Likely collecting locality of *Marcusenius cabrae*

Boulenger, 1900 | Historical locality assessment | 15 November 2026

Best-supported location. Kop-Malafu was near the present Cabinda–Democratic Republic of the Congo frontier, in the **Chiloango drainage**. The likely reference locality is the historical Cope-Malafu (Copo-Malavo) boundary marker, north of the N'Henha, a tributary of the Fubo. Its reconstructed historical position is approximately **5.314°S, 12.537°E**; this is a locality reference, not a verified coordinate for the collecting marsh. [1], [2]

Evidence for the identification

Boulenger described three specimens from the *marais de Kop-Malafu (Mayumbe)*, collected by Commandant Cabra. These are **syntypes**: MRAC 274–275 and BMNH 1899.11.27.91. The original account gives neither a collecting coordinate nor a named river. The publication date is 1900, rather than 1901. [1], [3]

The 1913 Belgian–Portuguese boundary protocol, recording the earlier frontier survey, locates the Cope-Malafu/Copo-Malavo marker in a clearing in Moondo woodland, north of the N'Henha (p. 945). Its account of the drainage identifies the N'Henha as a tributary of the Fubo and places the Fubo in the Shiloango system (p. 943). This supplies the geographic link missing from the fish description. [2]

Coordinate reconstruction. The survey meridian is 12°32′12″E; the Zila-Zambi reference latitude is 5°15′33″S. Placing Cope-Malafu 6,012 m south along that meridian gives about **5°18′49″S, 12°32′12″E**. The independently stated distance and latitude of Kaïkakongo provide a consistent check (pp. 944–946). [2]

