Unusually high sea ice cover influences resource use by benthic invertebrates in coastal Antarctica

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Context: sea ice in Antarctica

Antarctic littoral is circled by a fringe of sea ice (up to 20 millions km^2)

Sea ice is a major environmental driver in Antarctica, influences

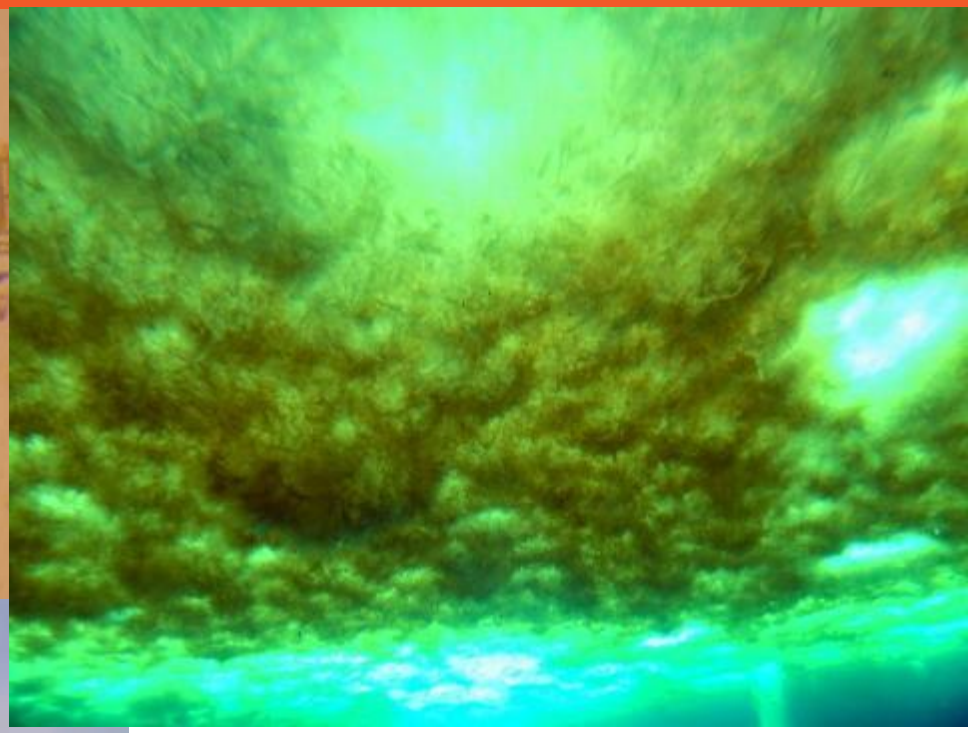
- Air/Sea interactions
- Water column mixing
- Light penetration
- Organic matter fluxes
- …

Sea ice is highly dynamic

Sea ice hosts sympagic organisms

Image: NASA

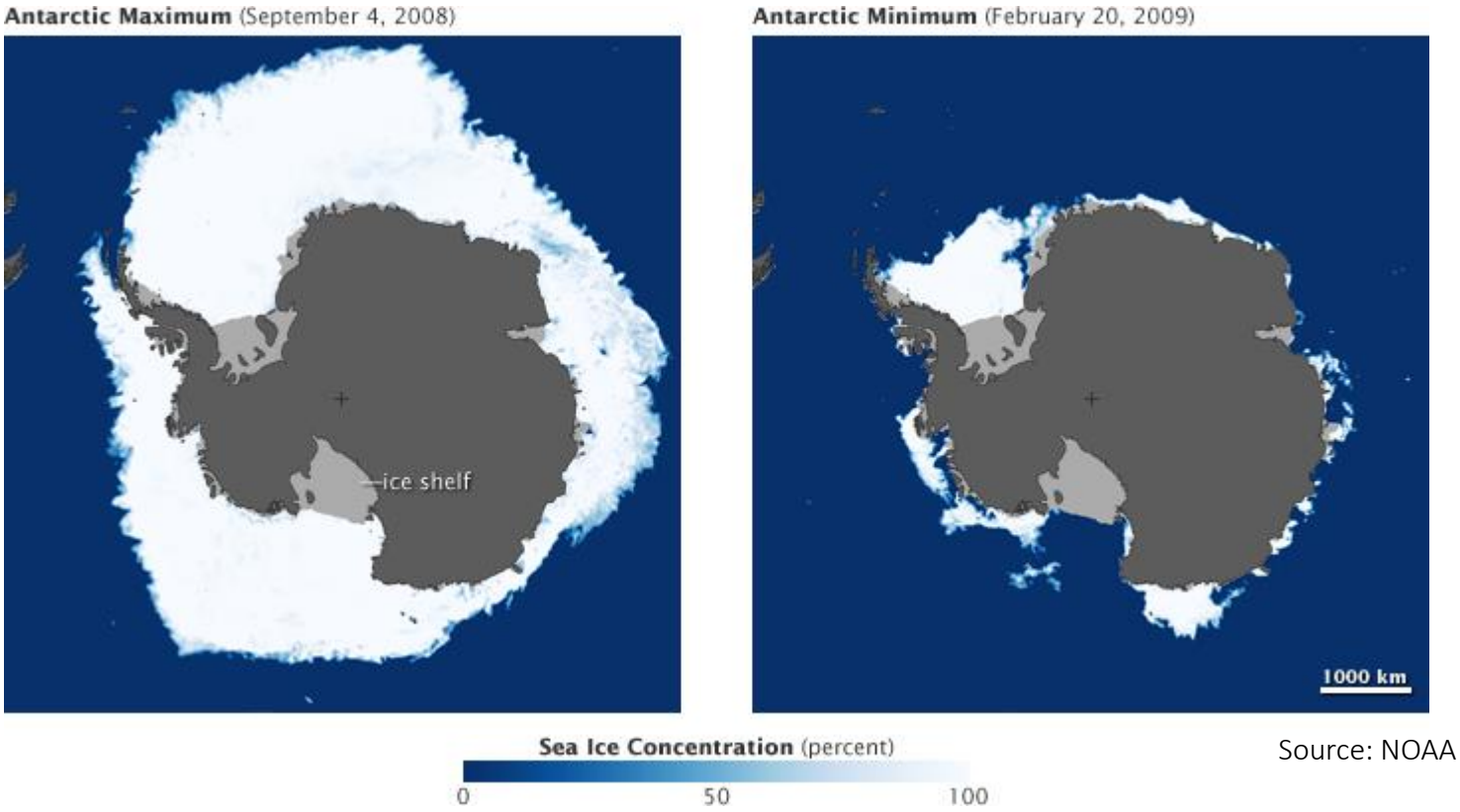
Context: sea ice in Antarctica



Source: Australian Antarctic Division

Sympagic algae:
Mostly diatoms
Form thick mats
Filaments up to several cm

Seasonal patterns of sea ice cover



Source: NOAA

Normal cycle:

