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The Biology of Cephalopods

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Edited by

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CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS	v
ORGANIZERS AND CHAIRMEN OF SESSIONS	vii

Introduction

JOHN MESSENGER and MARION NIXON

Text	1
References	9

Evolution of the Dibranchiate Cephalopoda

D. T. DONOVAN

Synopsis	15
Introduction	15
Localities for fossil coleoids	16
Extinct coleoid groups	17
Aulacocerida	18
Belemnitida	18
Phragmoteuthida	19
Groenlandibelidae	23
Forms with ten similar hooked arms	26
Fossil cuttlefish and squids	31
Cuttlefish	31
Loligosepiina	34
Teudopseidae and Palaeololiginidae	37
Plesioteuthididae	37
Kelaenidae	40
Origin of living groups	41
Sepiida	41
Vampyromorpha	42
Octopoda	43
Squids	43
<i>Spirula</i>	45
Conclusion	45
Acknowledgements	46
References	46

Present Status and New Trends in Cephalopod Systematics

G. L. VOSS

Synopsis	49
Text	49
Acknowledgements	58
References	59

Comparative Captures of Pelagic Cephalopods by Midwater Trawls

C. F. E. ROPER

Synopsis	61
Introduction	61
Gear and methods	63
The 3 m Isaacs-Kidd midwater trawl	63
The rectangular midwater trawl 8	64
The Engel midwater trawl	65
Sampling procedure	66
Results	67
Isaacs-Kidd versus rectangular midwater trawl	67
Isaacs-Kidd versus Engel trawl	77
Discussion	81
Acknowledgements	86
References	86

Beaks, Nets and Numbers

M. R. CLARKE

Synopsis	89
Introduction	89
Materials and methods	90
Importance by numbers	95
Bay of Biscay region	95
In the eastern North Atlantic 53°–55°N	97
In the eastern North Atlantic 37°–40°N, 20°–25°W	97
The Madeira region and 30°N 20°W	98
Canary Islands, east of Fuerteventura, 28°N 14°W	99
Eastern North Atlantic	100

CONTENTS

xi

South Atlantic	103
Indian Ocean	104
Western Pacific	105
North-eastern Pacific	106
South-eastern Pacific	107
The Antarctic	108
Numerical importance of families in whale's stomachs	109
Size of cephalopods sampled	110
Length	110
Weight	111
Weight eaten by whales and nutrient dispersal	113
Discussion	116
Acknowledgements	120
References	120
Appendix A	123
Appendix B	125
Abbreviations used in figures	126

Luminescence in Cephalopods and Fish

PETER J. HERRING

Synopsis	127
Introduction	127
Taxonomic distribution of luminescence	128
Bacterial luminescence	128
Intrinsic luminescence	132
Anatomical distribution of light organs	133
Structure of cephalopod light organs	141
Mode of operation	144
Chemistry of luminescence	148
Vertical distribution	152
Function of luminescence	153
Acknowledgements	156
References	156

Ventral Bioluminescent Countershading in Midwater Cephalopods

R. E. YOUNG

Synopsis	161
Introduction	161
Materials and methods	164

Results and discussions	165
<i>Pterygioteuthis microlampas</i>	165
<i>Heteroteuthis hawaiiensis</i>	170
<i>Enoplateuthis</i> sp.	176
<i>Histioteuthis dofleini</i>	178
<i>Thelidioteuthis alessandrini</i>	181
<i>Sandalops melancholicus</i>	182
Conclusions	185
Acknowledgements	189
References	189

Skin Patterning in *Octopus* and Other Genera

A. PACKARD and F. G. HOCHBERG

Synopsis	191
Introduction	191
The make-up of the skin	193
Elements	193
Units: the static morphological array (Table II)	200
Components	201
Patterns—completing the picture	213
What do patterns tell us about the nervous system behind them?	219
Displays and concealing patterns	223
Displays	223
Cryptic patterns	224
Evolutionary considerations	225
Homology	225
The role of the skin in evolution	227
Acknowledgements	228
References	228

