Factors determining parasite abundance in European perch, *Perca fluviatilis*, European whitefish, *Coregonus lavaretus*, and Arctic charr, *Salvelinus alpinus*, in an oligotrophic lake, southern Norway.

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Temporal and spatial variations in macroparasite status were investigated in European perch, *Perca fluviatilis*, European whitefish, *Coregonus lavaretus*, and Arctic charr, *Salvelinus alpinus* in Lake Norsjø (Southern Norway), based on gillnet fishing in three locations in the spring, summer, and fall 2018. In addition, length, weight, age, sex, δ¹³C, and δ¹⁵N were determined. Parasite abundance was modelled using negative binomial generalized linear models in relation to fish metrics, season, and sampling location. The most prevalent parasite species were determined by the diet and habitat of the host. European perch was mainly infected by acanthocephalans, European whitefish mainly infected by acanthocephalans and cestodes, and Arctic charr mainly infected by cestodes. The most prevalent parasites in European perch are transmitted by benthic animals. Parasites in European whitefish are transmitted by both benthic animals and copepods, while the most prevalent parasites in Arctic charr are copepod transmitted. This corresponds well with the δ¹³C signatures in the three species, indicating that European perch primarily fed in the littoral zone (δ¹³C: -24.9 ± 2.5 ‰), Arctic charr in the pelagic and profundal zone (δ¹³C: -29.4 ± 1.1 ‰), while European whitefish both fed in the littoral and pelagic zone (δ¹³C: -28.3 ± 2.3 ‰) of Lake Norsjø. Individual abundances of parasites depended on host age, length, sex, δ¹⁵N, and season. Positive correlations between parasite abundance and host age, length, or trophic level measured as δ¹⁵N were most common, and occurred in all three host species. Many parasites accumulate with age, and larger hosts provide more diverse habitats for parasites.

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INTRODUCTION

Species composition of parasite communities and parasite abundance in freshwater fish are determined by various biotic and abiotic factors. Abundance, which is the number of parasites in an individual host, is subject to higher fluctuations due to stochastic factors than species composition (Timi et al. 2010; Timi & Lanfranchi 2013; Locke et al. 2013). One of the most important determinants of parasite community structure and abundance is host ecology (Kennedy 1978; Bush et al. 1990; Poulin 1995; Locke et al. 2014), and parasite communities are highly dependent on habitat and diet of the host (Knudsen et al. 2008). Parasite abundance can be linked to information on niche use, for instance by analysis of stable carbon isotope signatures (δ¹³C), stomach samples or head shape (Knudsen et al. 2014). Parasite abundance is also influenced by the age of the host (Khan 2012), as longevity provides a more stable habitat for parasites and allows for accumulation of parasites over time (Bell & Burt 1991). Increasing host body size also increases parasite abundance (e. g. Poulin 2000, 2004; Valtonen et al. 2010; Timi & Lanfranchi 2013; Anegg et al. 2014). Larger hosts provide a greater diversity of niches and more space for parasites (Poulin 1995; Poulin & Leung 2011), as well as they consume more food, increasing the chance of contracting a parasite infection (Poulin 1997). Larger fish also feed on larger prey, with higher diversity of potential parasites (Timi et al. 2011). However, not all studies confirm higher parasite abundance for larger hosts (Balling & Pfeiffer 1997; Poulin 2007; Luque & Poulin 2008). Another factor influencing parasite community structure and abundance is the trophic position of the host (Luque & Poulin 2008; Timi et al. 2011; Alarcos & Timi 2012), with higher diversities of parasites observed at higher trophic levels (Chen et al. 2008; Knudsen et al. 2008).
Especially piscivorous fish have higher abundances of parasites (Valtonen et al. 2010), as parasites accumulate in predators through the food chain (Valtonen & Julkunen 1995), and some parasites are able to reestablish in predatory fish (Bérubé & Curtis 1984; Sandlund et al. 1992). However, not all studies reveal a correlation between parasite abundances and trophic position (Knudsen et al. 2014). In some studies, parasite abundance is also shown to vary by sex (Balling & Pfeiffer 1997). In addition, some parasite-host systems exhibit seasonal fluctuations in parasite abundance (Andersen 1978; Scott & Smith 1994).

Studies on parasites of freshwater fish in southern Norway have mainly been conducted during the 1950s to 1970s, and focused on the parasites development and lifespan (Lien 1970), single parasite-host interactions (Halvorsen 1970), the occurrence of parasites (Vik 1959, 1963; Borgström & Lien 1973), and the occurrence of parasites combined with seasonal variations in abundance (Halvorsen 1968, 1972; Skorping 1977, 1981; Andersen 1978). However, there is one recent publication investigating parasite community structure and abundance related to trophic niche and habitat in southern Norway (Paterson et al. 2019). In this study, we have explored factors determining the abundance of numerous macroparasites in three species of freshwater fish, Arctic char, Salvelinus alpinus (Linnaeus, 1758), hereafter: char, European perch, Perca fluviatilis Linnaeus, 1758, hereafter: perch and European whitefish, Coregonus lavaretus (Linnaeus, 1758), hereafter: whitefish, in a large, oligotrophic lake in southern Norway.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**Study Site**

Lake Norsjø is a large (55.48 km$^2$) lake in Vestfold and Telemark county, South-Eastern Norway. The lake is 30 km long and has an average width of 3 km and a lake volume of 5.1 km$^3$. Its maximum depth is 171 m, with a mean depth of 87 m. Lake Norsjø is located at 15 m. a. s. l. as part of the Telemark watercourse (Vann-Nett 2019). Three main rivers enter Lake Norsjø, which are all draining mountain areas north west in the county. In south, Lake Norsjø is dammed at Skotfoss, the outlet of the lake, where the River SkienSelva starts. The lake regulation is minor, only < 1 m (Vann-Nett 2019). Lake Norsjø is classified as an oligotrophic Norwegian lake (Lyche Solheim & Skotke 2016). Human activities with moderate impacts on the lake are agriculture, industry, and recreational activities (Vann-Nett 2019). According to Jensen (1954), Lake Norsjø houses charr, brown trout, Salmo trutta Linnaeus, 1758, Northern pike, Esox lucius Linnaeus, 1758, perch, whitefish, Atlantic salmon, Salmo salar Linnaeus, 1758, European smelt, Osmerus eperlanus (Linnaeus, 1758), European eel, Anguilla Anguilla (Linnaeus, 1758), Crucian carp, Carassius carassius (Linnaeus, 1758), river lamprey, Lampetra fluviatilis (Linnaeus, 1758), tench, Tinca tinca (Linnaeus, 1758), and three-spined sticklebacks, Gasterosteus aculeatus (Linnaeus, 1758).

Fish were sampled in three locations north, in the middle, and south of Lake Norsjø (Figure 1). The northern sampling site is located in Årnes Bay close to the inlets of River Boelva and River Sauarelva. Årnes Bay is mostly shallow (< 10 m depth) with a maximum depth about 30 m. The area is surrounded by wetland vegetation. The sampling site in the middle of the lake is located by the inlet of River Eidselva close to the town Ulefoss. This area is deeper with a maximum depth up to 60 m. The southern sampling site is located in Fjærekilen Bay, which is deeper (> 60 m depth). The sampling site is located in Fjærekilen Bay.

**Sampling**

Fish were sampled three times in 2018, late May (spring), late July (summer), and mid-September (fall). Standard bottom-set gill nets (1.5 m × 25 m) with mesh sizes between 13.5 and 45 mm were used. Six series of eight gill nets were created. Two series were deployed at each location for each sampling season (Table 1). The nets were set in the morning, and collected 24 h later. The nets were set from the shore in a 90° angle. Linked nets were 200 m in length, and sampling occurred between depths of 2 m and 40–60 m, covering both the epilimnion and hypolimnion. In the south of Lake Norsjø, maximum sampling depth was approximately 20 m. Totally, 258 perch, 101 whitefish, and 173 char were caught. The catches per season and location are compiled in Table 2. A sub-sample of 75 perch, 75 char, and 50 whitefish was randomly selected for further analysis.

