

Top of the Food Chain

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An Introduction to the Violet-line Piranha *Serrasalmus geryi*

There is no other “piranha” quite like the violet-line piranha *Serrasalmus geryi*. Technically, this species is not actually considered a true piranha at all, but rather it is a member of the closely related group of species known as pirambebas. To keep the definition of pirambebas easy, we consider any species within *Serrasalmus*, *Pygopristis*, and *Pristobrycon* as pirambebas while those species within *Pygocentrus* are now reserved as the “true” piranhas.

Serrasalmus geryi exhibits a high level of lateral compression, a feature that has led to its inclusion in the “compressus” subgroup of pirambebas.

It should be noted that one other “piranha,” the wimple piranha *Catoprion mento*, is considered neither a true piranha nor a pirambeba at all, but it is rather a closely related species that belongs to the same subfamily, Serrasalminae.

Before the late 1980s, the scientific literature published commonly had all of the above genera lumped into one genus—*Serrasalmus*. Thankfully, through the work of Drs. William Fink, Antonio Machado-Allison, Kirk Winemiller, and Michel Jegu, we now have a much better assessment of these wonderfully fascinating fishes, not only from a taxonomic viewpoint but also from an ecological one.

Another person who has proved to be a valuable link between the aquarium hobby and the scientific world is Frank Magallanes, who has been instrumental in many aspects of piranha-keeping, from legal issues to assisting in securing specimens for scientific review and providing accurate and reliable information to hobbyists all over the world through his meticulously kept and super-informative Oregon Piranha and

