

## Full Length Research Paper

# Levels of copper in liver, muscle and gill tissues in *Capoeta trutta* (Heckel, 1843) from Munzur River, Turkey

D. Danabas<sup>1\*</sup>, F. Benzer<sup>2</sup>, O. Kaplan<sup>3</sup> and N. C. Yildirim<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>Tunceli University, Fisheries Faculty, TR62000, Tunceli, Turkey.<sup>2</sup>Veterinary Control and Research Institute, Ministry of Agriculture, TR23100, Elazig, Turkey.<sup>3</sup>Tunceli University, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Food Engineering, TR62000, Tunceli, Turkey.<sup>4</sup>Tunceli University, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Environmental Engineering, TR62000, Tunceli, Turkey.

Accepted 18 November, 2019

Heavy metal pollution of waters is a major environmental problem. Due to their toxicity, long persistence, bioaccumulative and nonbiodegradable properties in the food chain, heavy metals constitute a core group of aquatic pollutants. *Capoeta trutta* is an economically important fish and the object of significant commercial fishery in the Munzur River. Levels of Cu were measured in samples of the muscle, gill and liver tissues of *C. trutta* from Munzur River. In liver copper levels were higher at Station I (6.15 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) polluted by domestic waste than Station II (5.48 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) (P<0.05). The highest copper level (7.25 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) was measured in muscle tissue at Station II. There was found no statically differences between stations in gill and muscle (P>0.05). It is suggested that ecological condition of freshwater fish and contamination levels in Munzur River must be regularly monitored.

**Key words:** Munzur River, copper, *Capoeta trutta*, domestic sewage.

## INTRODUCTION

Contamination of freshwater fish with heavy metals is a recognized environmental problem (Staniskiene et al., 2006). The major sources of contamination in surface water can be traced to industrial discharges, domestic waste disposal and application of agrochemicals on farmlands (Kennicutt et al., 1992).

Among the various pollutants, heavy metals, in particular, are widespread contaminants released into aquatic systems from numerous anthropogenic sources. Some metals are known to be toxic even at low concentrations, including arsenic, cadmium, mercury and lead (Le et al., 2009). Others, such as copper and cobalt, are known to be essential elements and play important roles in biological metabolism at very low concentrations (Le et al., 2009) and either an excess or deficit can

disturb biochemical functions in both humans and animals (Gulec et al., 2011). Heavy metals, unlike organic pollutants, cannot be chemically degraded or biodegraded by microorganisms. Thus, their content has steadily increased in soils and subsequently accumulated in plants, animals, and even in humans (Che et al., 2006). The pollutants like heavy metals after entering into aquatic environment accumulate in tissues and organs of aquatic organisms. The amount of absorption and assembling depends on ecological, physical, chemical and biological condition and the kind of element and physiology of organisms (Jaffar et al., 1988). The concentration of any pollutant in any given tissue therefore depends on its rate of absorption and the dynamic processes associated with its elimination by the fish (Al-Kahtani, 2009). Pollution/pollutant enters fish through five main routes: Via food or non-food particles, gills, oral consumption of water and the skin. On absorption, the pollutant is carried in blood stream to either a storage point or to the liver for transformation

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [ddanabas@tunceli.edu.tr](mailto:ddanabas@tunceli.edu.tr). Tel: +90 428 2131794. Fax: +90 428 2131861.

and/or storage. Pollutants transformed in the liver, may be stored there or excreted in bile or transported to other excretory organs such as gills or kidneys for elimination or stored in fat, which is an extra hepatic tissue (Heath, 1991; Nussev et al., 2000; Al-Kahtani, 2009).

Heavy metals cause the mutation in fish inner organs, disturb immune reactions, change blood parameters, reduce an organism's adaptation qualities, vitality, resistance to diseases. Loss of fry and degeneration and diminution of valuable varieties of fish are observed as a result of heavy metals pollution (Alabaster and Lloyd, 1994; Bird et al., 1998; Blasco et al., 1999; Kime, 1999).