**Fish**

The fish were frozen individually in labelled plastic bags until analyzed. After thawing, the fish were measured to the nearest mm, and weighted to the closest gram. Otoliths were removed for age determination. The otoliths were burned over a propane stove, and divided using a scalpel. Age was determined under a stereo
Table 1. Fish catches per season and location.

| Species               | Location | Season | Catch |
|-----------------------|----------|--------|-------|
| Arctic charr          | North    | Spring | 30    |
| (Salvelinus alpinus)  | North    | Summer | 30    |
| European whitefish    | North    | Spring | 30    |
| (Coregonus lavaretus) | North    | Summer | 23    |
| European perch        | North    | Summer | 30    |
| (Perca fluviatilis)   | North    | Summer | 30    |

microscope at 40x magnification by counting opaque winter zones. Approximately 2 g of skeletal muscle was sampled below the dorsal fin of the fish. Muscle samples were freeze-dried for approximately 24 h using a Heto LyoLab 3000 (Heto-Holten A/S, Allerod, DK) freeze drier, and subsequently ground to fine powder using mortar and pestle. About 2 mg of the freeze-dried powder of each fish was weighted, and placed in a tin capsule before sent to the Norwegian Institute for Energy Technology (IFE) for determination of stable isotope ratios of carbon and nitrogen ($\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{15}N$). At IFE, the samples were combusted in the presence of O$_2$ and Cr$_2$O$_3$ at 1700 °C in a NCS 2500 elemental analyzer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) to determine $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{15}N$ along with the C/N ratio.

Parasites
The fish were visually examined for the presence of metazoan ectoparasites, especially on the gills and fins, in the field just after the fish had been taken out of the gillnets. Sampled ectoparasites were stored in labelled glass vials containing 96% ethanol. Endoparasites were sampled in thawed fish in the laboratory. For endoparasite sampling, fish were opened from gills to anus. All cysts containing a cestode plerocercoid on the intestinal tract and other tissue were registered. A sample of encysted parasites was identified prior to the removal of organs. The intestinal tract was subsequently removed and placed in a petri dish in 9% saline solution. Saline solution was used to prevent parasites from disintegrating, which is common for cestodes in freshwater. The intestinal tract was cut open from oesophagus to anus, and all macroscopic parasites were collected. All parasites were identified according to morphological features under a stereomicroscope at 20–240x magnification. The number of cestodes was based on the number of heads (scolexes). The genera Argulus Müller, 1785, Triaenophorus Rudolphi, 1793, Eubothrium Nybelin, 1922, and Proteocephalus Weiland, 1858 were identified according to Bykhovskaya-Pavlovskaya et al. (1964). Salmincola Wilson, 1915 was identified according to Kabata (1969). Plerocercoid specimen of Dibothriocephalus Lühe, 1899 (formerly Diphyllobothrium Cobbold, 1858, revised genus name according to Waeschenbach et al. (2017)) were identified using Bykhovskaya-Pavlovskaya et al. (1964) and Andersen and Gibson (1989). It has to be noted, that Andersen and Gibson (1989) has some uncertainties related to frozen samples, as morphological features become less clear.

Data analysis
For all numerical variables describing fish metrics, mean, median, standard deviation and range were calculated. Prevalence and mean abundance of each parasite species were calculated according to Bush et al. (1997). Eubothrium salvelini (Schrank, 1790), Proteocephalus sp., Dibothriocephalus dendriticus (Nitzsch, 1824) Lühe, 1899, Dibothriocephalus ditremus (Creplin, 1825) Lühe, 1899, and Triaenophorus nodulosus (Pallas, 1781) were additionally pooled as copepod transmitted parasites, and prevalence and mean abundance was calculated for this group. D. dendriticus, D. ditremus, and T. nodulosus were pooled as cestode plerocercoid larvae of cestodes, and prevalence and mean abundance calculated.

For each parasite group or species with a prevalence above 10%, the abundance was modelled. Due to highly aggregated distributions of parasites, negative binomial generalized linear models were used (Wilson & Grenfell 1997). The models were created using the glmmTMB-package (Brooks et al. 2017) in R (R Developer Core Team 2019). First, separate negative binomial generalized linear models using each of the following variables as explanatory variables were created. The candidate variables were length, weight, age, $\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{15}N$, C/N-ratio, sex, location, and season. The AIC for all of these models was calculated using the AIC-function in R (R Developer Core Team 2019). The model with the lowest AIC was selected for further analysis. Subsequently, it was attempted to add one additional explanatory variable to the selected model. Extended models were created using the selected model, adding each of the remaining explanatory variables to separate models. The extended models were compared to the original model one by one, using maximum likelihood. This step was included to avoid selecting more complicated models with marginally lower AIC over the most
parsimonious model. The AIC was calculated for the original model, and for each extended model that was significantly better than the original model according to maximum likelihood. The model with the lowest AIC was selected. The model selection process for each individual model is elaborated in Appendix 1. The residuals of the selected model were checked using simulated residuals in the DHARMa-package in R (R Developer Core Team 2019). Graphs of the model results were created using the ggplot2-package (Wickham 2016), and the ggeffects-package (Lüdecke 2018). Some of the selected models exhibited curved patterns in the residuals, and were thus not viable. In these cases, quadratic terms for numerical variables were used. The numerical variables length, weight, age, δ¹³C, δ¹⁵N, and the C/N-ratio were included in new models as quadratic terms in the form aX² + bX, where X is the respective numerical variable, and a and b are coefficients, using the poly-function in R (R Developer Core Team 2019). These models were selected, advanced, and checked in the same manner as the models using linear terms. For all tests, a significance level of α = 0.05 was used.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Whitefish exhibited an average length of 279.2 mm, and average weight of 198.7 g, and a median weight of 177.0 g (Table 3). The average age of whitefish was 4.9 yrs. Whitefish had intermediate δ¹³C-signatures (average -28.3 ‰), and the lowest δ¹⁵N-signatures (average 8.0 ‰). The average length of char was 272.5 mm, at an average weight of 231.2 g, and a median weight of 170.0 g. Charr had an average age of 12.0 yrs. Charr exhibited the most negative δ¹³C-signatures (average -29.4 ‰), and the highest δ¹⁵N-signatures (average 11.5 ‰). Perch had an average length of 212.2 mm, and an average weight of 141.3 g, with a median weight of 83 g. On average, perch was 4.2 yrs of age. Perch exhibited the least negative δ¹³C-signatures (average -24.9 ‰), and intermediate δ¹⁵N-signatures (average 9.0 ‰). Age and size distributions and growth curves are presented in Appendix 2.

Parasite species occurrence, prevalence and mean abundance

In Whitefish in Lake Norsjø, Trematoda Rudolphi, 1808, Dibothriocephalus spp., Proteocephalus sp., Acanthocephala Koelreuter, 1771, Argulus coregoni Thorell, 1865, Salmincola sp., and Nematoda (Diesing, 1861) were found. Trematodes, and nematodes were only found in whitefish. The most prevalent parasites in whitefish were acanthocephalans (Prevalence: 36%, mean abundance: 4.4) (Table 4) and Proteocephalus sp. (Prevalence: 24%, mean abundance: 0.7).

In charr, A. coregoni, Salmincola edwardsii (Olsson, 1869), E. salvelini, T. nodulosus, D. ditremus, D. dendriticus, Proteocephalus sp., and acanthocephalans were identified. S. edwardsii, and E. salvelini were only found in char. In charr, encysted parasites (plerocercoids) had a prevalence of 93%, and a mean abundance of 20.2. E. salvelini was the most prevalent species (Prevalence: 68%, mean abundance: 2.6), followed by D. ditremus with a prevalence of 43%, and a mean abundance of 1.0.