Austral winter

Thick sea ice cover

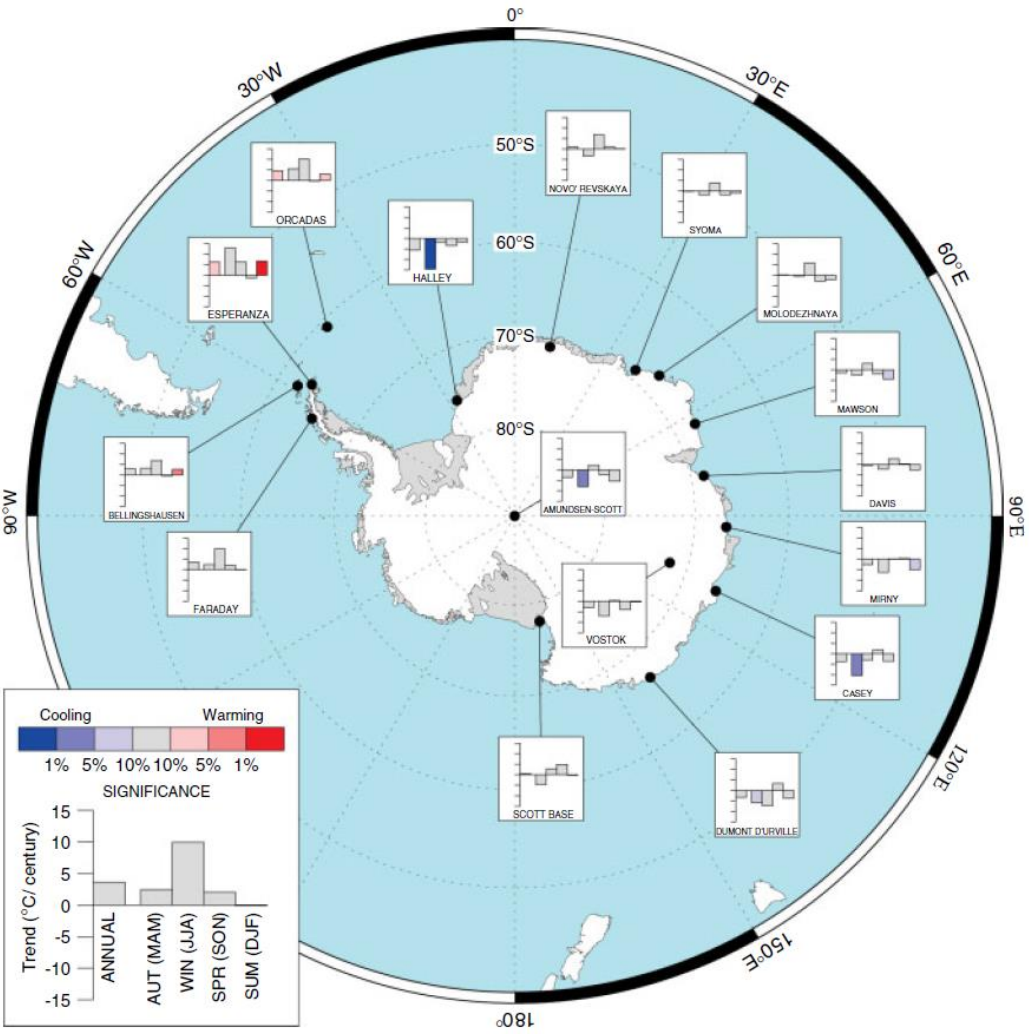
Austral summer

Thinning and breakup of sea ice

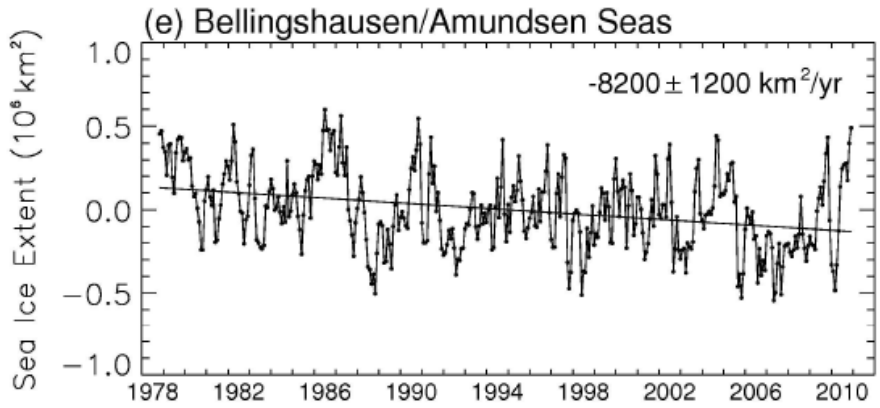
Release of sympagic material

High productivity events

Climate change and sea ice cover

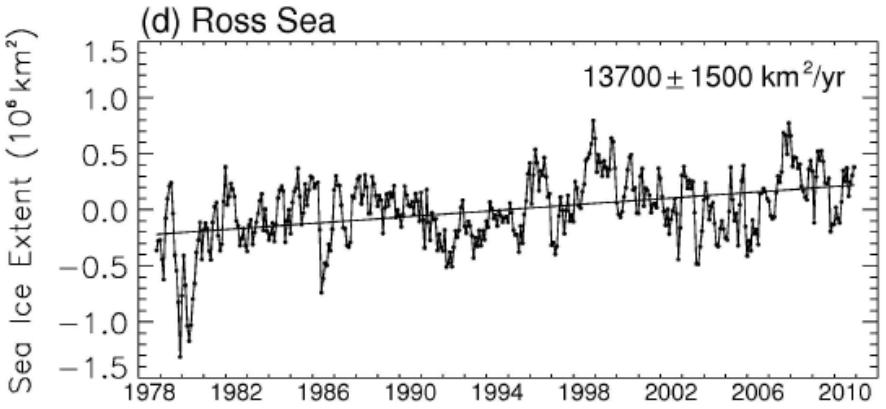


Turner et al. 2005 Int J Climatol 25: 279-294
(Data 1971-2000)



West Antarctic Peninsula: T° ↗, Ice cover ↘

East Antarctica: T° → ↘, Ice cover → ↗



Parkinson & Cavalieri 2012 Cryosphere 6: 871-880

Study site: Dumont d'Urville station

East Antarctica, Adélie Land
Petrels Island

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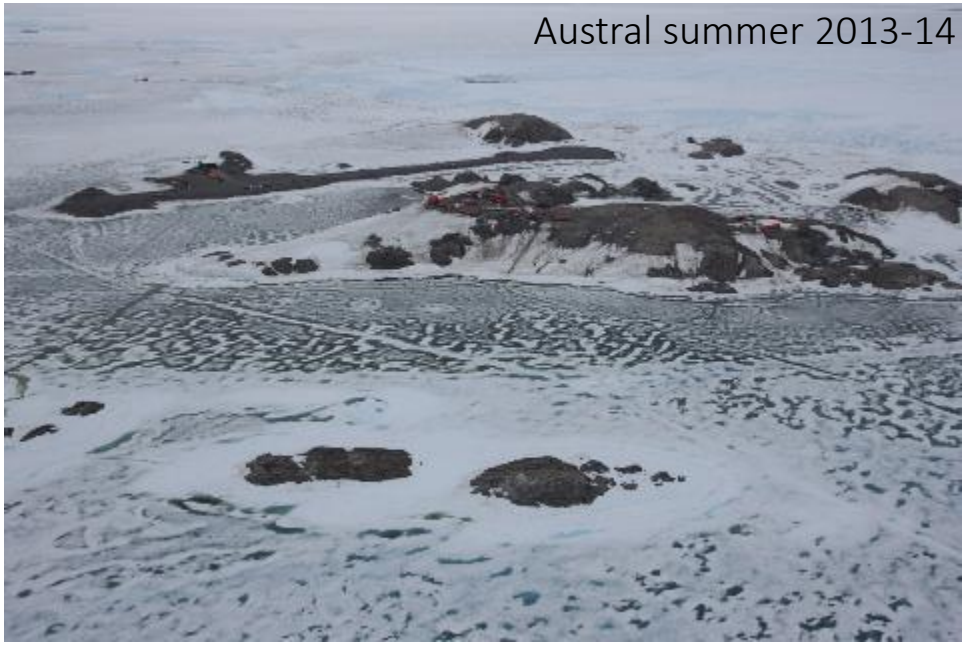
East Antarctica, Adélie Land
Petrels Island

2013-2015: Event of high spatial and temporal sea ice coverage

No seasonal breakup during austral summers 2013-14 and 2014-15



Study site: Dumont d'Urville station

Time of sampling : Austral summer 2014-15

Objectives

How will Antarctic communities respond to such environmental changes?

How could increased sea ice cover impact benthic food webs?

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Use of stable isotope ratios to identify resources supporting dominant benthic invertebrates (primary consumers & omnivores)

Quantification of relative importance of 4 producers / organic matter pools

Objectives

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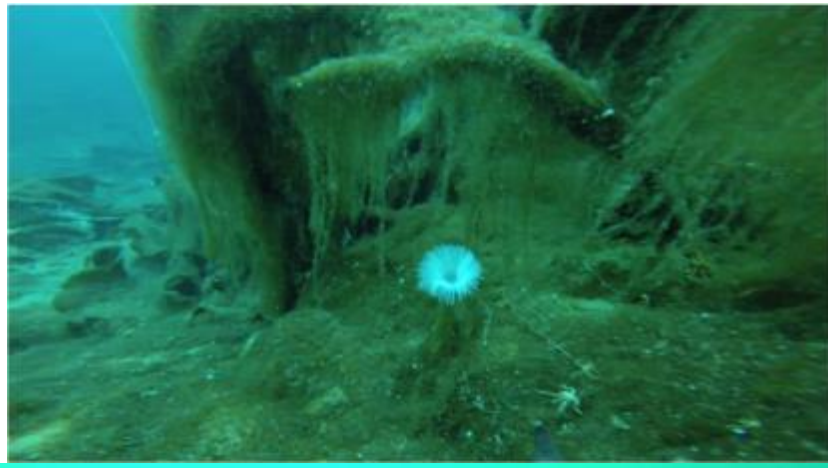
3. Benthic brown algae *Himantothallus grandifolius*

Objectives

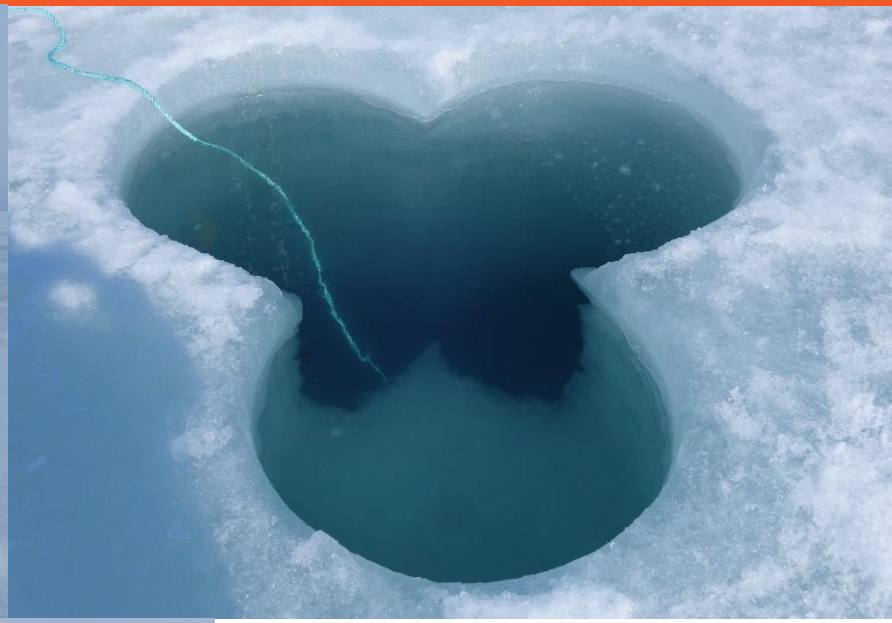
How will Antarctic communities respond to such environmental changes?

How could increased sea ice cover impact benthic food webs?

