

Reassessing food web concept with records of nematomorph parasites in the Himalaya

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Nematomorphs are one of the least studied groups of organisms with scarce information available on their ecology and distribution. Here, we provide the record of *Paragordius*, a nematomorph genus of the Indian Himalayan region. Based on the present observations and past evidence, we elucidate the manipulative strategies adapted by these parasites with the orthopteran hosts of headwater ecosystems. Their role in enhancing the land-river continuum by providing cross-ecosystem food subsidies through the affected orthopterans makes them potential nutrient vectors. Thus, we provide our perspective on interfaces between the newly recorded parasites and orthopteran hosts as 'keystone interactions' of headwater ecosystems. Studies like these provide an opportunity to rethink the typical food web concept, emphasising the essential incorporation of parasites as integral components in food web dynamics.

Keywords: Freshwater ecosystems, host-parasite, keystone interactions, land-river continuum, macroinvertebrates