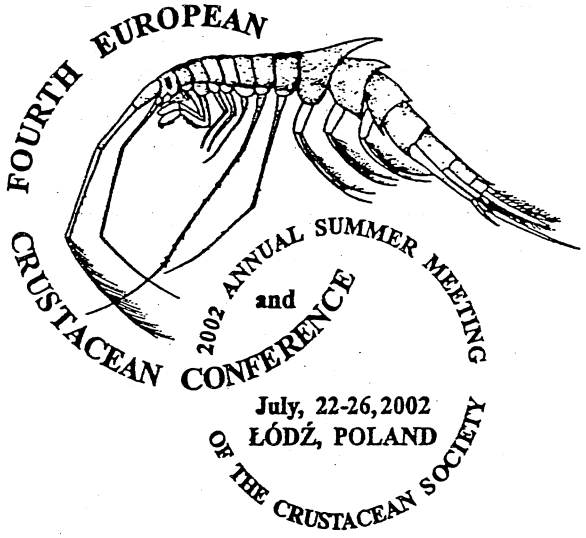
FOURTH EUROPEAN CRUSTACEAN CONFERENCE



Abstracts

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Morozińska-Gogol, J.[1], Rolbiecki, L.[2], Sywula, T.[3] & Rokicki, J.[2]

[1] Department of Ecology and Protection of the Sea, Pomeranian Pedagogical Academy, Arciszewskiego 22 b, 76-200 Słupsk, POLAND

[2] Department of Invertebrate Zoology, University of Gdańsk, al. Piłsudskiego 46, 81-378 Gdynia, POLAND

[3] Department of Genetics and Cytology, University of Gdańsk, Kładki 24, 80-952 Gdańsk POLAND

Thersitina gasterostei (Copepoda, Ergasilidae) in the three-spined stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus* from the Southern Baltic Sea

Thersitina gasterostei is a small (about 1 mm long) copepod parasitic on the gasterosteid fish, of which the three-spined stickleback is the preferred host.
A total of 3819 three-spined stickleback individuals, caught in the Southern Baltic within the period January 1993 – December 1994, were examined. The fish were classified, as appropriate, to four age groups (group 0 –III) and to three major morphological forms (*trachurus*, *semiarmatus*, and *leiurus*).
The fish were found to carry a total of 54 032 individuals of *T. gasterostei*, 42 793 of them being found on the internal surface of the gill cover, 10 645 on the gills, and 594 at the base of fins and on the skin. The infestation prevalence was

74.9%, the mean intensity was 25 and intensity ranged from 91 to 176 individuals, respectively. The infestation extent, as analysed by the age group, was as follows: group 0 showed 36% prevalence and 5.7 individuals mean intensity; group I – 73.5%, 23.6 ind.; group II – 82.9%, 29 ind.; and group III – 87.7%, 23.7 ind. When analysed by morphological form, the infestation parameters were as follows: the *trachurus* sticklebacks: 69.6%, 22.5 ind.; the *semiarmatus*: 67.6%, 23.5 ind.; and the *leiurus* – 44.7%, 21.9 ind. The heaviest infestation was observed in summer (89.7%, 26.5 ind.), the lowest one being recorded in winter (56.5%, 17 ind.).
It was observed that a *T. gasterostei* infestation clearly worsens the three-spined stickleback's condition and may, under favourable conditions (mainly in summer), reduce the species' population size.