4. Benthic biofilm
(heterogeneous mix of microalgae, amorphous material and detrital items)



Material & methods: sampling



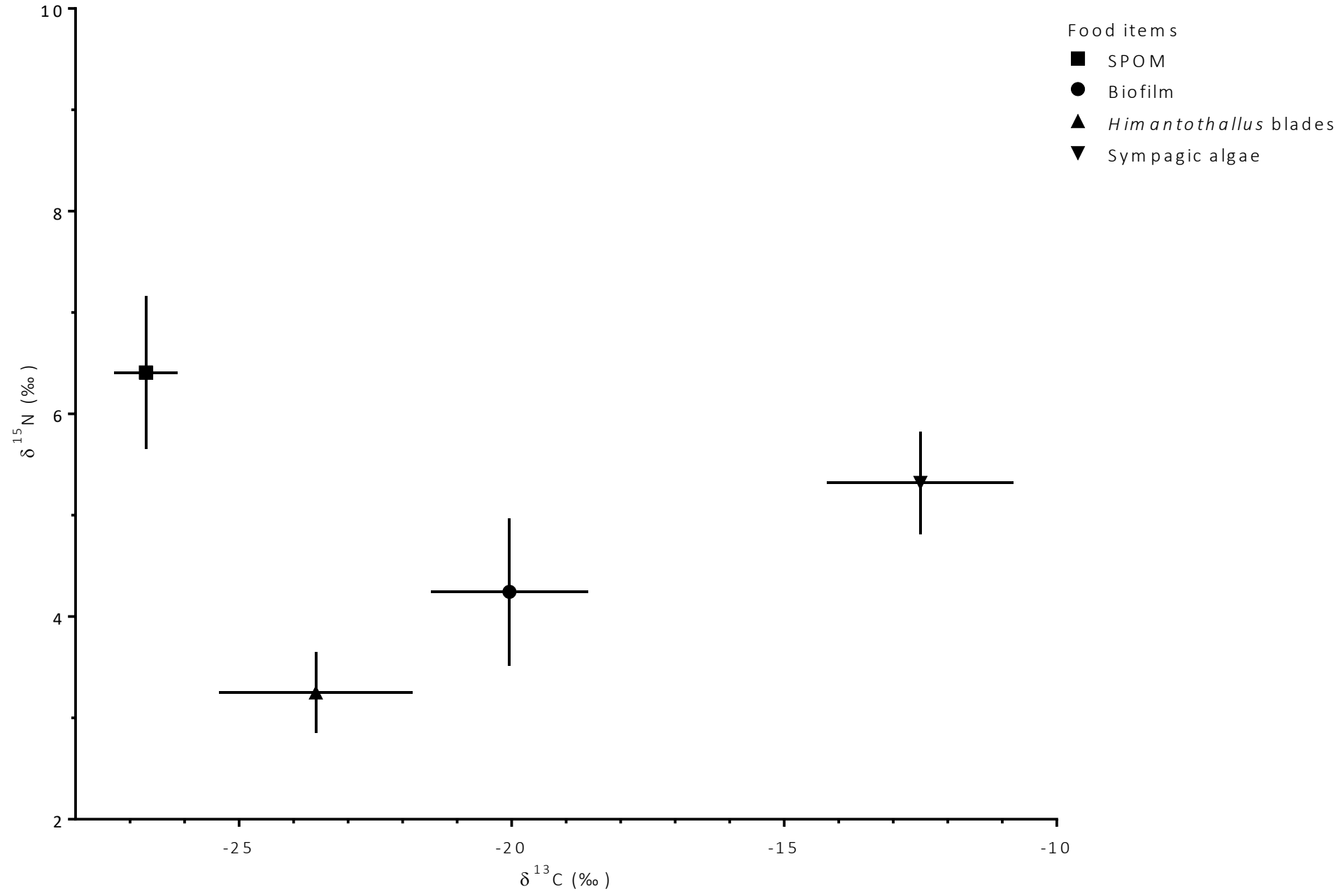
Hand collection

SCUBA diving under fast ice

Material & methods: analysis

University of Liège's setup:
Vario MICRO cube EA coupled to an Isoprime 100 IRMS

Results: isotopic biplot



Results: isotopic biplot

Harmothoe sp.

Perkinsiana sp.

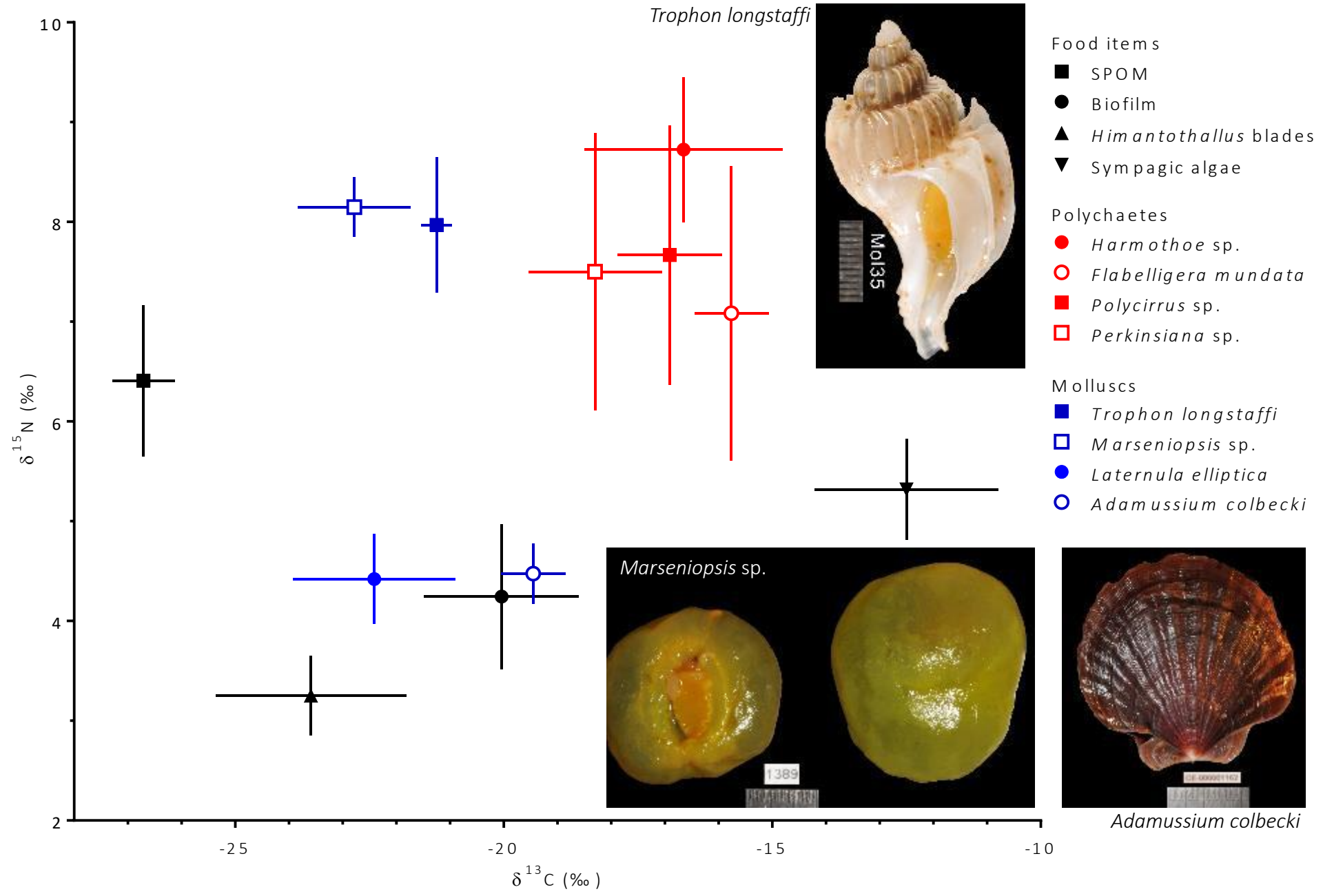
Food items
- SPOM
- Biofilm
- *Himantothallus* blades
- Sympagic algae

Polychaetes
- *Harmothoe* sp.
- *Flabelligera mundata*
- *Polycirrus* sp.
- *Perkinsiana* sp.

Flabelligera mundata

10
8
6
4
2
$\delta^{15}N$ (‰)
-25
-20
-15
-10
$\delta^{13}C$ (‰)

Results: isotopic biplot



Results: isotopic biplot

Echinoderms
- *Ophiura* sp.
- *Sterechinus neumayeri*
- *Diplasterias brucei*
- *Odontaster validus*
- *Heterocucumis* sp.
- *Staurocucumis* sp.

$\delta^{15}N$ (‰)

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$\delta^{13}C$ (‰)

