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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: *Pipistrellus tenuis* recorded during the small mammalian fauna study, Manipur, India. © Uttam Saikia.



## Visceral tetrathyridiosis *Mesocestoides* sp. (Cestoda: Cyclophyllidea) in a wild Barn Owl *Tyto alba* - a first report and new host record

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*Mesocestoides* sp. is most commonly recorded in all parts of the world (Soulsby 1982) except Australia (Bradley et al. 2018) and this is probably the first record from India. Incidence depends on the species and the region and the disease caused by *Mesocestoides* sp. tapeworms is called as mesocestoidosis or mesocestoidiasis. Predilection site of adult *Mesocestoides* sp. tapeworms is the small intestine.

Tapeworms of the genus *Mesocestoides* sp. require three hosts. The primary definitive host are carnivorous mammals or birds of prey and it does not affect cattle, sheep, goats, swine or horses (Padgett & Boyce 2004). Tetrathyridium is a second stage larvae affecting vertebrate (second intermediate host) and the first stage larvae (metacestode) of first intermediate host is unknown but believed to be an coprophagous arthropod (Brigitte 1991). *Mesocestoides* species can live in a wide range of hosts, but are particularly widespread in carnivores (Barker et al. 1993; Tenora 2004; David et al. 2011).

Tetrathyridium attached to internal organs were torn loose or cut free and fixed in histo-pathological examinations in 10% neutral-buffered formalin. During necropsy, the encapsulated tetrathyridium were

searched throughout the body with a bright LED light source. Formalin fixed tissues were processed by routine paraffin embedding method and 4- $\mu$ m-thick sections mounted and stained with hematoxylin and eosin (HE). The tissues samples were examined under light microscope. (Rifki et al. 2005; Karl et al. 2016).

Microscopic examination of the tissue samples taken from the liver and lung revealed chronic multiple pyogranuloma due to infestation by *Mesocestoides* sp. Individual larvae (around six number) were different in shape with convoluted borders. Thick eosinophilic cuticle lined larvae resemble a single layer of cells. The remaining body of the parasite was composed of a loose mesenchymal network with widely scattered parenchymal and muscle cells. Numerous clear vesicles/refractile bodies namely calcareous corpuscles, round to oval in shape, were observed within the stroma of the parasite. Mineralized areas were seen in some of the old lesions (Soulsby 1982; McAllister 2014; McAllister et al. 2018).

Tetrathyridia in the liver parenchyma were surrounded by a thick mantle of inflammatory cells and a scant, loose connective tissue. In some lesions, there were small lymphocytic nodules at the periphery. No

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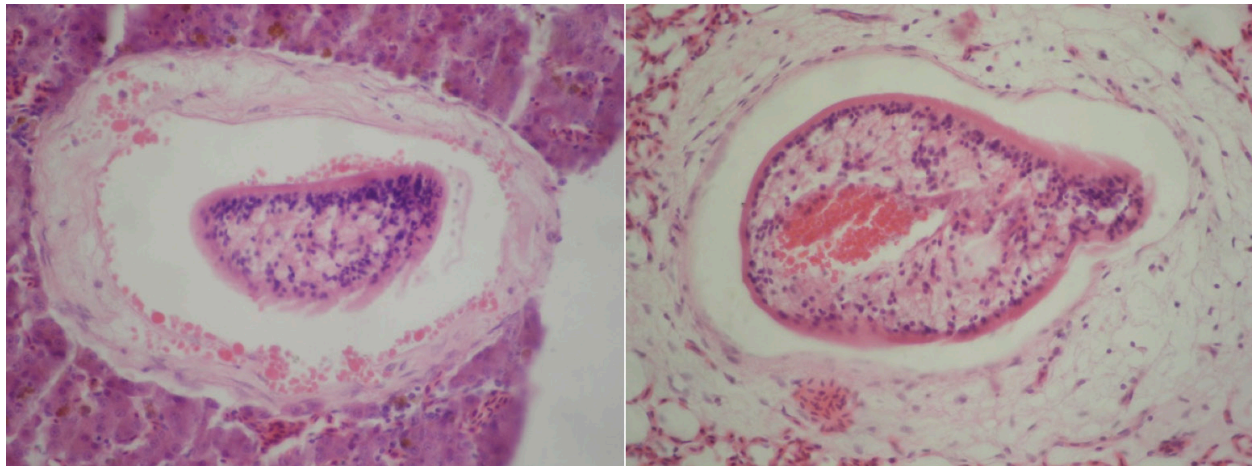


Image 1. Histological section of *Mesocestoides* sp. tetrathyridia from liver H&E. Bar: 50  $\mu$ m

reactive changes were seen in the visceral peritoneum except in superficial lesions where the inflammation extended to the liver surface. Single tetrathyridia occurred in each nodule.

Tetrathyridium on the pleura surface of the lungs were surrounded by a thin layer of loose connective tissue that appeared to be continuous with the pleura. The inner lining of the capsule was partly lined by flattened epithelial-like cells. There was a mild inflammatory reaction to the tetrathyridia, with infiltration of a few macrophages, lymphocytes, and plasma cells. In all lesions examined, tetrathyridia were intact and showed no evidence of degeneration.

We conclude that, Tetrathyridium has been reported in various vertebrate hosts, including wild and domestic animals like birds, snakes, frogs, and rodents (Soulsby 1982; Frank 1991; McAllister et al. 2017) but this is the first record from Barn Owl. Prey species were more prone to risk due to hunting or scavenging on small vertebrates infected with tetrathyridia and detailed molecular discrimination (Skirnisson et al. 2016) within the species to be studied. There are no real effective preventative measures that prevent *Mesocestoides* tapeworm infection. Effective prevention and control can be achieved with numerous anthelmintic products in domestic animals but less possible in wildlife (Ivan et al. 2004; Ubelaker et al. 2014). Biological control of *Mesocestoides* is so far not feasible and there are no reports on resistance of *Mesocestoides* tapeworms to anthelmintics.