Perch was infected with T. nodulosus, Eubothrium sp., Dibothriocephalus spp., Proteocephalus sp., and acanthocephalans. No parasite species was exclusively found in perch. Perch was mainly infected by acanthocephalans with a prevalence of 79%, and a mean abundance of 4.7.

Abundance

In whitefish, the abundance of Proteocephalus sp., Acanthocephalans, A. coregoni, Salmincola sp., and copepod transmitted parasites were modelled. The abundance of A. coregoni in whitefish varied by season with significantly higher abundance in the summer (Table 5). Season was also included in the model for Salmincola sp. in whitefish, with no apparent seasonal patterns. The abundance of Proteocephalus sp. in

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of numerical fish properties for fish selected for parasite sampling.

| Species                        | Variable       | Mean   | Median | SD    | Range        |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------|--------|-------|--------------|
| European whitefish (Coregonus lavaretus) | Length (mm)    | 279.2  | 282.5  | 47.4  | 186–440      |
|                                | Weight (g)     | 198.7  | 177.0  | 120.0 | 47–757       |
|                                | Age (yrs)      | 4.9    | 4.5    | 2.1   | 2–9          |
|                                | δ¹³C (%)       | -28.3  | -28.6  | 2.3   | -31.3–21.8   |
|                                | δ¹⁵N (%)       | 8.0    | 8.3    | 2.3   | 3.6–12.3     |
|                                | C/N ratio      | 3.2    | 3.2    | 0.1   | 3.1–3.4      |
| Arctic charr (Salvelinus alpinus) | Length (mm)    | 272.5  | 259.0  | 62.9  | 153–438      |
|                                | Weight (g)     | 231.2  | 170.0  | 188.3 | 28–981       |
|                                | Age (yrs)      | 12.0   | 10.0   | 6.6   | 4–31         |
|                                | δ¹³C (%)       | -29.4  | -29.5  | 1.1   | -321–27.1    |
|                                | δ¹⁵N (%)       | 11.5   | 11.6   | 1.8   | 6.61–14.8    |
|                                | C/N ratio      | 3.4    | 3.4    | 0.2   | 3.1–4.4      |
| European perch (Perca fluviatilis) | Length (mm)    | 212.2  | 197.0  | 55.1  | 112–356      |
|                                | Weight (g)     | 141.3  | 83.0   | 141.3 | 13–633       |
|                                | Age (yrs)      | 4.2    | 4      | 1.7   | 1–10         |
|                                | δ¹³C (%)       | -24.9  | -25.1  | 2.5   | -296–19.3    |
|                                | δ¹⁵N (%)       | 9.0    | 9.2    | 1.5   | 5.6–12.2     |
|                                | C/N ratio      | 3.2    | 3.2    | 0.05  | 3.1–3.4      |
whitefish was affected by sex, with significantly higher abundances in females (Figure 2). The relationships between age and the abundance of *Proteocephalus* sp., *Acanthocephalans* (Figure 3), and copepod-transmitted parasites (Figure 4) in whitefish were all significant and quadratic, with the highest abundances found between the age of 5 and 8 years.

For charr, models were created for the parasites and groups *S. edwardsii*, encysted parasites (plerocercoids), *E. salvelini*, *T. nodulosus*, *D. ditremus*, *D. dendriticus*, plerocercoids, and copepod-transmitted parasites. Age was included in the model of the abundance of *S. edwardsii* in charr, but no significant correlation or trend was found. The abundance of encysted parasites (plerocercoids) was significantly positively correlated to age in charr (Figure 5). This was also the case for the abundance of *E. salvelini* in charr. It was also a tendency towards higher abundances in the spring, although not significant (Figure 6). The abundance of *T. nodulosus* in charr tends to increase by age, but not significantly. *D. ditremus* in charr depended on sex, with significantly higher abundances in male fish. The abundance of *D. dendriticus* in charr varied by season, with significantly fewer individuals found in the fall. The abundance of plerocercoids in charr increased significantly by length, and had a non-significant tendency to decrease by age (Figure 7). In charr, the abundance of copepod-transmitted parasites increased significantly by length, with a non-significant tendency to decrease by age (Figure 8).

Acanthocephalans, and copepod-transmitted parasites were modelled in perch. In perch, the abundance of acanthocephalans varied by season, with significantly fewer individuals found in the fall. In addition, there was a positive trend of acanthocephalans by δ¹⁵N, which was not significant. The abundance of copepod-transmitted parasites in perch depended on age following a quadratic equation, with the highest abundances at age > 6 (Figure 9).

### Table 4. The parasites prevalence and mean abundance in their hosts.

| Host species                     | Parasite species/group | Prevalence (%) | Mean abundance |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| **European whitefish** (<i>Coregonus lavaretus</i>) | *Trematoda*               | 2              | 0.1            |
|                                  | *Argulus coregoni*     | 20             | 0.4            |
|                                  | *Salmincola sp.*       | 12             | 0.1            |
|                                  | *Dibothriocephalus* sp. | 4              | 0.0            |
|                                  | *Proteocephalus* sp.   | 24             | 0.7            |
|                                  | *Acanthocephalans*     | 36             | 4.4            |
|                                  | *Nematoda*             | 2              | 0.0            |
|                                  | *Copepod transmitted*  | 28             | 0.7            |
|                                  | *Plerocercoids*        | 4              | 0.0            |
| **Arctic charr** (<i>Salvelinus alpinus</i>) | *Argulus coregoni*     | 1.33           | 0.0            |
|                                  | *Salmincola edwardsii* | 16             | 0.2            |
|                                  | *Cysts (Plerocercoids)* | 93          | 20.2           |
|                                  | *Eubothrium salvelini* | 68             | 2.6            |
|                                  | *Triaenophorus* nodulosus | 36         | 0.6            |
|                                  | *Dibothriocephalus* ditremus | 43     | 1.0            |
|                                  | *Dibothriocephalus* dendriticus | 25  | 0.3            |
|                                  | *Proteocephalus* sp.   | 7              | 0.3            |
|                                  | *Acanthocephalans*     | 3              | 0.0            |
|                                  | *Copepod transmitted*  | 99             | 24.9           |
|                                  | *Plerocercoids*        | 99             | 22.0           |
| **European perch** (<i>Perca fluviatilis</i>) | *Triaenophorus* nodulosus | 4     | 0.0            |
|                                  | *Eubothrium* sp.       | 3              | 0.0            |
|                                  | *Dibothriocephalus* sp. | 4              | 0.1            |
|                                  | *Proteocephalus* sp.   | 5              | 0.1            |
|                                  | *Acanthocephalans*     | 79             | 4.7            |
|                                  | *Copepod transmitted*  | 12             | 0.2            |
|                                  | *Plerocercoids*        | 7              | 0.1            |
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Norway, and to parasitize the respective host species (Sterud 1999 and references therein). Acanthocephalans have been shown to parasitize whitefish in Italy (Dezfuli et al. 2009), the Bothnian Bay (Baltic Sea) (Wayland et al. 2004), and Finland (Karvonen & Valtonen 2004), and nematodes are found in whitefish, for instance in Finland (Pulkkinen et al. 1999; Karvonen & Valtonen 2004). These parasite groups may not have been found in whitefish in Norway before, as there are limited studies on parasites in southern Norway. The most common parasites found in our study depend on the general diet and habitat of the host species. Perch was mainly infected with Acanthocephalans, which are transmitted via ostracods, isopods or amphipods (Woo 2006). In Lake Nørsjø, ostracods and the isopod Asellus aquaticus Linnaeus, 1758 have previously been found in stomach samples of fish (Olk et al. 2016). As these are benthic animals, the high occurrence of acanthocephalans in perch indicates a littoral diet. Perch has a high dependence on the littoral zone (Zamora & Moreno-Amich 2002; Jacobsen et al. 2015), and it prefers the littoral zone during spring and summer according to a telemetric study (Westrelin et al. 2018).

