New locality record for the parasitic leech *Pterobdella amara*, and two new host stingrays at Ningaloo Reef, Western Australia

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An individual of the cowtail stingray (*Pastinachus sephen*) was identified at Ningaloo Reef, Western Australia as having a high number of parasitic leeches and gnathiid isopods primarily inhabiting its mouth, jaw and gills. It was underweight for its length and disc width when compared with other individuals of this species and its stomach was bloated and empty. It is proposed that the high density of these parasites directly led to the physical degradation and bodyweight of this individual. In addition to observing two previously undescribed hosts from this location, this is also a new locality record for this species of parasitic leech in Western Australia.

Keywords: gnathiid isopods, Ningaloo Reef, rays, parasitic leeches

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The fish leech, *Pterobdella amara* Kaburaki, 1921 is a common parasite previously recorded in *Pastinachus sephen* (cowtail stingray) and *Himantura uarnak* (reticulated whip-ray) from India and the east coast of Australia, and *Dasyatis akajei* (Japanese red ray) in Japan (Burreson 2006). *Pastinachus sephen* is an extremely common species of benthic ray recorded from the Indo-Pacific and can attain sizes of 200 cm disc width (Last & Stevens, 2009). Known as the cowtail stingray on account of a skin fold on the tail, it is not considered harmful to humans and typically flees when encountered making it difficult to observe. This species spends a lot of time concealed below the sediments when encountered making it difficult to observe. This is not considered harmful to humans and typically flees the cowtail stingray on account of a skin fold on the tail, it is not considered harmful to humans and typically flees when encountered making it difficult to observe. This species spends a lot of time concealed below the sediments when encountered making it difficult to observe. This is not considered harmful to humans and typically flees the cowtail stingray on account of a skin fold on the tail, it is not considered harmful to humans and typically flees when encountered making it difficult to observe. This species spends a lot of time concealed below the sediments when encountered making it difficult to observe. This is not considered harmful to humans and typically flees.
Pterobdella amara attached to the jaw which is a new host record for Western Australia. The parasite specimens from these two new hosts have also been lodged at the WA Museum under catalogue nos. WAM V7709 and 7710.

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REFERENCES


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