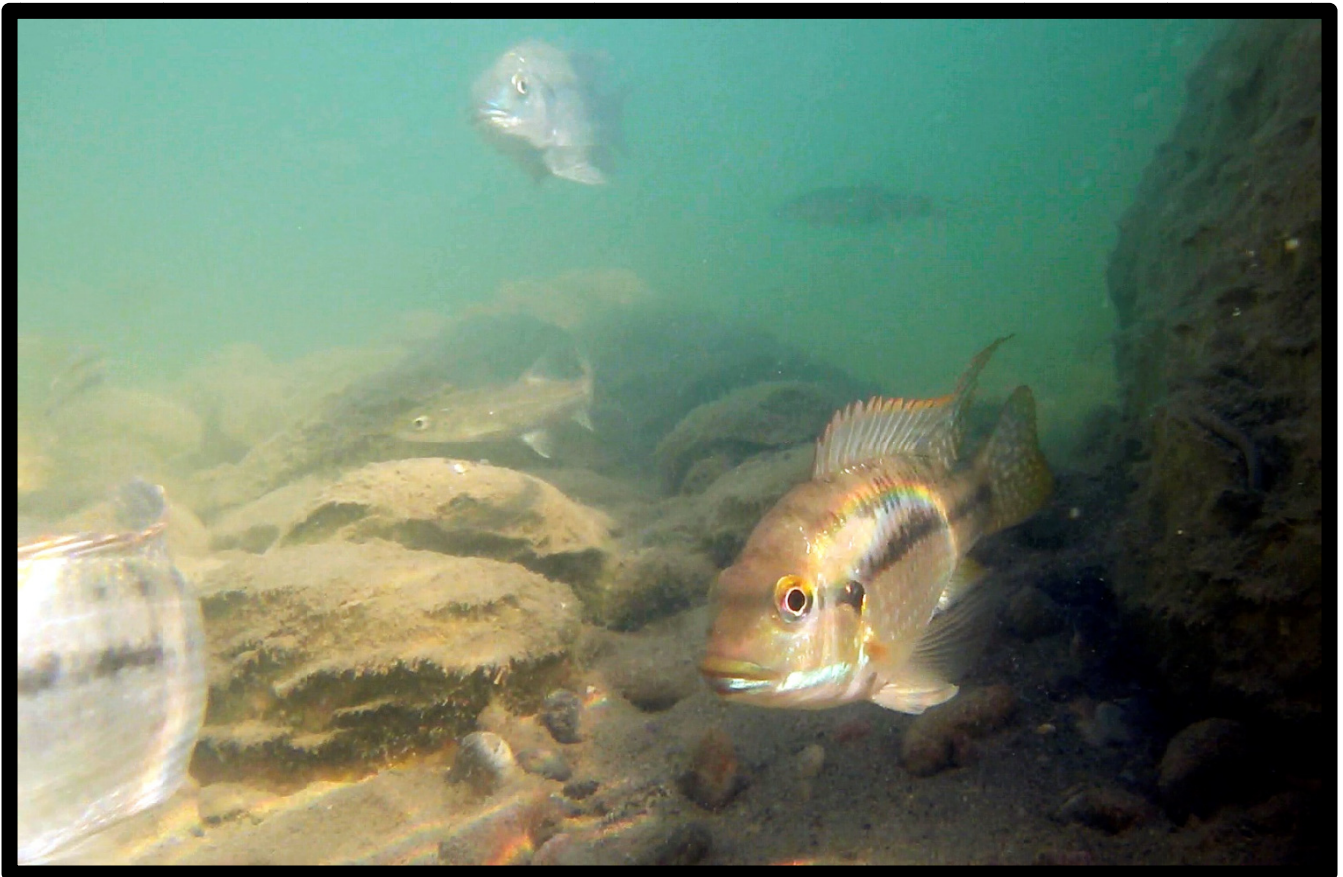


FiSHPIC

Oued Draa's biogeographical mosaic

Javier Esquivias¹ and Miguel Clavero²



A redbelly tilapia (*Coptodon zillii*, at the front) and a blue tilapia (*Oreochromis aureus*, at the back) swim together with several Draa barbels (*Luciobarbus lepineyi*) in Oued (= river) Tissint, a saline tributary of Oued Draa, the longest river in Morocco. The two tilapias are Afrotropical species, the barbel is part of a Mediterranean lineage and they all coincide in the Draa basin with the Dades trout (*Salmo multipunctata*), a cold-dwelling fish of Palearctic affinities. This fish fauna exemplifies the biogeographical diversity hosted by the Draa basin, inhabited by white-throated dippers (*Cinclus cinclus*) and Eurasian otters (*Lutra lutra*) together with Egyptian cobras (*Naja haje*) and Honey badgers (*Mellivora capensis*). Until very recent times the Draa basin also hosted Nile crocodiles (*Crocodylus niloticus*) and lions (*Panthera leo*). Conserving this unique biogeographical mosaic and advancing towards the recovery of its lost components should be an international conservation priority.

Oued Draa's fauna
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