In whitefish, both Acanthocephalans and Proteocephalus sp. were the most common parasites. Proteocephalus sp. are transmitted by Norway, and to parasitize the respective host species (Sterud 1999 and references therein). Acanthocephalans have been shown to parasitize whitefish in Italy (Dezfuli et al. 2009), the Bothnian Bay (Baltic Sea) (Wayland et al. 2004), and Finland (Karvonen & Valtonen 2004), and nematodes are found in whitefish, for instance in Finland (Pulkkinen et al. 1999; Karvonen & Valtonen 2004). These parasite groups may not have been found in whitefish in Norway before, as there are limited studies on parasites in southern Norway. The most common parasites found in our study depend on the general diet and habitat of the host species. Perch was mainly infected with Acanthocephalans, which are transmitted via ostracods, isopods or amphipods (Woo 2006). In Lake Nørsjø, ostracods and the isopod Asellus aquaticus Linnaeus, 1758 have previously been found in stomach samples of fish (Olk et al. 2016). As these are benthic animals, the high occurrence of acanthocephalans in perch indicates a littoral diet. Perch has a high dependence on the littoral zone (Zamora & Moreno-Amich 2002; Jacobsen et al. 2015), and it prefers the littoral zone during spring and summer according to a telemetric study (Westrelin et al. 2018). In whitefish, both Acanthocephalans and Proteocephalus sp. were the most common parasites. Proteocephalus sp. are transmitted by

DISCUSSION

Excepting the acanthocephalans and nematodes in whitefish, all the parasites found in our study have previously been described in Figure 3. The abundance of acanthocephalans in whitefish depending on the age of the host.

Figure 4. The abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in whitefish depending on the age of the host.

Figure 5. The number of encysted plerocercoid larvae of cestodes found in charr in relation to the age of the host.

Figure 6. The number of Eubothrium salvelini found in charr depended on the age of the host and season.

Figure 7. The number of plerocercoid larvae of cestodes in charr depending on the length of the host.

Figure 8. The length of charr was the best predictor for the abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in this species.

Figure 9. The number of copepod transmitted parasites found in perch depended on the age of the host.
Table 1. Model results for macroparasite abundance in the host species Arctic charr (Salvelinus alpinus), European whitefish (Coregonus lavaretus), and European perch (Perca fluviatilis).

| Host                | Parasite                             | Metric | Term       | Estimate   | SE  | z     | p    |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|------------|------------|-----|-------|------|
| European whitefish  | Argulus coregoni                     | Season | Δspring    | -20.234    | 17083.729 | -0.001 | > 0.1|
| (Coregonus lavaretus) |                                     |        | Δsummer    | 2.249      | 1.111   | 2.024 | < 0.05|
| Salmincola sp.      |                                      | Season | Δspring    | 21.07      | 27213.70 | 0.001 | > 0.1|
|                     |                                      |        | Δsummer    | 20.88      | 27213.70 | 0.001 | > 0.1|
| Proteocephalus sp.  |                                      | Sex    | Δmale      | -1.6702    | 0.8506   | -1.964 | < 0.05|
|                      | acanthocephala                       | Age    | βAge       | -8.1682    | 2.9387   | -2.780 | < 0.01|
|                      |                                      | Age    | βAge       | 8.8081     | 3.5408   | 2.488  | < 0.05|
|                      | copepod transmitted                   | Age    | βAge       | -6.3996    | 2.7692   | -2.311 | < 0.05|
| Arctic charr        | Salmincola edwardsii                 | Age    | βAge       | 10.2080    | 3.0930   | 3.300  | < 0.001|
| (Salvelinus alpinus) | encysted plerocercoids               | Age    | βAge       | -7.2901    | 2.6623   | -2.738 | < 0.01|
| Eubothrium salvelini|                                      | Age    | βAge       | 9.9698     | 3.4119   | 2.922  | < 0.01|
| Tribonophorus nodulosus |                                      | Age    | βAge       | 0.02457    | 0.04639  | -0.530 | > 0.1|
| Dibothriocephalus ditremus |                                      | Sex    | Δmale      | 0.04927    | 0.01784  | 2.762  | < 0.01|
| Dibothriocephalus dendriticus |                                      | Season | Δspring    | 0.67294    | 0.35945  | 1.872  | < 0.05|
|                      |                                        |        | Δsummer    | -0.49272   | 0.36182  | -1.362 | > 0.1|
| Triaenophorus nodulosus |                                      | Age    | βAge       | 0.03862    | 0.02962  | 1.304  | > 0.05|
| Dibothriocephalus ditremus |                                      | Age    | βAge       | 0.07495    | 0.02265  | 3.309  | < 0.001|
| Dibothriocephalus dentriticus |                                      | Season | Δspring    | 1.5041     | 0.6667   | 2.256  | < 0.05|
|                      |                                        |        | Δsummer    | 1.3863     | 0.6583   | 2.106  | < 0.05|
| plerocercoids       |                                      | Length | βLength    | 0.007730   | 0.002632 | 2.937  | < 0.01|
|                      |                                        | Age    | βAge       | 0.009221   | 0.024309 | -0.379 | > 0.1|
| copepod transmitted |                                      | Length | βLength    | 7.088 * 10^{-3} | 2.57 * 10^{-3} | 2.758 | < 0.01|
|                      |                                        | Age    | βAge       | -5.728 * 10^{-3} | 2.367 * 10^{-2} | -0.002 | > 0.1|
| European perch      | acanthocephala                       | Season | Δspring    | 1.00851    | 0.37483  | 2.691  | < 0.01|
| (Perca fluviatilis) |                                      |        | Δsummer    | 1.41060    | 0.38679  | 3.647  | < 0.001|
|                      |                                      | Δδ^{15}N | βδ^{15}N   | 0.13224    | 0.09457  | 1.398  | > 0.1|
| copepod transmitted |                                      | Age    | βAge       | -1.8552    | 2.7481   | 0.675  | > 0.1|
|                      |                                      | Age    | βAge       | 10.1687    | 4.0685   | 2.409  | < 0.05|

copepods (Scholz 1999). This indicates that whitefish in Lake Norsjø feed on both pelagic and littoral resources. Charr was mainly infected by copepod transmitted parasites, indicating a pelagic diet. However, sampling was conducted relatively close to the shore, meaning that charr was found below the littoral zone, but not necessarily in the open waters of the pelagic zone. Charr was not found in the pelagic zone of Lake Norsjø during a previous survey (Sandlund et al. 2016). This is also supported by the δ^{13}C-signatures, which were most negative for charr, followed by whitefish. The least negative δ^{13}C-signatures were found in perch. Stable isotope signatures are used to trace energy flow (δ^{13}C) and trophic position (δ^{15}N) in food webs (Peterson & Fry 1987; Cabana & Rasmussen 1996; Post 2002). Heavier isotopes form more stable bonds, and compounds including lighter isotopes are more readily metabolized (Hoefs 2013). As a consequence, δ^{15}N increases on average with 3.4 % per trophic level (Minagawa & Wada 1984; Post 2002), and δ^{13}C can be used to trace the dietary carbon source (Post 2002). The stable isotope signature of carbon (δ^{13}C) averagely varies with habitat. Littoral signatures are generally less negative than pelagic or profundal signatures (Vander Zanden & Rasmussen 1999).

While the occurrence of the most common parasites depends on the dietary niche of the respective species, abundance of the individual parasite species in individual host species was found to depend on sex, age, length, season and trophic levels measured as δ^{15}N in our study. A. coregoni had a higher abundance in the summer in whitefish than in the other seasons. This matches the seasonal occurrence of A. coregoni, as found in several studies on the parasite in aquaculture (Shimura 1983; Hakalahti & Valtonen 2003; Hakalahti et al. 2004b). A. coregoni overwinters as eggs (Shimura 1983), and eggs are not able to develop and hatch at temperatures below 8–10 °C (Mikheev et al. 2001; Hakalahti & Valtonen 2003). When temperatures exceed this critical value, eggs hatch over an extended period (Hakalahti et al. 2004a), from May to July (Shimura 1983), or during early summer (Hakalahti & Valtonen 2003). From July onwards, female A. coregoni detach from their fish hosts to lay eggs (Hakalahti & Valtonen 2003), and egg laying proceeds from mid-July to mid-October (Hakalahti et al. 2004b). Consequently, the highest abundance of A. coregoni on its host whitefish was found in the summer.

