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**The Development, Ultrastructure and  
Biomechanics of the Swimbladder of the  
New Zealand Snapper, *Pagrus auratus*.**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy.  
February 1990.

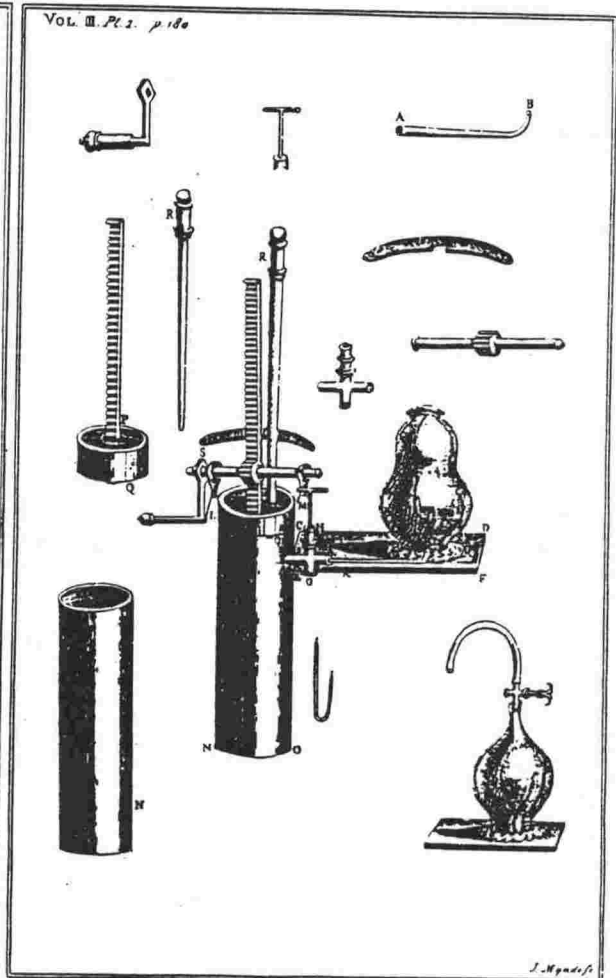
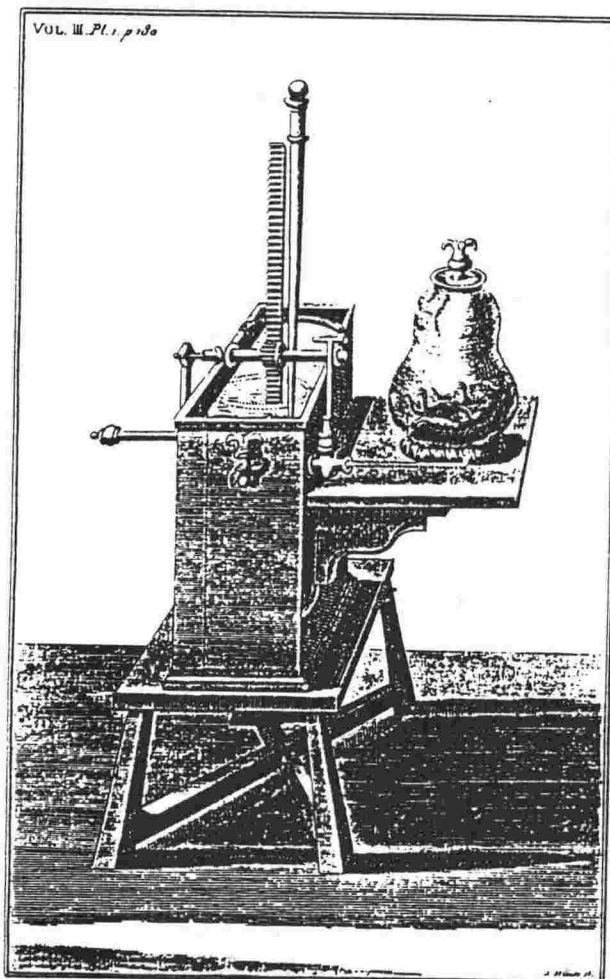
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"When it was propounded to the Honourable Robert Boyle, he, reflecting upon the manner how a Fish comes to rise or sink in water, soon bethought himself of an Experiment probably to determine, Whether a Fish makes those motions by constricting or expanding himself? The Experiment by him suggested was; To take a Bolt-head with a wide neck, and having fill'd it almost full with water, to put into it some live fish of a convenient size, that is, the biggest that can be got in, as a Roch, Perch, or the like; and then to draw out the neck of the Bolt-head as slender as you can; and to fill that also almost with water: Whereupon the fish lying at a certain depth in the water of the Glass, if upon his sinking you perceive the water at the slender top does subside, you may infer, he contracts himself, and if, upon his rising, the water be also raised, you may conclude, he dilates himself."

A.I. (1675)



Robert Boyle's Pneumal Engine

## Abstract

The eggs and larvae of the New Zealand snapper *Pagrus auratus* are pelagic with early buoyancy provided by dilute body fluids. The swimbladder begins to develop on the third day after hatch from a dorsal evagination of the gut tube. Communication with the gut is lost on about the tenth day following pneumatic inflation at around day eight. At this age the gas gland system appears fully functional and capable of secreting gas. By the age of settlement at around 30 days the swimbladder is a fully functional replica of the adult form except for the lack of a resorbent capillary system which does not develop until later in juvenile life.