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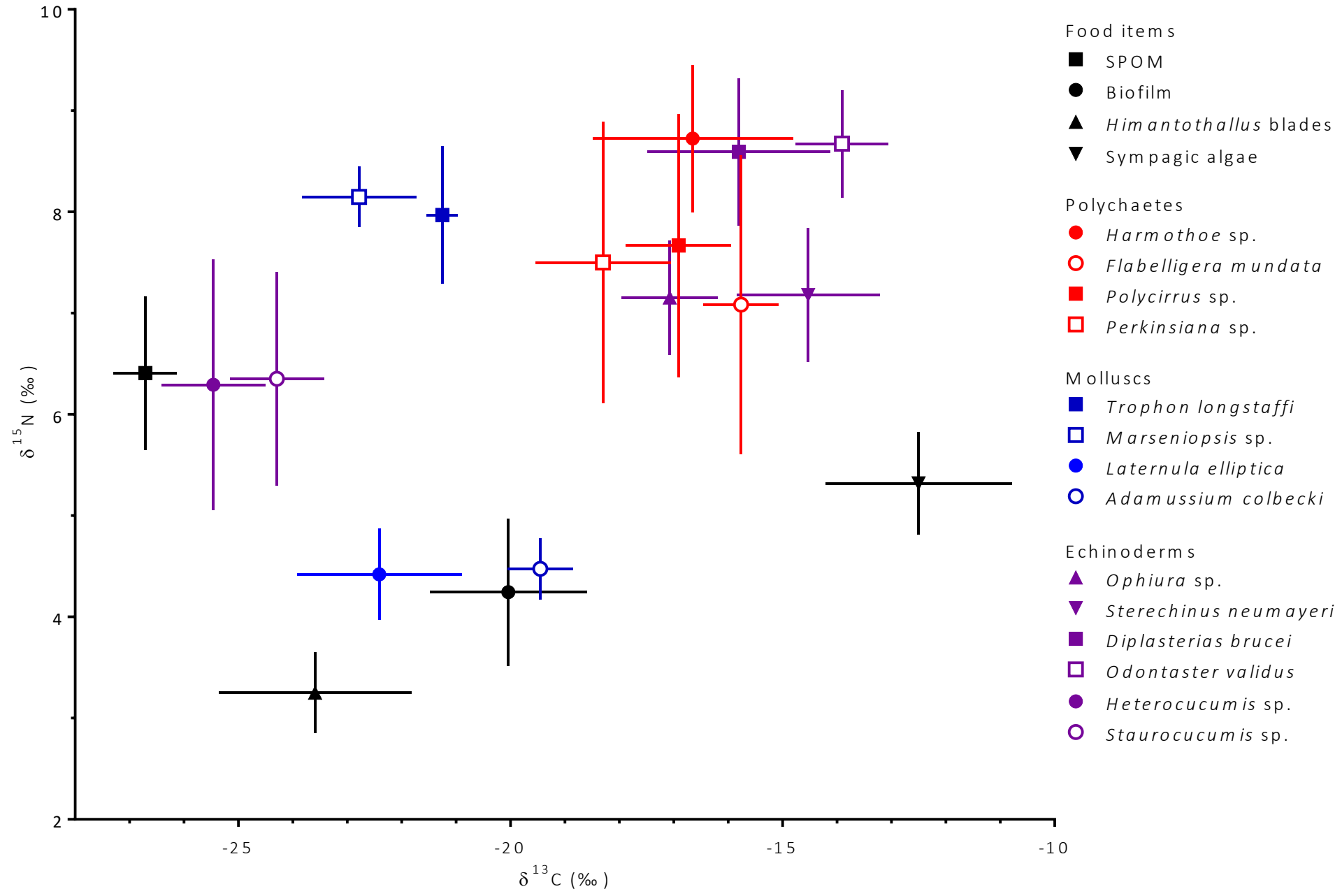
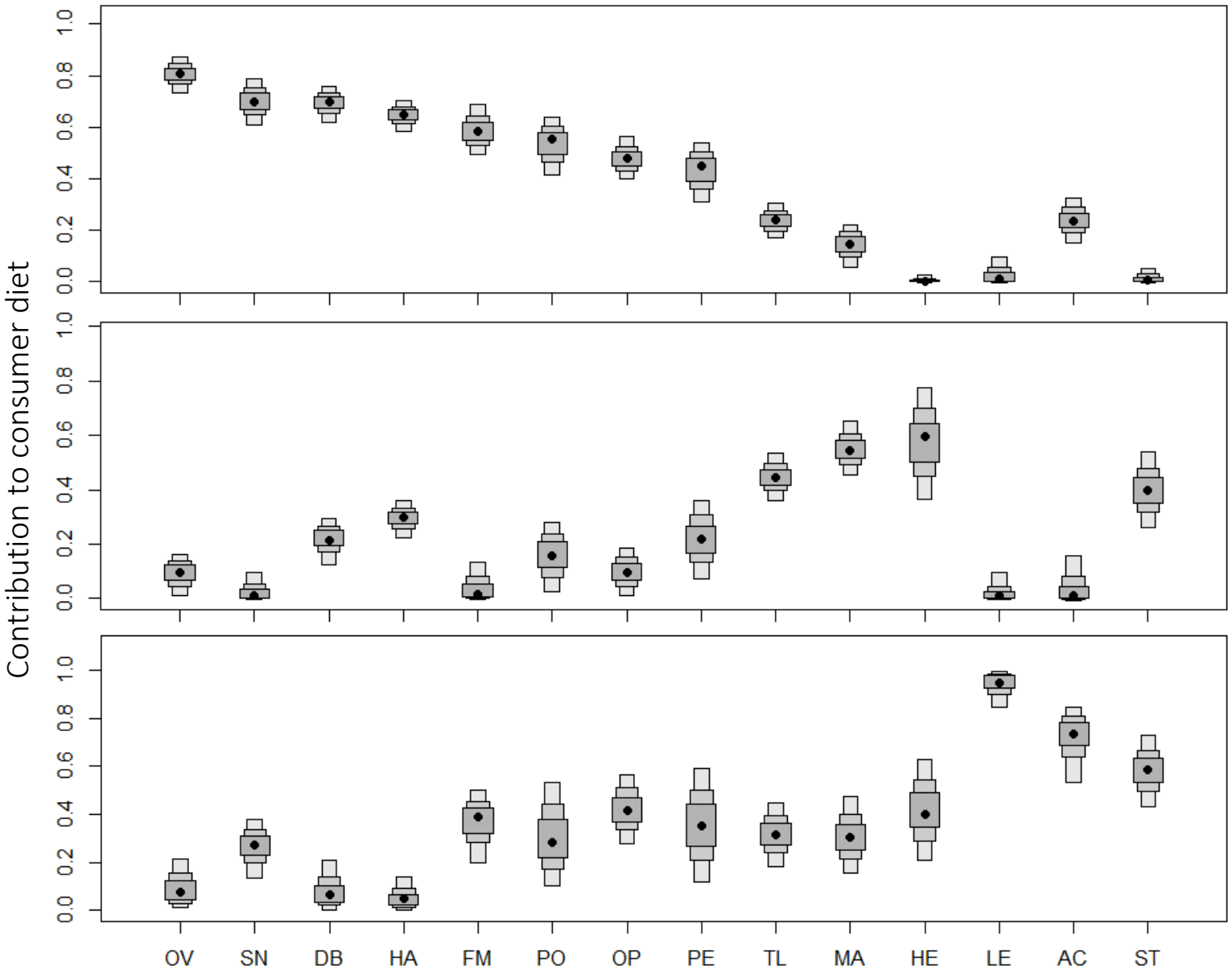
Results: isotopic biplot



Results - SIAR modelling



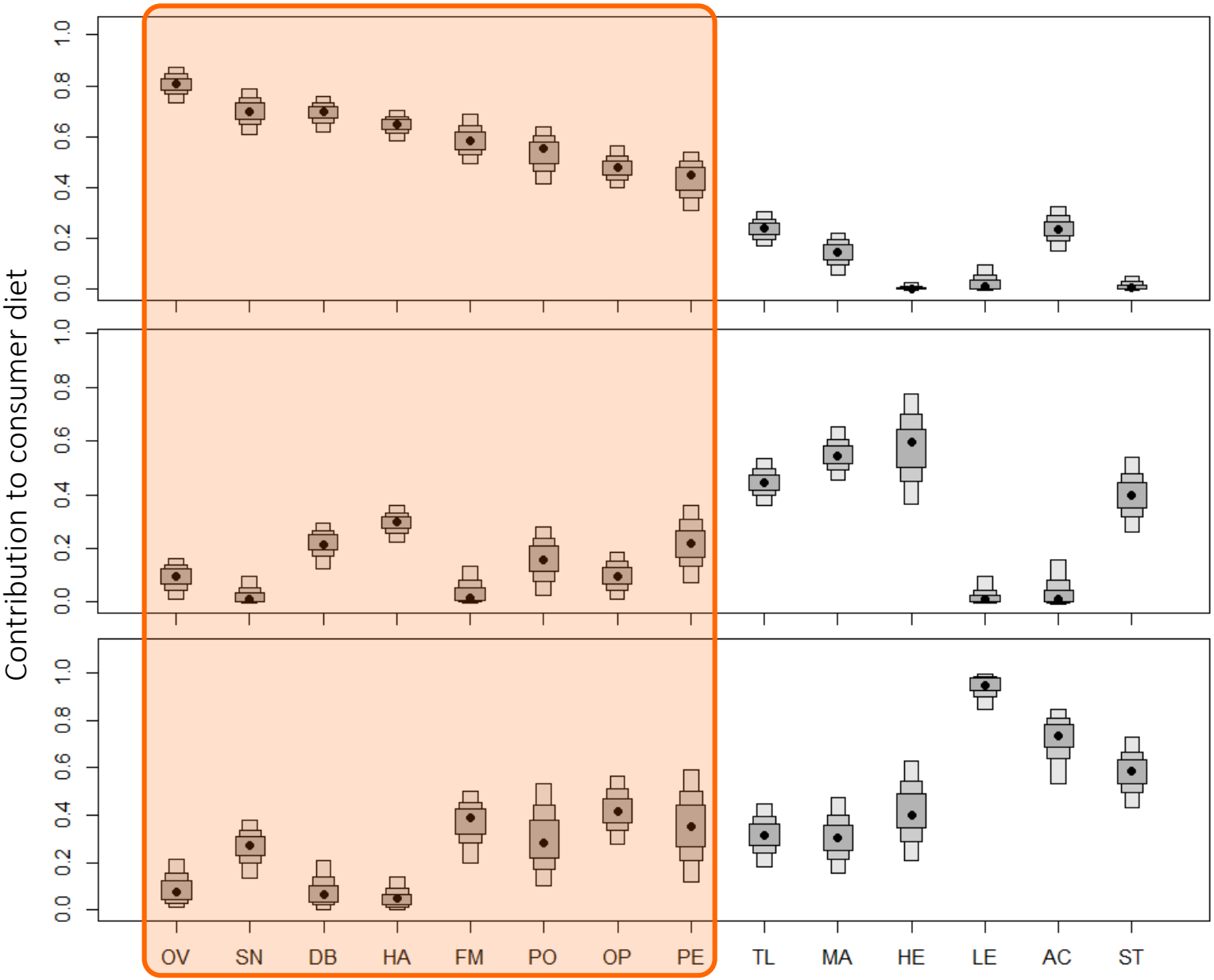
Sympagic algae

Suspended Particulate Organic Matter (SPOM)

Benthic algae + Biofilm

OV: *O. validus*; SN: *S. neumayeri*; DB: *D. brucei*; HA: *Harmothoe* sp.; FM: *F. mundata*; PO: *Polycirrus* sp.; OP: *Ophiura* sp.; PE: *Perkinsiana* sp.; TL: *T. longstaffi*; MA: *Marsienopsis* sp.; HE: *Heterocucumis* sp.; LE: *Laternula elliptica*; AC: *Adamussium colbecki*; ST: *Staurocucumis* sp.

