

Journal of Animal Ecology

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Article type : Research Article

Handling Editor: Stewart Plaistow

Title: The role of plasticity in the evolution of cryptic pigmentation in a freshwater isopod

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This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: 10.1111/1365-2656.12950

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Abstract

1. Cryptic pigmentation of prey is often thought to evolve in response to predator-mediated selection, but pigmentation traits can also be plastic, and change with respect to both abiotic and biotic environmental conditions. In such cases, identifying the presence of, and drivers of, trait plasticity is useful for understanding the evolution of crypsis.
2. Previous work suggests that cryptic pigmentation of freshwater isopods (*Asellus aquaticus*) has evolved in response to predation pressure by fish in habitats with varying macrophyte cover and coloration. However, macrophytes can potentially influence the distribution of pigmentation by altering not only habitat-specific predation susceptibility, but also dietary resources and abiotic conditions. The goals of this study were to experimentally test how two putative agents of selection, namely macrophytes and fish, affect the pigmentation of *A. aquaticus*, and to assess whether pigmentation is plastic, using a diet manipulation in a common garden.
3. We performed two experiments: i) In an outdoor mesocosm experiment, we investigated how different densities of predatory fish (0 / 30 / 60 threespine stickleback [*Gasterosteus aculeatus*] per mesocosm) and macrophytes (presence / absence) affected the abundance, pigmentation and body size structure of isopod populations. ii) In a subsequent laboratory experiment we reared isopods in a common garden experiment on two different food sources (high / low protein content) to test whether variation in pigmentation of isopods can be explained by diet-based developmental plasticity.
4. We found that fish presence strongly reduced isopod densities, particularly in the absence of macrophytes, but had no effect on pigmentation or size structure of the populations. However, we found that isopods showed consistently higher pigmentation in the presence of macrophytes, regardless of fish presence or absence. Our laboratory experiment, in which we manipulated the protein content of the isopods' diet, revealed strong plasticity of pigmentation and weak plasticity of growth rate.
5. The combined results of both experiments suggest that pigmentation of *A. aquaticus* is a developmentally plastic trait, and that multiple environmental factors (e.g. macrophytes, diet, and predation) might jointly influence the evolution of cryptic pigmentation of *A. aquaticus* in nature on relatively short timescales.

Keywords phenotypic plasticity, divergent selection, phenotypic divergence, *Asellus aquaticus*, macrophytes, shallow lakes, crypsis, stoichiometry, computer vision

Introduction

Natural selection and plasticity often interactively shape the phenotypic distribution of natural populations. Developmental plasticity, where the environmental conditions experienced during juvenile development and growth produce lasting effects on adult phenotypes, can be an important source of phenotypic variation within a population. Such plasticity can be neutral, adaptive or maladaptive depending on the environmental context and inclusive of interactions with abiotic and biotic conditions. Phenotypic differences across populations are often explained by divergent natural selection (Rundle & Nosil 2005; Schluter 2009; Calsbeek & Cox 2010), but the role of plasticity (developmental or otherwise) during adaptive population divergence is not well understood (Schlichting 2004; Kingsolver & Pfennig, 2007, Pfennig, Snell-Rood, Cruickshank, Schlichting & Moczek 2010). Sometimes phenotypic differences between environments can arise solely due to plasticity (Crispo, 2008) and be correlated or uncorrelated with fitness variation (Merilä, Laurila, Laugen, Räsänen, & Pakkala, 2000; Ghalambor, McKay, Carroll, & Reznick, 2007). Indeed, for many classic cases of adaptive population divergence (Table 1), it is often challenging to identify how multiple environmental differences can jointly affect the interaction between trait plasticity and natural selection (Nosil, Harmon, & Seehausen, 2009; Schmid & Guillaume, 2017).

During adaptive population divergence, multiple environmental differences (habitat, predation, resources, etc.), can potentially cause divergent plastic responses, and influence the strength of divergent natural selection. Predators, for example, are capable of causing divergent selection (Quinn & Kinnison, 1999; Bell, 2001; Moser, Roesti, & Berner, 2012; Bijleveld, Twietmeyer, Piechocki, van Gils, & Piersma, 2015) and of inducing plastic responses (Scoville & Pfrender, 2010; Walsh et al., 2016). Similarly, plants can both affect the strength of divergent selection on grazing prey species through the food web (Carpenter & Lodge, 1986) and can lead to plasticity by affecting light regimes (Tollrian & Heibl, 2004; Miner & Kerr, 2011) or nutrient dynamics (Polunin, 1984; Hart & Lovvorn, 2003). However, it is also possible that both biotic and abiotic environmental differences can interact to affect the distributions of phenotypes and fitness, and their covariance. Macrophytes can generate structural complexity (Kovalenko, Thomaz, & Warfe, 2011) and affect background coloration (Tavares, Pestana, Rocha, Schiavone, & Guillermo-Ferreira, 2018), to which not all prey phenotypes are equally well adapted (Lürig, Best & Stachowicz, 2016). Thus, differences in macrophyte cover may affect the strength and direction of selection from predation (Merilaita, Lyytinen, & Mappes, 2001).

