

SYSTEMATIC STATUS OF PHILOMETRA ACIPENSERIS (DEL LUPO, 1898) (NEMATODA)

In 1898, Del Lupo (Del Lupo M., 1898: Atti R. Accad. Sc. Torino 33: 823—826) described a new nematode species, *Ichthyonema acipenseris*, on the basis of the only specimen, believed to be a female, found in the body cavity (in the region of gills) of the sturgeon *Acipenser sturio*. The author mentions neither the locality nor the date of collection and it can be only supposed that it was in Italy. The description is poor, indicating, as also the drawings, that no philometrid nematode was at stake. The author gave the following characterization of the species:

Ichthyonema acipenseris Del Lupo. "Foemina. Entozoon abdominale, albidum, corpus cylindricum, aequale, pollices quindecim longum (cm. 43), circiter lineam unam cum dimidio latum (mm. 3). Caput ovatum-glandulosum, trifidum, trilobum, superiore lobo extensiore. Os orbiculare, parvum, lobis obstrusum. Cauda obtusa, papillis extensione variis praedita, capite tenuior. Cutis tenax, anulata, in longitudinem striata. Intestina et genitalia alba videntur: oviductus in vulvam tumescentem non longe a capite desinit. Ab ovo, extrinsecus spongioso, sollicite nascitur larva, caput rotundum, corpus cylindricum et caudam obtusam praebens, et intestinum fuscum" (in abdomine piscis: *Acipenser sturio*).

Since the find by Del Lupo (op. cit.) this species has not been recorded. Because *Ichthyonema* is now considered a junior synonym of the genus *Philometra*, Yamaguti (Yamaguti S., 1961: The nematodes of vertebrates, Plts. I, II. Systema Helminthum 3. Interscience Publishers, New York—London, 1261 pp.) and Rasheed (Rasheed S., 1963: J. Helminthol. 37: 89—130) have reported this parasite as *Philometra acipenseris* (Del Lupo, 1898); this species

has been omitted in the monograph by Ivashkin et al. (Ivashkin V. M., Sobolev A. A., Khromova L. A., 1971: Camallanata of animals and man and the diseases caused by them. Osnovy nematodologii 22. Publ. House Nauka, Moscow, 388 pp. — in Russian).

Through the courtesy of Prof. F. Bona from the University of Torino I obtained from the collections of the Zoological Museum of this university the fragments of the specimen labelled as "*Ichthyonema acipenseris* — typus". The fragments, preserved in ethanol, are dark-green to black, strongly depressed, dehydrated, with distinct, somewhat elevated transverse strips on the body surface; the striping is less distinct on the body end (probably the head end) where it is possible to observe several short bristles; this end reminds the head end of annelids. Moreover, this part of body is longitudinally prickled through with a metal needle or wire the remnants of which are perceptible also in another fragment.

In my opinion, these fragments cannot be considered as remnants of a nematode. It is highly probable that they represent body fragments of an annelid, possibly already somewhat digested, that was used as a bait for catching fishes; the metal pieces in its body may be the remnants of the hook. The specimen could get into the body cavity of the fish during the autopsy.

Consequently, on the basis of the above mentioned reasons, it is necessary to state that *I. acipenseris* is not a philometrid or any other nematode. Due to the fact that now it is impossible to determine the identity of this organism, I consider it necessary to designate *Ichthyonema acipenseris* Del Lupo, 1898 as *nomen dubium*.

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