Results - SIAR modelling



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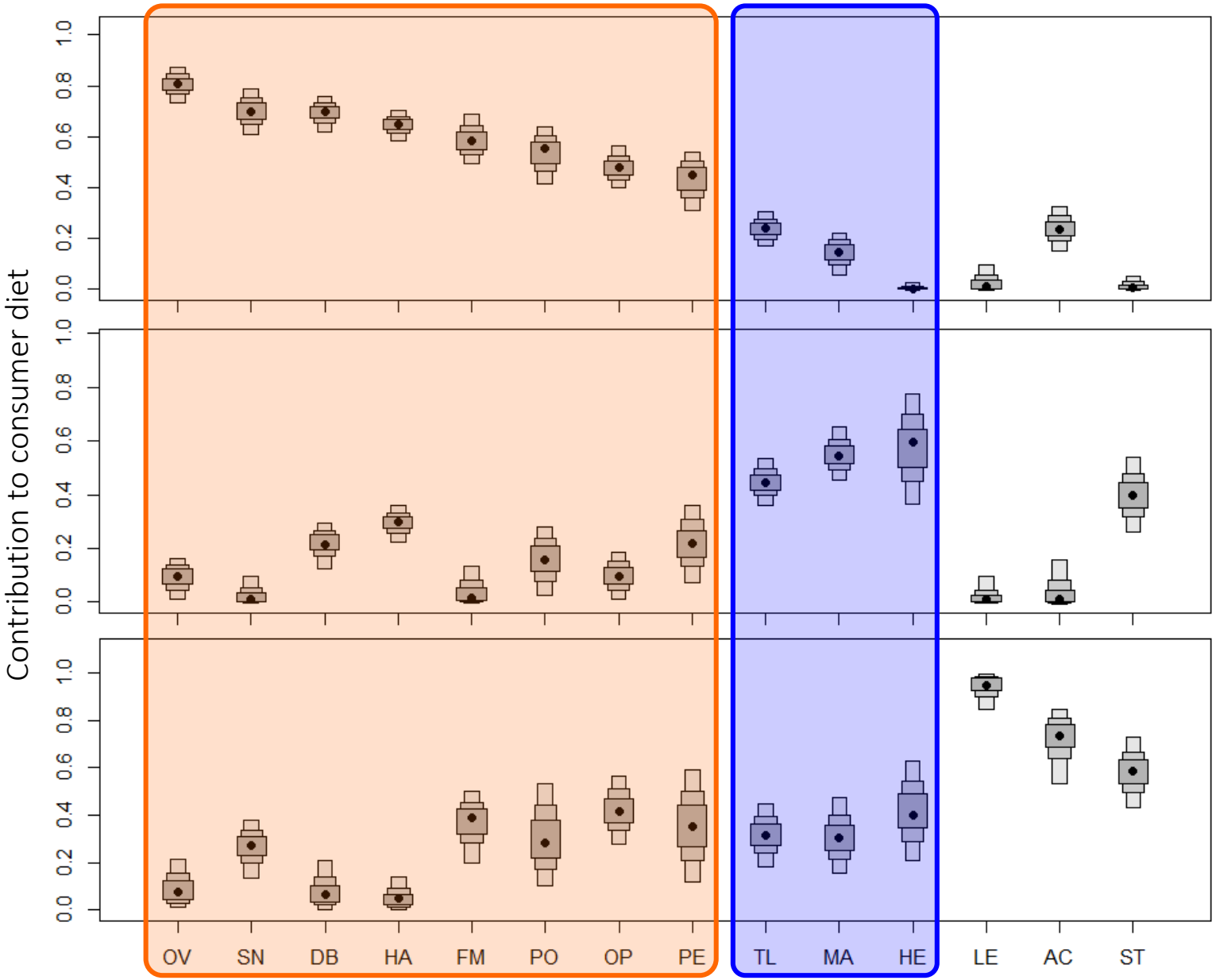

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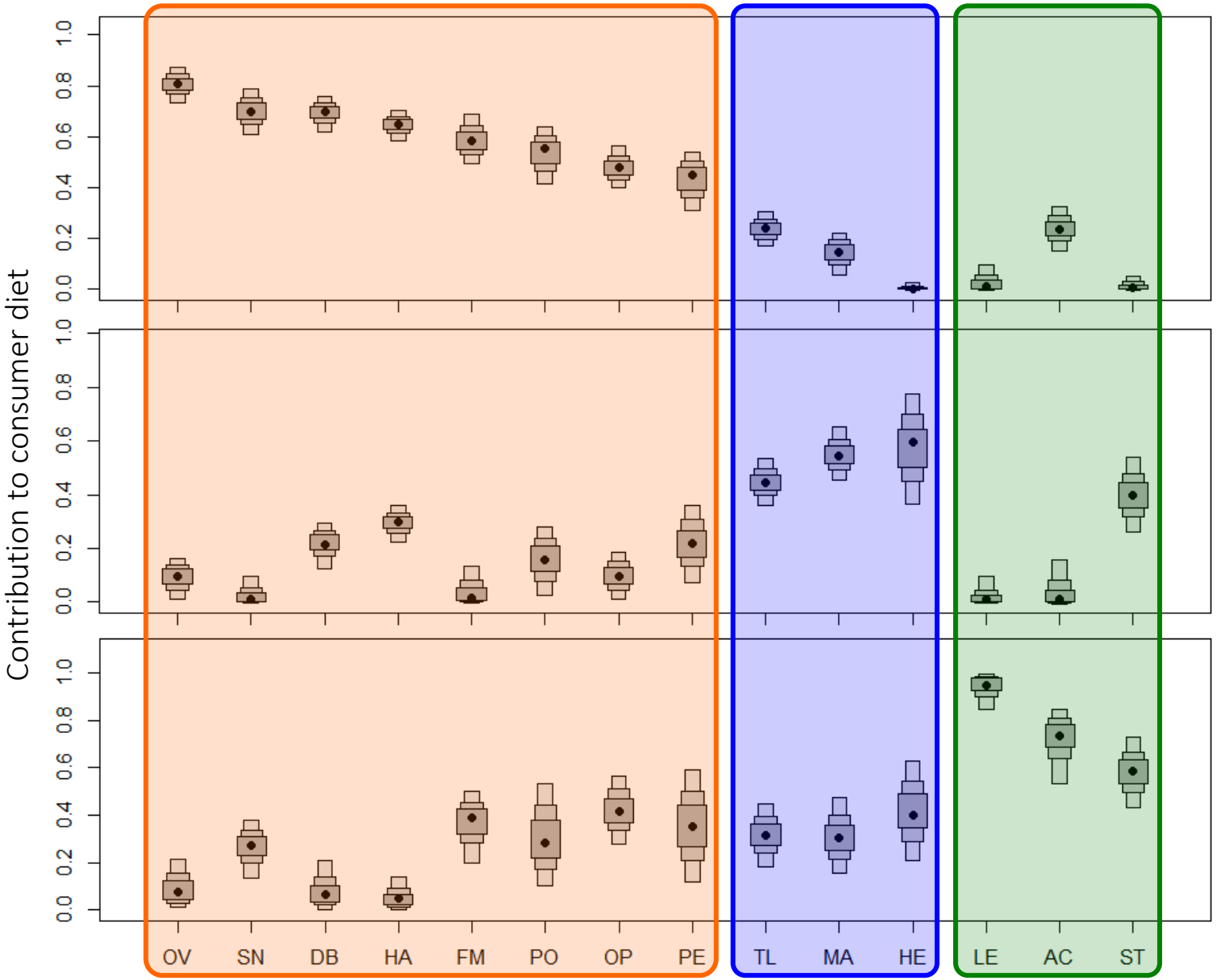

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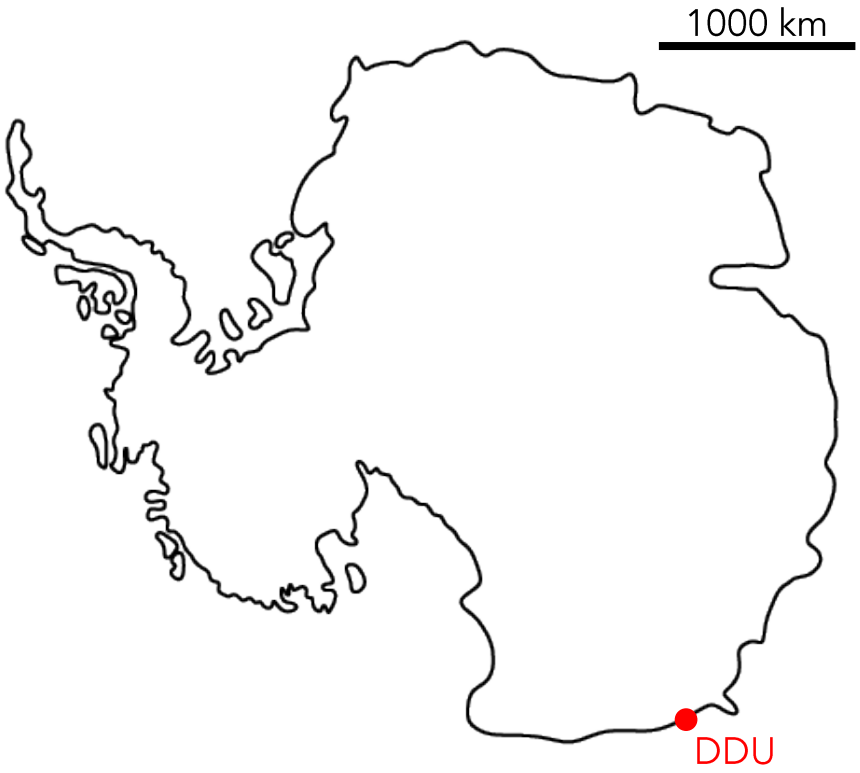
Discrepancies in resource use

Species	DDU
Laternula elliptica	
Adamussium colbecki	
Sterechinus neumayeri	
Odontaster validus	
Staurocucumis sp.	
Harmothoe sp.	

