

## Arapaima gigas



### Arapaima fish

#### Conservation status



Data Deficient (IUCN 2.3)

#### Scientific classification

Domain: Eukaryota  
Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Actinopterygii  
Order: Osteoglossiformes  
Family: Osteoglossidae  
Genus: Arapaima  
Species: *A. gigas*

#### Binomial Name

**Arapaima gigas**

(Schinz, 1822)

*Arapaima gigas*, also known as pirarucu or simply arapaima, is a species of arapaima native to the basin of the Amazon River. Once believed to be the sole species in the genus, it is among the largest freshwater fish. A *gigas* is native to freshwater in the basin of the Amazon River; it is known to occur in Bolivia, Brazil, Guyana, and Peru. In Bolivia known as paiche, it is considered an invasive species, affecting local native species and the ecosystem. It was first found in 1976, and presumably introduced from Peru being washed out of a Peruvian fish farm by a flood.<sup>10,11</sup> The species is an obligate air-breather, so needs to come to the surface regularly to gulp air. That species also is the only freshwater fish in South America that is listed as an endangered species in CITES, Appendix II, but the IUCN (2011) considers it to be "Data Deficient". Arapaima are threatened, in part, because of their large size (3m total length), fine eating quality, and relative ease of capture.<sup>12</sup>

The species is among the largest known freshwater fish, commonly measuring 200cm (79 in) and reportedly exceptionally reaching lengths of up to 450 cm (15 ft). Adults may weigh up to 200 kg (440 lb).<sup>13</sup> The Arapaima can live for up to 20 years.

#### Diet

In the wild, the Arapaima eats mostly fish but is also known to eat fruits, seeds, insects, birds and mammals found on the surface of the water. In order to eat, they use a "gulper" feeding strategy: by opening their large mouths they create a vacuum that pulls in nearby food objects. Their tongues and sharp, bony teeth, combined with the teeth on the roof of their palates, allow them to debilitate and shred their prey. The Arapaima can easily feed in low-oxygen areas where gill-breathing fish are forced to slow down.