Rapid differentiation of cuticular pigmentation among populations of the benthic freshwater isopod *Asellus aquaticus* (L., Crustacea) was first documented in southern Sweden by Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö (2004). A subsequent survey among 29 Swedish lakes revealed that isopods are more pigmented in dark reed environments (Reed: *Phragmites australis*), less pigmented in lighter macrophyte environments (*Chara tomentosa*), and the least pigmented on light sand environments without macrophytes (Fig. 2; Hargeby, Stoltz & Johansson, 2005). In addition, fish predation trials in the laboratory have shown that darker isopods have higher survival in dark-colored substrate, while lighter isopods have higher survival in environments with lighter substrates (Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö, 2004). Such results suggest that visual

predation along an environmental gradient of background coloration is driving the rapid evolution of cryptic pigmentation of *A. aquaticus* (Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö, 2004). Importantly, macrophytes may alter predation susceptibility by making isopods more or less visible against their background, but also by altering the 3D structure of the habitat and the variety of refugia (Kovalenko, Thomaz, & Warfe, 2011; Tavares, Pestana, Rocha, Schiavone, & Guillermo-Ferreira, 2018).

However, previous work has not emphasized how macrophytes might additionally influence the evolution of cryptic pigmentation of isopods, e.g. via their effects on food quality. It is known that macrophytes, and their associated epiphytes, periphyton, and detritus can strongly affect the abundance and composition of invertebrate populations by altering resource quantity and quality (Sutcliffe, Carrick & Willoughby, 1981; Polunin, 1984; Diehl & Kornijów, 1998; Hart & Lovvorn, 2003; Jannot, Wissinger, & Lucas, 2008). Previous work has demonstrated how such resource variation can affect life history traits and development in *A. aquaticus* (Marcus, Sutcliffe, & Willoughby, 1978; Arakelova, 2001). There is also a functional link between the quality of macrophyte detritus and isopod pigmentation: the essential amino acid tryptophan is the precursor molecule in the developmental pathway of *A. aquaticus*' ommochrome based pigmentation (Needham & Brunet, 1957; Shamim, Ranjan, Pandey, & Ramani, 2014), and because it cannot be synthesized by animals it must be acquired through feeding, e.g. on macrophytes (Muztar, Slinger & Burton, 1978). Building on this previous work, and the results of our mesocosm experiment (see below), we hypothesized that pigmentation of *A. aquaticus* could be developmentally plastic, and influenced by diet (Fig. 1).

In this study, we used two experiments to investigate the underlying causes of phenotypic variation in the freshwater isopod *A. aquaticus*. First, using an outdoor mesocosm experiment we tested how survival, body size, and pigmentation of isopods depended on fish density and macrophyte presence/absence. Second, in a laboratory common garden experiment, we tested how diet (high and low protein content) affected the build-up of pigmentation throughout isopod development. Taken together, our experiments test two specific hypotheses: **I)** fish and macrophytes jointly affect patterns of (cryptic) isopod pigmentation and **II)** isopod pigmentation is a developmentally plastic trait influenced by differences in diet.

Materials and methods

Study system

Asellus aquaticus is a freshwater isopod that is common in water bodies across Europe and parts of Asia (Sworobowicz et al., 2015). *A. aquaticus* can have a semelparous uni- or bivoltine reproductive cycle, depending on geographic and local conditions (Økland, 1978; Arakelova, 2001). It occurs in many different microhabitats, e.g. dense patches of *Elodea canadensis* (Marcus, Sutcliffe, & Willoughby, 1978), stands of *Chara* and reed (Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö, 2004) and sandy substrates (Hargeby, Stoltz & Johansson, 2005). *A. aquaticus* is mainly a detritivore (Marcus, Sutcliffe, & Willoughby, 1978; Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö, 2004) and an important prey item for invertebrate predators and fish (Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö, 2004; Hart & Gill, 1992). As such, it plays a significant role in freshwater food webs (Jeppesen, Sondergaard, Sondergaard, & Christoffersen, 1998). The distinctive pigmentation of isopods is composed of melanins (Needham, 1970), which are subcutaneous and therefore remain in the integument during molting. Consistent with developmentally plastic traits, loss or gain of pigmentation after reaching maturity has not been reported.

Effects of fish and macrophytes on isopods (mesocosm experiment)

In 2015, we set up 50 outdoor mesocosms (1000 L) at Eawag Kastanienbaum in a randomized block design that included factorial combinations of macrophytes (presence / absence) and fish (threespine stickleback - *Gasterosteus aculeatus*) in densities of 0, 30 and 60 individuals per tank. To establish the experiment in early May 2015, we filled each mesocosm with water from Lake Lucerne, added a 2 cm thick layer of gravel (2-4 mm grain size) and a 1 cm thick layer of fine sediment from Lake Lucerne, consisting of silt and organic material. On May 26th 2015, we then planted two species of common macrophytes, *Chara tomentosa* (hereafter *Chara*) collected from Lake Lucerne, and *Myriophyllum spicatum* (hereafter *Myriophyllum*) collected from a stream in the Lake Constance watershed (Oberriet, St. Gallen).

All collected plant material from either location was divided into 60 equal portions by visual partitioning, of which 50 were randomly assigned to mesocosms and 10 were used to measure initial plant biomass (Table S1) and to count and phenotype isopods at the start (see below). In the 25 mesocosms designated as “macrophyte tanks” both plant species were placed at the bottom of the tank and allowed to root. The other 25 mesocosms designated as “no macrophyte tanks” received invertebrates associated with the macrophytes, including *A. aquaticus*. We accomplished this by thoroughly washing the plant material into the water, and then temporarily suspending it in large mesh enclosures for 2.5 weeks. In this process only very little *Chara* detritus was released into the “no macrophyte” tanks (low *Chara* biomass in “no macrophyte” tanks, see Table S1).