Usually, many toxic compounds affect organisms in nature at the same time, each of them having a specific effect on physical and chemical processes that influence an organism's condition and reactions. Therefore, in order to maintain the quality of food it is important to regularly monitor and evaluate the pollution levels in fish as well as in water reservoirs (Staniskiene et al., 2006).

Copper is needed in trace amounts for carrying out vital functions in animal organisms (Cousins, 1985). Also, copper is used in alloys, chemical catalyzers, dyes and algacides as a raw material (Torres et al., 1987). Discharge of copper from these sources without any treatment increases its concentration in aquatic environments and hence shows its toxic action for aquatic organisms (Stagg and Shuttleworth, 1982; Laurant and McDonald, 1985).

*Capoeta trutta* is an economically important fish and the object of significant commercial fishery in Munzur River. The purpose of this work was to evaluate copper concentrations in liver, muscle and gill tissues of *C. trutta* collected from two sites (Station I and II) of Munzur River of Tunceli, Turkey.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Copper level was measured in samples of the liver, muscle and gill tissues in *C. trutta* from Munzur River. *C. trutta* samples were captured from two sites in Munzur River on April 2010 (Figure 1). Station I is a polluted site by domestic sewage discharge. Although there is discharge point of domestic sewage, Station II is unpolluted site.

Fish were captured with net (n = 10 in each station), placed in plastic bags, and anaesthetized immediately 0.7 g L<sup>-1</sup> benzocaine dissolved in ethyl alcohol (Sardella et al., 2004) for deep sedation (Altun and Danabas, 2006) and transported to the laboratory in freezer bags with ice. For chemical assays, liver, muscle and gill tissues were removed and stored -80°C until the assay.

### Reagents

All reagents used were of analytical reagent grade. Throughout the analytical work, doubly distilled water was used. All glass apparatus were kept permanently full with 1.0 mol L<sup>-1</sup> nitric acid when not in use. The microwave digestion procedure was chosen for the samples because of more accurate with respect to time than wet digestion. In the digestion and extraction procedures, concentrated nitric acid (65%, Merck, Darmstadt, Germany) was used. The stock

solutions (1000 mg L<sup>-1</sup>) were prepared by dissolving its nitrate salts in 1.0 mol L<sup>-1</sup> nitric acid.

### Apparatus

A Perkin Elmer AAnalyst 800 atomic absorption spectrometer with deuterium background corrector was used. For flame measurements a lamp and an air-acetylene flame were used. Cu which was measured was carried out in an air/acetylene flame (Table 1).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean copper values in fish tissues varied from 5.48 to 7.25 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> (Table 2). The maximum copper level permitted for fish is 20 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> according to Turkish Food Codex (Anonymous, 2008). Copper levels in analyzed fish samples were found to be lower than the permitted limits.

Kennicutt et al. (1992) reported that one of the major sources of contamination in surface water can be traced to domestic waste disposal. Similarly at Station I polluted domestic waste copper level was higher in liver than that observed in Station II. There was statistically difference in liver tissue at two sites (P<0.05) and not muscle and gills (P>0.05).

Biomonitoring, which was used in this study, is still a new approach. Gills and liver are chosen as target organs for assessing metal accumulation. The heavy metal concentration in tissues reflects past exposure via water and/or food demonstrating the current situation of the animals before toxicity in affecting the ecological balance of populations in the aquatic environment (Forstner and Wittmann, 1983).

In another study, Cu concentrations of muscle and liver were found in the range of 0.06-0.16 µg g<sup>-1</sup> and 28.5-80.0 µg g<sup>-1</sup> (Onsanit et al. (2010). Copper concentrations in liver were higher than that related by. In Bangladesh, muscles of three species of fish, *Tilapia nilotica*, *Cirrhina mrigala* and *Clarias batrachus*, were analyzed and maximum Cu concentration was determined as 6.12 µg g<sup>-1</sup> dry weights (Begum et al., 2005), similar to our findings.

