

Stoliczka's Barb *Pethia stoliczkana* at Kuang Si waterfalls, Luang Prabang, Laos

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Subjects identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location: Kuang Si Waterfall Park, Luang Prabang, Laos.

Elevation: About 460 metres.

Habitat: Shaded shallow pool (Fig. 1) next to freshwater stream with cascades (Fig. 2) flowing through limestone hill forest. Substrate consisted of clay and silt with accumulations of leaf litter. Water depth was not over 60 cm, and water temperature was estimated to be around 20 degrees Celsius.

Date and time: 6 January 2017, 10:40 hrs.

Identity of subjects: Stoliczka's Barb, *Pethia stoliczkana* (Teleostei: Cypriniformes: Cyprinidae).

Description of record: An estimated three dark reddish individuals were pursuing and displaying to at least six conspecific examples of paler, yellowish colour (Fig. 3) in all parts of the pool. The displays included the erecting of the dorsal, anal and pelvic fins and vigorous shaking of the body from side to side. The fish were about 6 cm in total length, and were observed being active mainly in the middle and at the bottom of the water column, occasionally going to the surface. Spawning was not observed.

The barbs shared the pool with at least one other species of silvery-grey fish, which could not be identified.



Fig. 1. Pool containing Stoliczka's Barb © Kelvin K. P. Lim

Remarks: Stoliczka's Barb is distributed in Myanmar, Thailand and Laos in the upper Mekong, Chao Phraya, Salween, Meklong and Irrawaddy basins (Smith, 1945 as *Puntius stoliczkae*; Kottelat, 2001: 74 as *Puntius stoliczkanus*). It has some commercial importance in North America and Europe as an ornamental fish which is considered to be relatively peaceful and hardy, and can be bred in the aquarium (Axelrod et al., 1996: 1065 as *Puntius stoliczkai*; Paysan, 1978: 148 as *Barbus stoliczkanus*).

As seen in Fig. 3, the dorsal fin of sexually active males is red with black markings. Courtship behaviour observed in captivity (see Axelrod et al., 1996: 1065) involves a large amount of butting and tail slapping as rival males vigorously attempt to fend off each other. The eggs are deposited on the substrate, instead of adhering to plants: these hatch in 30 to 36 hours, with fry becoming free swimming two days later. In the featured observation, the dark reddish fish are courting males, and the yellowish fish are presumed to be females (Fig. 3). It is noted that

apart from the dorsal fin, the pelvic, anal and caudal fins of the courting males are also red. The pH of the water in the pool is assumed to be hard and alkaline, given that the geology of the immediate area is dominated by (travertine) limestone.



Fig. 2. Series of cascades along the stream.

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Fig. 3. Male Stoliczka's barb (left) displaying to a female.

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