



Arapaima



by Ellen Lawrence

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River Monster

It's nighttime in the Amazon rain forest.

Something huge is lurking in a muddy river.

The enormous **predator** is 10 feet (3 m) long and covered with silvery scales.

What is this giant creature?

It's an arapaima (ar-uh-PAHY-muh)—one of the largest freshwater fish on Earth!



How would you describe an arapaima to someone who has never seen this giant fish?



scientists holding
an arapaima



The arapaima can
weigh more than
400 pounds (181 kg).
That's about as much
as an adult lion!



Meet a Mega Fish

An arapaima's giant body is **streamlined** for moving through the water.

It has a flat head and a big, upturned mouth.

The fish's body is covered with huge scales.

A single scale can be more than 2 inches (5 cm) long—that's the length of a chicken's egg!


The scales near the fish's tail have bright red edges.



upturned mouth



scale



The native Tupi people of Brazil call the arapaima *pirarucu*. This name means “red fish.”

scales