Isopods were introduced to the mesocosms by planting or washing plant material into the water (see above): on average 159 ± 29 (mean \pm SD) isopods were introduced to each mesocosm separately by planting or suspending both macrophyte species. We counted and phenotyped isopods coming from the 10 aliquots of both macrophyte species. Approximately 50% of the isopods were introduced from *Myriophyllum* (80 ± 34 , mean \pm SD) and 50% from *Chara* macrophytes (79 ± 26 , mean \pm SD). The isopods were exposed to experimental conditions for six months (May-Oct), which corresponds to presence of 2 - 3 generations, and experienced fish predation for 3 months (Aug-Oct).

On August 8th 2015, we added fish (threespine stickleback) to 40 mesocosms at a density of either 30 or 60 individuals per tank. The stickleback were laboratory-reared juveniles (3 months old) that we bred from wild-caught stickleback from the Lake Constance region. In each tank, the fish were either a mixture of lake and stream ecotypes, or their hybrids. Thus, both the macrophytes and the fish predators represented a diverse mixture from both lake and stream habitats.

We terminated the experiment on Oct 22nd, after six months, and sampled the isopods from all mesocosms by dragging a net with a 28×28 cm opening and 100- μ m mesh size across the bottom (sampling $\frac{1}{3}$ of the benthic environment). We preserved all sampled isopods in the freezer for subsequent phenotypic analysis. At the end of the experiment, we quantified total macrophyte biomass of all species (Table S1), and the nutrient concentrations of each species (*Myriophyllum*, *Chara*, and filamentous algae) with an elemental analyzer (Pyro-cube and Isoprime; Elementar, Table S2).

Effects of diet on development of pigmentation (laboratory experiment)

In the following year (2016), we set up a laboratory experiment to test for developmental plasticity of pigmentation in *A. aquaticus* by manipulating dietary nutrient composition (ratios of N, P, and C) during development and measuring rates of pigmentation change and growth over 100 days. For the high nutrient diet, we mixed a substrate containing 80% dry yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) and 20% potato starch with agar and filtered lake water. The low nutrient diet was prepared in the same way, but with 20% yeast and 80% starch. Individual isopods from a total of 11 families were reared in a full sib, split family design: half of each family was reared with a low nutrient diet and the other half with a high nutrient diet. To obtain the families, we collected >500 adult *A. aquaticus* from *Chara* vegetation in Lake Lucerne (47°00'06.8"N 8°20'02.7"E) and established them in a single aquarium (160L with lake water) in the laboratory. We maintained this population with *Chara* plant material as substrate, at 20°C with a 12:12 hour light / dark cycle. These isopods were allowed to mate freely in the tank, and brooding females were isolated and reared in separate containers until their juveniles were ready for the experiment (5-10 days). Once a mother released her juveniles, we randomly distributed single individuals into 50 ml polyethylene tubes. The tubes were filled with filtered lake water and contained a pellet of one of the food types. We placed the racks that held the tubes in a water bath at 20°C to buffer against temperature changes and with a 12:12 h light / dark cycle. Whenever a food pellet was fully consumed by an isopod, we replaced it with a one of the same kind. We changed half of the water in each tube every two weeks.

Isopod phenotyping

In the mesocosm experiment, we imaged thawed isopods with a modified flatbed scanner (Epson) in high resolution (2400 dpi). Individuals were placed inside a water film on the scanner to minimize reflectance and artifacts during the scanning (Fig. 3B). We included gray scale card and millimeter reference cards in all pictures to ensure reproducible brightness conditions and magnification.

In the plasticity experiment, we took pictures of live isopods using a camera stand with a digital single-lens reflex camera (Canon) and a 100 mm macro lens (Tamron). We placed a single isopod on a white plastic bowl underneath the camera that was illuminated with an LED-spotting (Leica). We took a picture of every individual isopod at the start of the experiment, and every two weeks over the course of the experiment.

We measured pigmentation and body size of isopods in both experiments by using computer vision techniques that analyzed digital pictures of the specimens. Pigmentation and body size of isopods were extracted from all images with a self-written python package (<https://github.com/mluerig/phenotype>). The package uses thresholding algorithms and segmentation to locate isopods in the image and extract the phenotypic information from the are marked as the animal (dorsal region of isopod torso = carapace excluding legs and antennae). The gray scale values from these pixels are then extracted, averaged and converted to a pigmentation scale from 0 (gray scale value of 255) to 1 (gray scale value of 0). Body size was measured as carapace length, excluding legs and antennae, using the same pixels from the marked area. Results produced with this method were not different from measurements of the same images using ImageJ (Fig. S1, linear correlation between methods: 0.97, $P=0.0291$ [(Schindelin et al., 2012)]).

Pigmentation in isopods is strongly dependent on body size, such that bigger isopods are more pigmented than smaller isopods in both our source populations (Fig. 3). To explore how pigmentation might vary among treatments independently of body size, we size-corrected pigmentation using a linear regression of pigmentation and log transformed body size in the source populations (Fig. 3: intercept = 0.082, slope = 0.671). Hereafter, we refer to size-corrected pigmentation as “pigmentation”.

Data Analysis

We used a series of linear mixed models (LMMs) to test for treatment effects on isopods in both the mesocosm and the laboratory experiments (Table 2). All LMMs were run using the R-package nlme (J. Pinheiro, Bates, DebRoy, Sarkar, & R Core Team, 2017) with normal error distributions.