The abundance of Proctocephalus sp. in whitefish was highest.
in fish aged 5–8 yrs, and in females. Whitefish between the age of 5 and 8 yrs may have consumed higher numbers of copepods. This is also supported by the higher abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in whitefish aged 5–8 yrs in Lake Norsjø. However, stomach contents have not been analyzed in our study. Higher abundance of *Proteocephalus percae* (Müller, 1780) in females has previously been demonstrated in perch during the spawning season (Ballng & Pfeiffer 1997). However, the higher abundance of *Proteocephalus* sp. in female whitefish in Lake Norsjø did not differ by season, and may have been caused by a different mechanism. Acanthocephalans were also most abundant in whitefish between the age of 5 and 8 yrs, meaning that whitefish between the age of 5 and 8 yrs may also consume more amphipods, isopods and ostracods (Woo 2006). In addition, acanthocephalans can be transmitted by predation on fish (Woo 2006), and since whitefish aged 5–8 yrs are towards the older end of the ages recorded, these whitefish may consume some fish.

Charr was infected by a variety of parasites in our study, most of which copepod transmitted. The abundance of the ectoparasite *S. edwardsii* showed no apparent relationship to the age of the fish, even though age was included in the model. *S. edwardsii* directly infects its host, and its abundance is not affected by the diet (Kabata 1969). Infective copepodids of *S. edwardsii* are usually found towards the bottom of the lake (Poulin et al. 1990), indicating that charr utilizes benthic habitat. Our results are different from previous studies, which indicate a greater risk of infection with *S. edwardsii* with increasing size and age of the host (Black et al. 1983; Amundsen et al. 1997). In addition, host size is suggested to be the most important predictor of ectoparasite loads, as larger fish represent larger targets for the parasite, and more water is circulated over the gills of large fish (Poulin et al. 1991). However, usually *S. edwardsii* is found to infect the gill region (Conley & Curtis 1993; Amundsen et al. 1997), while it was found in other microhabitats in our study. The parasite was found attached to the skin and fins in our study, which has previously been observed in small fish (Black et al. 1983; Conley & Curtis 1993). This may result in the more uniform distribution of the parasite related to age in charr. However, attachment to the fins may also be a local adaption of the parasite (Amundsen et al. 1997), as the fins were the exclusive attachment site in a study on *S. edwardsii* in Enderdale Water in Britain (Fryer 1981). The abundance of encysted parasites (plerocercoids) in charr was positively correlated to the age of the host. Encysted parasites belong to a variety of species, and in general, parasite abundance is shown to increase by age (Khan 2012), as long lived hosts provide a more stable habitat for parasites, and may accumulate parasites over time (Bell & Burt 1991). The abundance of *E. salvelini* was also positively correlated with the age of charr, and it is specifically shown to accumulate with age (Smith 1973; Hanzelová et al. 2002). This parasite is host-specific to charr in Europe, and has a life-cycle using copepods as intermediate host, and charr as definite host (Andersen et al. 1986a; Hernandez & Muzzall 1998; Hanzelová et al. 2002), as they continuously emit eggs (Hanzelová et al. 2002). However, peaks in egg shedding are reported in the spring (Boyce 1974; Kennedy 1978; Hernandez & Muzzall 1998), which may cause seasonal variations in *E. salvelini* in Lake Norsjø. However, peaks in egg shedding in the spring do not cause higher abundances of the parasite observed in fish the same spring, as more time is needed for *E. salvelini* to infect copepods, to be consumed by fish, and to establish in fish to the point that the parasite is visible to the unaided eye.

Plerocercoid larval of cestodes were found to increase in abundance by length in charr in our study. Specifically, plerocercoid larvae of *T. nodulosus*, *D. ditremus*, and *D. dendriticus* were identified. The increase in abundance by size is likely caused by accumulation of plerocercoids over time. *Triacanthophorus* sp. is able to survive in its intermediate fish host for several years, and thus able to accumulate with increasing size or age (Dick & Rosen 1982; Rosen & Dick 1984; Hoffmann et al. 1986b). This is also reflected in the individual trend of increasing abundance of *T. nodulosus* by age in our study. *Dibothriocephalus* spp. also survives in their intermediate fish hosts for several years, and may accumulate (Halvorsen & Andersen 1984; Henriksen et al. 2016). In addition, *Dibothriocephalus* spp. may re-establish in predatory fish (Hammar 2000; Henriksen et al. 2016), and feeding on smaller infected fish may result in higher abundances of *Dibothriocephalus* spp. in larger charr. In Lake Norsjø, three-spined sticklebacks and European smelt are present (Jensen 1954), which are both intermediate hosts for *Dibothriocephalus* spp. (Andersen et al. 1986; Andersen & Valtonen 1992; Anikieva & Ieshko 2017). *D. ditremus* also exhibited a higher abundance in male charr, with no apparent relationship between sex and any other variable that could explain the higher occurrence of *D. ditremus* in males. As the reasons behind this remain obscure, this may be caused by feeding specialization of male charr on the infected copepod species. Charr exhibit individual feeding-specialization, and are persistent in their diet over long periods (Knudsen et al. 2004, 2009). The abundance of *D. dendriticus* exhibited seasonal variations, with fewer specimen found in the fall. This is also unusual, as the parasite lives for several years in fish (Halvorsen & Andersen 1984), and other studies show no significant seasonal variations in its abundance (Henriksen et al. 2019). As the first intermediate host of *D. dendriticus* are copepods (Halvorsen 1966; Marcogliese 1995; Scholz et al. 2009), seasonal trends may be linked to new infections and fluctuations in copepod abundance.

The abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in charr in general was positively correlated to fish length. Increases in parasite abundance with body size are common (Bell & Burt 1991; Poulin 1995, 2000, 2004; Valtonen et al. 2010; Poulin & Leung 2011; Timi et al. 2011; Timi & Lanfranchi 2013; Anegg et al. 2014). Larger hosts provide a greater diversity of niches, more space for parasites (Poulin 1995; Poulin & Leung 2011), and consume more potentially infected food (Poulin 1997).

In perch, acanthocephalans had a non-significant tendency to increase with trophic position measured as δ15N, and exhibited seasonal variations with lower abundance in the fall. Acanthocephalans are transmitted by isopods, amphipods and ostracods (Woo 2006), which is not necessarily consistent with higher trophic levels. However, generally more parasites are found at higher trophic levels (Luque & Poulin 2008; Timi et al. 2011; Afarcos & Timi 2012), and perch in Lake Norsjø may mainly feed on litoral benthic animals. Acanthocephalans are recruited in the spring, and live approximately one season (Woo 2006), which may result in fewer specimen remaining in the fall. The abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in perch was highest in fish older than 6 yrs. This may be a general positive relationship between parasite abundance and age of the host (Khan 2012), due to accumulation and a more stable habitat in long-living hosts (Bell & Burt 1991). In addition, it may be caused by older perch consuming more pelagic prey, such as copepods in Lake Norsjø. However, this
would need to be confirmed using stomach content analysis.

In Lake Norsjø, the host species, perch, whitefish and charr, exhibit different parasite communities, which could be related to their respective dietary niches. Habitat appeared to be important in defining which parasites were most prevalent in their respective hosts. Differences in parasite community by habitat have previously been found in charr (Henricson & Nyman 1976; Frandsen et al. 1989; Dorucu et al. 1995; Knudsen et al. 1997; Siwertsson et al. 2016; Paterson et al. 2019) and whitefish (Knudsen et al. 2003; Karvonen et al. 2013). When modelling individual parasite abundances, increasing abundances by age and size of the fish host were most commonly found in our study.

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Appendix 1. Model selection.

