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The Hypogean Fishes of China

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China has 91 species of hypogean (cave and artesian) fishes described so far. That is nearly one third of all the hypogean species that have been described in the world (298). That figure places China as the country with the largest proportion of those kinds of fishes. Of all Chinese hypogean fishes 55 species show troglomorphisms, i.e., adaptations that have been correlated to the hypogean environment such as reduction and/or loss of eyes, pigmentation, and the swim bladder. Additionally, two other characters seem to be unique to some of the hypogean species of China: presence of a horn-like structure and hyperdevelopment of the dorsal area similar to a humpback. Despite the fact that the first written account of a cave fish took place in China in 1540, almost all the new descriptions occurred in the last 20 years mostly in papers written in Chinese and/or in journals of difficult access outside China. We summarize all the basic knowledge about the hypogean fishes of China and put them in context regarding all the hypogean fishes in the world.