

Observations on the ecology of the freshwater leech *Helobdella stagnalis* (Hirudinoidea: Glossiphoniidae), new for Turkey

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Abstract: The freshwater leech *Helobdella stagnalis* was found in fish ponds and discharge channels at a Fisheries Research Station near Elazığ on the Upper Euphrates. It was identified on the basis of morphological features. The species had not previously been recorded in Turkey. The abundance of the species was highest (1.3 ± 0.07 leeches/m²) in August and lowest (0.2 leeches/m²) in February.

Kurzfassung: Der Süßwasseregel *Helobdella stagnalis* wurde in Fischteichen und Entwässerungskanälen der Fischereilichen Untersuchungsstation von Elazığ am Oberen Euphrat gefunden. Er wurde anhand morphologischer Merkmale bestimmt. Dies ist der erste Nachweis dieser Art in der Türkei. Die Art erreichte ihre grösste Dichte im August (1.3 ± 0.07 Egel/m²) und ihre niederste im Februar (0.2 Egel/m²).

Key words: Abundance, phenology, leech morphology, Turkey, Middle East.

Introduction

There is no available overview of the leeches of Turkey. The occurrence of 21 species of leeches in the Levantine has been reviewed by RÜCKERT (1985). *Pantobdella muricata*, a well-known species in the Mediterranean Sea, was first recorded for Turkey by ERGÜVEN & CANDAN (1992). SOYLU (1990) found *Piscicola geometra* on the gills and body surface of *Esox lucius* in Sapanca Lake, and ÖZDEMİR & SARIEYYÜPOĞLU (1991) on *Barbus capito pectoralis* in Keban Dam Lake (Elazığ Province). In addition, SARIEYYÜPOĞLU & SAĞLAM (1995) also found *Illinobdella patzcuarensis* and *Actinobdella* sp. in Keban Dam Lake. SAĞLAM (2001) reported the first record of *Placobdella costata* for Turkey. The Medicinal Leech, *Hirudo medicinalis*, is widespread in Turkey. KASPAREK et al. (2000) recorded it in 42 out of 65 wetlands in the western half of Anatolia, and DEMIRSOY et al. (2002) studied its seasonal distribution.

This paper reports the first record of *Helobdella stagnalis* from Turkey, and includes some observations on its biology and ecology.

Material and methods

Helobdella stagnalis was studied in discharge channels of the Cip Fisheries Research Station of Fisheries Faculty, Fırat University (Elazığ) which is situated 15 km north-west of Elazığ in eastern Turkey. The vegetation consists of *Typha latifolia* and *Ceratophyllum submersum*.