Mormyrops anguilloides (Linnaeus, 1758)

Lufubu River, Zambia. © L. De Vos.

Synonyms
Mormyrops zambezense Sauvage, 1880
Mormyrus anguilloides Linnaeus, 1758
Mormyrops anguiloides anguiloides (Linnaeus, 1758)
Oxyrhynchus deliciosus Leach, 1818
Mormyrus tuckeyi Valenciennes, 1847
Mormyrus zambanenje Peters, 1852
Mormyrops longiceps Günther, 1867
Mormyrus swanenburgi Schilthuis, 1891
Mormyrops anguilloides voltae Roman, 1966

FAO names
None

Local names
Adangme: Nua gbemazu (Ghana)
Afrikaans: Cornish jack (South Africa), Roof-bottelneus (South Africa)
Arabic: Taraza (Sudan)
Baoulé: Flô (Cote d'Ivoire)
Bemba: Lombolombo (Zambia), Milobe (Zambia), Mulobe (Zambia), Ntongo (Zambia)
Chokwe (Tshokwe): Kalembe (Angola), Kalembele (Angola), Kambangaji (Angola), Lundembe (Angola), Ndembe (Angola), Ngulu (Angola), Tulembele (Angola), Tumbangaji (Angola)
Dinka (northeastern) (Dinka): Akinkin (Sudan)
English: Cornish jack (Kenya, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe)
Ewe: Noagbe (Ghana)
Fulfulde, Pulaar (Pulaar): Ndelew (Senegal)
Ga: Nuagbemazu (Ghana)
Hausa: Milligi (Nigeria)
Ijo: Ogboro (Nigeria)
Jula: Bungɛ (Burkina Faso)
Kanuri: Bunyi karam (Nigeria)
Kele (Ya Okandja): Bomete (Congo Dem Rp), Ilitosini (Congo Dem Rp), Ndjandja (Congo Dem Rp)
Kele (Ya Wembe): Bokobo (Congo Dem Rp)
Kim: Gulum (Chad), Nrii (Chad), Rîn (Chad)
Limba, west-central: Mamankalay (Sierra Leone)
Lombo (Olombo): Ndjandja (Congo Dem Rp)
Mende: Ndurguy (Sierra Leone)
Mòoré: Yemdele (Burkina Faso)

Nuer: Not (Sudan)
Nupe: Dwangwa (Nigeria)
Nyanja (Chichewa): Mphuta (Malawi)
Sena: Nentche (Mozambique)
Shiluk: Adolo (Sudan)
So (Eso): Ndjandja (Congo Dem Rp)
Soninké: Wandaana (Senegal)
Swahili: Linjolo (Tanzania), Nyanda (Tanzania)
Themne: Aloh (Sierra Leone)
Yoruba: Lele (Nigeria), Ogodorobo (Nigeria)
Zande: Gbodongo (Sudan)

Geographical distribution
Widely distributed. Present in most of the West African river basins (Bigorne 2003), the White Nile, Uebi Shebeli and Juba River (Gosse 1984), and the Congo River basin (Skelton 2001). In southern Africa, restricted to the middle and lower Zambezi, Buzi and Pungwe (Skelton 2001). Also known from Lake Malawi, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Albert (Gosse 1984; Skelton 2001).

Key features
Head depressed, mouth large and terminal; body elongated (Bell-Cross & Minshull 1988; Skelton 2001). Chin (mental swelling) absent; origin of dorsal fin behind origin of anal fin, nearer to caudal fin base than to tip of snout; dorsal fin shorter than anal fin; mouth width subequal to snout length: snout long (Skelton 2001). Body depth 4.9-7.5 and head length 3.4-5.1 times in SL; snout almost as wide as head; interorbital space wide, 2.9-6.8 in head length; variation in meristic characteristics due to existence of geographic clines (Bigorne 2003). 21-33 soft rays in dorsal fin, 38-51 in anal (Skelton 2001; Bigorne 2003).

Habitat and Biology
Juveniles occur in marginal habitats, adults prefer deep quiet water between boulders and below overhangs, away from strong currents; also occurs beneath *Salvinia* mats and in river estuaries in Lake Kariba; juveniles prey on invertebrates, mainly shrimps and insect larvae; larger individuals feed on small cichlids, minnows and labeos; may live for eight years or more; breeds in summer during the rainy season; mature females carry 25000 or more eggs (Skelton 1993, 2001). A fractional spawner (Albaret 1982; Kirschbaum 1995). IUCN red list status least concern (Bills & Marshall 2010).

Interest to fisheries
Despite the overall importance of mormyrids in fisheries catches, FAO (2024) only holds species level statistics on two species, *Mormyrus longirostris* and *Mormyrops anguilloides*, in both cases from Zimbabwe (Figure). Data for Mormyridae at the family level are available from eight countries (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Catches usually range from several hundred to several thousands of tons annually, but Nigeria reports around 30000 tons caught every year. For most countries in which this widespread family is present, data are lacking even at the family level.

Mormyrops anguilloides is of commercial importance throughout its distribution area, but is rarely abundant and never a dominant species in the fishery. In Lake Volta it is caught with longlines and gillnets, but it's not the main target of the gear (van Zwieten et al 2011). It was one of the abundant species in gill net catches at the start and end of the flood in the study of Adebisi (1988) in the Ogun River (Nigeria). In the Lekki lagoon (Nigeria) the species is caught with gill nets, cast nets, basket traps and bamboo traps (Emmanuel & Osibona 2013). Although not a top species of economic value in the Sangha (Congo basin), it is amongst the most favoured fish (Boundja 2016). Large individuals are caught with hooks in the central Congo River basin (Mputu et al 2022). It is an important

commercial species in the Victoria Nile (Uganda) between Murchison falls and Lake Albert (Wandera 2000) and one of the main species in Lake Nasser (van Zwieten et al 2011). In the inshore fishery on the Zimbabwean shores of Lake Kariba it contributes 5.63% to the catches, or 17.84 tons (in 1998) (Songore et al 1999; Marshall 2011). In southern Africa, the Cornish jack is a popular species for anglers and is also taken by spearfishermen (Skelton 2001).

