

FIFTH CONGRESS OF EUROPEAN ICHTHYOLOGISTS
– PROCEEDINGS –
CONGRESSUS EUROPÆUS ICHTHYOLOGORUM



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**CONGRESS OF EUROPEAN ICHTHYOLOGISTS
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CONGRESSUS EUROPAEUS ICHTHYOLOGORUM
STOCKHOLM 1985**

COMMEMORATING PETRUS ARTEDI (1705–1735)

Editors

SVEN O KULLANDER BO FERNHOLM

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Contents

xi Preface

- 1 Opening address
Kerstin Niblaeus
- 3 Peter Artedi, founder of modern ichthyology
Alwyne Wheeler
- 11 Petrus Artedi in his Swedish context
Gunnar Broberg
- 17 The phylogenetic position of the Plecoglossidae (Teleostei, Salmoniformes), with comments on the Osmeridae and Osmeroidei
Gordon J. Howes, Christopher P.J. Sanford
- 31 Possible otophysic connections in some fossil and living ostariophysan fishes
Mireille Gayet, Michel Chardon
- 43 On the present status of cyprinid fish studies in China
Wu Yunfei
- 49 The *Leuciscus cephalus* complex (Pisces, Cyprinidae) in the western Balkanic area
Pier Giorgio Bianco, Borivoj Knežević
- 57 Ventral cephalic musculature in elasmobranchs: some functional and phylogenetic implications
Amelia Victoria de Andrés, José Miguel García Guzmán, Ramón Muñoz-Chápuli
- 65 The hypothalamic, ventricular channel-system and its phylogenetic distribution among fishes
Mario F. Wullimann
- 73 A comparison of actinopterygian brain ventricles and ependyma
Kurt M. Kotschal, Wolf-Dietrich Krautgartner, Hannes Pohla, Hans Adam
- 81 Brain-body weight ratio in holocephalian fishes
Roland Platel, Christian Delfini, Monique Diagne
- 87 On the vascular convolutions in the head of three species of hammerhead shark (Chondrichthyes, Sphyrnidae)
Lina García Garrido, Ramón Muñoz-Chápuli
- 91 Morphogenesis of the lateral line organ of *Blennius pavo* (Perciformes, Blenniidae)
Roland Brandstätter, Robert A. Patzner
- 97 Angulo-articular inclination and fast jaw depression in *Astatotilapia elegans* (Trewavas): different ways in using strain energy
Peter Aerts, Ward Vanden Berghe, Walter Verraes
- 101 Morphological investigations on fish head structures with the help of microcomputers
Ward Vanden Berghe, Peter Aerts, Hendrik Claeys, Ann Huysseune, Walter Verraes

- 105 Computerized measurement of gill respiratory area with corrosion casts of gill vasculature
Hannes Pohla, Gustav Bernroider, Alois Lametschwandtner, Alfred Goldschmid
- 109 A survey of the fish fauna of the Mount Namjagbarwa region in Xiang (Tibet), China
Wu Yunfei
- 113 Systematical and ecological analysis of the Red Sea ichthyofauna
Menachem Goren
- 117 The fish fauna and aquatic milieu of the Llanos of Colombia (Orinoco basin) with special regard to respiratory patterns of fishes inhabiting extreme hypoxic waters
Plutarco Cala
- 127 Seasonal patterns in the diets, gut length and feeding behaviour of three Panamanian cichlids (Teleostei, Cichlidae)
Teresa J. Townshend, R.J. Wootton
- 133 Fin-feeding by the piranha (*Serrasalmus spilopleura* Kner): the cropping of a novel renewable resource
Thomas G. Northcote, Marlene S. Arcifa, Otavio Froelich
- 145 Trophic dynamics of the mahseer, *Tor puitora* (Teleostei, Cyprinidae), in the Central Himalayas
Ramesh C. Sharma
- 153 Diet shifts, feeding efficiency and coexistence of bream (*Abramis brama*), roach (*Rutilus rutilus*) and white bream (*Blicca bjoerkna*) in hypertrophic lakes
Eddy H.R.R. Lammens, Jan Geursen, Peter J. Mac Gillavry
- 163 Seasonal growth patterns in a population of roach (*Rutilus rutilus*) after spawning
Markus Meili
- 169 Notes on the reproductive ecology of the feral form of the common carp, *Cyprinus carpio carpio*, in the Rhine River
Anton Lelek
- 175 Fish communities in Guadeloupe mangroves
Max Louis, Pascale Baelde
- 181 On the biology and ecology of *Lophius* species (Teleostei, Lophiidae) in the Adriatic Sea
Ivan Jardas
- 187 North Sea spawning grounds of the sole (*Solea solea*) located from the 1984 Belgian plankton survey
Christiane Borremans
- 193 Mesopelagic fish faunas of two fjords differing in physical oceanography
Jocelyn M. Richard, Richard L. Haedrich
- 201 Migration and home ranges of natural and transplanted burbot (*Lota lota*) off the coast of Finland
Richard Hudd, Hannu Lehtonen
- 207 Variability of reproductive status in a population of *Pseudopleuronectes americanus*
Margaret P. Burton, David R. Idler