The concentrations of heavy metal were found generally higher in the liver and gills than in the gonad and muscle tissues in three species; *Dicentrarchus labrax*, *Sparus arata* and *Mugil cephalus* (Dural et al., 2005). According to these authors the levels of heavy metals were higher in *Mugil cephalus*. But, copper concentrations in muscle were higher than liver and gills, in our study. Fish are capable in synthesizing lipid in their liver and in secreting it to their muscle (Ando et al., 1993). *Capoeta trutta* accumulates lipid in muscle in reproduction season (June to September). They can accumulate heavy metals in lipid and consequently more copper accumulation in this period.

Fish absorbs metals through ingestion of water or contaminated food. Heavy metals have been shown to undergo bioaccumulation in the tissue of aquatic

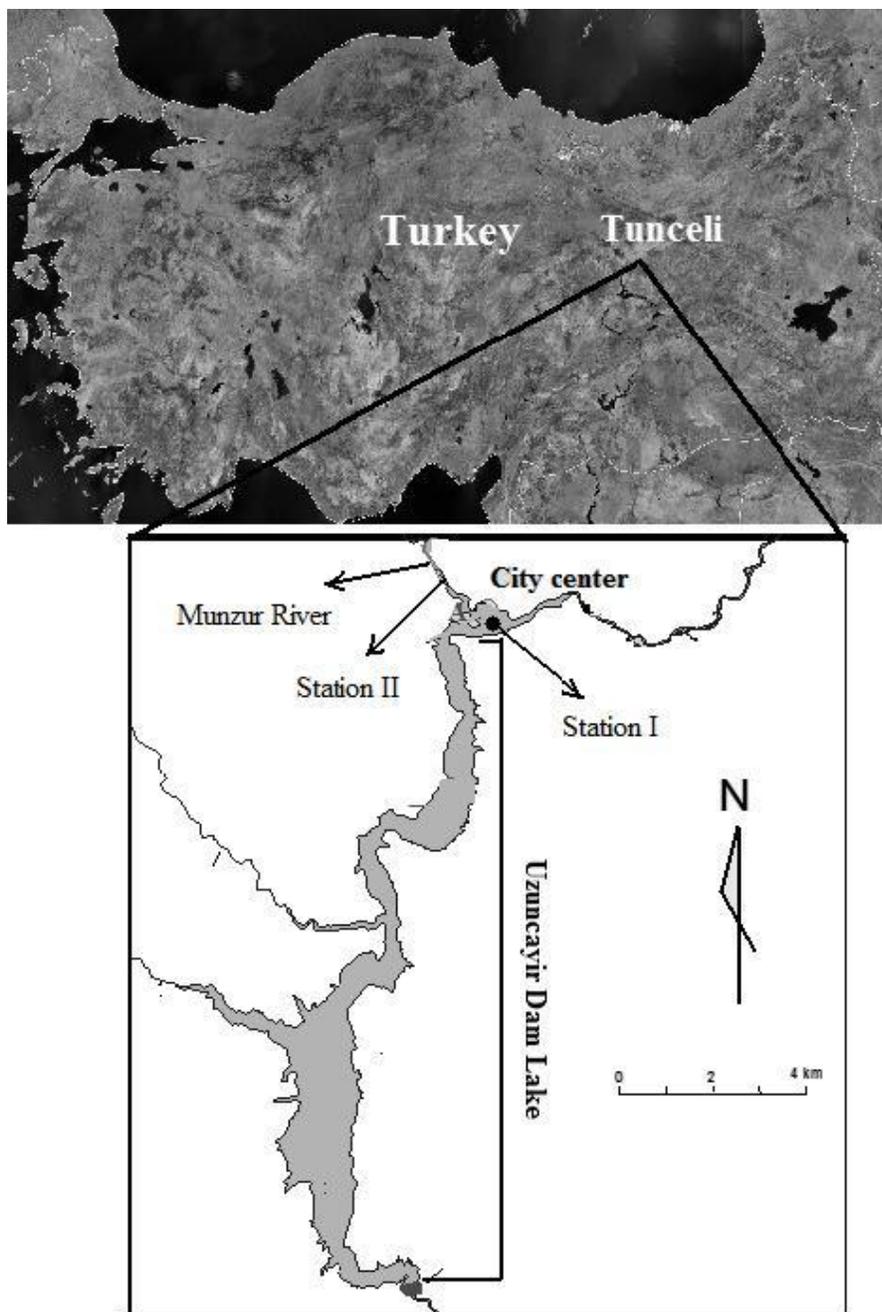


Figure 1. Map of sampling site on Munzur River, Tunceli, Turkey.

Table 1. Instrumental conditions of Copper.

Element	Acetylene ( $L\ min^{-1}$ )	Air ( $L\ min^{-1}$ )	Wavelength (nm)	Slit width (nm)
Cu	2	17	324.8	0.7

organisms. On consumption of fish and other aquatic organisms these metals become transferred to human (Akan et al., 2009). This research showed that copper concentrations in liver, muscle and gills were lower than

the maximum levels set by law.

In conclusion, Munzur River is one of the most important water reservoirs of the region, because of having a great potential aquaculture and fisheries activities. It may

**Table 2.** Copper level (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) in liver, muscle and gills in *Capoeta trutta* (Heckel, 1843) from Munzur River, Tunceli, Turkey.

	Liver (n = 10)	Muscle (n = 10)	Gill (n = 10)
Station I	6.15±0.17	6.87±0.32	6.03±0.24
Station II	5.48±0.22	7.25±0.30	6.65±0.21
P value	0.029*	0.39	0.085

\*Statistically different according to independent T test (P<0.05).

be stated that in order to evaluate the ecological condition of freshwater fish, the contamination levels in Munzur River must be regularly monitored.