The base model *Argulus coregoni* in whitefish was selected according to the lowest AIC. Candidate models are presented in Table A1-1. The model including season as explanatory variable was considered the model with the best fit.

Table A1-1. Candidate models for the base model for *Argulus coregoni* in Whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 75.05866 |
| Weight               | 75.81601 |
| Age                  | 80.14130 |
| δ¹³C                 | 72.40155 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | 79.48613 |
| Sex                  | 80.79960 |
| Location             | 79.59549 |
| Season               | 65.92807 |
| C/N-ratio            | 79.15692 |

Subsequently, length, weight, δ¹³C, δ¹⁵N, sex, age, location, and the C/N-ratio were added in separate models to the base model containing season. These models, which are nested in the base model were compared to the base mode using maximum likelihood. Comparisons to the base model are presented in Table A1-2.

Table A1-2. Advanced models and the results of the comparison to the base model by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Season     | Length               | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Weight               | > 0.10 |
| Season     | δ¹³C                 | > 0.05 |
| Season     | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Location             | > 0.10 |
| Season     | C/N-ratio            | > 0.05 |

As no more advanced model was significantly better than the base model, the base model only containing season as explanatory variable was chosen as the final model.

The AICs for different base models for the number of *Salmincola* sp. in whitefish is shown in Table A1-3.

Table A1-3. AIC table for base model selection for *Salmincola* sp. in whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 48.44164 |
| Weight               | 48.43219 |
| Age                  | 48.44905 |
| δ¹³C                 | 48.44557 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | 48.30059 |
| Sex                  | 48.10730 |
| Location             | 48.40397 |
| Season               | 47.49582 |
| C/N-ratio            | 48.00397 |

The comparison to more advanced models is shown in Table A1-6. The model including season and length was the only model significantly better than the base model. This model was initially selected. However, the model was not viable according to curved patterns in the residuals.

Table A1-6. Model comparison of more advanced models for *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish to the base model by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Length     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Location             | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Season               | < 0.05 |
| Length     | Weight               | > 0.05 |
| Length     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ¹³C                 | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10 |

Appendix 1. Model selection.

The base model *Argulus coregoni* in whitefish was selected according to the lowest AIC. Candidate models are presented in Table A1-1. The model including season as explanatory variable was considered the model with the best fit.

Table A1-1. Candidate models for the base model for *Argulus coregoni* in Whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 75.05866 |
| Weight               | 75.81601 |
| Age                  | 80.14130 |
| δ¹³C                 | 72.40155 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | 79.48613 |
| Sex                  | 80.79960 |
| Location             | 79.59549 |
| Season               | 65.92807 |
| C/N-ratio            | 79.15692 |

Subsequently, length, weight, δ¹³C, δ¹⁵N, sex, age, location, and the C/N-ratio were added in separate models to the base model containing season. These models, which are nested in the base model were compared to the base mode using maximum likelihood. Comparisons to the base model are presented in Table A1-2.

Table A1-2. Advanced models and the results of the comparison to the base model by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Season     | Length               | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Weight               | > 0.10 |
| Season     | δ¹³C                 | > 0.05 |
| Season     | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Location             | > 0.10 |
| Season     | C/N-ratio            | > 0.05 |

As no more advanced model was significantly better than the base model, the base model only containing season as explanatory variable was chosen as the final model.

The AICs for different base models for the number of *Salmincola* sp. in whitefish is shown in Table A1-3.

Table A1-3. AIC table for the model selection of the base model for *Salmincola* sp. in whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 48.44164 |
| Weight               | 48.43219 |
| Age                  | 48.44905 |
| δ¹³C                 | 48.44557 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | 48.30059 |
| Sex                  | 48.10730 |
| Location             | 48.40397 |
| Season               | 47.49582 |
| C/N-ratio            | 48.00397 |

The comparison to more advanced models is shown in Table A1-6. The model including season and length was the only model significantly better than the base model. This model was initially selected. However, the model was not viable according to curved patterns in the residuals.

Table A1-6. Model comparison of more advanced models for *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish to the base model by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Length     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Location             | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Season               | < 0.05 |
| Length     | Weight               | > 0.05 |
| Length     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ¹³C                 | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10 |

The base model selection for the number of *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish is presented in Table A1-5. Four of the candidate models could not be calculated. Length was included in the base model.

Table A1-5. AIC table for base model selection for *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 94.37454 |
| Weight               | 97.29397 |
| Age                  | 96.21320 |
| δ¹³C                 | NA     |
| δ¹⁵N                 | NA     |
| Sex                  | 97.30856 |
| Location             | NA     |
| Season               | NA     |
| C/N-ratio            | 101.38057 |

The model including season as explanatory variable performed best. However, its performance was similar to all the other models. The model including season was advanced, and results of maximum likelihood tests of the more advanced models are presented in Table A1-4. None of the more advanced models was significantly better than the base model, and the base model was thus selected.

Table A1-4. Comparison of more advanced models to the base model of *Salmincola* sp. in whitefish by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Season     | Length               | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Weight               | > 0.10 |
| Season     | δ¹³C                 | > 0.10 |
| Season     | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Location             | > 0.10 |
| Season     | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10 |

The base model selection for the number of *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish is presented in Table A1-5. Four of the candidate models could not be calculated. Length was included in the base model.

Table A1-5. AIC table for base model selection for *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 94.37454 |
| Weight               | 97.29397 |
| Age                  | 96.21320 |
| δ¹³C                 | NA     |
| δ¹⁵N                 | NA     |
| Sex                  | 97.30856 |
| Location             | NA     |
| Season               | NA     |
| C/N-ratio            | 101.38057 |

The comparison to more advanced models is shown in Table A1-6. The model including length and season was the only model significantly better than the base model. This model was initially selected. However, the model was not viable according to curved patterns in the residuals.

Table A1-6. Model comparison of more advanced models for *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish to the base model by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Length     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Location             | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Season               | < 0.05 |
| Length     | Weight               | > 0.05 |
| Length     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ¹³C                 | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10 |
Adding quadratic terms to the model for the number of *Proteocephalus* sp. in whitefish was attempted. New base models were created containing quadratic terms of the numerical variables. An AIC table for their comparison is presented in Table A1-7.

| Explanatory variable     | AIC       |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Length (quadratic)       | 93.09508  |
| Weight (quadratic)       | 96.15357  |
| Age (quadratic)          | 91.78830  |
| δ¹³C (quadratic)         | 102.95684 |
| δ¹⁵N (quadratic)         | 103.79494 |
| C/N-ratio (quadratic)    | 97.30856  |
| Sex                      | 102.44419 |
| Location                 | 100.89044 |
| Season                   | 103.33786 |

The base model containing the quadratic term of age was selected, and more advanced models adding the other variables one by one were created. The comparison of the more advanced models to the base model by maximum likelihood is shown in Table A1-8. None of the more advanced models were significantly better than the base model, and the base model containing the quadratic term for age was selected. The residuals for this models did not exhibit curved patterns.

The base model was compared to more advanced models using maximum likelihood (Table A1-10). Both advanced models containing season and the C/N-ratio were significantly better than the base model. The advanced models performing better than the base model were compared by AIC (Table A1-11), and the model containing age and season as explanatory variables was selected. However, as the residuals exhibited curved patterns, the inclusion of quadratic terms in a new base model was attempted.

The model containing a quadratic term of age as explanatory variable performed best according to the AIC (Table A1-12). According to maximum likelihood tests, more advanced models containing Season and the C/N-ratio performed better than the base model (Table A1-13). These models were compared using the AIC (Table A1-14), and the model containing a quadratic term for age and season was performing best. However, the residuals of both more advanced models exhibited curved patterns, and the base model was selected based on the best residual fit.
Appendix 1 continued.