- 213** Manipulation of otolith microstructures as a means of mass-marking salmonid yolk sac fry
Henrik Mosegaard, Nils G. Steffner, Bjarne Ragnarsson
- 221** Daily growth rates of otoliths in yolk sac fry of two salmonid species at five different temperatures
Henrik Mosegaard, Robert Titus
- 229** On the annual cycle of ring formation in horse mackerel, *Trachurus trachurus*, otoliths off Portugal and its implications on age determination
Luís M. Arruda
- 233** A readily accessible method for cloning fish mitochondrial DNA to generate homologous molecular probes
Maurizio A. Mangini, Bruce J. Cochrane, John H. Paul
- 239** Behavioral and ecological aspects of electroreception in fish
Walter Heiligenberg
- 247** Modern trends in reproductive endocrinology of teleosts
Pieter G.W.J. van Oordt
- 269** Stimulation of reproductive behaviour by aromatizable and non-aromatizable androgens in the male three-spined stickleback, *Gasterosteus aculeatus*
Bertil Borg
- 273** The use of low doses of carp pituitary homogenate for inducing ovulation in carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) during late spring
Elżbieta Brzuska
- 277** A method for producing clones of the medaka, *Oryzias latipes* (Teleostei, Oryziatidae)
Kenichi Ijiri
- 285** The mechanism of tubule elongation during testicular recrudescence in the redbfish, *Sciaenops ocellatus* (Perciformes)
Harry J. Grier, Ronald G. Taylor, Ruth O. Reese
- 293** The reproduction of *Blennius pavo* Risso (Teleostei, Blenniidae). VII. Secondary sexual organs and accessory glands of the testis during the reproductive cycle
Robert A. Patzner, Margit Seiwald
- 299** The reproduction of *Blennius pavo* Risso (Teleostei, Blenniidae). VIII. The testicular gland – preliminary results
Margit Seiwald, Robert A. Patzner
- 305** Genetics in fish farming: past imperfect, present indicative, future conditional
Noël P. Wilkins
- 315** Applied fish behavior studies: assessing environmental effects of energy-related activities
Robert H. Gray
- 325** Downstream migrations of young fishes and stock replenishment in reservoirs and lakes
Dimitrij S. Pavlov
- 329** Evaluation of factors influencing the feedings conditions of eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) in Lake Constance, West Germany
Rainer Berg

- 335** Chemical composition of whitefish (Coregonidae) from Lake Léman during spawning
Konrad Dabrowski, Alexis Champigneulle
- 339** Chitin as a marker used for the determination of the utilization of *Daphnia pulex* fed to *Coregonus lavaretus*
Roland Rösch
- 345** Histology and ultrastructure of the 'jellied' condition in Dover sole, *Microstomus pacificus*
Robert A. Fisher, Ronald A. Fritzsche, Gary L. Hendrickson
- 351** Selection of minimum size limit for pike-perch (*Stizostedion lucioperca*) in the coastal waters of Finland
Hannu Lehtonen

Papers presented to the Symposium on Antarctic Fish Biology

- 357** A general review of the Antarctic bottom fish fauna
Anatole P. Andriashev
- 373** Origins and pathways possible for the fishes of the Antarctic Ocean
Richard Gordon Miller
- 381** Reproductive strategies of Antarctic fish
Anthony W. North, Martin G. White
- 391** Midwater fish fauna of the Weddell Sea, Antarctica
Gerd Hubold, Werner Ekau
- 397** Distribution and abundance of fish on the Kerguelen Islands shelf
Guy Duhamel
- 405** Postlarval Notothenioidei and midwater fish collected during the SIBEX cruise by British Antarctic Survey, 1985
Martin G. White, Anthony W. North
- 413** Chromosome relationships among 15 species of Nototheniidae
Catherine Ozouf-Costaz, Mireille Doussau de Bazignan
- 421** Information incorporated in Antarctic fish otoliths
Richard L. Radtke
- 427** Contribution to the early life history of Channichthyidae from the Bransfield Strait and South Georgia (Antarctica)
Wieslaw Ślósarczyk
- 435** Age and growth of four species of *Electrona* (Teleostei, Myctophidae)
Tomasz B. Linkowski
- 443** Temperature adaptation of the immune response in the Antarctic teleost *Notothenia rossii* Richardson
Julian G. O'Neill
- 453** Branchial vascular anatomy in the icefish *Chaenocephalus aceratus*
J. Clifford Rankin, Brenda Harrison, Anthony C. Airey

