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# BALLYHOO ISOPOD

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Your answer to question #4138 [November-December 1989, Page 376] about the cymothoid isopod in the mouth of a Ballyhoo was good, but a bit too general. We described this isopod as a new species in 1985 (*Crustaceana* 48: 147-152). It's scientific name is *Glossobius hemiramphi* Williams and Williams, and it's common name might as well be the "Ballyhoo Isopod".

The female of this species occurs in the mouth of the Ballyhoo and in the Bermuda Halfbeak, but never in the closely related Balao. The known geographic range of this parasite extends from the Atlantic coast of the United States of America off Georgia through the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, Bermuda, and the western coast of Africa. It may also exist with the Ballyhoo in other areas (such as Brazil and Cape Verde Islands) where this fish occurs.

Most cymothoid isopod parasites that occur in the mouth or gills of fishes are white or pale in color, while those that occur externally on fishes are darker. This isopod is unusual in having a dark head and a light body. Thus the parts that are exposed when the fish opens its mouth are dark, probably to prevent a bright white head of the isopod from scaring prey or attracting predators.

Unlike most parasites, buried in the guts of their hosts, this isopod has a bird's-eye view of the host's actions. A rather high percentage of individuals in a school of these important bait fishes can be infected with this parasite.

Cymothoid young develop in a large pouch formed on the belly of the female isopod until they are released as juveniles. The large plates that make up this pouch are formed in a single molt in this species. A closely related isopod occurs in the mouths of flyingfishes.