Main food items

Sympagic algae

Benthic algae / Biofilm

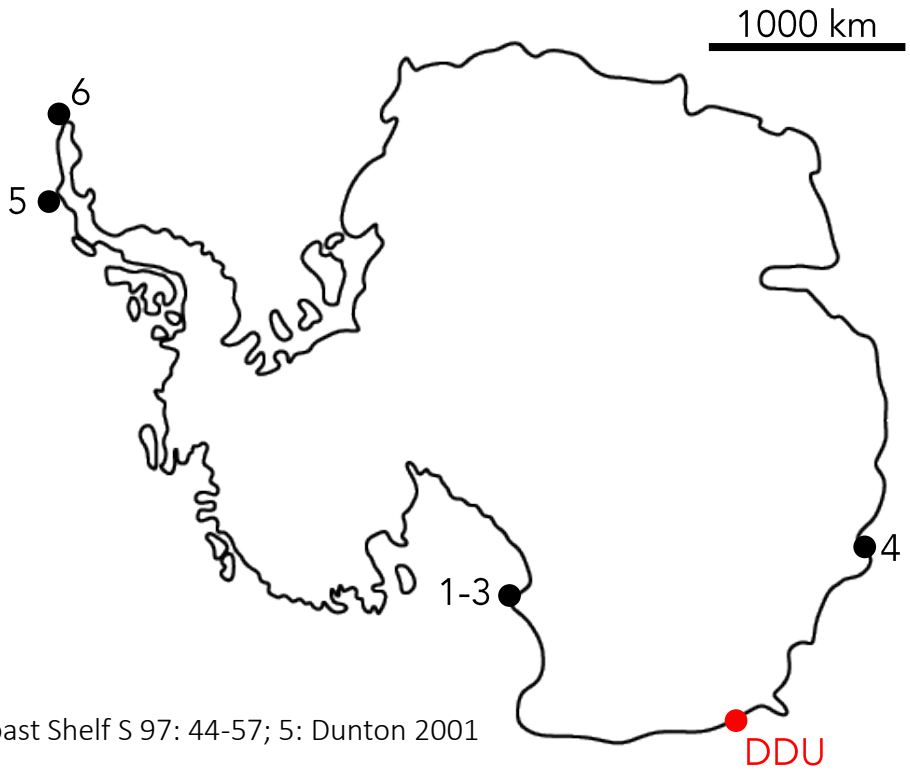


Discrepancies in resource use

Species	DDU	1	2	3	4	5	6
Laternula elliptica							
Adamussium colbecki							
Sterechinus neumayeri							
Odontaster validus							
Staurocucumis sp.							
Harmothoe sp.							

Main food items

- Sympagic algae / Ice POM
- Benthic algae / Biofilm
- Plankton / SPOM
- Sediment POM
- Animal-based diet
- No data



References:

1-3: Norkko et al. 2007 Ecology 88: 2810-2820; 4: Gillies et al. 2012 Estuar Coast Shelf S 97: 44-57; 5: Dunton 2001 Amer Zool 41: 99-112; 6: Corbisier et al. 2004 Polar Biol 27: 75-82

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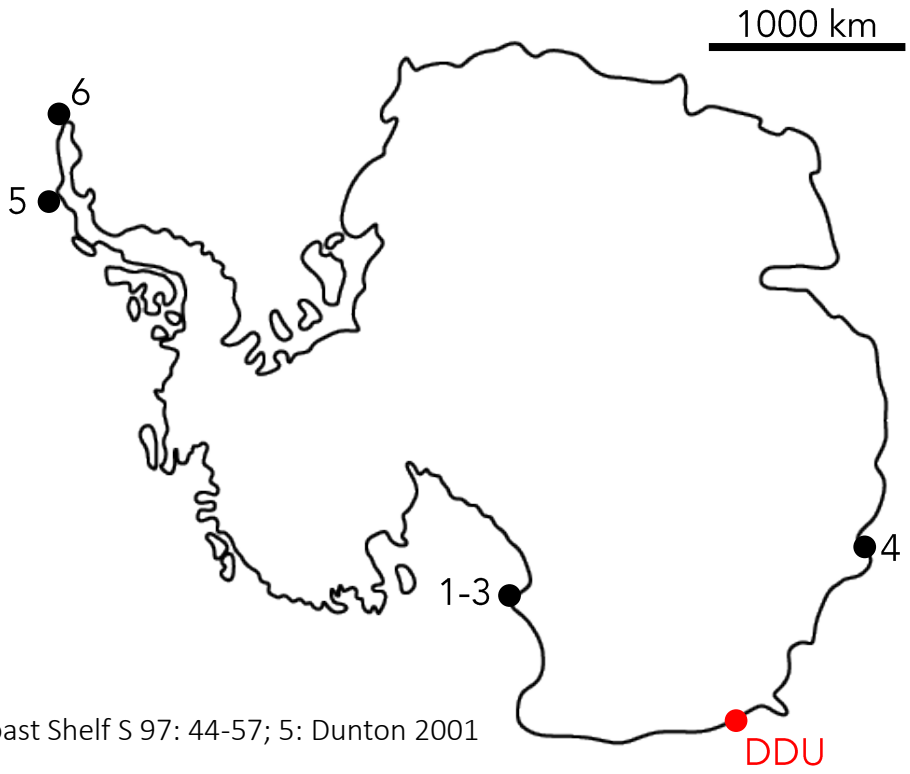
Staurocucumis sp.							
Harmothoe sp.							

Sea ice

Main food items

- Sympagic algae / Ice POM
- Benthic algae / Biofilm
- Plankton / SPOM
- Sediment POM
- Animal-based diet
- No data



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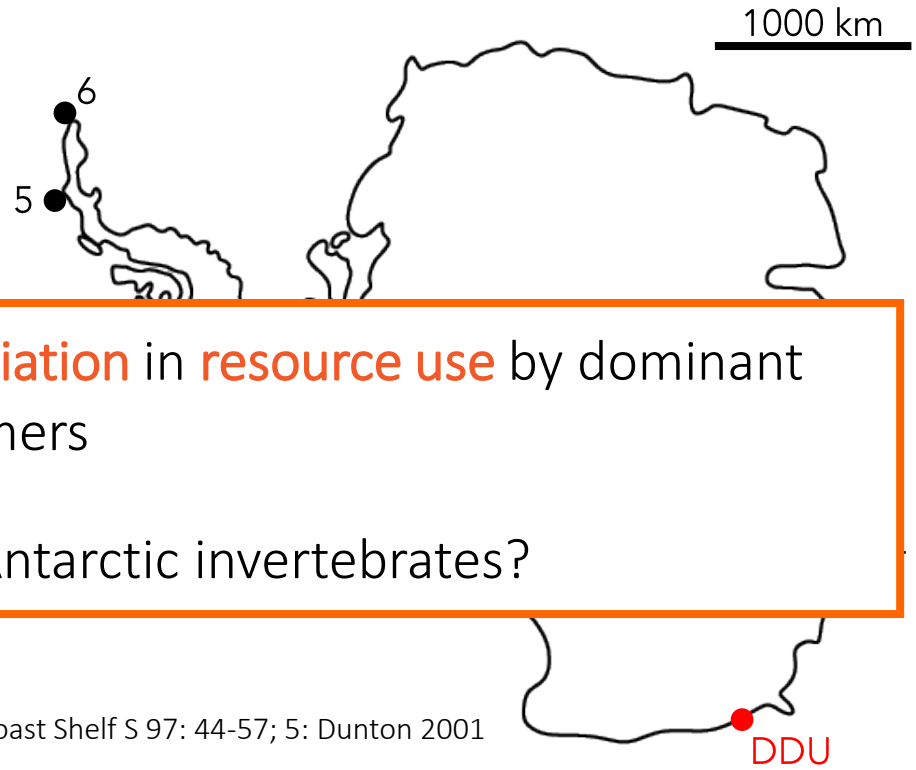

Important spatial and/or temporal variation in resource use by dominant consumers

High trophic plasticity of Antarctic invertebrates?

References:

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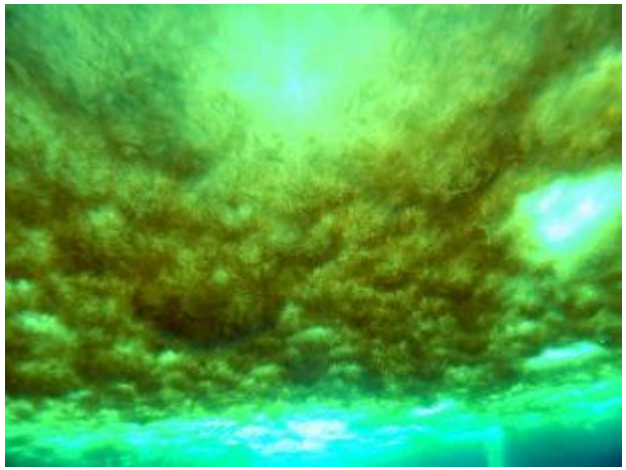
Sympagic algae consumption: how and why?

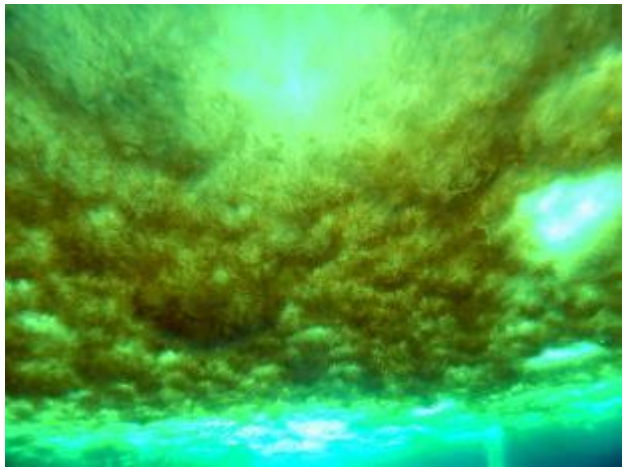


Sea ice is a dynamic system: constant melting/freezing

Sympagic algae aggregates sink quickly

Sinking speed is size-dependent and range from 100 to 500 m/day (i.e. 1-5 hours to reach a depth of 20 m)

Sympagic algae consumption: how and why?