- 455** Muscle function in Antarctic fish
Ian A. Johnston
- 459** Gross morphology, fibre composition and mechanical properties of pectoral fin muscles in the Antarctic teleost *Notothenia neglecta* Nybelin
Paul Harrison, Colin J.M. Nicol, Ian A. Johnston
- 467** Gill morphometrics of an Antarctic fish, *Pleuragramma antarcticum*
Andreas Kunzmann
- 469** A new species of *Haemogregarina* from the Antarctic teleosts *Notothenia rossii* Richardson and *N. neglecta* Nybelin
D. Louise Barber, Jean E. Mills Westermann, Peter Storoz

The hypothalamic, ventricular channel-system and its phylogenetic distribution among fishes

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*Wullimann, M.F. 1987. The hypothalamic, ventricular channel-system and its phylogenetic distribution among fishes. Proc. V Congr. europ. Ichthyol., Stockholm 1985, pp. 65–72. The inferior lobes, bilateral diverticuli of the ventral hypothalamus, characterize both cartilaginous and ray-finned fishes but are not found in lobe-finned fishes (coelacanth and dipnoans) or in tetrapods. In the Picasso trigger fish, *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* Linnaeus (Balistidae), the lateral recess of the third ventricle, which protrudes into the inferior lobes, displays a peculiar series of channels, with pores leading to the outside of the brain. In order to determine the evolutionary polarity of this neuroanatomical feature, series of transverse brain sections from members of all major groups of fishes were examined for the presence of such a channel-system (11 chondrichthyans, 2 cladistians, 3 chondrosteans, 1 ginglymode, 1 halecomorph, 58 teleosteans). This feature appears to have originated only with the Clupeocephala of Lauder and Liem, and its fully developed state is restricted to the Percomorpha, specifically balistids (Tetraodontiformes) and pomacentrids, cichlids and labrids (Perciformes). Therefore, this feature most likely represents an apomorphic neural character within actinopterygian fishes.*

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Unlike in land vertebrates, the hypothalamus is the most highly differentiated part of the diencephalon in fishes. One of the most extensive hypothalamic specializations is the inferior lobes (Fig. 1). These bilateral diverticuli of the ventral hypothalamus characterize both cartilaginous and ray-finned fishes but are not found in lobe-finned fishes (coelacanth and dipnoans) or in tetrapods. In some species of cartilaginous and ray-finned fishes, the relative size of these ventrolateral hypothalamic brain parts is comparable to that of other major brain divisions, such as the cerebellum or the optic tectum (Fig. 1).

A particularly striking feature of the inferior lobes in the Picasso trigger fish, *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* Linnaeus is the presence of a ventricular, hypothalamic channel-system (Wullimann *et al.* 1984). In order to determine the phylogenetic distribution and evolutionary polarity (plesiomorphy versus apomorphy) of this neural character, members of all major fish groups were examined for its presence. These data were then examined for possible correlations with the ecology and behavior of the fishes exhibiting a ventricular, hypothalamic channel-system. As fishes constitute the largest and most variable group of vertebrates, the comparative approach, emphasized in this study, is the most appropriate method for elucidating the biological role of the inferior lobes, a role which is still essentially unknown.

There is a great deal of information available on the inferior lobes, including their overall morpho-

logy (Holmgren 1920, Bergquist 1932, Ariëns Kappers *et al.* 1936, Crosby & Showers 1969, Demski *et al.* 1975, Evan *et al.* 1976, 1976a, Kühlenbeck 1977, Senn 1981, Wullimann *et al.* 1984), their neuronal connections (Luiten & Van der Pers 1977, Finger 1978, 1983, Morita *et al.* 1980, Sakamoto & Ito 1982, Smeets & Boord 1985), their histology (Knowles 1972, Demski *et al.* 1975, Evan *et al.* 1976, 1976a), their ultrastructure (Vigh & Vigh-Teichmann 1973, Kriebel 1982) and their histochemistry (Baumgarten & Braak 1967, Braak 1967, Vigh-Teichmann *et al.* 1970, Parent *et al.* 1978, Parent 1979, 1983, Parent & Northcutt 1982, Halpern-Sebold & Schreibmann 1983, Kotschal & Adam 1983, Vigh-Teichmann *et al.* 1983, Ekström & Van Veen 1984, Ekström *et al.* 1985, Margolis-Kazan *et al.* 1985). Only a few behavioral and physiological studies (Demski & Knigge 1971, Demski 1973, 1981, 1983, Peter 1979), however, have dealt with the functional aspects of these brain parts.

I would like to express my gratitude to R. Glenn Northcutt and David G. Senn for offering access to their large collections of brain series, to William L. Fink and the Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, and Toni Bürgin for providing brains of additional specimens included in this study, to Mary Sue and R. Glenn Northcutt for extensive help in preparing the manuscript and innumerable other support, and to Rosemarie Daetwyler and David Bay for technical help. This study was supported by the Janngen-Poehn-Stiftung, Switzerland, and by National Institutes of Health research grant NS11006, USA.