In the mesocosm experiment, we used a LMM to test for differences in three response variables at the tank level: isopod abundance (Model M1), size corrected pigmentation (Model M2) and body size (Model M3). The response variables in M2 and M3 were tank averages. For M1-M3, the fixed effects were macrophyte presence, fish density (0, 30, or 60 individuals), and their interaction, and the random effect was spatial block. Because of the unbalanced experimental design (10 tanks without fish, 20 tanks with 30 fish, 20 tanks with 60 fish) we parameterized the models with sum-to-zero constraints and performed all tests based on type III sum-of-squares (Quinn & Keough, 2002). Results of F-tests and likelihood-ratio tests are reported for fixed and random effects, respectively. Additionally, to test for differences in isopod densities between fish presence and absence (0 vs. 30 and 60) we used a post-hoc analysis (Tukey all paired comparisons from R-package multcomp, [(Hothorn, Bretz, & Westfall, 2008)]). Finally, we also tested for interactions between body size and treatment at the individual level (M4). For this model, uncorrected pigmentation was the response variable, and the fixed effects were body size, macrophytes, fish, and their interactions. We also added tank identity to the random effects, by nesting tanks inside blocks.

In the laboratory experiment, we tested for the effect of dietary nutrient concentration on the development of pigmentation (Model M5) and body size (Model M6). For each model, the fixed effects were time (days since start), and diet type. To account for repeated measurements of the same individuals we included individuals nested within families as random effects. We focused on the linear rate of growth and pigmentation accumulation over the first 70 days, because after this time mortality rates were too high (fewer than 50% of individuals were still alive) to accurately quantify variation in non-linear patterns (Fig. S2). To test for overall differences in survival between individuals across families and between diet types we used a log-rank test (R-package survminer [(Kassambara & Kosinski, 2017)]).

Residuals of all models were checked for normality and homoscedasticity using diagnostic plots. The models involving repeated measurements (M5 and M6) were also screened for presence of temporal autocorrelation using correlograms. In the case of heteroscedasticity, we included an appropriate variance function to model the variance structure of the errors (grouped or power variance function [(J. C. Pinheiro & Bates, 2000)]). All analyses were performed in the programming language R (R Core Team, 2017).

Results

Mesocosm Experiment

At the end of the experiment, isopod densities were significantly lower when fish were present in the mesocosms than when fish were absent. This effect, however, was dependent on the presence of macrophytes, which increased isopod survival, particularly at high density (Fig 4, M1: interactive effect). In the absence of fish, isopod densities in some mesocosms without macrophytes were very high, but the mean density was not significantly different from mesocosms with macrophytes. Isopod pigmentation was higher in the presence of macrophytes, regardless of fish density (Fig. 5A, Table 2: M2). In addition, the population of isopods in the mesocosms tended to be less pigmented than the population used to inoculate the experiment starting population (Fig. 5A solid line). Body size did not differ among the treatments (Fig. 5B; no effect of macrophytes or fish density in Table 2: M3), and average size did not change relative to the starting population (Figure 5B, solid line). Furthermore, there were no interactive effects of any of the treatments and body size on pigmentation (Table 2, M4), but instead the significant effect of macrophytes on pigmentation was confirmed. Finally, we confirmed that the biomass of our planted macrophytes (*Myriophyllum* and especially *Chara*) was higher in the macrophyte treatment than the no-macrophyte treatment, despite some growth from fragments in the sediment growth from the sediment (Table S1). The *Chara* plants in our experiment also had a higher phosphorus and nitrogen content relative to other sources of detritus in the mesocosms (Table S2).

Plasticity experiment

In the laboratory experiment the dietary manipulation of phosphorus and nitrogen content (Table S2), had strong effects on the rate of pigmentation development through time in *A. aquaticus* (Table 2: M5). Compared to the low nutrient diet, the high nutrient diet yielded higher pigmentation across all families (Fig. 6A). The high nutrient diet also marginally increased growth rates (Table 2: M6), but responses differed strongly among families (Fig. 6B). Furthermore, death rate increased toward the end of the experiment (after day 70, Fig. S2), but with no significant difference in survival among diet treatments (log rank test: $P=0.58$). Among the survivors, we observed notable effects of diet quality on fecundity: a marsupium developed in 11 females reared under high nutrient diet but only one female on a low nutrient diet.

Discussion

Both experiments are consistent with the hypothesis that isopod pigmentation is a developmentally plastic trait, which is likely influenced by food resources. In the mesocosm experiment, isopods collected from tanks with macrophytes had stronger pigmentation than isopods from macrophyte-free mesocosms (Fig. 5A). Although we expected interactive effects of fish predation and macrophytes (i.e. hypothesis I), the effect of macrophytes on pigmentation persisted independent of the large range of fish density in our experiment. Furthermore, our laboratory diet manipulation experimentally confirmed plasticity of pigmentation (Fig. 6A), and, to a lesser extent, plasticity in the somatic growth rate of isopods (Fig. 6B). Below we elaborate on potential mechanisms that might explain these outcomes, and discuss the interactions

between food availability, selection by predators, and the role of plasticity during adaptive divergence of natural populations.

Over the course of the six-month experiment, isopod density in mesocosms without fish predators increased significantly (between 100% and 200%), regardless of macrophyte presence. In the presence of fish isopod population size declined by 25% relative to initial densities, consistent with studies showing that stickleback are effective visual predators of *A. aquaticus* (Salvanes & Hart, 1998). However, when fish were present, isopods densities were higher in mesocosms with macrophytes than in macrophyte free tanks, suggesting that macrophytes can reduce predation pressure by stickleback (Diehl & Kornijów, 1998). This could occur because macrophytes generate structural habitat complexity (Kovalenko et al., 2011; Warfe, Barmuta, & Wotherspoon, 2008, Lürig, Best & Stachowicz, 2016), making it difficult for fish to find and capture any isopods, or because they alter the intensity and heterogeneity of the light environment (Baker & Ball, 1995; Verweij, Nagelkerken, & De Graaff, 2006).