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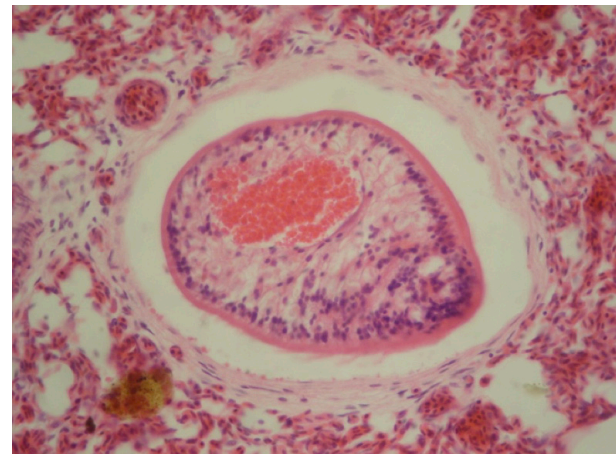


Image 2. Histological section of *Mesocestoides* sp. tetrathyridia from lung H&E. Bar: 50  $\mu$ m

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## Article

**Diversity, distribution, and abundance status of small mammalian fauna (Chiroptera: Rodentia: Eulipotyphla) of Manipur, India**

– Uttam Saikia & A.B. Meetei, Pp. 21751–21768

## Review

**Conservation of Tiger *Panthera tigris* in Nepal: a review of current efforts and challenges**

– Pramod Ghimire, Pp. 21769–21775

## Communications

**Effects of visitor disturbance on tetrapod vertebrates in the Horton Plains National Park, Sri Lanka**

– D.M.T. Dhananjani & W.A.D. Mahaulpatha, Pp. 21776–21785

**Population density and nesting behaviour of Indian Giant Squirrel *Ratufa indica* (Erxleben, 1777) in Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats of Maharashtra, India**

– Ganesh Rathod, Erach Bharucha & Kranti Yardi, Pp. 21786–21796

**First camera-trap confirmation of Tibetan Brown Bear *Ursus arctos pruinosus* Blyth, 1854 (Mammalia: Carnivora: Ursidae) with a review of its distribution and status in Nepal**

– Madhu Chetri, Pp. 21797–21804

**Age estimation of Tiger *Panthera tigris* (Linnaeus, 1758) and Lion *Panthera leo* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae): applicability of cementum annuli analysis method**

– Vipin, Chandra Prakash Sharma, Vinita Sharma, Surendra Prakash Goyal, Heather Stevens & Sandeep Kumar Gupta, Pp. 21805–21810

**Hematological value of captive Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* around Chitwan National Park, Sauraha, Nepal**

– Roshan Ghimire, Sagar Regmi, Rakshya Shrestha, Amir Sadaula & Janardan Dev Joshi, Pp. 21811–21817

**Foraging strata and dietary preferences of fifteen species of babblers in Sarawak, Malaysia**

– Jayasilan Mohd-Azlan, Attiqqah Fadziliah Sapian, Andrew Alek Tuen & Chong Leong Puan, Pp. 21818–21825

**Effects of wind farm on land bird composition at Kachchh District, Gujarat, India**

– Selvaraj Ramesh Kumar, P.R. Arun & A. Mohamed Samsoor Ali, Pp. 21826–21835

**New records of odonates from Trongsa and Zhemgang, central Bhutan with a checklist of Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park**

– Mer Man Gurung, Cheten Dorji, Abir Man Sinchuri, Sanjit K. Rai, Karma C. Dendup & Vincent J. Kalkman, Pp. 21836–21844

**Land snails of Guwahati, Assam, India**

– Girindra Kalita, Pp. 21845–21852

**Morphology characterization and phytochemical overview of the Moluccan Ironwood *Intsia bijuga* (Colebr.) Kuntze, a living collection of Purwodadi Botanic Garden, Indonesia**

– Melisnawati H. Angio, Elga Renjana & Elok Rifqi Firdiana, Pp. 21853–21861

**Woody plant wealth of Therikadu Reserve Forest, Tuticorin, India: a checklist**

– V. Muneeswaran & M. Udayakumar, Pp. 21862–21869

**Invasive alien plant species of Hassan District, Karnataka, India**

– G.M. Prashanth Kumar & Shiddamallayya Nagayya, Pp. 21870–21890

## Notes

**First photographic evidence of the Binturong *Arctictis binturong* (Raffles, 1821) from Nepal**

– Madhu Chetri, Purna Bahadur Ale, Tulasi Prasad Dahal & Karan Bahadur Shah, Pp. 21891–21894

**First record of *Chlorophorus jucundus* (Perroud, 1855) (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae: Cerambycinae) from Maharashtra, India**

– Yogesh K. Mane & Sunil M. Gaikwad, Pp. 21895–21897

**First record of the swallowtail moth *Epiplema adamantina* Inoue, 1998 (Lepidoptera: Uraniidae: Epipleminae) from western Himalaya, India**

– Lekhendra & Arun Pratap Singh, Pp. 21898–21899

**Visceral tetrathyridiosis *Mesocestoides* sp. (Cestoda: Cyclophyllidae) in a wild Barn Owl *Tyto alba* - a first report and new host record**

– P.G. Vimalraj & A. Latchumikanthan, Pp. 21900–21902

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