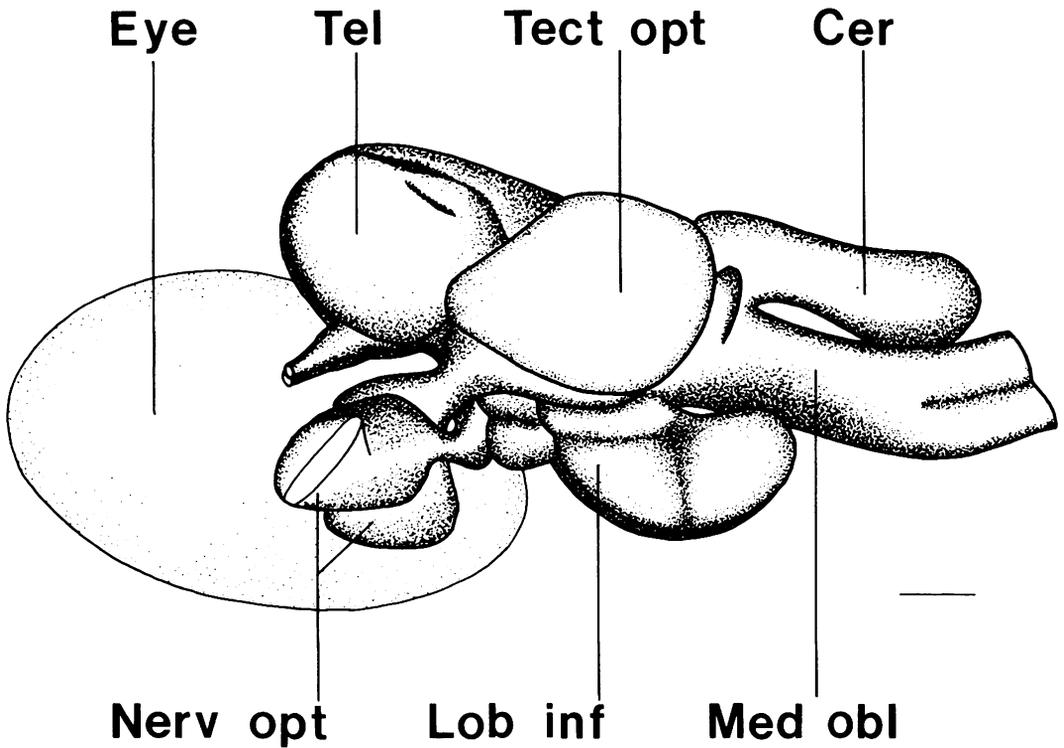


Figure 1. Reconstructed lateral view of the brain of *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* showing the relative size of the inferior lobes compared to other brain divisions. The cranial nerves were omitted, the white structure in the left optic nerve is the optic papilla. Cer, corpus cerebelli; Lob inf, lobus inferior; Med obl, medulla oblongata; nerv opt, nervus opticus; Tect opt, tectum opticum; Tel, telencephalon. Bar scale equals 1 mm.

Table 1. The phylogenetic distribution of the hypothalamic, ventricular channel-system among fishes (Systematics: after Lauder & Liem 1983, except Chondrichthyes: after Nelson 1976. P: lateral recess leads to periphery of inferior lobe, C: presence of ventricular channels).

Systematic group			P	C
CHONDRICHTHYES:				
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	Squalidae	Squaliformes	-	-
<i>Isistius brasiliensis</i>			-	-
<i>Squatina dumeril</i>	Squatinae		-	-
<i>Heterodontus francisci</i>	Heterodontidae	Heterodontiformes	-	-
<i>Gynglimostoma cirratum</i>	Orectolobidae	Lamniformes	-	-
<i>Mustelus canis</i>	Carcharhinidae		-	-
<i>Notorhynchus maculatus</i>	Hexanchidae	Hexanchiformes	-	-
<i>Raja eglanteria</i>	Rajidae	Rajiformes	-	-
<i>Platyrhinoidis triseriata</i>	Rhinobatidae		-	-
<i>Urolophus</i> sp.	Dasyatidae		-	-
<i>Hydrolagus colliei</i>	Chimaeridae	Chimaeriformes	-	-
OSTEICHTHYES:				
Cladistians				
<i>Polypterus palmas</i>	Polypteridae	no order	-	-
<i>Erpetoichthys calabaricus</i>			-	-
Chondrosteans				
<i>Acipenser oxyrhynchus</i>	Acipenseridae	no order	-	-
<i>Scaphirhynchus platorhynchus</i>			-	-

