A Report on Occurrence and Parasite-Host of Ligula intestinalis in Sattarkhan Lake (East Azerbaijan-Iran)

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Abstract—Ligula intestinalis is a three-host life-cycle Pseudophyllidean Cestode which in its plerocercoid stage infests a range of fresh water species. The objective of the present study was the worm occurrence within planctonic copepods, fishes and piscivorous birds examined of parasite-host samples in the Lake of Sattarkhan Dam (near the city of Ahar, East Azerbaijan, Iran). Fish sample were collected with fyke and gill nets and the abdominal cavity was examined for the presence of ligula. Zooplanktons were captured using a planktonic net and occurrence of parasitic larval form in the body cavity was determined. Piscivorous birds were selected by telescope, they hunted and dissected for presence of parasite eggs in their gut. Results indicated that prevalence of infection was 16% for cyclopoid copepoda and majority of infected cyclopid were female Cyclops. Investigation of 310 fishes specimens were indicated to infection of five species of cyprinid fishes. In addition, results indicated to manipulation of six species of migratory aquatic and semi aquatic birds by ligula. Obtained results are in agreement by previous studies. Its definite in this study that all of aquatic and semi aquatic birds by ligula. The adult worms can be form 10-100 cm in length and up to 1.2 cm in width. The virulent nature of this parasite leads it to commonly filling every available space within the body cavity whatever the initial size of the host, the weight of the parasite can exceed the total body weight of the fish. Once hosted by the fish the parasite will usually reside in the body cavity for the duration of the fish's life [7]. Interestingly, the fish is not the major host of ligula, the cycle starts in the body of piscivorous birds. The life expectancy in the major host is a maximum of 5 days, but in this time they will lay a multitude of eggs. These eggs are passed in to water via the faeces of the bird. Once in the aquatic medium the coracidia hatch from the eggs, coracidium larva eaten by a wide range of copepod zooplankton, penetrates the gut wall where the procercoid stage develops. They develop to the procercoid stage within 9-10 days and will survive in the copepods for another 3-5 days [7]. The cycle continues when the planktivorous fish ingests the copepod. The procercoid then burrows through the gut wall and continues to develop into a plerocercoid larva in the fish's abdominal cavity. The cycle is then complete when the piscivorous predatory bird eats the tapeworm hosting fish.

Differences in the reported timing of development may be explained by the following: procercoids may become infective before they complete their growth, also, copepods of different genera and species may vary in their compatibility as intermediate hosts and lastly, growth is apparently affected by the number of procercoids in the copepod [23].

Ligula plerocercoids show very limited structural differentiation. They are flat, unsegmented and have a tapering anterior end with two bothridia plerocercoids from different host fish vary in size, which ranges from 67-245 mm in length, and 3-10 mm in width.

Ligula has been the subject of a number of studies mainly those aimed at differences in pathogenicity and parasite-host relationships [2], [3], [5], [6], [9], [10], [15], [16], [22], [23], [24], [25], [29], [31], [32], [34], [35]. The objective of the present study was the first attempted to determine the infection of organism by ligula intestinalis in Sattarkhan Lake and our specifically objectives were:

1) to study the worm occurrence within planctonic copepods, fishes and piscivorous birds
2) to experimentally examine of parasite-hosts.
II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study was carried out monthly (for one year) in Sattarkhan Lake (46°, 20' E; 38°, 45' N) is suited near the city of Ahar, East Azarbaijan, Iran (Fig1). Its surface area is 7.2 km² with a mean depth of around 4 m and the average annual water temperature is around 11°C (range 4–16°C). A total of 310 fish sample were collected with fyke net and gill nets of different mesh sizes (10, 12, 14, 17, 21, 27, 32, 40, and 50 mm measured between adjacent knots) to catch a wide range of fish sizes. Samples preserved with formalin (10%), then, the body abdominal cavity was examined for the presence of ligula intestinalis. In parallel, the fish specimens were identified according to Carcasson [12], Eschmeyer [17] and Allen [1].

Zooplanktons were captured using a planktonic net (mesh size 45 μm), preserved with borate-buffered formalin (4% final concentration) and their genius composition were identified according to Burska and Burska [11], Davis [13], Mass [26], Newell and Newell [28] and Todd and Laverack [33]. Planktonic copepods were separated under microscope and the sex and occurrence of parasitic larval form in the body cavity of each copepod individual was determined.

Piscivorous birds were identified according to Evans [18], Harris et al. [20], Hudec [21] selected by telescope and they hunted for study of parasite infection. Each individual was dissected for presence of parasite eggs in its gut.

III. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the name and abundance of zooplankton in Sattarkhan Lake, belong to 9 geniuses in 5 phyla. The maximum diversity was seen in Rotatoria with 4 geniuses, Ciliata, Rizopoda and Cladocera with 1 genus were showed the minimum diversity. Dominated zooplanktons of lake were Cyclops, Branchionus and Polyarthra and the higher number was seen in planctonic copepoda with average 90352 individual per m³. A total of 1000 specimen of copepoda were selected randomly and tested for occurrence of plerocercoid stage of ligula. Result indicated that prevalence of infection was 16% for two cyclopid copepoda. Interestingly, ratio of infection between female and male copepods was 15 to 1 and majority of parasite infected cyclopid were female Cyclops. Procercoid stage of ligula and sample of infected Cyclops were shown in fig2 and fig3.

Investigation of 310 fishes specimens were indicated to occurrence of 10 species and 3 families: Cyprinidae, Baltioridae and Percidae in this lake (table2). Cyprinid fishes were included: Capoeta capoeta, Barbus capito, B. mursa, Carassius auratus, Cyprinus cyprinus, Alburnus filippi, Leuciscus cephalus and Alburnoides bipunctatus that five of them were infected (Capoeta capoeta, Cyprinus cyprinus, Alburnus filippi, Leuciscus cephalus and Alburnoides bipunctatus), from each of Baltioridae and Percidae only one member were identified in Sattarkhan Lake (Nemachilus bergianus and Stizostedion lucioperca), there was no infected specimen between them. Piscivorous birds were examine for occurrence of ligula too, there were 16 species of migratory aquatic and semi aquatic birds in Sattarkhan Lake (table3), that results indicated to manipulation of six species by ligula (Phalacrocorax carbo, Ardea cinera, Egretta alba, Egretta garzetta, Alcedo atthis and Ciconia ciconia).
In a lake, if the conditions are suitable, its population increases rapidly which in turn results in mortality of fish hosts [24]. Science the whole fish population may be infected in the course of time [23], there would be a decrease in the fish population. Several pathological changes were reported in infections of *Ligula intestinalis*; fibrosis, inflammation and atrophy of the viscera, resulting from compression and displacement of the organs by the parasites, often together with accumulation of blood stained ascetic fluid [31], [27]. Clear distension of the body wall as the worm increases in size is probably the most visually astounding feature. This distension can cause impairment of muscle development and also reduce streamlining and increased risk of predation, reduced growth, anemia, dark colouration and erratic swimming is also side affects of *ligula*.

Although in ponds and farms some chemotherapeutic agents used to treat adult stage cestode infections may be effective, in particular Droncit 5 mg/kg direct application or incorporated in to pellets or Mebendazole (5-benzoyi-1H-benzimidazol-2-vl) specifically against migrating pleurocercoids or treatment of ponds with Neguvon (Masoten or Dipterox) to eliminate copepods [27] but there is no treatment for wild fish to restricted infection.

*Ligula intestinalis* seems to be a thermophilic species, low temperatures seem to delay or even interrupt development and consequently completion of the life cycle. Distribution and seasonality of tapeworm infections depends not only on ambient temperatures but also on the abundance of compatible copepods, which is also seasonal and their part in the composition of the fish's food, which is both age and season related [10].

Its definite in this study that:
- All of infected fishes in lake are from cyprinidae and Cyclopaedia are frequent intermediate host particularly in ponds and large bodies of water [29], [15], [16].

The presence of *L.intestinalis* pleurocercoids was shown by researchers to be associated with certain pathological effects in the first host: there are numerous health implications when hosting ligula, these pathological effects mainly includes the inhibition of gonadal development in the fish host [4], [15], [16]. Thus ligula pleurocercoids may play a role in the regulation of their fish hosts population dynamics, via the inhibition of gonadal development. According to Kennedy et al., [23], ligula typically exhibits epizootic cycles over a period of 4-5 years and it has excellent power of dispersal and is brought in to a lake by migratory birds. Following its arrival

### VI. DISCUSSION

*Ligula intestinalis* is known to infest many fresh water fishes including cyprinidae and Cyclopeidae are frequent intermediate host particularly in ponds and large bodies of water [29], [15], [16].

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because the water of lake is used for drinking.

V. CONCLUSION

It's seemed that because of nature of region, one of effective method for restricted infection may be biological elimination and more study is necessary for this porpoise. In addition, it's necessary to prevent from consumption of infective fish by native people and inform them about sanitation.

REFERENCES


