

Jonathan Armbruster

Associate Professor and Curator of Fishes
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Dr. Armbruster was born in Chicago, Illinois, where he grew up fishing in Lake Michigan. Fishing started his passion for fishes that eventually led him to a job at an aquarium store and an interest in loricariid catfishes (suckermouth armored catfishes). A stock of several hundred common plecos (*Pterygoplichthys*) were received and placed by the manager in a much too small aquarium. The next day, many lay gasping on the ground, some apparently dead. While throwing the apparently dry and dead ones away, one twitched and Jon threw it and the rest back into the aquarium and most survived. Later, one of his first papers would be on the adaptations for air breathing in loricariid catfishes, which includes a novel structure in the common pleco that helps it breathe air.

After a BS at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Dr. Armbruster continued on as a Ph.D. student. On a trip to Venezuela, he realized that most loricariid catfishes could not be identified to species, but before the species level taxonomy could be examined, one had to know what the genera were. This led to a dissertation on loricariid anatomy and phylogenetics, and has progressed into a broad study of evolution in loricariid catfishes. He spent one year at the Smithsonian studying a group of wood-eating catfishes and then took a position at Auburn University, AL, where he has added over 25,000 lots to the collection. In 2003, he and a team of ichthyologists designed the All Catfish Species Inventory as a global examination of catfish diversity. Along with a team of ichthyologists from around the world, hundreds of catfish species were described. Collections of fishes were made throughout the range of catfishes, and Dr. Armbruster and his graduate students participated in expeditions to South America, Africa, and New Guinea. Dr. Armbruster continues work on catfish taxonomy, phylogeny, and ecology as well as teaching evolution and comparative vertebrate anatomy. He has published or submitted 41 papers and described 41 species, three genera, and one subfamily.