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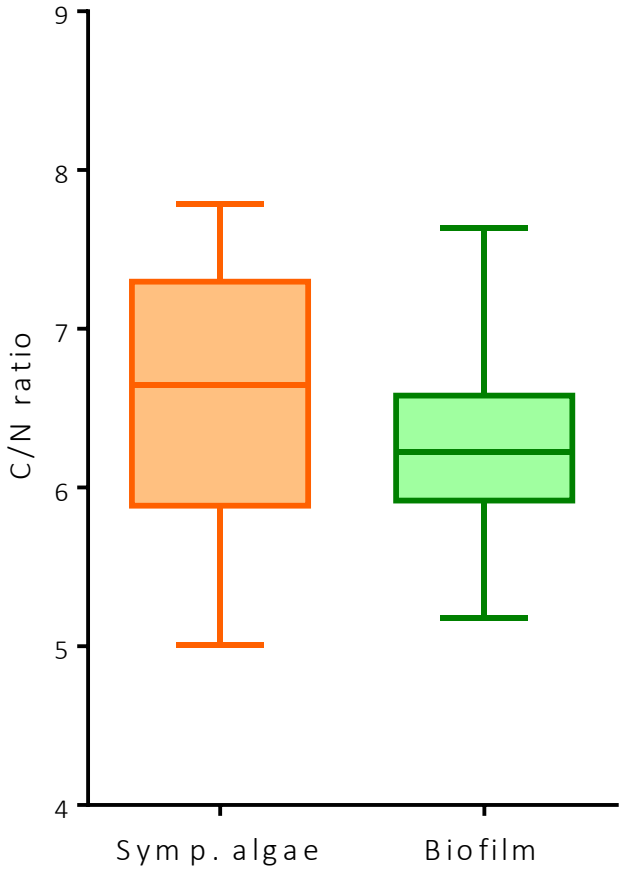
Sinking speed is size-dependent and range from 100 to 500 m/day (i.e. 1-5 hours to reach a depth of 20 m)

Why is it preferred by many consumers over more abundant food items such as biofilm?

Better nutritional value? Unlikely… ➔

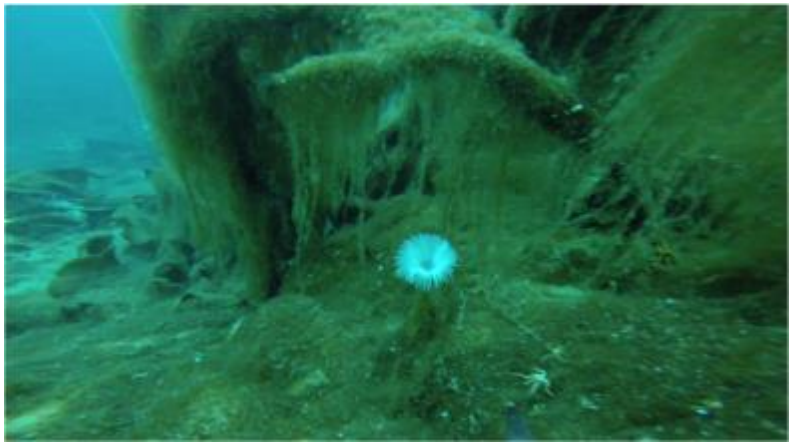
Better palatability? Pure aggregates of microalgae…



Role of benthic biofilm in the food web

Preliminary microscopic examination:
Benthic biofilm = heterogeneous mix of microalgae, amorphous material and detrital items

Here: importance of benthic biofilm in food web comparatively limited despite high abundance



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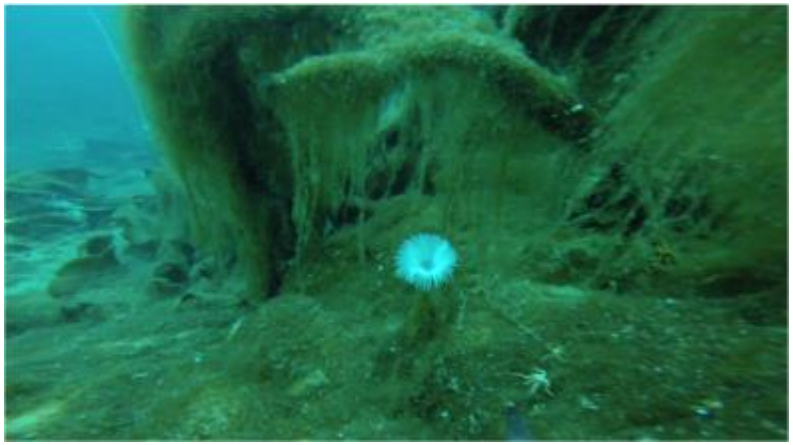

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Ross Sea: Benthic invertebrates consume more detritic matter in sea-ice influenced locations
(Norkko et al. 07)

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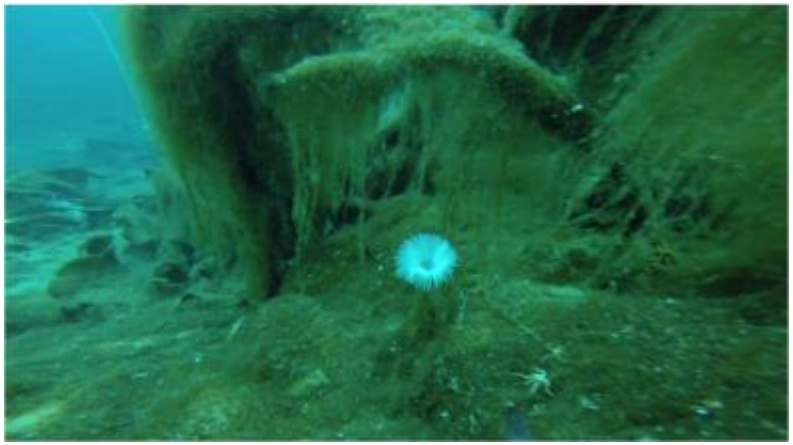

Here: importance of benthic biofilm in food web comparatively limited despite high abundance

Ross Sea: Benthic invertebrates consume more detritic matter in sea-ice influenced locations
(Norkko et al. 07)

Important variation in benthic ecosystem response to sea ice: sudden changes vs. stable conditions?

However: no data about dynamics of biofilm accumulation!

Here: long-lived benthic invertebrates with low metabolic rates ➔ low isotopic turnover? Is isotopic equilibrium reached?

Our model could underestimate actual biofilm importance for invertebrate feeding

Take home message

- Important sea ice cover is linked with high reliance of coastal benthic primary consumers / omnivores on sympagic algae

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- Resource use by consumers of Adélie Land markedly differs from results obtained in other locations. High trophic plasticity of Antarctic invertebrates? Sudden changes vs. stable conditions?

Take home message

- Important sea ice cover is linked with high reliance of coastal benthic primary consumers / omnivores on sympagic algae
- Resource use by consumers of Adélie Land markedly differs from results obtained in other locations. High trophic plasticity of Antarctic invertebrates? Sudden changes vs. stable conditions?
- Interpretation of results is complicated by lack of background data ("normal" conditions) and by physiological features of studied organisms

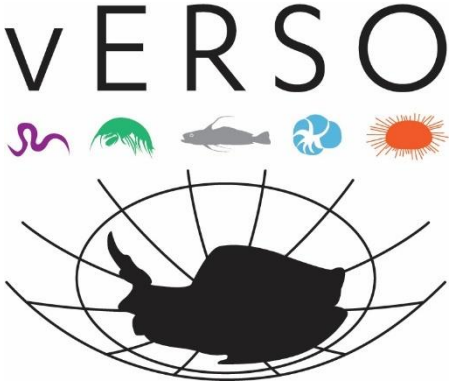
Take home message

- Important sea ice cover is linked with high reliance of coastal benthic primary consumers / omnivores on sympagic algae

- Resource use by consumers of Adélie Land markedly differs from results obtained in other locations. High trophic plasticity of Antarctic invertebrates? Sudden changes vs. stable conditions?

