

# INFESTATION OF STRIPED BASS, *MORONE SAXATILIS*, BY THE LEECH *MYZOBDELLA LUGUBRIS*

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**ABSTRACT:** The estuarine leech *Myzobdella lugubris* has been reported to parasitize a number of fish and invertebrate species (Sawyer et al., 1975). Infestations of striped bass reported in the literature are rare, are usually on fish two years or older, and typically number one leech per fish (Paperna and Zwerner, 1976). We noted heavy leech infestations (81 to 377 per fish) on two year old striped bass reared under intensive culture conditions at the Crane Aquaculture Facility.

## INTRODUCTION

Many of the piscicolid leeches belong to the genus *Myzobdella* (see Meyer, 1966). *Myzobdella lugubris* (Fig. 1) is a species that occurs throughout fresh and brackish waters of the United States. It is parasitic on teleosts or commensal on crustaceans and was the first fish leech reported to utilize both a fish and an arthropod in its life history (Daniels and Sawyer, 1975). It appears to parasitize fish for most of the year and then leaves the fish to deposit cocoons during the warmer summer months. *M. lugubris* is reported most frequently on certain brackish water fishes, especially *Mugil cephalus* and *Fundulus* spp., but is known frequently to parasitize a number of freshwater fishes as well, especially species of the genera *Ictalurus* and *Lepomis* (Sawyer et al., 1975). Striped bass 2 years old or older have been parasitized by *M. lugubris* but only rarely, and if so, in low numbers (Paperna and Zwerner, 1976). We observed in November, 1985, a heavy *M. lugubris* infestation (Fig. 2) of 2-year-old striped bass reared at our intensive culture facility. These striped bass are maintained for broodfish research in a 10,000 gal, 20 ft diameter tank receiving oligohaline water from Chesapeake Bay in a single pass open system. An inflow to the tank of 350 gal/min provides two water changeovers per hour. We were