

## ON A CASE OF "WORM-CATARACT" IN DANISH EEL-POUTS (*ZOARCES VIVIPARUS* L.)

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That metacercariae of the strigeid trematode *Displostomum spathaceum* (Rudolphi 1819) produce blindness among freshwater fish in Denmark has long been known, but that the same phenomenon also occurs, at least occasionally, in fish living in our brackish waters in the southern parts of Denmark, where water from the Baltic Sea and water from Kattegat is mixed to a salinity of about 8–14‰, (mostly lying round 8–10‰), has hitherto not been known.

In November 1981, a catch of 268 eel-pouts, all taken in Guldborgsund, was examined by the laboratory of fish pathology at the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University in Copenhagen, and surprisingly 30 specimens had a milky white opacity of their eye lenses and were presumed to be blind. 15 of the blind fish were taken to the laboratory for further examination and through dissections of 5 double infected fish, the tentative diagnosis "Worm-Cataract" was easily verified, since 183 metacercariae were found in the 10 lenses examined.

The question of where the eel-pouts had been infected is probably answered through information given in the monograph on Danish fresh-water snails by *Mandahl-Barth* (1949); that is the intermediate host of *D. spathaceum*, the snail *Lymnaea ovata*, besides being a typical fresh-water snail, also has a "forma" adapted to live in brackish-waters with a salinity about 8‰ up to 10‰. The monograph also states that this "forma", – called "forma baltica" (*Nilsson* 1849) – is confined to the Baltic

Sea and its subareas, of which Guldborgsund is one. According to this, the eel-pouts were probably infected through the "forma baltica" snails, which in turn have been infected from eggs delivered by gulls, grebes, coots, herons etc. living around inland lakes and marshes on the neighboring islands Lolland and Falster.

It is a wellknown fact that these birds very often make flights to marine areas in order to seek food, and consequently eggs from the adult trematodes living in their intestines could be released into the water (in case Guldborgsund) inhabited by "forma-baltica".

Finally it should be mentioned, that although extensive investigations on brackish water fish have been carried out in Poland (*Markowski* 1933), and on a minor scale in the waters around the island of Rügen (*Reimer* 1970), no cases of "Worm-Cataract" in eel-pouts were found. Therefore the case from Guldborgsund must be considered the first case reported from eel-pouts living in the brackish-waters adjacent to the Baltic Sea.

### Literature

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