

The role of the stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus* L. as a host of plerocerkoids *Schistocephalus solidus* /Muller, 1776/ in the Bays of Gdańsk and Puck

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Although the stickleback is economically unimportant, it occurs numerously and its role in the transmission of parasites is increasingly significant. In recent years from spring till autumn sticklebacks have been examined for plerocerkoids of the tapeworm *Schistocephalus solidus*. The extensivity of infestation reached a peak at the end of August beginning of September, but was much lower in early spring and late autumn. As concerns intensivity, one plerocerkoid /exceptionally two or three/ was found per fish.

Sticklebacks become infested with *S. solidus* on eating Copepoda, mainly the *Cyclops* genus. Copepods are the stickleback's principal food item in the water bodies studied.

The final host of *S. solidus* are numerous species of fish-eating birds. Sticklebacks were found to have been eaten by the following birds in the Bay of Gdańsk: *Mergus serrator*, *Uria aalge*, *Melanitta fusca* and *Podiceps cristatus* /Stepniwicz, oral information/. Despite the wide specificity demonstrated by the mature tapeworm, it appears that each of these avian species could be its final host. One may assume that as regards hosts, *S. solidus* finds adequate conditions for growth and development in the Bays of Gdańsk and Puck. Hence the considerable infestation of their stickleback populations with plerocerkoids of *S. solidus*.