Isopods in mesocosms from our macrophyte treatment exhibited darker pigmentation than in our treatment without added macrophytes, regardless of fish density, suggesting that the effects of macrophytes on pigmentation were independent of fish predation. This was surprising, given the findings of previous work (Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö, 2004; Hargeby, Stoltz & Johansson, 2005; Eroukhmanoff, Hargeby, & Svensson, 2009), but matches one of the scenarios we proposed (“Macrophyte effect”, Fig. 2D). One possible explanation for stronger pigmentation in the presence of macrophytes could be the influence of macrophytes on the light environment. In most tanks, *Myriophyllum* extended its canopy to the water surface, substantially reducing the amount of incoming light. Isopods born into a darker environment could also develop more pigments to be less conspicuous. This phenomenon may also be a reasonable explanation for why isopods in our experiment were generally lighter than the isopods we collection from the wild: in Lake Lucerne and the Oberriet creek, macrophyte cover was higher than in the mesocosms, potentially inducing a much darker environment during isopod development. However, macrophytes that are blocking incoming light may also reduce the amount of UV radiation that organisms are exposed to, which typically increases pigmentation in aquatic organisms (Tollrian & Heibl, 2004; Miner & Kerr, 2011). Given such complexities, we suggest further work could investigate how experimental manipulations of the light environment could influence isopod pigmentation, growth, and survival during development. This would complement the interpretation of our results showing how dietary manipulations affected the development of pigmentation.

Over the course of the entire experiment there was a clear difference in the dietary resources among the treatments that was available for detritivorous isopods (Table 3). In the mesocosms where macrophytes were planted there was significantly higher biomass of *Chara* and *Myriophyllum*. Submerged plants are also often covered with epiphytes (Jeppesen, Sondergaard, Sondergaard, & Christoffersen, 1998), which, beside the plant itself, are part of *A. aquaticus*' dietary spectrum (Graca, Maltby, & Calow, 1993; Marcus, Sutcliffe, & Willoughby, 1978). Furthermore, a substantial portion of the initially planted *Chara* biomass was converted over the season to consumable detritus (lower final living biomass than input biomass). *Chara* which has a relatively high P content relative to its carbon content (i.e. low C:P ratio). Low C:P food resources are often associated with higher growth efficiencies of macroinvertebrates (Elser et al., 2000), while high C:P ratios may hinder growth and other developmental processes (Lee et al., 2008). While we did not find any effects of macrophyte presence on the body size spectrum,

it is possible that nutrient rich detritus may increase the development of pigmentation in isopods. The biosynthesis of the ommochrome pigments in *A. aquaticus* results from a potentially costly physiological pathway (Needham & Brunet, 1957; Needham, 1970) that may require a high quality diet, i.e. with high nutrient concentrations, to function properly. Additionally, macrophyte detritus may have provided the essential compounds required for the biosynthesis. The ommochrome pathway starts with the essential amino acid tryptophan as the precursor molecule (Shamim, Ranjan, Pandey, & Ramani, 2014). *Myriophyllum* and *Chara* are both natural sources for tryptophan (Muztar, Slinger & Burton, 1978), and so increased macrophyte detritus may have provided additional tryptophan that supported the biosynthesis of pigments.

Plasticity due to variation in resources is common in natural populations. Notable examples include plastic morphology and behavior in fishes (perch [*Perca fluviatilis*]: (Olsson, Svanbäck, & Eklöv, 2007); arctic charr [*Salvelinus alpinus*]: (Andersson, 2003)), life history in echinoids (Reitzel & Heyland, 2007) and *Drosophila* (Lee et al., 2008), and growth rates and sexual traits in amphipods (Cothran, Stiff, Jeyasingh, & Relyea, 2012; Sutcliffe, Carrick & Willoughby, 1981). Both of our experiments suggest a strong role for diet-based developmental plasticity of isopod pigmentation. As discussed above, resource-based plasticity could partly explain the consistent differences in pigmentation between mesocosms with and without macrophytes (Fig. 5). Furthermore, across multiple families it was clear that isopods reared on a diet with more nutrients developed pigmentation faster for a given growth. The difference in intercepts of the reaction norms among families (Fig. 6; Table 2: M5 family effect) suggests there is some genetic variation in the pigmentation of *A. aquaticus*. Growth rates were also significantly affected by diet, but the effect was much smaller and the relative differences among family-level responses were greater than for rates of pigmentation development (Fig. 6). Interestingly, three families showed a positive growth rate when reared on the low nutrient diet, but further experiments would be necessary to understand the extent of family-level variation in isopod development and to identify other involved key drivers of plasticity of isopod pigmentation and growth in natural populations.

Our study shows that differentiation in pigmentation in *A. aquaticus*, a process primarily thought to be driven by selection from predation (Hargeby, Johansson & Ahnesjö, 2004; Hargeby, Stoltz & Johansson, 2005; Eroukhmanoff, Hargeby, & Svensson, 2009), may also be influenced by developmental plasticity in response to different diets and macrophyte environments. Our results do not preclude the possibility for selection on cryptic pigmentation from fish predation, which is a previously suggested driver of phenotypic diversification of *A. aquaticus*. It is possible that the plastic response in our experiment was stronger than any selective effects of fish predation, or that the experiment was not long enough to observe predator mediated selection. Overall, our results illustrate that the same environmental factor (macrophytes) known to impact divergent selection for cryptic coloration can also drive phenotypic plasticity in pigmentation via diet. Such cases might be common in natural populations, because the putative agents of selection on a trait might also affect plasticity of the same trait (Table 1). Such complexities highlight the need for more comparative and experimental studies of (mal)adaptive developmental plasticity in general (Scoville & Pfrender, 2010), and its role during adaptive divergence in particular.

