

## **Preliminary studies on helminth communities of small sandeel, *Ammodytes tobianus* L. (Actinopterygii: Ammodytidae), from the Gulf of Gdańsk and Pomeranian Bay, Poland**

**Michał Skrzypczak, Leszek Rolbiecki**

Department of Invertebrate Zoology and Parasitology, University of Gdańsk, Wita Stwosza 59, 80-308 Gdańsk, Poland

Corresponding Author: Leszek Rolbiecki; e-mail: l.rolbiecki@biol.ug.edu.pl

Small sandeel (*Ammodytes tobianus* Linnaeus, 1758) is a common marine perciform fish belonging to family Ammodytidae (sand lances) that can be found throughout the north-eastern Atlantic Ocean, including western and southern parts of the Baltic Sea. As a numerous, mainly planktivorous species, it plays a major role in food chains as a prey for predatory fish, birds, and mammals. Although parasite fauna of the species has already been a subject of interest, it is still not very well explored in the southern Baltic Sea. A total of 1242 small sandeels (767 from the Gulf of Gdańsk and 475 from Pomeranian Bay) were studied within 2013–2015 and subjected to standard parasitological examinations. The fish were found to harbour the digenetic trematode *Brachyphallus crenatus* (Rudolphi, 1802), the cestodes *Bothriocephalus scorpii* (Müller, 1776), Cestoda not det., and the nematodes *Contracaecum* spp. All of these taxa were noted in small sandeels from the Gulf of Gdańsk, and three of them (*B. crenatus*, *Contracaecum* spp., Cestoda not det.) were present in fish from Pomeranian Bay. The total (both areas) prevalence was 6.4%, with a mean intensity of 1.3 and an intensity range of 1–5; in the Gulf of Gdańsk their presence was slightly higher than in Pomeranian Bay. The dominant parasite was *Contracaecum* spp. (5.9%, 1.2, 1–5 in the Gulf of Gdańsk and 3.6%, 1.1, 1–3 in Pomeranian Bay). Although small sandeels originated from various regions of the Baltic Sea the infection degree and parasite species richness of fish were similar. All the parasites found were noted for the first time in small sandeels from the southern Baltic Sea.