

Summary: Michael Barger, Platyhelminthes (Trematoda, etc.)

Michael Barger of Peru State College has been a long time, consistent researcher of Platyhelminthes which includes trematoda. Barger's work is committed to a continuing study of the parasites of fishes and aquatic herpetiles from the Primitive Big Thicket Area of Texas. He was one of the first researchers for the Thicket of Diversity, established in 2006. His work focused on the aquatic ectotherms and their parasites.

Two week-long collecting trips in 2007 provided the preliminary data necessary to make predictions regarding future sampling; a 3-week collecting trip in 2008 and a 2-week collecting trip in 2009 provided data for the first empirical estimates of species diversity of parasites in the Big Thicket. In 2006-07 Barger received \$1259, with an additional \$1000 and \$1800 in 2008. These grants were primarily managed by Executive Director Linda Brindle.

In 2010, Barger spent 7 months on sabbatical in Texas working on the project, and collected approximately 85 species of parasites from 421 fishes representing 39 species. Many of these have been identified and deposited in the Harold W. Manter Laboratory of Parasitology. Others are new and are being described currently; 2 have been described already (Barger 2010 a ,b) and 1 has been redescribed (Barger, 2011). He was funded \$5390 in 2010.

In 2011, no collections were conducted and Barger proposed "Biodiversity Survey and Inventory of Parasites of Aquatic Ectotherms in the Big Thicket Continued Survey" to continue the strategy implemented in summer of 2010 during collections in the spring and late summer in 2012. It was funded for \$2103.

Barger was able to receive funding from other sources and continued researching and reporting findings.

Much of Barger's data has been shared by Mona Halvorsen with NPS for inclusion in their database. He is one of the ToD's most prolific researchers.

Submitted by Mary C. Johnston, Nov. 12, 2020

In 2026, ToD Chair Mary C. Johnston and Intern, Natalia Doiron, reviewed data and records. On the advice of another parasitology researcher, Dr. H. Randall Yoder (Lamar University), the research group name for Barger's data was changed from Trematoda to Platyhelminthes to include more of his data in a logical grouping. This now includes mainly the classes: trematoda, cestoda, and monogenea. Trematoda was first identified on Taxa Tally 2013 and it included 2 species listed as New to Science and 2 New to Park.

It was noted that Barger continued research on Platyhelminthes beyond his ToD funding and partnered for many years with the National Park Service as evidenced by IRMA records. Data was received while ToD Director Mona Halvorsen was employed. After that, there was a vacuum and the record was incomplete. Doiron closely reviewed Excel sheets through 2017 and

found additional unrecorded species. The update for Taxa Tally 2026 will reflect a new total of 71 species. They have been added to the 2026 list and are verified.

A google scholar search of Michael Barger was conducted to identify related papers that were published after his work with ToD. This research would have had its roots in his earlier studies in the Big Thicket with the Big Thicket Association's ToD project.

Submitted by: Mary C. Johnston and Natalia Doiron, April 2026