Acknowledgements

We thank Gilles Antoniazza, Emil Birnstiel, Laetitia Catalano, Andreas Taverna, Erwin Schäffer, Doris Hohmann, Daniel Steiner and Jaime M. Anaya-Rojas for major contributions to fish breeding and care and mesocosm set-up, maintenance, and sampling. Serge Robert, Patrick Kathriner, and Beat Kienholz provided lab facilities and infrastructure support. MS received financial support from the Slovak Research and Development Agency (APVV-16-0236) and from European Regional Development Fund-Project “Mechanisms and dynamics of macromolecular complexes: from single molecules to cells” (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/15_003/0000441). The Eawag Directorate provided financial support for RJB. MDL was funded by the center for Adaptation to a changing Environment (ACE) at ETH Zürich

Data accessibility

All isopod abundances, phenotypic data and plant biomass from the experiment, as well as phenotypic data collected from Hargeby et al. (2005) have been deposited in the Dryad Digital Repository with the DOI doi:10.5061/dryad.cf225bk (Lürig al. 2018). Furthermore, a snapshot of the python package used for the phenotyping has been archived at Zenodo with the DOI 10.5281/zenodo.1490236 (Lürig 2018).

Authors' contributions

MDL and BM conceived the ideas and designed methodology; MDL, RJB and MS collected the data; MDL and MS analyzed the data; MDL and BM led the writing of the manuscript. All authors contributed critically to the drafts and gave final approval for publication.

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Figures

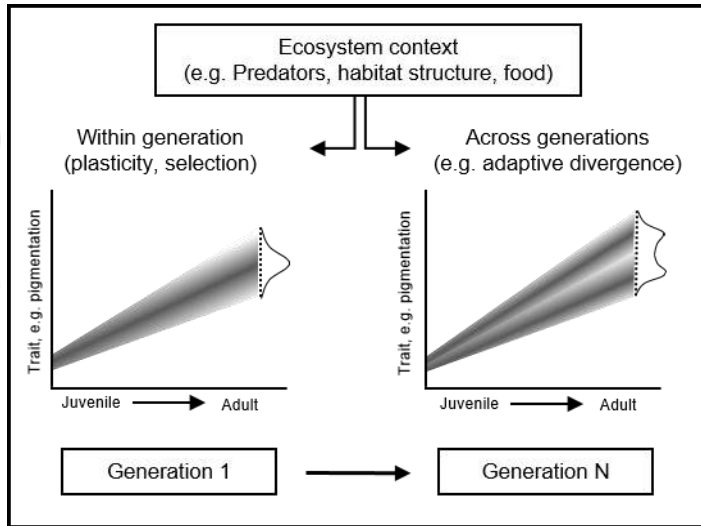


Fig. 1. The ecosystem context during organismal development and growth can determine how the phenotype distribution in a population both develops within generations (i.e. due to plasticity and selection) and evolves across generations. Different evolutionary outcomes across generations are possible (e.g. via adaptive divergence) that can also be influenced by the ecosystem context.

