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The Ciliate Fauna in the Digestive System of *Rana ridibunda* (Amphibia: Anura) I: *Balantidium*
(Balantidiidae, Trichostomatida)

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Abstract: *Balantidium* spp. living in the digestive system of *Rana ridibunda* in Van were determined. Five species belonging to the genus *Balantidium* were distinguished. Of these, one new species was recognized, described as *Balantidium vanensis* n. sp. This study reports for the first time the presence of *B. helenae*, *B. claperedei* and *B. giganteum* in the digestive system of *R. ridibunda*. These species are also new records for the protozoan fauna of Turkey. There was only *B. duodeni* in the duodenum and *B. elongatum* in the intestinal part next to the duodenum. The species of the genus *Balantidium* in the rectum constituted 50.21% of *B. helenae*, 28.41% of *B. claperedei*, 9.06% of *B. vanensis*, 7.16% *B. elongatum* and 4.98% of *B. giganteum*. The species determined in the study were compared with the available information in the original descriptions and the previous reports and the similarities and differences were discussed. It was determined that the digestive system microfauna of the genus *Balantidium* from *R. ridibunda* in Van is similar to the fauna of Asiatic frogs in terms of diversity.

Key Words: *Rana ridibunda*, Turkey, Rectal ciliates, *Balantidium*, *Balantidium vanensis* n. sp.

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