

## WORM CATARACT OF *HETEROPNEUSTES FOSSILIS* (BLOCH)

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CATARACT of fishes caused by larval trematodes belonging to genus *Diplostomum* has been reported by La Rue *et al.*<sup>1</sup> Hughes<sup>2</sup> and Sato *et al.*<sup>3</sup>. The present report deals with a worm cataract of *Heteropneustes fossilis* collected from the swamps of Darbhanga during November–December 1979.

The majority of the fishes were found infested. Microscopical examination proved that the eyes were invaded by metacercariae belonging to the genus *Diplostomum*. The number of worms per eye varied from 20 to 80. The parasites had no cyst membranes of their own (Fig. 1). Vitreous, lens and the retina were the sites of infestation. The hosts appeared to be thinner and sluggish when compared to normal specimens. Besides the above mentioned symptoms, corneal haemorrhage and accumulation of watery liquid in the infected eyes were also noted.

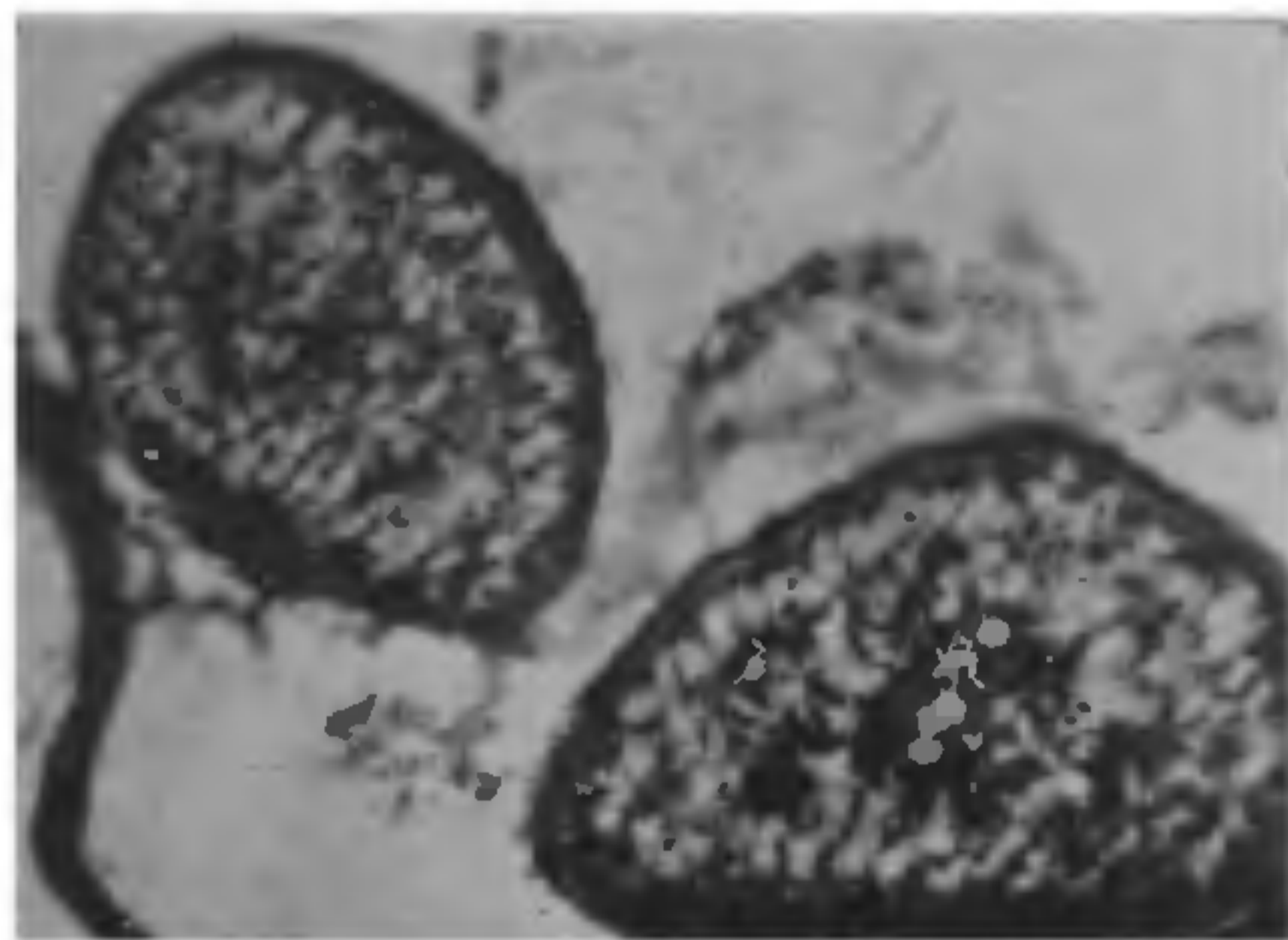


FIG. 1. Section of a portion of eye of *H. fossilis* showing two parasites (H x E, x 400).

Parasite specimens carefully relaxed and fixed in 70% alcohol, stained with alum carmine and mounted in D.P.X., gave the following average measurements.

Body length	: 938 $\mu$ m
Body width	: 338 $\mu$ m
Oral sucker	: 52 $\mu$ m
Ventral sucker	: 36 $\mu$ m
Holdfast length	: 92 $\mu$ m
Holdfast width	: 61 $\mu$ m

The pharynx lies just behind the oral sucker. The oesophagus is short. The ventral sucker lies at about the posterior third of the body. The holdfast organ is situated in the posterior region of the ventral sucker.

The present report on worm cataract in fish is probably the first record in India, although Pandey<sup>4</sup> has reported the occurrence of *Diplostomulum ophthalmi* in the eyes of *H. fossilis*.

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