Despite being interpreted as a positive signal by mainstream media, local or large-scale trends of sea ice increase in Antarctica could actually have strong impacts on benthic ecosystems

Funding

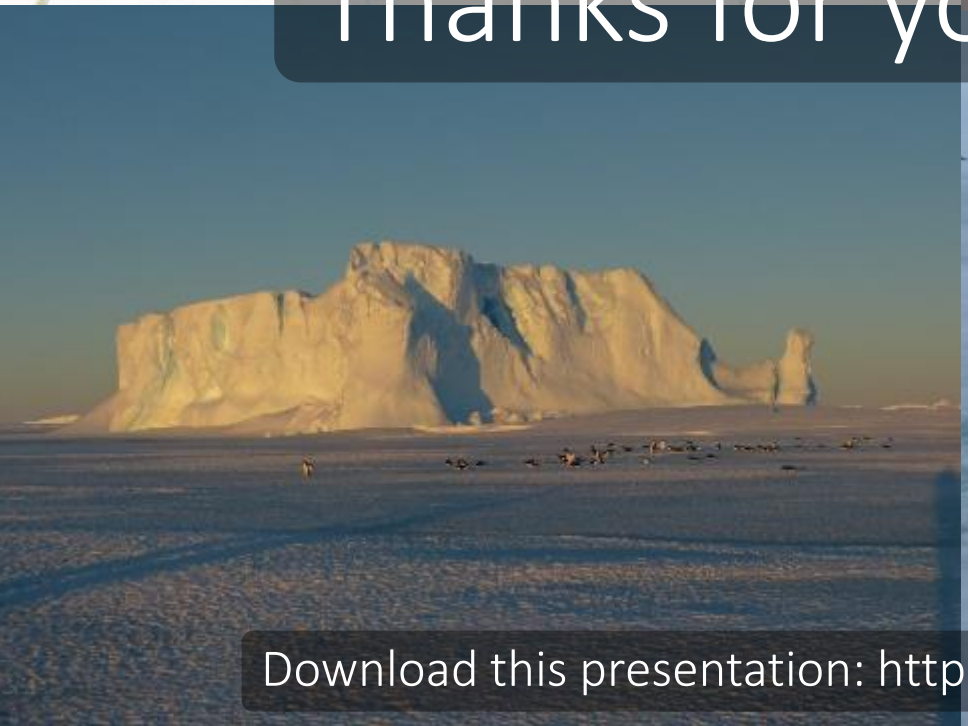


Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO)

vERSO project (Ecosystem Resilience in Southern Ocean)

French Polar Institute (IPEV)






Thanks for your attention

Download this presentation: http://hdl.handle.net/2268/210019

SIAR parameters

SIAR 4.2 in R 3.2.2

No concentration dependencies

TEFs: $\Delta^{13}C = 0.40 \pm 1.20$ ‰; $\Delta^{15}N = 2.30 \pm 1.61$ ‰ (mean ± SD; TEFs for aquatic consumers from McCutchan *et al.* 2003 Oikos 102: 378-390)

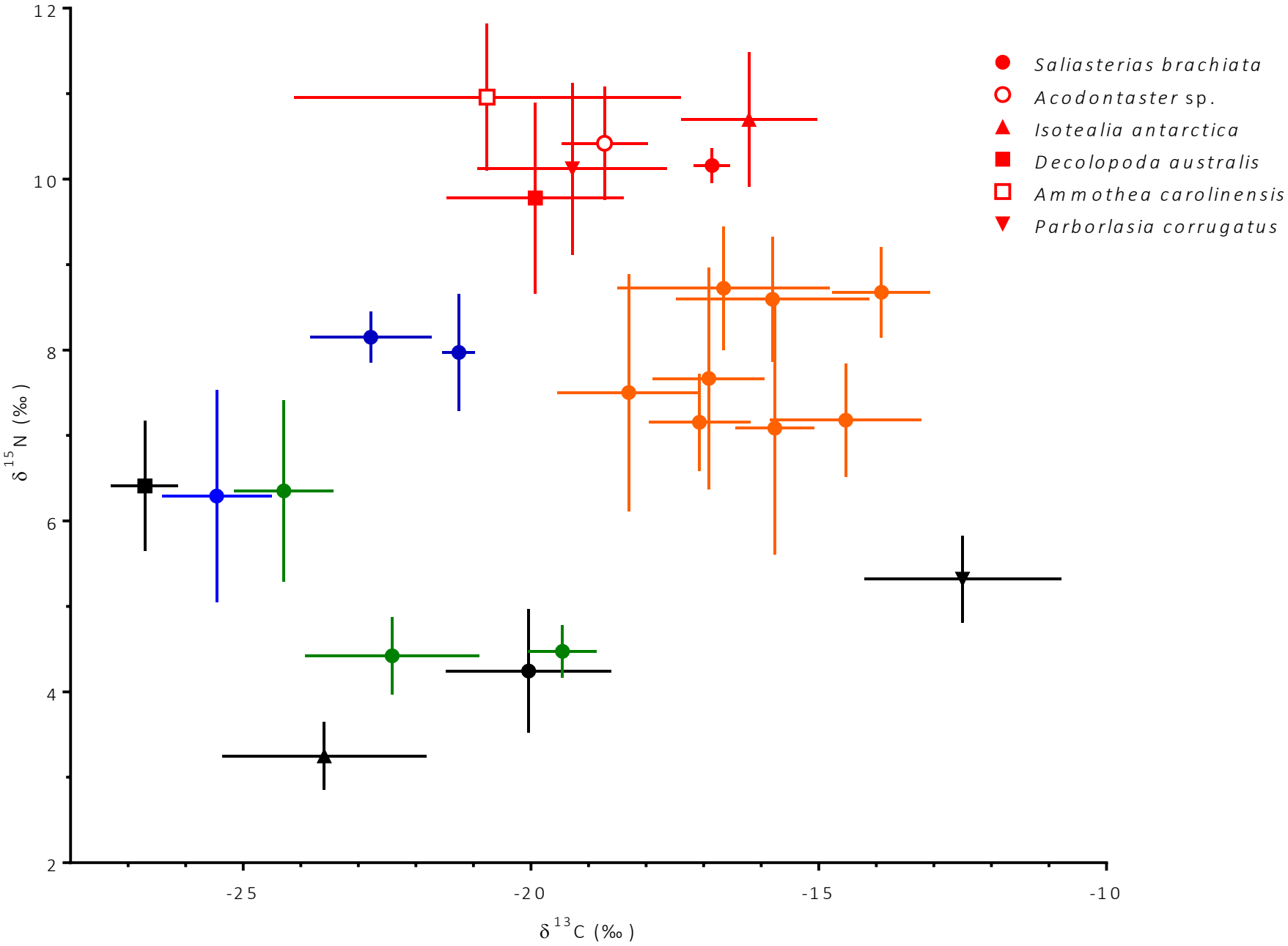
10^6 iterations

Burn-in size: 10^5

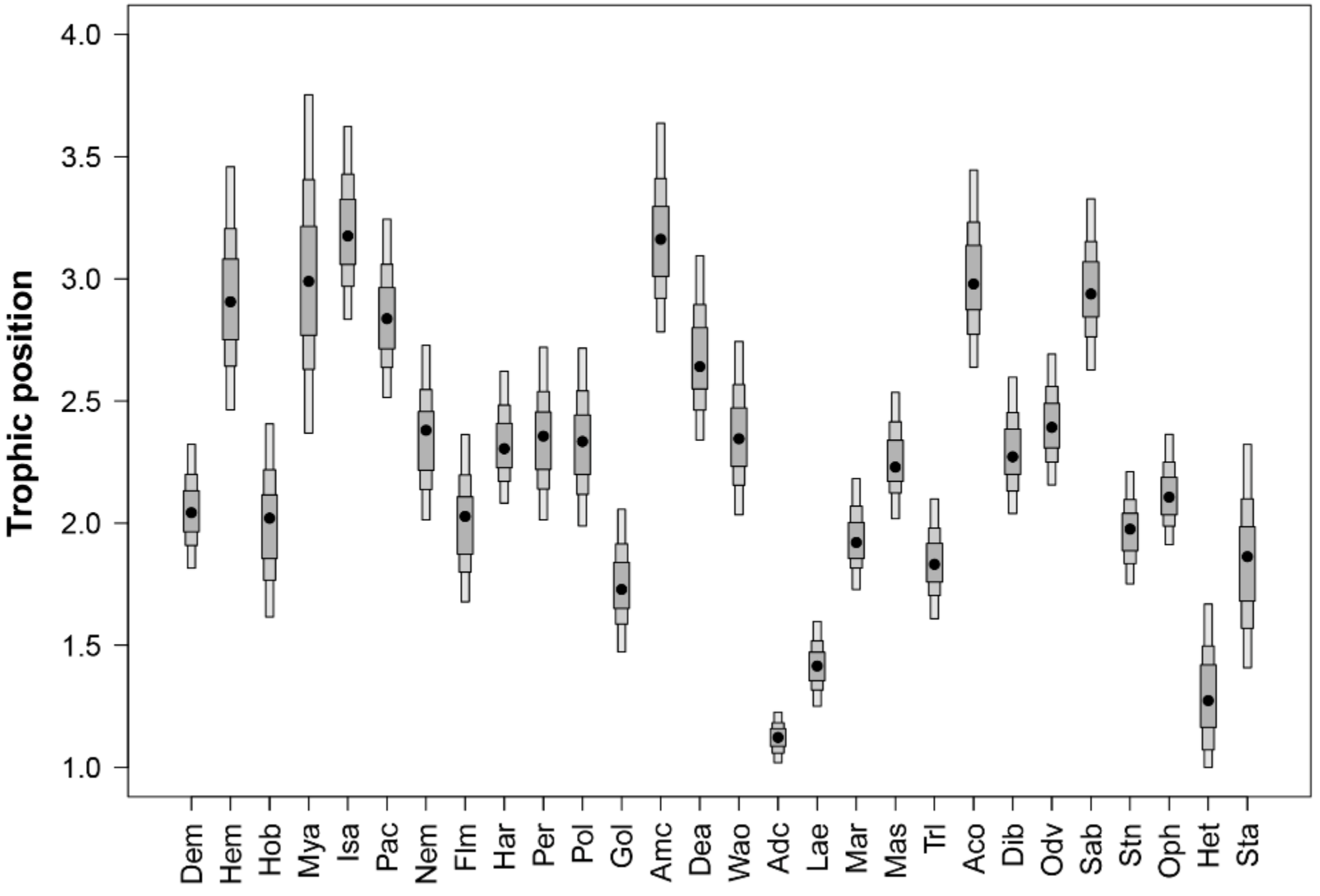
Sample numbers

Sample nature	N
SPOM	12
Biofilm	57
Sympagic algae	20
Himantothallus grandifolius blades	16
Harmotohe sp.	30
Flabelligera mundata	22
Polycirrus sp.	19
Perkinsiana sp.	24
Trophon longstaffi	22
Marseniopsis sp.	21
Laternula elliptica	21
Adamussium colbecki	25
Ophiura sp.	23
Sterechinus neumayeri	21
Diplasterias brucei	21
Odontaster validus	23
Heterocucumis sp.	23
Staurocucumis sp.	19

A glimpse at secondary consumers



Low trophic positions of consumers



Inter-annual change in isotopic compositions