



What has the ABRS done for fish trematodes lately? (Plenty).

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Australia's 5,750 fish species harbour many groups of parasites which, together, certainly far exceed the richness of their hosts. Arguably the best-known group is the Trematoda (Platyhelminthes). There are now just over 800 species known from nearly 600 Australian fishes. Species have been described from 1876, but study of the fauna became significant only from the 1960s and then accelerated from about 1990. The last 30 years has seen description of about 80% of the known species. This period correlates with and was enabled by sustained funding by the ABRS. How close have we come to a full description of this fauna? Given that the known fauna has been described from ~10% of the fish species, it is certain that there remain many hundreds of species to be found. The best-known component of the fauna is that of Great Barrier Reef fishes. Sampling there has focussed on large, common, conspicuous, shallow water species. We are now rarely surprised by what we find there. In contrast, the trematodes in southern regions and in small and deep-water fishes are poorly understood making estimates of total richness at best heroic. Total parasite richness for the fauna is even more mysterious.

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