Table A1-12. AIC table for the comparison of quadratic models for the number of acanthocephalans in whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC  |
|---------------------|------|
| Length (quadratic)  | 171.0887 |
| Weight (quadratic)  | 172.1426 |
| Age (quadratic)     | 170.6091 |
| δ13C (quadratic)    | 177.0976 |
| δ15N (quadratic)    | 184.2953 |
| C/N-ratio (quadratic) | 178.6064 |
| Sex                 | 179.3307 |
| Location            | 183.4828 |
| Season              | 177.8922 |

Table A1-13. Tests between the quadratic base model for acanthocephalans in whitefish to more advanced models using maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p   |
|------------|----------------------|-----|
| Age (quadratic) | Length              | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | Weight               | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | δ13C                 | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | δ15N                 | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | C/N-ratio            | < 0.05 |
| Age (quadratic) | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | Location             | < 0.05 |
| Age (quadratic) | Season               | > 0.10 |

Table A1-14. Comparison of more advanced quadratic models for the abundance of acanthocephalans in whitefish using AIC.

| Explanatory variable | AIC  |
|---------------------|------|
| Age (quadratic)     | 170.6091 |
| Age (quadratic)     | 172.1426 |
| Age (quadratic)     | 170.6091 |
| δ13C (quadratic)    | 177.0976 |
| δ15N (quadratic)    | 184.2953 |
| C/N-ratio (quadratic) | 178.6064 |
| Sex                 | 179.3307 |
| Location            | 183.4828 |
| Season              | 177.8922 |

Table A1-15. AIC table for base models of copepod transmitted parasites in whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC  |
|---------------------|------|
| Length              | 101.5716 |
| Weight              | 104.8061 |
| Age                 | 102.7190 |
| δ13C                | 109.1295 |
| δ15N                | 109.5603 |
| C/N-ratio           | 108.9059 |
| Sex                 | 105.1300 |
| Location            | 110.5478 |
| Season              | 108.5875 |

Table A1-16. Comparison of more advanced models to the base model of copepod transmitted parasites in whitefish by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p   |
|------------|----------------------|-----|
| Length     | Weight               | > 0.05 |
| Length     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ13C                 | > 0.10 |
| Length     | δ15N                 | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Length     | Season               | < 0.05 |
| Length     | Location             | > 0.10 |
| Length     | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10 |

The base model for copepod transmitted parasites containing the quadratic term for age was the best model according to the AIC (Table A1-17). None of the more advanced models were significantly better than the base model according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-18). Consequently, the base model was selected.

Table A1-17. AIC table for quadratic base models for copepod transmitted parasites in whitefish.

| Explanatory variable | AIC  |
|---------------------|------|
| Length (quadratic)  | 99.61478 |
| Weight (quadratic)  | 103.14450 |
| Age (quadratic)     | 97.50996 |
| δ13C (quadratic)    | 110.39990 |
| δ15N (quadratic)    | 111.55580 |
| C/N-ratio (quadratic) | 110.86819 |
| Sex                 | 105.12996 |
| Location            | 110.54780 |
| Season              | 108.58752 |

Table A1-18. Comparison of more advanced models to the quadratic base model for copepod transmitted parasites in whitefish using maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p   |
|------------|----------------------|-----|
| Age (quadratic) | Length              | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | Weight               | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | δ13C                 | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | δ15N                 | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Age (quadratic) | Location             | > 0.05 |
| Age (quadratic) | Season               | > 0.10 |

The base model for Salmincola edwadsii in charr using age as explanatory variable had the lowest AIC (Table A1-19). However, it performed similarly to models containing length and δ13C. None of the more advanced models was significantly better than the base model according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-20). Consequently, the base model including age was selected.
Appendix 1 continued.

Table A1-19. AIC table for base models of the number of *Salmincola edwardsii* in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC   |
|----------------------|-------|
| Length               | 78.68604 |
| Weight               | NA    |
| Age                  | 78.30467 |
| δ¹³C                 | 78.87065 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | NA    |
| C/N-ratio            | NA    |
| Sex                  | NA    |
| Season               | 80.8404 |

Table A1-20. Model comparison of more advanced models for *Salmincola edwardsii* in charr to the base model containing age by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p       |
|------------|----------------------|---------|
| Age        | Length               | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Weight               | > 0.10  |
| Age        | δ¹³C                 | NA      |
| Age        | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Sex                  | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Location             | > 0.10  |
| Age        | C/N-ratio            | NA      |

The base model for cysts in charr with the lowest AIC used age as explanatory variable (Table A1-21). More advanced models containing length and weight were both significantly better than the base model according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-22). Comparing the more advanced models to the base model by AIC revealed, that the model containing age and length was the best model (Table A1-23). However, as age and length exhibited colinearity, and age was not significant in this model, the base model was selected.

Table A1-21 base model comparison for the number of cysts in charr using AIC.

| Explanatory variable | AIC   |
|----------------------|-------|
| Length               | 598.4953 |
| Weight               | 598.6042 |
| Age                  | 592.5246 |
| δ¹³C                 | 609.3290 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | 608.9781 |
| C/N-ratio            | 609.4156 |
| Sex                  | 609.7253 |
| Season               | 610.8502 |
| Location             | 609.5858 |

Table A1-22. Comparing more advanced models to the base model for cysts in charr using maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p       |
|------------|----------------------|---------|
| Age        | Length               | < 0.01  |
| Age        | Weight               | < 0.05  |
| Age        | δ¹³C                 | > 0.10  |
| Age        | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.05  |
| Age        | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Sex                  | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Season               | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Location             | > 0.10  |

The selected base model for the number of *Eubothrium salvelini* in charr with age as explanatory variable had the lowest AIC (Table A1-24). Only the more advanced model containing age and season was significantly better according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-25). Consequently, the model containing age and season was selected.

Table A1-23. AIC table comparing base models for *Eubothrium salvelini* in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC   |
|----------------------|-------|
| Age                  | 592.5246 |
| Age + Length         | 587.1827 |
| Age + Weight         | 590.5388 |

Table A1-24. AIC table for base models of the number of *Salmincola edwardsii* in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC     |
|----------------------|---------|
| Length               | 78.68604 |
| Weight               | NA      |
| Age                  | 78.30467 |
| δ¹³C                 | 78.87065 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | NA      |
| C/N-ratio            | NA      |
| Sex                  | NA      |
| Season               | 80.8404 |

Table A1-25. Comparison of more advanced models for *Eubothrium salvelini* in charr to the base model containing age by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p       |
|------------|----------------------|---------|
| Age        | Length               | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Weight               | > 0.10  |
| Age        | δ¹³C                 | > 0.10  |
| Age        | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10  |
| Age        | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Sex                  | > 0.10  |
| Age        | Season               | < 0.05  |
| Age        | Location             | > 0.05  |
Appendix 1 continued.

The base model containing age was the best model for the abundance of *Triaenophorus nodulosus* in charr according to the AIC (Table A1-26). No additional variable seemed to improve the model according to comparisons to the base model by maximum likelihood (Table A1-27). The base model was selected.

Table A1-26. AIC table for base models of *Triaenophorus nodulosus* in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC  |
|----------------------|------|
| Length               | 168.8717 |
| Weight               | 169.0970 |
| Age                  | 164.1332 |
| δ13C                 | 166.9320 |
| δ15N                 | 168.1660 |
| C/N-ratio            | 168.4137 |
| Sex                  | 167.7276 |
| Season               | 167.4710 |
| Location             | 165.5015 |

Table A1-27. Comparison of more advanced models to base model of *Triaenophorus nodulosus* in charr using maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p   |
|------------|----------------------|-----|
| Age        | Length               | > 0.10 |
| Age        | Weight               | > 0.10 |
| Age        | δ13C                 | > 0.10 |
| Age        | δ15N                 | > 0.10 |
| Age        | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10 |
| Age        | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Age        | Season               | > 0.10 |
| Age        | Location             | > 0.10 |

The abundance of *Dibothriocephalus ditremus* in charr was best explained by season according to the AIC (Table A1-30). Extending this model with either season or sex did not improve the model according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-31). None of the other variables produced viable models. The base model using season as explanatory variable was selected.