## REFERENCES

- Akan JC, Abdulrahman FI, Sodipo OA, Akandu PI (2009). Bioaccumulation of some heavy metals of six fresh water fishes caught from Lake Chad in Doron Buhari, Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. *J. Appl. Sci. Environ. Sanitation*, 4 (2): 103-114.
- Alabaster JS, Lloyd R (1994). *Water quality criteria for freshwater fish*. Moscow, pp. 25.
- Al-Kahtani MA (2009). Accumulation of heavy metals in tilapia fish (*Oreochromis niloticus*) from Al-Khadoud Spring, Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia. *Am. J. Appl. Sci.*, 6(12): 2024-2029.
- Altun T, Danabas D (2006). Effects of short and long exposure to the anesthetic 2-phenoxyethanol mixed with ethyl alcohol on common carp (*Cyprinus Carpio* L., 1758) fingerlings. *Israeli J. Aquac. – Bamidgheh*, 58(3): 1-5.
- Ando S, Mori Y, Nakamura K, Sugawara A (1993). Characteristics of lipid accumulation types in five species of fish, nippon Suisan Gakkaishi, 59 (9): 1559-1564.
- Anonymous (2008). Regulation of setting maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs. *Official Gazette*, May 17, 2008, Iss: 26879.
- Begum A, Amin N, Kaneco S, Ohta K (2005). Selected elemental composition of the muscle tissue of three species, of fish, *Tilapia nilotica*, *Cirrhina mrigala* and *Clarius batrachus*, from the fresh water Dhanmondi Lake in Bangladesh. *Food Chem.*, 93: 439-443.
- Bird GA, Hesslein RH, Mills KH, Schwartz WJ, Turner MA (1998). Bioaccumulation of radionuclides in fertilized Canadian Schield lake basins. *Sci. Total Environ.*, pp. 67: 218.
- Blasco J, Arias AM, Saenz V (1999). Heavy metals in organisms of the River Guadalquivir estuary: possible incidents of the Aznalcollar disaster. *Sci. Total Environ.*, pp. 242-249.
- Che D, Meagher RB, Rugh CL, Kim T, Heaton ACP, Merkle SA (2006). Expression of organomercurial lyase in Eastern Cottonwood enhances organomercury resistance. *In vitro Cell Dev. Biol.-Plant*, 42: 228-234, Doi: 10.1079/IVP2006771.
- Cousins RJ (1985). Absorption, transport and hepatic metabolism of copper and zinc: Special reference to metallothionein and ceruloplasmin. *Physiol. Rev.*, 65: 238-309.
- Dural M, Goksu MZL, Ozak AA, Derici B (2005). Bioaccumulation of some heavy metals in different tissues of *Dicentrarchus labrax* L., 1758, *Sparus aurata* L., 1758 and *Mugil cephalus* L., 1758 from the Camlik Lagoon of the Eastern Coast of Mediterranean (Turkey). *Water Air Soil Pollut.*, 175: 1573-2932.
