or slightly above, usually protruding dorsal head profile / ○ 14–22 serra on inner pectoral spine. Size up to 203 mm SL.



Distribution. Iran: Shur, Qalatooyeh, and Golabi springs in Kol drainage.

Habitat. Springs and spring-fed streams.

Biology. No data.



Conservation status. EN; appears to be declining within its very small range. Invasive *Amatitlania nigrofasciata* might be a threat in springs.

Further reading. Esmaeili et al. 2022 (description).



Mystus misrai; Orontes drainage, Türkiye; 120 mm SL.

Mystus misrai

Common name. Hatay zugzug.

Diagnosis. Distinguished from other species of *Mystus* in West Asia by: ● dorsal fin margin rounded / ● 8–10 serra on inner pectoral spine / ● eye situated below dorsal head profile, not protruding / ● head blunt / ● no stripes or lines on flank in life and preserved individuals / ● dorsal spine shorter than head-width at eye, usually as long as distance between lower eye margins / ○ maxillary barbel reaching to or beyond pelvic origin. Size up to 138 mm SL.

Distribution. Türkiye and Syria: Lower Orontes drainage.

Habitat. Large rivers and lakes.

Biology. No data.

Conservation status. CR; following massive pollution of lower Orontes and draining of Lake Amik in 20th century, this species appears to be restricted to Lake Balık (Gölbaşı). It is thought to be in decline here due to habitat deterioration.

Further reading. Anuradha 1986 (description); Freyhof & Yoğurtçuoğlu 2023 (rediscovery).



Mystus pelusius; Tigris drainage, Türkiye; 140 mm SL.

Mystus pelusius

Common name. Zugzug catfish.

Diagnosis. Distinguished from other species of *Mystus* in West Asia by: ○ maxillary barbel reaching to or beyond pelvic origin, to anal-base in some individuals / ○ adipose base length 38–46 % SL, with a gentle slope at its origin / ○ dorsal fin margin straight or very slightly convex / ○ 11–16 serra on inner pectoral spine / ○ eye situated at or slightly above, usually protruding dorsal head profile / ○ head pointed / ○ usually a wide, brown, mid-lateral stripe, followed by a wide silvery stripe above and below mid-lateral stripe, and a silvery line along lateral midline in life and preserved individuals / ○ dorsal spine as long or longer than head width at eye, often longer than maximal head width. Size up to 178 mm SL.

Distribution. Qweiq, Euphrates, Tigris, Karun, Jarrahi, and Zohreh drainages.

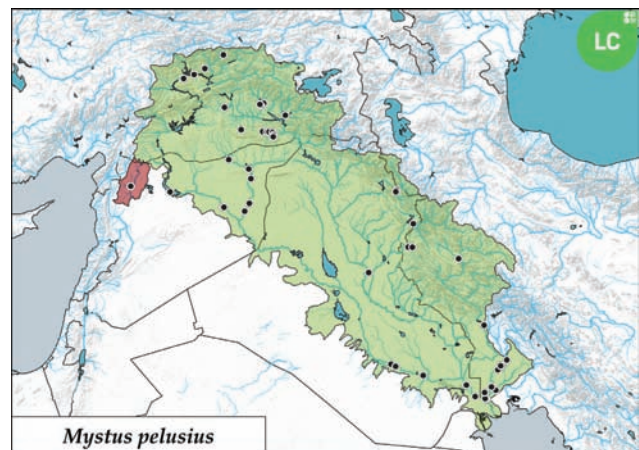
Habitat. Larger rivers, marshes, reservoirs, and lakes.

Biology. Lives up to 7 years. Spawns first time in one year, in May and June, males with about 70 mm SL and females

with about 50 mm SL. Feeds on invertebrates and small fishes.

Conservation status. LC; extirpated from Qweiq.

Further reading. Coad 2010a (identification, distribution, biology); Esmaeili et al. 2022 (diagnosis).



Mystus gulio is a coastal species known from Pakistan adjacent to Iran.