<i>Polyodon spathula</i>	Polyodontidae	no order	-	-
Ginglymodes				
<i>Lepisosteus osseus</i>	Lepisosteidae	no order	-	-
Halecomorphs				
<i>Amia calva</i>	Amiidae	no order	-	-
Teleosteans				
Osteoglossomorpha				
<i>Osteoglossum bicirrhosum</i>	Osteoglossidae	Osteoglossoidi	-	-
<i>Pantodon buchholzi</i>			-	-
<i>Xenomystus nigri</i>	Notopteridae	Notopteroidei	-	-
<i>Gnathonemus petersi</i>	Mormyridae		-	-
<i>Hiodon tergisus</i>	Hiodontidae		-	-
Elopomorpha				
<i>Elops saurus</i>	Elopidae	no order	-	-
<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	Anguillidae	Anguilliformes	-	-
<i>Gymnothorax moringa</i>	Muraenidae		-	-
Clupeomorpha				
<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Clupeidae	Clupeoidei	-	+
<i>Brevoortia tyrannus</i>			-	+
<i>Engraulis mordax</i>	Engraulidae		-	+
Euteleostei				
<i>Esox lucius</i>	Esocidae	Esocae	-	-
<i>Umbra limi</i>	Umbridae		-	-
<i>Salmo trutta</i>	Salmonidae	no order	-	-
<i>Salmo gairdneri</i>			-	-
Ostariophysans				
<i>Carassius auratus</i>	Cyprinidae	Cypriniformes	-	-
<i>Crenuchus spilurus</i>	Characidae	Characiformes	-	-
<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>	Ictaluridae	Siluriformes	-	+
<i>Ictalurus melas</i>			-	+
<i>Sorubim lima</i>	Pimelodidae		+	-
Gymnotid species	Gymnotidae		-	-
Neoteleostei				
<i>Trisopterus minutus</i>	Gadidae	Gadiformes	-	-
Atherinomorpha				
<i>Leuresthes tenuis</i>	Atherinidae	'Atherinoids'	+	-
<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>	Poeciliidae	Cyprinodontiformes	+	-
<i>Strongylura notata</i>	Belontiidae	Beloniformes	+	-
Percomorpha				
<i>Hippocampus zosterae</i>	Syngnathidae	Gasterosteiformes	+	-
<i>Holocentrus spinifer</i>	Holocentridae	Beryciformes	-	-
<i>Anthias squamipinnis</i>	Serranidae	Perciformes	-	-
<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>	Centrarchidae	Percoidi	-	-
<i>Lepomis cyanellus</i>			-	+
<i>Toxotes jaculatrix</i>	Toxotidae		+	-
<i>Trachinotus falcatus</i>	Carangidae		?	+
<i>Lipogramma klayi</i>	Grammidae		-	+
<i>Amphiprion</i> sp.	Pomacentridae	Labroidei	+	+
<i>Dascyllus aruanus</i>			+	+
<i>Chromis chromis</i>			-	+
<i>Astronotus ocellatus</i>	Cichlidae		+	+
<i>Oreochromis mossambicus</i>			+	+
<i>Hemichromis bimaculatus</i>			+	-
<i>Cichlasoma erythraeum</i>			?	+
<i>Embiotoca jacksoni</i>	Embiotocidae		+	?
<i>Cymatogaster aggregata</i>			+	-
<i>Labroides dimidiatus</i>	Labridae		+	+
<i>Coris julis</i>			+	+
<i>Astroscopus y-graecum</i>	Uranoscopidae	Blennioidei	-	-
<i>Gobius niger</i>	Gobiidae	Gobioidei	-	-
<i>Mistichthys accuminatus</i>			-	-
<i>Sphyaena barracuda</i>	Sphyaenidae	Sphyaenoidei	-	+
<i>Anabas testudineus</i>	Anabantidae	Anabantoidei	-	-
<i>Betta splendens</i>	Belontiidae		-	-
<i>Scorpaena porcus</i>	Scorpaenidae	Scorpaeniformes	-	-
<i>Ophicephalus africanus</i>	'Channidae'	Channiformes	-	-
<i>Rhinecanthus aculeatus</i>	Balistidae	Tetraodontiformes	+	+
<i>Odonus niger</i>			+	+
<i>Melichthys vidua</i>			+	+
<i>Diodon hystrix</i>	Diodontidae		-	-
<i>Buglossidium luteum</i>	Soleidae	Pleuronectiformes	-	-
<i>Lepidopsetta bilineata</i>			?	+

Materials and Methods

Brains of all 76 species listed in Table 1 were fixed in AFA (90 ml 80% ethanol, 5 ml stock formaldehyde, 5 ml glacial acetic acid), embedded in paraffin and sectioned at 15 μm . Series of transverse or sagittal sections were then impregnated with Bodian-silver and/or stained with cresyl-violet (modification of Senn 1966).

The reconstruction of the lateral view of the brain (Fig. 1) was done using a Wild-M5 drawing tube. Photomicrographs (Figs 2 & 3) of combined Bodian-cresyl material were taken using a Zeiss photomicroscope and Agfapan 25 film.

Results

In actinopterygians the third ventricle protrudes bilaterally into the inferior lobes, forming the lateral recess, in one of two very distinct morphological patterns. In the first, the lateral recess displays a peculiar series of channels, with pores leading to the outside of the brain, as exist in the Picasso trigger fish, *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* (Fig. 2).

