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Review of Key to Parasites of Freshwater Fish of the U.S.S.R.

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BOOK REVIEW . . .


This is a translation of the Russian book, Opredelitely Parazitov Presnovodnykh Ryb SSSR, by the above authors, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moscow-Leningrad, 1962. It is essentially a key to the identification of the species of parasites of the freshwater fishes of Russia including longer descriptions of the higher taxa.

It was not possible for the reviewer to read critically all 919 pages of this book, but since it is primarily a key he tried it out on a few selected species. In general, it is excellent and well illustrated; there are several confusing items, but because there are 1,211 species involved, it is to be expected that some do not key out easily.

There are no page references in the keys, which necessitates a search for the proper section; this is a common fault of keys. The figure numbers of the species, however, are in the proper places in the key.

The Platyhelminthes is set up to include the classes Monogeneoidea, Cestoidea, and Trematoda, whereas most Americans place the Monogenea in family descriptions; there is no key to these families. Whether right or wrong, the order Fasciolata is confusing and it was difficult to key out Cryptocotyle concavum, a heterophyid. On p. 610 are listed the metacercarial heterophyids, but the family description is that of the adult.

The reviewer will have difficulty with larval tapeworms because the key consists of adult characters; there is no key to the plerocercoids.

Although the nematode Spinictectus is easily recognized because of its spines, these spectacular structures are not mentioned till the last key division. The nematode key leans heavily on structures which are not easily seen—phasmids, lateral and caudal glands. There is an unfortunate omission of “not” in 6(1) of the nematode key on p. 618. The classes Nematoda and Acanthocephala are included in the Nemathelminthes; most Americans consider these as separate phyla.

Neoechinorhynchus rutili keyed out easily, but the spiral rows of proboscis hooks must not be confused with the circular arrangement of the same hooks. There is no easily found information on larval Acanthocephala of fish in the book.

In the Copepoda, Ergasilus keyed out easily as did Lernaeae, although the branched horns of the latter are not mentioned. Yamaguti’s work is referred to without date, and not even the first volume (1953) of his Systema Helminthum is in the bibliography.

There is a list of Russian fishes and a very helpful host–parasite checklist; unfortunately, there is no index to the fish list and the genera and species are not in alphabetical order, making them difficult to find. The index is to the parasites only and the page numbers are those of the original text, not the translation.

Since this is the only English work dealing with all Russian freshwater fish parasites, it will be of great use to researchers and graduate students, and will help fish disease diagnosticians identify unusual genera and intercontinental species.

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