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SPELEAN HISTORY SESSION (Thursday morning)

The Cavefish Calendar: Establishing the Precise Chronology of Early Discoveries of Cave Fishes

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The history of the discovery of the first true cave, troglobitic (blind, depigmented) fish has been unclear. Different claims have been made at different times about the primacy of discoveries in this area. There are at least three references for European cave fishes for pre-Linnean times: Besson (1569), Kircher (1665), and Montalembert (1748). All these citations are unsupported by scientific evidence and may have been based on uncritical observations. Even if they were true, they would all be preceded by a description of a cave fish in China in 1541 that seems to refer to a true cavernicole.