We have postulated that these channels are part of a functional unit, possibly involved in hormone production, in concert with blood vessels, connective tissue and bone structures in that area (Wullmann *et al.* 1984). A dense venous network, located in a pouch at the base of the cranium, underlies the meninx primitiva exactly in the region of the channel openings.

The lateral recess of the inferior lobe in most teleosts exhibits a second pattern, in which there are no channels leading to the external surface of the brain. This condition is seen in *Esox lucius* (Fig. 3).

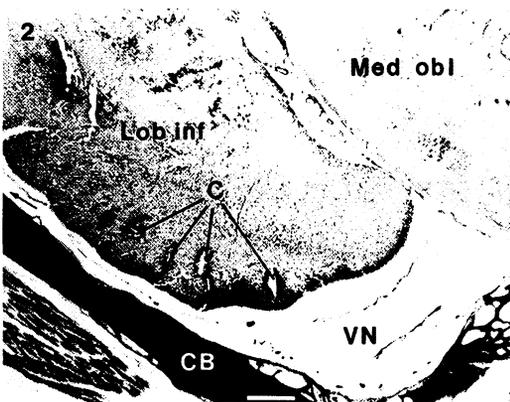


Figure 2. Parasagittal section of the inferior lobe (lob inf) of *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* showing the ventricular channels (C) and the venous network (VN) which is located in a pouch of the cranial base (CB). Med obl, medulla oblongata; arrow points rostrally; bar scale equals 0.2 mm.

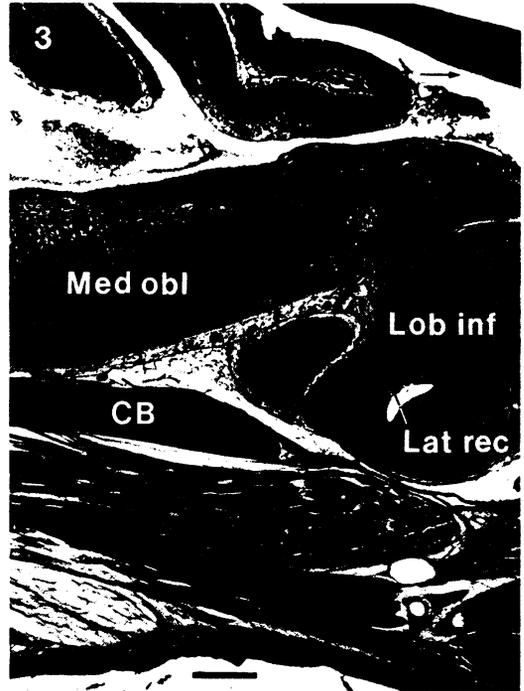


Figure 3. Parasagittal section of the inferior lobe (lob inf) of *Esox lucius*. The lateral recess (lat rec) shows no ventricular channels, and the cranial base (CB) does not form a pouch which would allow the development of a venous network. The rest of the abbreviations are the same as in Fig. 2. Bar scale equals 0.2 mm.

In order to obtain an overview of the morphological diversity and phylogenetic distribution of the modes of contact between the lateral recess of the inferior lobe and the external surface of the brain, a variety of species were examined (Table 1) for the existence of ventricular channels leading to the medio-ventral periphery of the inferior lobe (C in Table 1) and for the presence of a lateral recess leading to the medio-ventral periphery of the inferior lobe (P in Table 1). The results of this survey are listed in Table 1.

In total, 76 species were studied (11 chondrichthyans, 2 cladistians, 3 chondrosteans, 1 ginglymode, 1 halecomorph and 58 teleosts). The neuro-anatomical feature comprising the pattern seen in *Rhinecanthus aculeatus* seems to have originated only with the Clupeocephala (Clupeomorpha and Euteleostei) of Lauder & Liem (1983), and it is fully expressed (i.e. the lateral recess leads to the periphery of the inferior lobe as do its channels) only in the Percomorpha, specifically balistids (Tetraodontiformes) and pomacentrids, cichlids and labrids (Perciformes).

In addition, a few other taxa display one of the two features. All clupeomorphs examined revealed ventricular channels, whereas the atherinomorphs display a lateral recess leading to the periphery of the inferior lobe. In the ostariophysans, only the siluroids among the siluriforms revealed one or the other feature. Within the percomorphs, some species of the Gasterosteiformes, Pleuronectiformes and Perciformes (in addition to the above mentioned families of Labroidae) revealed one character or the other.