The swimbladder of the adult is of the euphysoclist form with a dorsally located resorbent oval area and sits high in the pleural cavity. The ventral tunica externa is firmly attached to the connective tissue lining the pleural space. The adult swimbladder displaces 5.6% of the volume of the body and its volume is regulated to provide near neutral buoyancy. The connective tissue integument provides almost no restriction to volume changes brought about by vertical movements of the fish and the swimbladder obeys Boyle's Law for physiological pressure changes. The ability of the connective tissue of the tunica externa to accommodate large tissue strains is due to massive regular crimping of otherwise straight collagen fibrils allowing reversible extensions up to 130%. In all other respects however the tissue structure of the tunica externa is consistent with a tissue providing an active mechanical role. The fibrillar morphology and physicochemical properties of swimbladder collagen is consistent with the vertebrate type I form however there are interesting variations in collagen form distributed throughout the swimbladder. Fibrillar morphology of the highly extensible tunica interna is significantly different to that of the tunica externa and appears to play very little mechanical role. The extensibility of the tunica externa appears to be regulated by physiological stress and related to the past history of tissue strain.

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1	
1.1 Swimbladder Biomechanics	1	
1.2 Swimbladder Development	4	
1.3 Swimbladder Structure	4	
1.4 The New Zealand Snapper	5	
1.5 A Note on Style	5	
Chapter 2: General Methods	7	
2.1 Introduction	7	
2.2 Method of Specimen Capture	8	
2.3 Swimbladder Fixation and Preparation	11	
2.4 Processing of Tissue	12	
Chapter 3: Development of the Swimbladder	17	
3.1 Introduction	17	
3.2 Methods	21	
3.3 Results	22	
3.3.1 Eggs (0.9mm S.L.)	22	
3.3.2 Day 1 (2.0mm S.L.)	22	
3.3.3 Day 2 (2.7mm S.L.)	25	
3.3.4 Day 3 (2.8mm S.L.)	26	
3.3.5 Day 4 (2.9mm S.L.)	31	
3.3.6 Day 5 (3.0mm S.L.)	32	
3.3.7 Day 8 (3.3mm S.L.)	32	
3.3.8 Day 10 (3.5mm S.L.)	35	
3.3.9 Gaseous Inflation and Regression of the Pneumatic Duct	35	
3.3.10 Day 12 (3.8mm S.L.)	36	
3.3.11 Day 16 (5.0mm S.L.)	43	
3.3.12 Day 30 (9.5mm S.L.)	43	
3.4 Discussion	49	
3.4.1 Swimbladder Development	49	
3.4.2 Swimbladder Hypertrophy	52	
3.4.3 Swimbladder Stress Syndrome	57	
3.4.4 The Influence of Buoyancy on the Distribution of Eggs and Larvae	58	
Chapter 4: Morphology and Ultrastructure of the Swimbladder	63	
4.1 Introduction	63	
4.2 Methods	64	
4.2.1 Collagen Fibril Distributions	65	
4.3 Results	66	
4.3.1 General Morphology	66	
4.3.2 Luminal Epithelium	70	
4.3.3 Gas Gland and Rete Mirabile	76	
4.3.4 Resorbent Epithelium	85	
4.3.5 Submucosa	85	
4.3.6 Tunica Externa	89	
4.4 Discussion	98	
4.4.1 General Structure	98	
4.4.2 Luminal Epithelium	105	
4.4.3 Gas Gland Epithelium and Rete Mirabile	106	
4.4.4 Resorbent Epithelium	107	
4.4.5 Lamellar Structures of The Swimbladder Epithelium and Submucosa	108	
4.4.6 Gas Diffusion Barrier	110	
4.4.7 Fine Structure of the Fibrous Tunic	117	



Chapter 5: Snapper Density, Swimbladder Volume and Swimbladder Stress	125
5.1 Introduction	125
5.2 Methods	129
5.2.1 Swimbladder Volume	129
5.3 Results	131
5.4 Discussion	134
Chapter 6: Swimbladder Biomechanics	143
6.1 Introduction	143
6.2 Methods	146
6.2.1 Hyperbaric Plethysmography	146
6.2.2 Swimbladder Cystometry	148
6.2.3 Micro-tensile Stress Testing of Isolated Tissue Strips	150
6.2.4 Tomography	150
6.3 Results	151
6.3.1 Plethysmography	151
6.3.2 Cystometry	152
6.3.3 Uniaxial Tissue Strain	154
6.3.4 Tomography	157
6.4 Discussion	158
6.4.1 Plethysmography	158
6.4.2 Tomography - the Geometry of the Swimbladder	161
6.4.3 A Mathematical Model for Expansions of the Swimbladder	162
6.4.4 The Mechanical Behaviour of the Swimbladder Wall - Uniaxial Tissue Extensions	168
6.4.5 The Viscoelasticity of the Swimbladder Wall	174
6.4.6 The Sensory Implications of Swimbladder Morphology and the Viscoelastic Behaviour of the Swimbladder Wall Hearing	176
Pressure Reception	178
Chapter 7: Biochemistry of the Swimbladder - Quantification of Crystallised Purines and Comparative Analysis of Collagen	183
7.1 Introduction	183
7.1.1 Guanine	183
7.1.2 Collagen	184
7.2 Methods	187
7.2.1 Analysis of Crystallised Purines	187
7.2.2 Isolation and Purification of Collagen	188
7.2.3 Electrophoresis	188
7.2.4 Viscosimetry	189
7.2.5 Physiological Shrinkage Temperatures	189
7.2.6 Analysis of Fibrillar Collagen Banding Pattern	190
7.3 Results	191
7.3.1 Swimbladder Purines	191
7.3.2 Collagen - Banding Pattern	195
7.3.3 Collagen - Physicochemical Characterisation	195
7.3.4 Viscosimetry	196
7.4 Discussion	200
7.4.1 Guanine	200
7.4.2 Collagen - Molecular Stability	201
7.4.3 Swimbladder Collagen Types	207
Chapter 8: General Discussion and Practical Implications	211
References	217