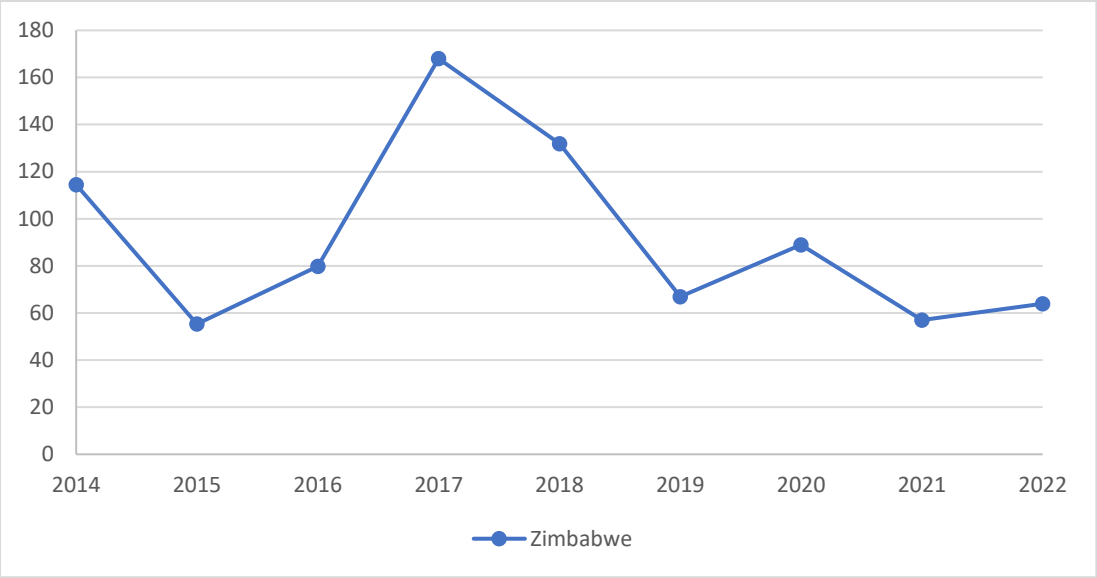

Figure 1: Catches (in tonnes) of Mormyrops anguilloides *as available from FAO (April 2024).*

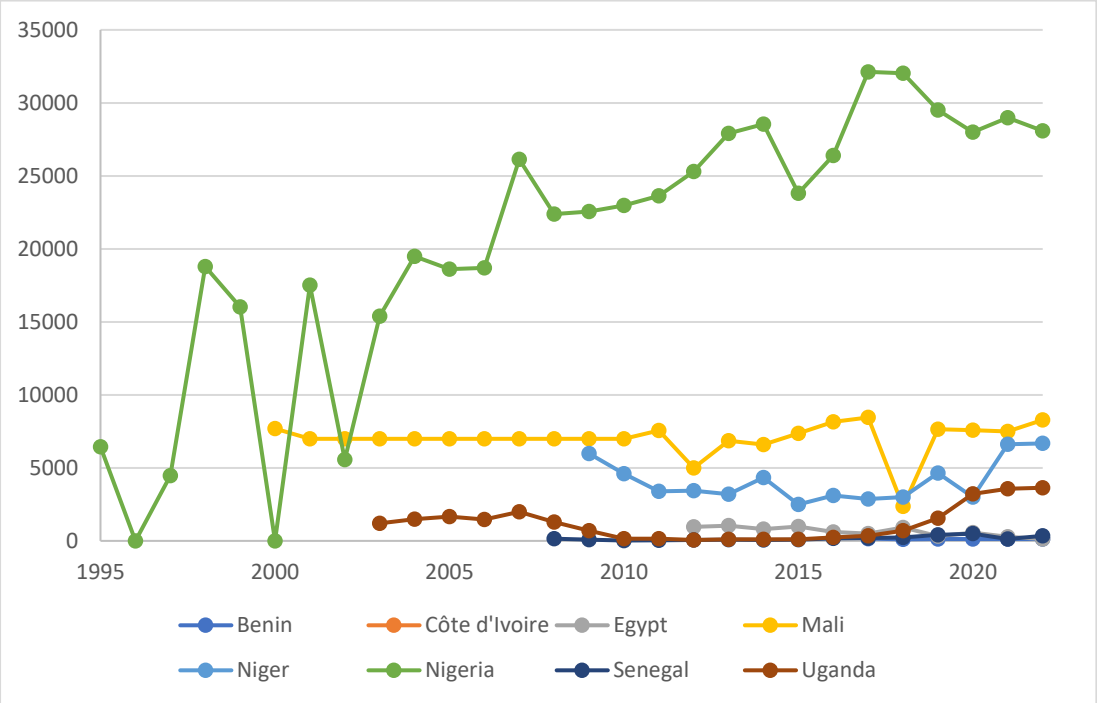

Figure 2: Catches (in tonnes) of Mormyridae *as available from FAO (April 2024).*

Few fisheries data are available in published literature. Boundja (2016), in a study on some species of economic value in fisheries of the Sangha River, found that the vast majority (up to 85%) of *M. anguilloides* were under 15 months old and potentially immature, with almost 78% of fish only a few months old and immature. Few large individuals, usually caught with hooks, were present, while the

commonly used gill nets captured large biomass of small and likely immature fishes, which clearly indicates an unsustainable fishery for this species with low resilience.

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