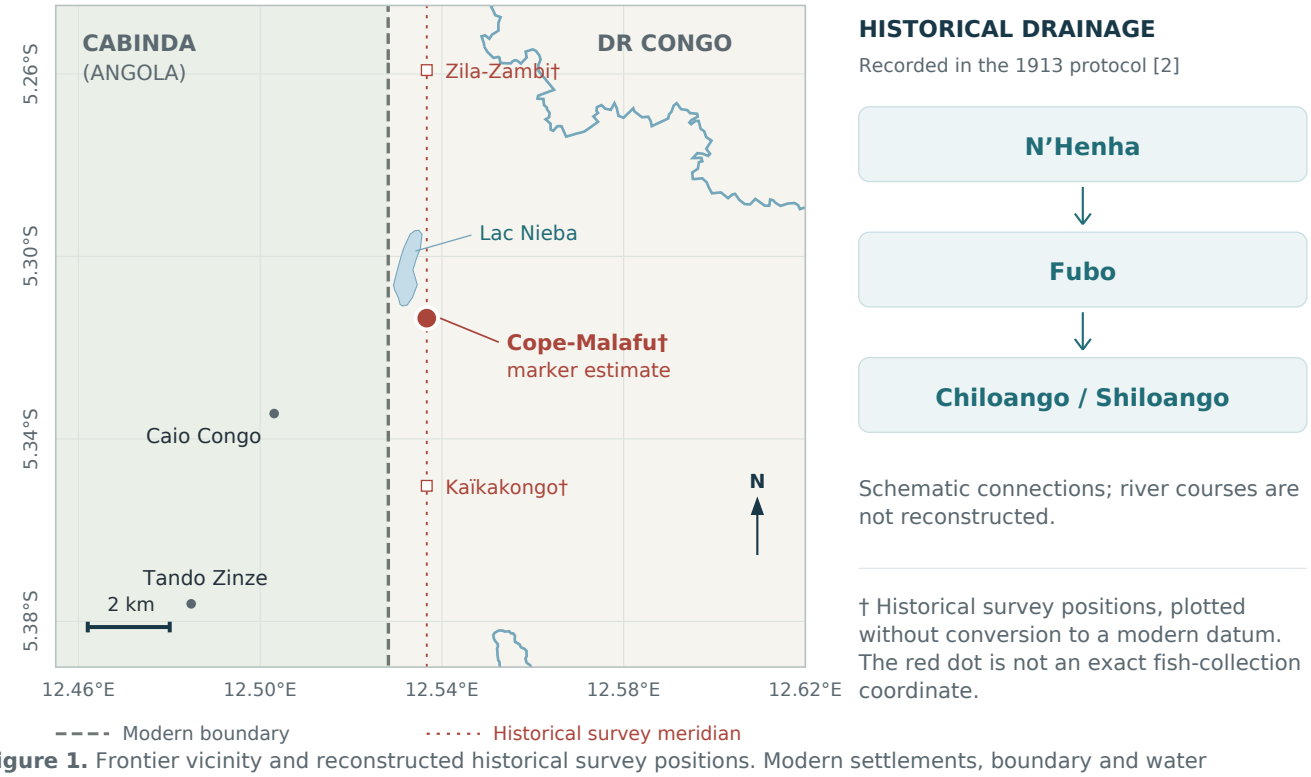


Figure 1. Frontier vicinity and reconstructed historical survey positions. Modern settlements, boundary and water features are geographic references, not identifications of the collecting marsh. The mismatch between the survey meridian and the mapped boundary has not been resolved by a datum transformation. Base data © OpenStreetMap contributors, ODbL; retrieved 15 November 2026. [7]

Correcting the fish-literature record

The erroneous Kouilou assignment should be separated from the earlier country error. The published accounts are not uniform: an intervening treatment correctly identified the Chiloango drainage.

Source	Published treatment and assessment
Teugels & Hopkins **1998**	The examined-material entry for MRAC 274–275 places Kop-Malafu, Mayombe in **Congo-Brazzaville** (p. 203). This is the wrong country for the reconstructed frontier locality. That entry does **not** explicitly assign these syntypes to the Kouilou. [4]
Hopkins, Lavoué & Sullivan **2007**	The *Paramormyrops kingsleyae* account places the *M. cabrae* types at Mayumbe, **Chiloango River** (pp. 303–304). This agrees with the historical basin evidence; Boulenger's original record still specifies marshes, not a main-channel capture. [5]
Rich, Sullivan & Hopkins **2017**	The synonymy gives **Congo-Brazzaville (Kouilou-Niari Basin), 5.20°S, 12.3°E**. Both the country and basin conflict with the historical evidence. Those coordinates themselves fall in Cabinda, roughly 29 km west-northwest of the reconstructed marker, and should not be treated as a verified type-locality georeference. [6], [7]

Recommended interpretation and limits

A defensible locality statement is: **"Marshes of Kop-Malafu (Mayumbe), near the historical Cope-Malafu/Copo-Malavo frontier marker; Cabinda–DR Congo border region, Chiloango drainage, probably the N'Henha–Fubo subcatchment."** The marker is the best historical anchor, but the exact marsh, its modern name and the side of the present border on which the fish were taken remain unverified. The historical coordinate should be retained as an approximate reference with its derivation, not entered as a precise modern GPS position.

Sources

[1] Boulenger, G. A. (1900). *Matériaux pour la faune du Congo. Poissons nouveaux du Congo*. Sixième partie. *Annales du Musée du Congo, Zoologie* 1(6): 129–164; *M. cabrae*, p. 130, pl. XLVIII, fig. 1. Original description, p. 130.

[2] Belgium & Portugal (1913). Protocol signed at Brussels, 5 July 1913, approving the frontier commissioners' surveys. *Bulletin officiel du Congo belge*, pp. 941–965; locality, drainage and survey data, pp. 943–946. Official protocol.

[3] *Eschmeyer's Catalog of Fishes* (2026). Entry for *Marcusenius cabrae* Boulenger, 1900: original publication and syntype holdings. Accessed 15 November 2026. Catalogue entry.

[4] Teugels, G. G. & Hopkins, C. D. (1998). Morphological and osteological evidence for the generic position of *Mormyrus kingsleyae* in the genus *Brienomyrus* (Teleostei: Mormyridae). *Copeia* 1998(1): 199–204; p. 203. JSTOR 1447719.

[5] Hopkins, C. D., Lavoué, S. & Sullivan, J. P. (2007). Mormyridae. In Stiassny, M. L. J., Teugels, G. G. & Hopkins, C. D. (eds), *The Fresh and Brackish Water Fishes of Lower Guinea, West-Central Africa*, vol. 1; pp. 303–304. Chapter, relevant account.

[6] Rich, M., Sullivan, J. P. & Hopkins, C. D. (2017). Rediscovery and description of *Paramormyrops sphekodes* (Sauvage, 1879) and a new cryptic *Paramormyrops* (Mormyridae: Osteoglossiformes) from the Ogooué River of Gabon using morphometrics, DNA sequencing and electrophysiology. *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* 180: 613–646; *P. kingsleyae* account. doi:10.1093/zoolinnean/zlw004.

[7] OpenStreetMap contributors (2026). Modern geographic reference data for the Cabinda–DR Congo frontier. Retrieved 15 November 2026; © contributors, ODbL. Map centred on the historical reference position.