

**43002257 The Biology Ecology & Conserv. Of Smallscale Croaker  
Boesemania Microlepis in the Mainstream Mekong S. Laos**

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The smallscale croaker *Boesemania microlepis* is a large species in the perciform family Sciaenidae reaching over a metre in length and at least 18 kg in weight. Although drums and croakers from this family are mainly marine, this freshwater species is found in the Mekong, Chao Phraya, Nan, Meklong, Tachin, and Bang Pakong River basins. It occurs in the Mekong River basin in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and parts of peninsular Malaysia and Western Indonesia. In the Mekong River, the species is known at least as far north as Louang Phrabang in northern Laos. This paper reviews the status of mainstream Mekong River populations of the smallscale croaker in southern Laos. We have identified seven known spawning grounds in Khong District, Champasak Province, southern Laos based on the dry-season occurrence of croaking individuals in spawning condition in these areas. We discuss habitat usage and the acoustic sounds made by smallscale croakers. Fish Conservation Zones have already been established to benefit the species, and this may be an excellent strategy for protecting populations. *Boesemania microlepis* should be considered for special IUCN conservation listing, based on widespread reports of severely declining stocks of this popular and expensive food fish in southern Laos and northeast Cambodia.