PARASITES OF SPECTACLED CAIMAN IN PUERTO RICO

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A recent study of the incidence of parasites in freshwater sport fishes in Puerto Rico has revealed the presence of a larval tongue worm (Pentastomida, Sebekidae) occurring on Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) and the Peacock Bass (*Cichla ocellaris*). This parasitic worm, of unknown species, is of a family known only from members of the Crocodylia as the primary host and is commonly known as the Caiman Tongueworm. Pentastomids are a distinct phylum of wormlike parasites thought to have originated on the dinosaurs, and persisting as adults today primarily in reptiles. The larval forms occur in fish, amphibians, reptiles and a few mammals. The presence of these parasites in fish in Puerto Rico is strongly associated with water bodies where introduced populations of feral Spectacled Caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*) occur. The history of introduction of Spectacled Caimans to Puerto Rico is unclear, but they are currently found in Tortuguero Lagoon, Lake Toa Vaca, and Lake Guajataca and possibly other lakes, rivers and lagoons on the island. Populations appear fairly sparse at all these locations.