



South America is a megadiverse continent, including at least five of the world's biodiversity 'hotspots', more than 30,000 km of coastline and two of the 10 largest freshwater drainage systems of the world, i.e. the Amazon and Paraná River basins, which is reflected in its species-rich ichthyofauna. Bearing that in mind, one might expect a high diversity of fish cestodes as well, even though there are no comprehensive checklists or other faunistic studies encompassing the whole continent that could provide an overview of the cestode diversity. Tapeworms (Cestoda) are a monophyletic assemblage of flatworms (phylum Platyhelminthes), their second species richest group with more than 5,000 species in 751 recognised genera; all are obligate internal parasites of vertebrates. The cestodes have radiated through marine, freshwater and terrestrial environments and their complex life cycles include one or more intermediate hosts in a wide array of animal phyla. The present paper aims at addressing the following objectives: (1) to provide for the first time an annotated checklist that summarizes records of cestodes in marine and freshwater cartilaginous and bony fishes from South America, including detailed information on their hosts, site of infection, geographical distribution, stage of development and molecular data; (2) to critically assess doubtful reports; and (3) to depict the problems that impede a better understanding of the diversity and host associations of cestodes in South America.

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ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF FISH CESTODES FROM SOUTH AMERICA

BY

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