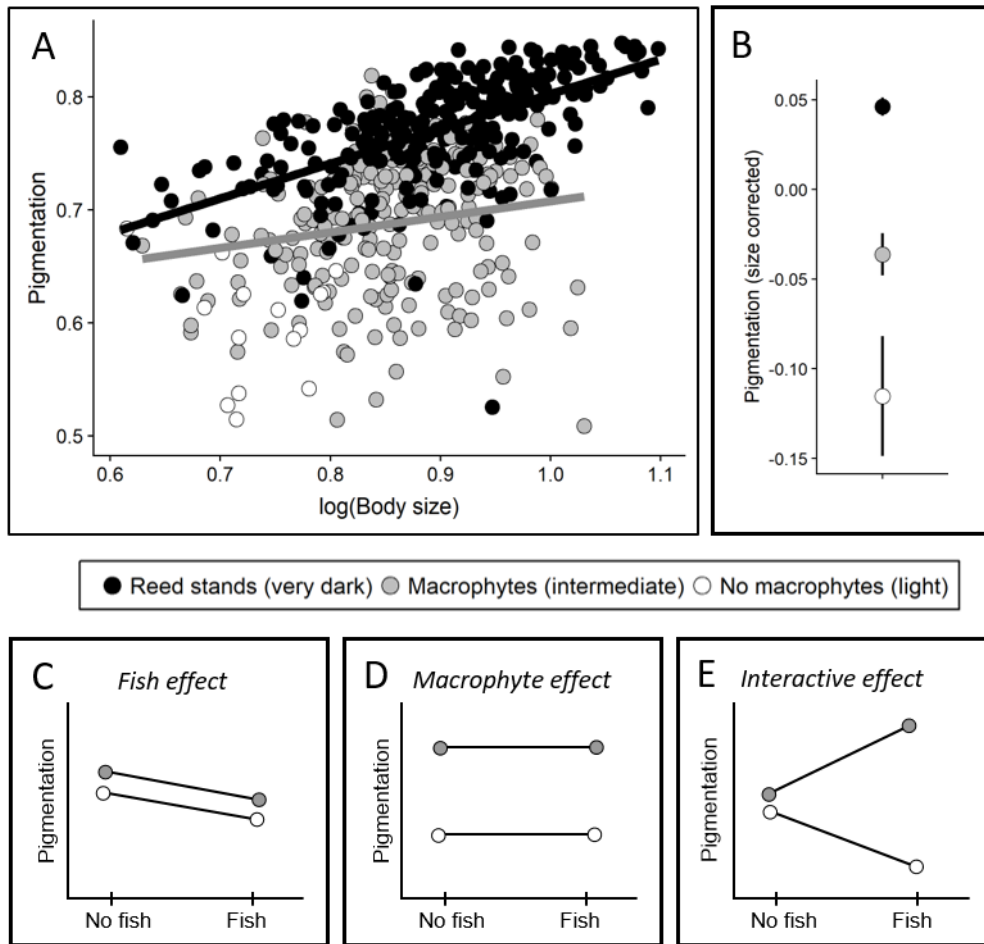


Fig 2. A - The relationship of pigmentation and body size of *A. aquaticus* in microhabitats with different backgrounds (from dark to light): reed (*Phragmites australis*), macrophytes (*Chara tomentosa*) and no macrophytes (sandy substrate). The data includes six lakes from Southern Sweden, and was collected from Hargeby, Stoltz & Johansson (2005) using *WebPlotDigitizer* (Rohatgi 2016). Each data point is an individual; the lines are estimates of pigmentation from a linear mixed effect model with vegetation as main effect, body size as the covariate, and lake as the random effect (main effect of vegetation $P=0.005$). B - Size corrected pigmentation (mean \pm SD) per microhabitat. We corrected pigmentation for body size using the equation of a linear regression analysis including data from all lakes and microhabitats. C-E - Schematic illustrations of how phenotypic differentiation in *A. aquaticus* may depend on different ecosystem contexts. C - Across all macrophyte microhabitats, fish may selectively forage on larger individuals, which may result in larger number of small isopods, which are developmentally less pigmented. D - Across all predation intensities from fish, differences in macrophytes may lead to differences in pigmentation, e.g. through food or light. E - Fish and macrophytes may interact in their effect on pigmentation, e.g.: fish may remove more dark isopods in light environments, or vice versa, and thus could select for pigmentation that matches the background of a microhabitat.

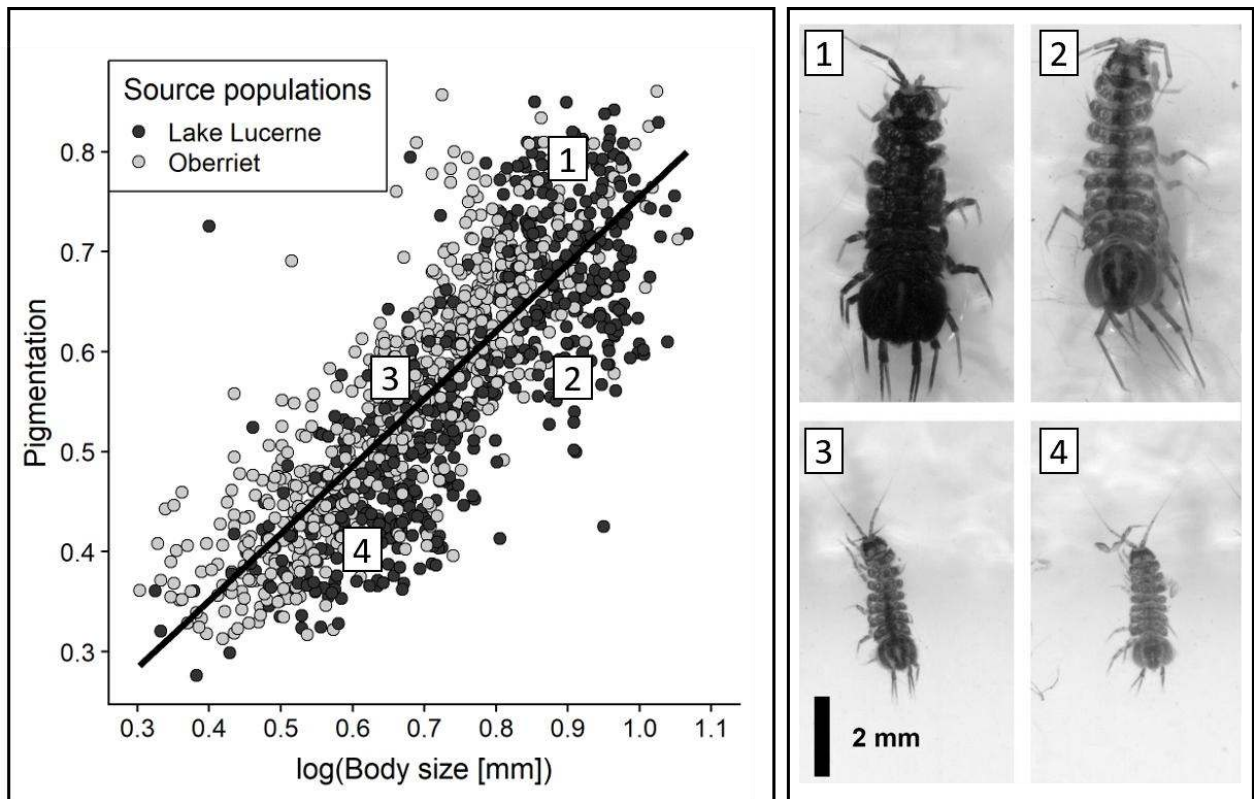


Fig. 3. Pigmentation and body size in the source populations of *Asellus aquaticus* are positively related: linear regression coefficient = 0.671 (linear model of pigmentation and logarithmic body size $P < 0.001$). We used the linear equation of this regression analysis to size correct pigmentation of isopods collected from the mesocosms after the experiment. Isopods from both populations were equally represented in the mesocosm at the start of the experiment. The four pictures show example images of scanned *A. aquaticus*, the numbers indicate their position among the range of phenotypes. 1: dark adult, 2: light adult, 3: dark juvenile, 4: light juvenile (all from Lake Lucerne).