- Forstner U Wittmann GTW (1983). *Metal pollution in the aquatic environment*. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, pp. 30-61.
- Gulec AK, Yildirim NC, Danabas D, Yildirim N (2011). Some haematological and biochemical parameters in common carp (*Cyprinus carpio* L., 1758) in Munzur River, Tunceli, Turkey. *Asian J. Chem.*, 23(2): 910-912.
- Heath AG (1991). *Water pollution and fish physiology*. Lewis Publishers, Boca Raton, Florida, USA, ISBN: 0873716329, p. 359.
- Jaffar M, Ashraf M, Rasool A (1988). Heavy metals contents in some selected local freshwater fish and relevant water. *Pakistan J. Sci. Ind. Res.*, 31: 189-193.
- Kennicutt MC, Wade TL, Presley BJ (1992). Assessment of sediment contamination in Casco Bay. *Casco Bay Estuary Project*, Texas A&M University, p.113.
- Kime DE (1999). A strategy for assessing the effects of xenobiotics on fish reproduction. *Sci. Total Environ.*, 3: 225.
- Lauran DJ, McDonald DG (1985). Effects of copper on branchial ionregulation in the rainbow trout, *Salmo gairdneri* Richardson. *J. Comp. Physiol.*, 155: 635-644.
- Le QD, Shirai K, Nguyen DC, Miyazaki N, Arai T (2009). Heavy metals in a tropical eel *Anguilla marmorata* from The Central Part of Vietnam. *Water Air Soil Pollut.*, 204: 69–78. Doi: 10.1007/s11270-009-0027-7.
- Nussef G, Van Vuren JHH, Du Preez HH (2000). Bioaccumulation of chromium, manganese, nickel and lead in the tissues of the moggel, *labeo umbratus* (Cyprinidae), from Witbank Dam, Mpumalanga. *Water SA*, 26: 269-284. <http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=973444>.
- Onsanit S, Ke C, Wang X, Wang KJ, Wang WX (2010). Trace elements in two marine fish cultured in fish cages in Fujian province, China. *Environ. Pollut.*, 158: 1334-1342.
- Sardella BA, Matey V, Cooper J, Gonzalez RJ, Brauner CJ (2004). Physiological, biochemical and morphological indicators of osmoregulatory stress in 'california' mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus* x *O. urolepis hornorum*) exposed to hypersaline water. *J. Exp. Biol.*, 207: 1399-1413.
- Stagg RM, Shuttleworth TJ (1982). The accumulation of copper in *Platichthys flesus* and its effects on plasma electrolyte concentrations. *J. Fish Biol.*, 20: 419-500.
- Staniskiene B, Matusevicius P, Budreckiene R, Skibniewska KA (2006). Distribution of heavy metals in tissues of freshwater fish in Lithuania. *Polish J. Environ. Stud.*, 15(4): 585-591.
- Torres P, Tort L, Flos R (1987). Acute toxicity of copper to mediterranean dogfish. *Comp. Biochem. Physiol. C*, 86: 169-171.