Discussion

Evolutionary polarity. As Northcutt (1984) has shown, the cladistic method provides a valuable tool for evaluating the evolutionary polarity of

neural characters. Based on the phylogenetic relationships of actinopterygian fishes as summarized by Lauder & Liem (1983), a dendrogram of the relevant taxa was constructed, and the two neural features in question were plotted thereon (Fig. 4). From the phylogenetic distribution of the ventricular, hypothalamic channel-system, several hypotheses can be formulated regarding its emergence within actinopterygian fishes. As it is present in only some clupeocephalans and lacking in all of the outgroups, it is most likely that it developed at this stage of actinopterygian evolution and represents an apomorphic (derived) character for clupeocephalans.

There are two possibilities regarding the clupeocephalans: the features may be plesiomorphic (primitive) for this group and have been repeated-

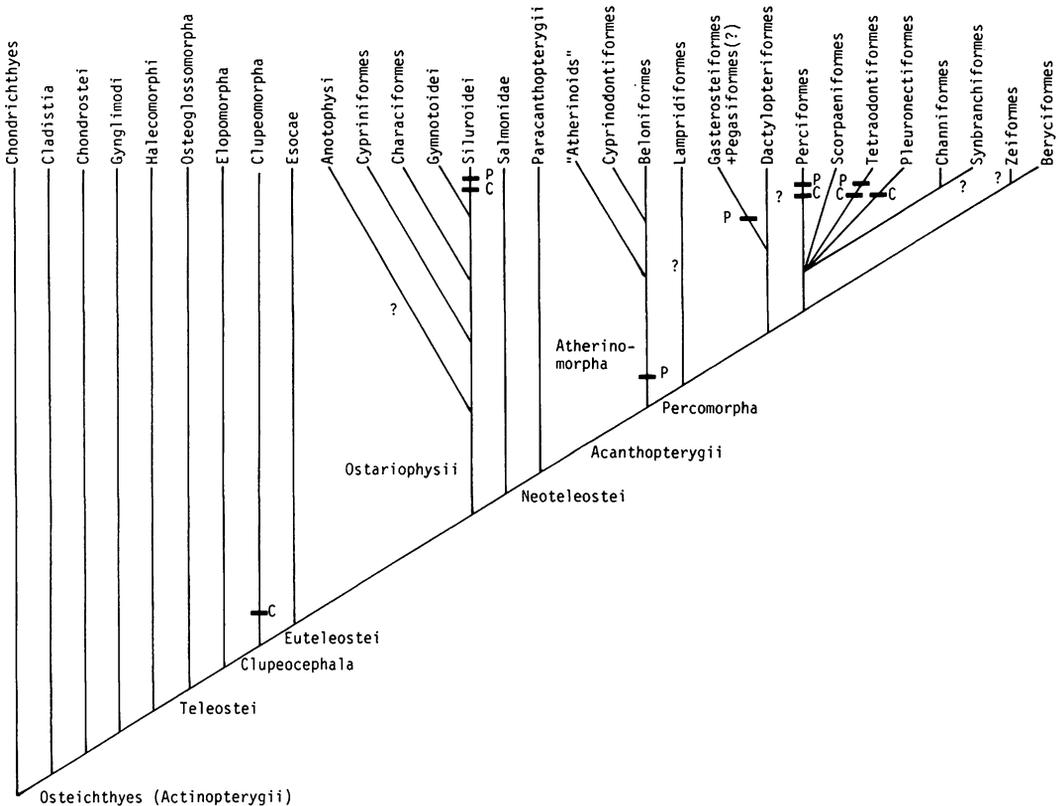


Figure 4. Dendrogram of the phylogenetic relationships of actinopterygian fishes (as summarized by Lauder & Liem 1983), on which is plotted the distribution of the two neural characters comprising the hypothalamic, ventricular channel-system: the existence of ventricular channels leading to the medio-ventral periphery of the inferior lobe (C) and the presence of a lateral recess leading to the medio-ventral periphery of the inferior lobe (P). The phylogenetic distribution indicates that the ventricular, hypothalamic channel-system represents an apomorphic neural character within clupeocephalan fishes. A question mark indicates that no representatives of this group were examined.

ly lost, or they may have arisen several times independently. Their distribution (Fig. 4) indicates that they probably evolved at least three (and possibly seven) times independently – in the clupeomorphs, in the silurids and (1–5 times) in the acanthopterygians (atherinomorphs and percomorphs). Any hypothesis of plesiomorphy (for P and/or C) at the clupecocephalan or the ostariophysian stage would require at least 13 or 12 transformations, respectively, whereas a hypothesis of parallel apomorphy would require only ten or nine transformations, respectively.

In contrast, the most parsimonious hypothesis of plesiomorphy regarding these characters for acanthopterygians would only require six transformations (plesiomorphy for P in atherinomorphs and gasterosteiforms, but subsequent loss and regain in the remaining percomorphs), whereas a hypothesis of parallel apomorphy would require seven transformations. Within the Percomorpha, however, a minimum of seven transformations would again be required to interpret these characters as plesiomorphies, as opposed to six in the case of apomorphies. Thus the most likely evolutionary scenario for these two characters is that they (either one or both) have evolved six times independently within the clupecocephalans, but that P has originated only once for both atherinomorphs and gasterosteiforms. However, the present interpretation would be strengthened by additional analysis, as some groups of acanthopterygians have not been examined for these characters. The fact that two species of the genus *Lepomis* differ in the presence of C indicates that an analysis on a lower systematical level (in this case within the Perciformes) would even enlarge the number of possible evolutionary events for these features.