Table A1-30. Base model comparison for *Dibothriocephalus dendriticus* in charr using AIC.

| Explanatory variable | AIC  |
|----------------------|------|
| Length               | 107.9485 |
| Weight               | 108.1215 |
| Age                  | NA    |
| δ13C                 | 106.5658 |
| δ15N                 | NA    |
| C/N-ratio            | 108.0964 |
| Sex                  | NA    |
| Season               | 102.6733 |
| Location             | 108.0871 |

Table A1-28. AIC table for base models for *Dibothriocephalus ditremus* in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC  |
|----------------------|------|
| Length               | 206.6559 |
| Weight               | 207.7512 |
| Age                  | 206.4372 |
| δ13C                 | 207.9316 |
| δ15N                 | 207.8016 |
| C/N-ratio            | 207.2861 |
| Sex                  | 204.0079 |
| Season               | 208.4528 |
| Location             | 207.0390 |

Table A1-31. Model extension for *Dibothriocephalus dendriticus* in charr by maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Season     | Length               | NA   |
| Season     | Weight               | NA   |
| Season     | δ13C                 | NA   |
| Season     | δ15N                 | NA   |
| Season     | C/N-ratio            | NA   |
| Season     | Age                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Season     | Location             | NA   |

The abundance of plerocercoid larvae of cestodes in charr was best predicted by age in the base model (Table A1-32). More advanced models containing length and weight as additional explanatory variables were significantly better than the base model according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-33). The model containing age and length was the best of these models according to the AIC (Table A1-34), and was consequently selected.
Appendix I continued.

Table A1-32. AIC table for base models for plerocercoid larvae of cestodes in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 607.4484 |
| Weight               | 608.2406 |
| Age                  | 602.2455 |
| \(\delta^{13}C\)     | 619.7730 |
| \(\delta^{15}N\)     | 619.8596 |
| C/N-ratio            | 620.1091 |
| Sex                  | 620.0495 |
| Season               | 621.2955 |
| Location             | 620.2163 |

Table A1-33. Model comparison using maximum likelihood between the base model for plerocercoid larvae of cestodes in charr and more advanced models.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Age        | Length               | < 0.01|
| Age        | Weight               | < 0.05|
| Age        | \(\delta^{13}C\)     | > 0.10|
| Age        | \(\delta^{15}N\)     | > 0.05|
| Age        | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10|
| Age        | Sex                  | > 0.10|
| Age        | Location             | > 0.10|

Table A1-34. AIC table of advanced models for plerocercoid larvae of cestodes in charr and the base model containing age.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Age                  | 602.2455 |
| Age + Length         | 596.2323 |
| Age + Weight         | 600.3266 |

Age was the best single predictor of the abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in charr according to the AIC (Table A1-35). More advanced models additionally including length and weight were significantly better according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-36). Of these three models, the model containing age and length had the lowest AIC (Table A1-37), and was selected.

Table A1-35. AIC table for base models for plerocercoid larvae of cestodes in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 607.4484 |
| Weight               | 608.2406 |
| Age                  | 602.2455 |
| \(\delta^{13}C\)     | 619.7730 |
| \(\delta^{15}N\)     | 619.8596 |
| C/N-ratio            | 620.1091 |
| Sex                  | 620.0495 |
| Season               | 621.2955 |
| Location             | 620.2163 |

Table A1-36. Model comparison for advancing the model for copepod transmitted parasites in charr according to maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Age        | Length               | < 0.01|
| Age        | Weight               | < 0.05|
| Age        | \(\delta^{13}C\)     | > 0.10|
| Age        | \(\delta^{15}N\)     | > 0.10|
| Age        | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10|
| Age        | Sex                  | > 0.10|
| Age        | Location             | > 0.10|

The base model containing season had the lowest AIC for models of the abundance of acanthocephalans in perch (Table A1-38). The model containing both season and \(\delta^{15}N\) was the only model significantly better than the base model (Table A1-39). The more advanced model was selected.

Table A1-37. AIC table for base model and advanced models that were significantly better, modelling the abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in charr.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Age                  | 602.2455 |
| Age + Length         | 596.2323 |
| Age + Weight         | 600.3266 |

Table A1-38. AIC table for base models for the abundance of acanthocephalans in perch.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 393.9637 |
| Weight               | 397.0874 |
| Age                  | 397.0297 |
| \(\delta^{13}C\)     | 397.3429 |
| \(\delta^{15}N\)     | 392.4103 |
| C/N-ratio            | 397.1748 |
| Sex                  | 393.8278 |
| Season               | 384.4378 |
| Location             | 399.0303 |

Table A1-39. Comparison of base model for acanthocephalans in perch to more advanced models using maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p    |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Season     | Length               | > 0.05|
| Season     | Weight               | > 0.10|
| Season     | \(\delta^{13}C\)     | > 0.10|
| Season     | \(\delta^{15}N\)     | < 0.05|
| Season     | Sex                  | > 0.10|
| Season     | Location             | > 0.10|
| Season     | Season               | > 0.10|
| Season     | C/N-ratio            | > 0.10|
Appendix I continued.

Age was the best predictor for copepod transmitted parasites in perch according to AIC (Table A1-40). According to maximum likelihood, the addition of season improved this model (Table A1-41). However, the model containing age and season as explanatory variables exhibited curved patterns in the residuals, and did not fit trends in the data well. The creation of quadratic models was attempted.

Table A1-40. AIC table for base models of copepod transmitted parasites in perch.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length               | 74.14675 |
| Weight               | 71.90901 |
| Age                  | 65.70433 |
| δ¹³C                 | 77.29767 |
| δ¹⁵N                 | 75.53130 |
| C/N-ratio            | 77.26851 |
| Sex                  | 74.03819 |
| Season               | 70.86179 |
| Location             | 70.55145 |

Table A1-41. Model extension for copepod transmitted parasites in perch using maximum likelihood.

| Base Model | Explanatory variable | p     |
|------------|----------------------|-------|
| Age        | Length               | > 0.10 |
| Age        | Weight               | > 0.10 |
| Age        | δ¹³C                 | > 0.10 |
| Age        | δ¹⁵N                 | > 0.10 |
| Age        | Sex                  | > 0.10 |
| Age        | Location             | NA    |
| Age        | Season               | < 0.05 |
| Age        | C/N-ratio            | NA    |

The model including age as quadratic term for the abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in perch was the best model according to AIC (Table A1-42). No additional term improved this model according to maximum likelihood (Table A1-43), and the quadratic base model was selected.

Table A1-42. AIC table for quadratic base models for the abundance of copepod transmitted parasites in perch.

| Explanatory variable | AIC    |
|----------------------|--------|
| Length (quadratic)   | 76.03101 |
| Weight (quadratic)   | 72.77307 |
| Age (quadratic)      | 67.18371 |
| δ¹³C (quadratic)     | 75.17302 |
| δ¹⁵N (quadratic)     | 77.24605 |
| C/N-ratio (quadratic)| 79.02974 |
| Sex                  | 74.03819 |
| Season               | 70.86179 |
| Location             | 70.55145 |
Appendix 2. Age and length distribution.

Figure A2-1. Length distribution of whitefish caught.

Figure A2-2. Length distribution of whitefish selected for parasite sampling.

Figure A2-3. Age distribution of whitefish selected for parasite sampling.

Figure A2-4. Length of whitefish selected for parasite sampling related to age.

Figure A2-5. Length distribution of charr caught.

Figure A2-6. Length distribution of charr selected for parasite sampling.

Figure A2-7. Age distribution of charr selected for parasite sampling.
Figure A2-8. Length of Arctic charr selected for parasite analysis in relation to age.

Figure A2-9. Length distribution of perch caught.

Figure A2-10. Length distribution of perch selected for parasite sampling.

Figure A2-11. Age distribution of perch selected for parasite sampling.

Figure A2-12. Length of Perch selected for further analysis in relation to age.