The Squid and its Giant Nerve Fibre

J. B. GILPIN-BROWN

Synopsis	233
Commentary	233
Acknowledgements	240
References	240

The Squid Giant Axon: A Model for Studies of Neuronal Calcium Metabolism

P. F. BAKER

Synopsis	243
Introduction	243
The calcium gradient	244
Maintenance of the calcium gradient	247
Voltage-sensitive entry of calcium	254
Acknowledgement	259
References	259

The Giant Nerve Fibre System of Cephalopods. Recent Structural Findings

R. MARTIN

Synopsis	261
Introduction	261
Synaptic connexions along the chain of the giant neurons	262
The chiasm of the first-order giant fibres	264
The localization of the cell bodies of the third-order axons	265
The dimensions of the giant synapse of <i>Loligo</i>	266
The "giant synapse" of sepiids and oegopsids	269
The accessory system	270
Embryology of the giant fibre system	272
Open problems	272
Acknowledgement	273
References	273

Pupillary Response of Cephalopods

W. R. A. MUNTZ

Synopsis	277
Introduction	277
The response of the pupil to light	278
Pupil shape and the retinal image	280
References	285

Extra-ocular Photoreceptors in Cephalopods

A. MAURO

Synopsis	287
Historical introduction	287
Extra-ocular photoreceptors in octopods	290
Review of the micro-anatomy	290
Spectrophotometric data	295
Electrophysiological evidence of photoreceptors	295
Extra-ocular photoreceptors in squid	297
Review of the micro-anatomy	297
Spectrophotometric data	301
Spectral sensitivity	302
Electrophysiological evidence	302
Discussion	305
Acknowledgements	306
References	306

Structure and Function of the Angular Acceleration Receptor Systems in the Statocysts of Cephalopods

B. U. BUDELMANN

Synopsis	309
Introduction	309
Morphology of the angular acceleration receptor systems	310
Structure of the crista	310
Structure of the cupula	317
Physiology of the angular acceleration receptor systems	319
General	319
Electrophysiological experiments	320
Behavioural experiments	321
Gravity sensitivity	322
Acknowledgements	322
References	322

Comparative Biochemistry of the Central Nervous System

J. J. BARLOW

Synopsis	325
Introduction	325

Distribution of cholinergic compounds in cephalopod brain	326
Quantitative analyses in different cephalopods	326
Histochemistry of cholinesterase in octopods	327
Histochemistry of cholinesterase in decapods	330
Some evidence for a specific cholinergic pathway	333
Distribution of aminergic compounds in cephalopod brain	335
Quantitative analyses in different cephalopods	335
Histochemical localization of monoamines	340
Some evidence for specific adrenergic pathways	341
Discussion	342
Acknowledgements	343
References	343

Prey-capture and Learning in the Cuttlefish, *Sepia*

J. B. MESSENGER

Synopsis	347
Introduction	347
The attack with the tentacles	349
The three phases of the attack	349
The accuracy of the attack	353
Evidence for binocular depth perception	355
Learning not to attack	358
A simple experiment	358
The effect of reinforcement on the rate of learning	359
Sequential learning and efferent copy	363
Are there separate short- and long-term memory stores?	367
Learning and the vertical lobe system	370
Acknowledgements	375
References	375

Brain, Behaviour and Evolution of Cephalopods

J. Z. YOUNG

Synopsis	377
Introduction	377
Characters of octopods and decapods	378
Vampyroteuthidae	379
<i>Vampyroteuthis infernalis</i>	379
Octopods	388
Benthopelagic octopods	388
Bathypelagic octopods	397
Various benthic octopods	402
Epipelagic octopods	404

The decapods are a homogeneous group	405
Oceanic sepioid	406
Circalittoral sepioids	410
Benthic circalittoral sepioids	412
Circalittoral epipelagic squids	413
Oceanic epipelagic squids	414
Mesopelagic squids	415
Bathypelagic squids	418
Discussion	426
Adaptations to habitat	426
Phylogenetic considerations	429
References	430
Abbreviations used in figures	433
Acknowledgements	434

Multiphasic Retention Performance Curves: Fear or Memory?