Based on the above interpretation, the fully developed channel-system can be viewed as a synapomorphic (shared derived) character uniting the pomacentrids, cichlids and labrids of the suborder Labroidei; the presence of a lateral recess opening to the outside of the brain can even be recognized as a synapomorphy for all of the four families of this suborder, including the embiotocids.

Biological role. In vertebrates, the periventricular nuclear areas bordering the third ventricle and the central canal of the spinal cord differ from the remaining periventricular grey of the brain in that they display numerous cerebro-spinal-fluid (CSF)-contacting neurons. In actinopterygian fishes the hypothalamic nuclei containing CSF-contacting neurons include the neurosecretory nuclei, which

are known to project to the pituitary (Vigh-Teichmann *et al.* 1970a, 1976, Haider & Sathyanesan 1972, Vigh & Vigh-Teichmann 1973, Holmes & Ball 1974, Moitra & Medya 1980), as well as other nuclei that are not part of the hypothalamo-hypophyseal complex (Vigh & Vigh-Teichmann 1973). Among the latter, the periventricular nucleus of the lateral recess of the inferior lobe is known to possess CSF-contacting neurons (Evan *et al.* 1976). Both secretory and sensory functions, with respect to the CSF, have been ascribed to these specialized ventricular neurons (Vigh-Teichmann *et al.* 1970a, 1976, Vigh & Vigh-Teichmann 1973, Parent 1979, Vigh *et al.* 1983).

The lateral recess of the inferior lobe and its periventricular nucleus are, therefore, almost certainly involved in transmitting information between the CSF and the central nervous system (CNS). The development of a more elaborate system in that region, such as the channel-system described, would theoretically allow new pathways for transmission among the CSF, the CNS and the bloodstream and is consistent with the known data described above.

Behavioral data for teleosts (Demski & Knigge 1971, Demski 1973, 1981, 1983, Peter 1979) indicates that the inferior lobes are involved in the neural circuitry mediating motor responses normally observed in feeding and aggression. Part of the neuronal basis for these phenomena has been revealed in *Cyprinus carpio* Linnaeus (Luiten & Van der Pers 1977), where cells of the periventricular nucleus and nucleus diffusus of the inferior lobe (terminology after Braford & Northcutt 1983), as well as those of the preglomerular nucleus, project to the trigeminal, whereas only neurons of nucleus diffusus and the preglomerular nucleus send axons to the facial motor nucleus.

In the crucian carp, *Carassius carassius* Linnaeus, tertiary gustatory fibers have been shown to project to the nucleus diffusus of the inferior lobe and to nucleus 'glomerulosus' (Morita *et al.* 1980). Secondary and tertiary gustatory fibers to nucleus 'glomerulosus' in the bullhead catfish, *Ictalurus nebulosus* Lesueur, have also been reported (Finger 1978, 1983).

Based on these anatomical and behavioral results and some additional physiological evidence, a region dorsal to the rostral beginning of the lateral recess was designated by Demski (1981) the 'hypothalamic feeding area' (HFA). Demski also suggested a model of the underlying neuronal circuitry, in which olfactory and gustatory input dominates the possible biological role of the HFA.

This model may very well be adequate for cyprinids and silurids. It should, however, be

noted that part of the behavioral evidence on which the model is based derives from experiments on perciforms such as centrarchids and cichlids. The neuroanatomy of the hypothalamus in perciforms and tetraodontiforms differs drastically from that in cyprinids and silurids. The latter lack a conspicuous nucleus glomerulosus, which is present in perciform and tetraodontiform teleosts and is known to receive projections from visually related nuclei in *Navodon modestus* Günther. In turn, the nucleus glomerulosus is interconnected by a huge fiber tract with the inferior lobe (Sakamoto & Ito 1982). Perciforms and tetraodontiforms thus possess a neuronal circuitry in that region that is strongly involved in processing visual information and is very different from that in cyprinids and silurids.

The perciform (labrids, pomacentrids and cichlids) and tetraodontiform (balistids) fishes that were shown by the present study to possess a fully developed channel-system in the inferior lobes are also highly dependent on visual clues. Furthermore, they are characterized by complex social systems (Fricke 1974, 1979, 1980, 1983, Fricke & Holzberg 1974, Robertson 1972, Coates 1982, Ross *et al.* 1983), in which marked plasticity of growth, social function and, in some cases, even sex occurs (Sale 1977). It is therefore suggested that the hypothalamic, ventricular channel-system in these cases serves as part of a hormone-producing system (of unknown function) that acts as a bridge between humoral and neural processes.

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