

PARENTAL CARE OF A GLOSSIPHONIID LEECH, *HELOBDELLA*
NOCIVA HARDING

The reproductive processes of glossiphoniid leeches show interesting specializations including a well developed pattern of brood care (Mann, 1962). The present communication deals with the parental care of *Helobdella nociva*, kept in the laboratory.

During April 1978 observations were made from 18 leeches which showed that the eggs or the developing embryos were initially attached to the ventral surface of the body at about two-third distance from the oral end with a thin transparent membraneous sac-like covering, the cocoon, over them (Pl. VI A.). An average of 36 (33-42) eggs were counted inside a cocoon. The young leeches with well developed anterior and posterior suckers probably break free the transparent thin-walled cocoon within 4-8 days but continue to cling their mother's fold for another 1-2 days. Holding by their posterior suckers in heavy clusters (Pl. VI B) the young leeches enjoy swimming with the mother who often directs the side of her body downwards so as to form a shallow groove in order to afford additional protection to her brood. The young leeches were

measured 2.2 mm. in length at which stage they led a life independent of the mother.

From a persual of literature (Harding and Moore, 1927; Mann, 1962) it has been revealed that there is no report on the breeding habits of this species. However, Mookherjee (1946) had described and illustrated the parental care of the leech *Glossiphonia reticulata* from this sub continent. He did not find any thin membraneous egg-cases typical for the glossiphoniid leeches although he mentioned that a groove of varying size formed for the lodging of the embryos. But the number of young per brood noted by him was 37, a figure parallels with the brood size of the present species.

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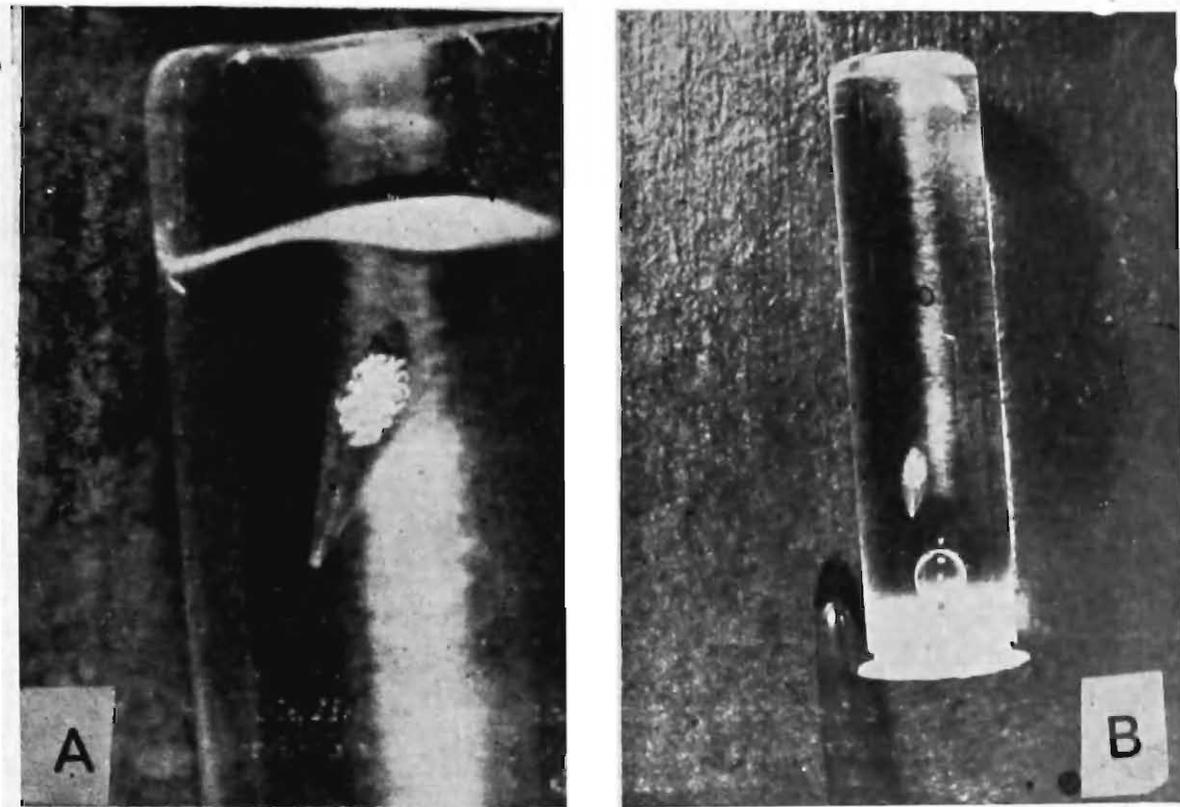
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PLATE VI



A. A gravid leech, *Helobdella nociva* with cocoon at the ventral surface of the body
B. The mother leech with their youngs attached to the ventral surface in heavy clusters.