G. D. SANDERS

Synopsis	435
Introduction	435
Multiphasic retention performance in cephalopods	435
Fear and memory interpretations	438
Experimental procedure	439
Results	440
Discussion and conclusions	443
References	444

Sucker Surfaces and Prey Capture

MARION NIXON and P. N. DILLY

Synopsis	447
Introduction	447
General morphology of suckers	448
Animals and methods	451
Sepioidea	452
<i>Sepia officinalis</i>	452
<i>Spirula spirula</i>	458
Teuthoidea	461
Myopsida, <i>Alloteuthis subulata</i>	461
Oegopsida, <i>Mastigoteuthis</i> sp.	464
Oegopsida, <i>Taonius megalops</i>	469
Vampyromorpha	473
<i>Vampyroteuthis infernalis</i>	473

Octopoda	476
Cirrata, <i>Cirroteuthis</i> sp.	476
Incirrata, <i>Octopus vulgaris</i>	479
Incirrata, <i>Eledone moschata</i>	489
Incirrata, <i>Octopus salutii</i>	491
Incirrata, <i>Scaevargus unicolorrhus</i>	493
Incirrata, <i>Japetella diaphana</i>	495
Incirrata, <i>Argonauta argo</i>	497
Discussion	499
Structural features of the sucker surface	499
The suckers and prey capture	502
Sensory structures	503
Growth of the infundibular surface	505
Phylogenetic considerations	505
Conclusion	506
Acknowledgements	506
References	507

The Evolution of Haemocyanin

ANNA GHIRETTI-MAGALDI, F. GHIRETTI and B. SALVATO

Synopsis	513
Introduction	513
The quaternary structure	514
The smallest functional subunit	517
The polypeptide chain	519
References	522

Optic Glands and the Endocrinology of Reproduction

M. J. WELLS and J. WELLS

Synopsis	525
Introduction	525
Implantation experiments	526
Implants derived from <i>Octopus vulgaris</i>	526
Implants derived from the opposite sex and/or other species and genera	529
<i>In vitro</i> experiments	530
Amino acid uptake and yolk protein synthesis by the ovary	531
The site of yolk synthesis and the nature of the yolk protein	533
Discussion	537
References	538

A Reconsideration of Factors Associated with Sexual Maturation

KATHARINA MANGOLD and D. FROESCH

Synopsis	541
Introduction	541
Results	543
Discussion	553
References	554

Post-hatching Behaviour and Mode of Life in Cephalopods

S. v. BOLETZKY

Synopsis	557
Introduction	557
Some characteristics of young cephalopods	558
Nektonic (oceanic and neritic) cephalopods	558
Benthic sepioids	558
The benthic octopodids	559
Signs of adult habits in planktonic young octopodids	562
Discussion	565
References	566

Appendix I

Studies on Cephalopods by J. Z. Young

Text	569
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Appendix II

Classification of Recent Cephalopods

Text	575
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AUTHOR INDEX	581
SUBJECT INDEX	591

INTRODUCTION

JOHN MESSENGER and MARION NIXON*

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Although this Symposium was originally conceived simply as a tribute to Professor J. Z. Young, it soon became apparent that there had never been, so far as we could ascertain, a full-scale meeting devoted exclusively to cephalopods. In a world burgeoning with symposia, large and small, national and international, on a broad canvas or devoted to the latest, and often ephemeral, problems of a particular research field, this seemed to us a quite extraordinary oversight. For not only are the cephalopods fascinating in their own right, but for the last 40 years they have provided material for fundamental research in neurobiology. We therefore set out to produce a meeting that would both honour Professor Young and reflect current research into different aspects of the life of cephalopods.

The result will inevitably be seen to be a compromise and our title over-ambitious. Although there is as strong a neurobiological bias as would be expected (Professor Young having worked on the nervous system throughout his long and active career) this volume could not provide a comprehensive review of the many experiments on learning in *Octopus* and *Sepia* carried out by him and his colleagues: readers seeking this will consult the useful review by Sanders (1975). And we do not pretend that this volume is a definitive Biology of Cephalopods: it is a record of a conference into which we fitted as many speakers as possible. Naturally we had to make some selection, partly because the Zoological Society's Symposia are traditionally limited to two days and partly because, in these times of financial stringency, it was impossible to invite every worker in the field. As it was, several contributors had to finance themselves, despite the very generous financial help given by the Royal Society, by the Wellcome Trustees, and above all by the Zoological Society of London. To all of these bodies we would like to express our warmest thanks for making the Symposium possible. We would like, too, to thank the Zoological Society of

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