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- ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBER** \$149/yr

*U.S. rates apply to citizens of Canada and Mexico.

NOTE: \$48 of membership dues goes toward a print subscription to *The American Biology Teacher*, for each year joined, except spouse members, in which case only the sponsoring active member receives a subscription to be shared by the two persons.

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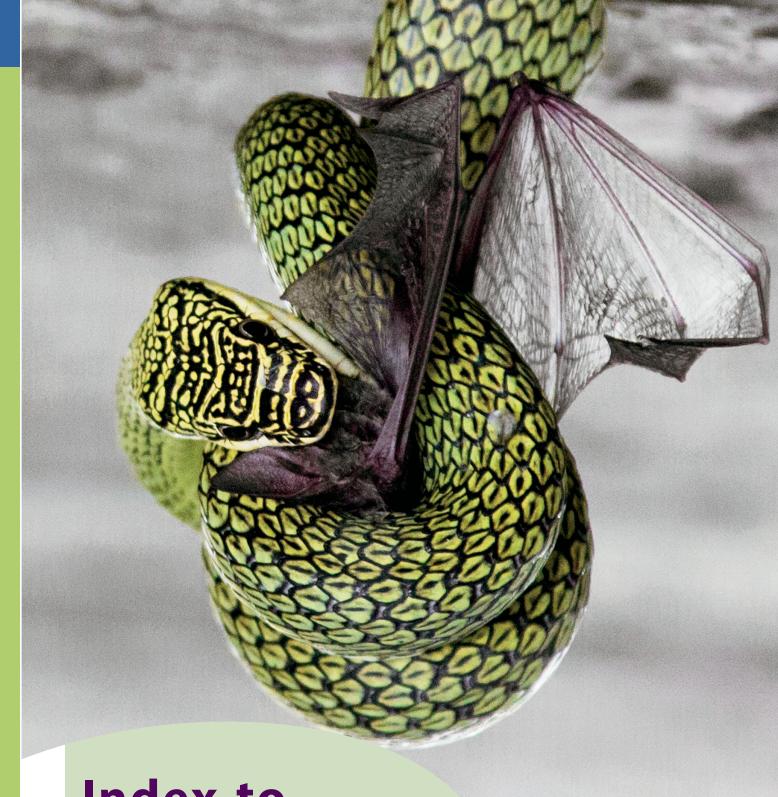
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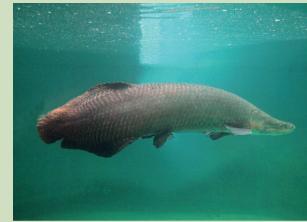
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The May BioMystery Answer



These are the giant scales from *Arapaima gigas* (locally called Pirarucú or the Amazon "codfish"), which is among the largest scaled fish in the world. It is native to the Amazon and Essequibo river basins of South America. These fish typically reach 2–3 meters in length (100 kgs) with the longest measuring 4.5 meters (200 kgs). The Pirarucú (red fish) is

an important source of protein and has experienced a population decline due to overfishing. Arapaima eat fish and crustaceans and perhaps small land animals found near the shore. They have gills but can also gulp air into a specialized lung-like air bladder allowing it to survive in low oxygen aquatic environments.

In addition to their importance as a food source, their exceedingly large scales are prized by locals because of their rough mineralized collagen fiber surface that can be used as a fingernail file. This interesting scale construction provides a robust but flexible armor for the fish.

The photo(s) was (were) taken in the Museu Ciecas Naturais da Amazonia (The Natural Science Museum of the Amazon) in Manaus, Brazil by W.F. McComas.