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## Amazon Species Watch – The Wolfish

### Scientific Classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Actinopterygii
Order:	Characiformes
Family:	Erythrinidae
Genus:	<b>Hoplias</b>
Species:	<b><i>H. aimara</i></b>

The Wolfish (*Hoplias aimara*) aka: Aimara, Hymara or Trairão.

These prehistoric-looking fish are reminiscent of the bowfin of North America, with bony heads and a mouthful of teeth, and are one of the most ferocious predators within the Amazon.

They can be found across most of northern South America, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, French Guiana, Suriname, and the island of Trinidad.

They are most often found in counter current zones of principal rivers and creeks and are the ambush predators of other fish species, but may also feed opportunistically on other animals that fall or enter the water, such as terrestrial invertebrates. Despite their fearsome reputation, attacks on larger vertebrates including humans are unproven.

This is the largest of the *Hoplias* species with specimens caught to lengths of 120 cm and weights to over 80lbs. They have an elongated cylindrical shape with colouration being generally dark brown with a lighter base colour, although shades can vary, with several vertical patches or stripes. There are normally small spots visible on the upper anterior part of the body including the head, but the patterning can vary significantly through geographic location.



If you've ever seen the vampire like teeth of a Payara or the surgical precision of a Piranha tooth, you know there are plenty of well-equipped predatory fish out there. However, one type of tooth you may not have encountered before is the canine-like tooth of the Wolfish. These thick, bony teeth are perfect for preventing prey from escaping and are matched by further set of teeth in the throat. Wolfish are predominantly active at dusk and at night, and will lurk in dense vegetation, waiting to ambush prey as it comes past. They are recognised as being one of the most voracious predators in the water.



Like the Arapaima, Wolfish can breathe air to make up for low oxygen levels in the water. When fishing for them, it's not uncommon to see or hear them come to the surface to gulp air. This clever adaptation allows them to live in places other fish can't. They are calculated and dirty fighters with a savage temperament and will not give up once hooked, continuing to leap and jump, fighting to the very end. Even when finally brought to the net /grips, they will twist like a crocodile in a death roll! The absence of a pronounced tail wrist also makes them difficult to manage when out of the water.



Wolfish will attack almost anything that looks like food, and are terrific fun on surface lures, particularly walking stick baits equipped with extra strong hooks (4X). As ambush predators, they love structure so good tight casts are more likely to bring a strike. Set the hook firmly and more than once as they have very bony jaws. Once connected they are accomplished jumpers and will give you a mix of short and powerful runs with impressive acrobatics.

Looking at a Wolfish, they don't look particularly appetising. Big scales, bony heads, and a drab coloration are a far cry from some of the more ornate species. Despite this, they are edible, and peoples of the Amazon do eat them. If you ever get the chance to try one, do, but be warned, they have a lot of bones you'll need to pick out before digging in.