
A Survey of Lotic Tardigrades from the Pascagoula drainage.

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There are approximately 800 described species of tardigrades. These microscopic metazoans are commonly known as “water bears” because of their lumbering gait. The focus of this research is to identify and describe the association of tardigrades found in the Pascagoula drainage basin. Few studies of tardigrades from around the world are known from river systems and none from streams in Mississippi. Beyond this study, the community of tardigrades associated with this drainage is unknown. Samples were collected from stream substrate in several locations within the Pascagoula drainage basin from March to September 2002. Tardigrades were separated from the substrate, sorted and mounted for identification. Hypsibideae dominated the tardigrade community in all streams surveyed. While seasonality appears to influence the makeup of the communities, the greatest number of specimens was collected in the late spring and the most commonly observed genera was *Hypsibius*. Other commonly observed specimens included *Isohypsibius* and *Ramazottius*. *Dactylobiotus* was observed in many streams in low occurrence but independent of seasonality.