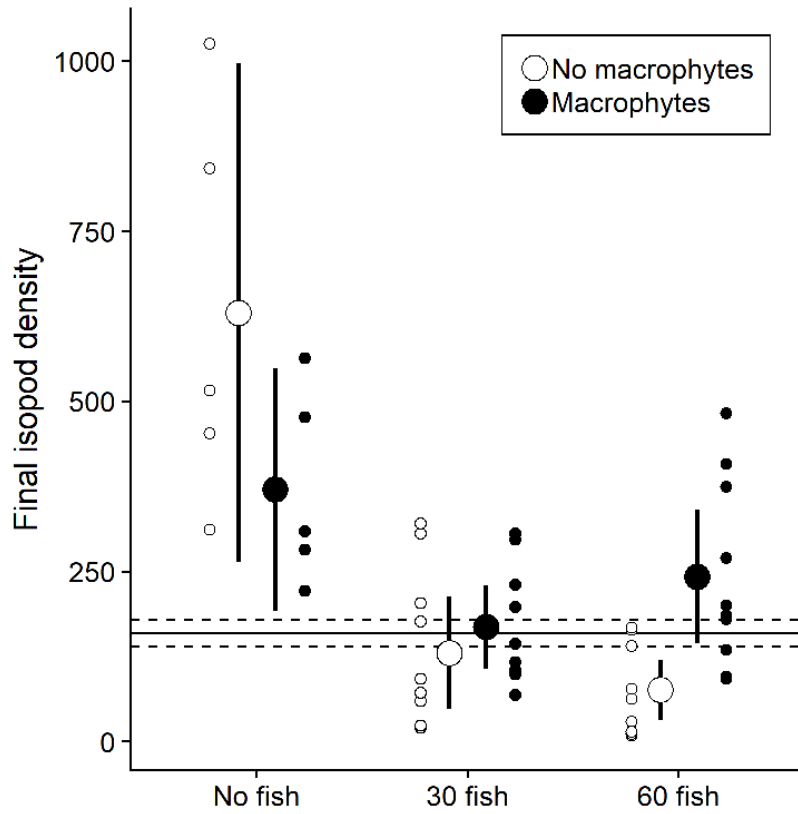


Fig. 4. Fish presence significantly reduced isopod densities (post hoc contrasts: 0 vs.30 fish and 0 vs 60 fish both significant [$p < 0.001$]). However, this interacted with macrophyte presence. Each small point represents a mesocosm tank; the large points are mean \pm 95% confidence interval (ci). At the beginning of the experiment all mesocosms were stocked with 159 ± 29 (mean \pm SD; solid and dashed lines, respectively) specimens of *A. aquaticus*.

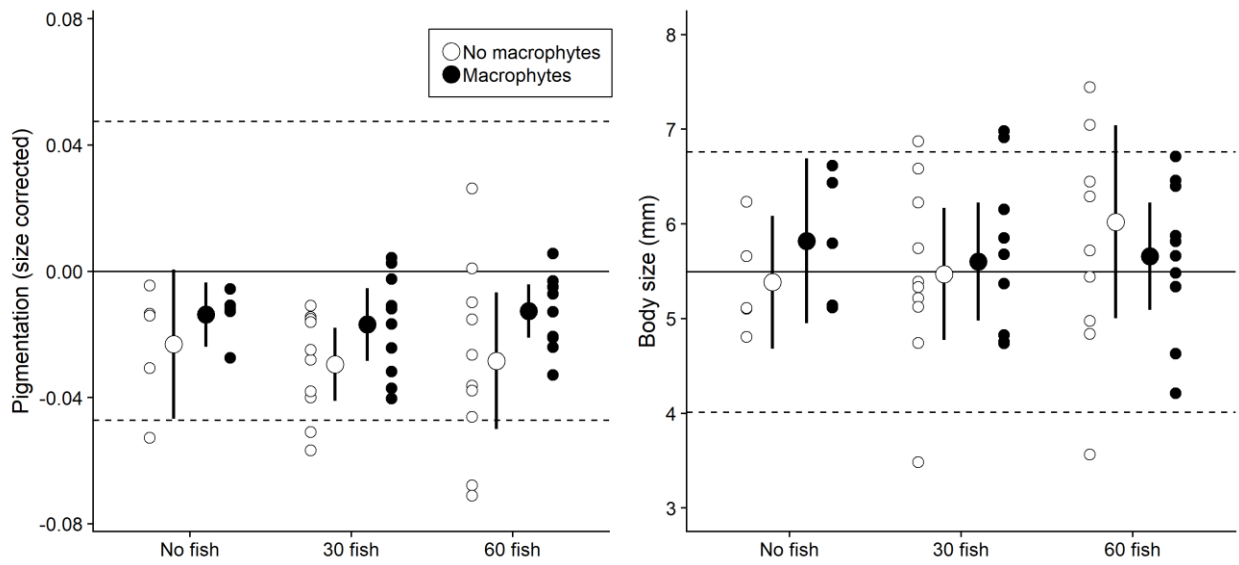


Fig. 5. A - Macrophyte presence yielded higher pigmentation in isopods than macrophyte free tanks (significant main effect of macrophytes in M2 $P=0.002$). Values are size corrected using the linear equation of the regression shown in Fig. 3. B- Body size of isopod specimens retrieved from the mesocosms after the experiment was not affected by any of the treatments. In both panels each data point represents the average response for one mesocosm and the large dots with error bars are mean \pm ci per treatment across all mesocosms. The solid line indicates the mean starting condition and the dashed lines show mean and SD of the starting populations, respectively.

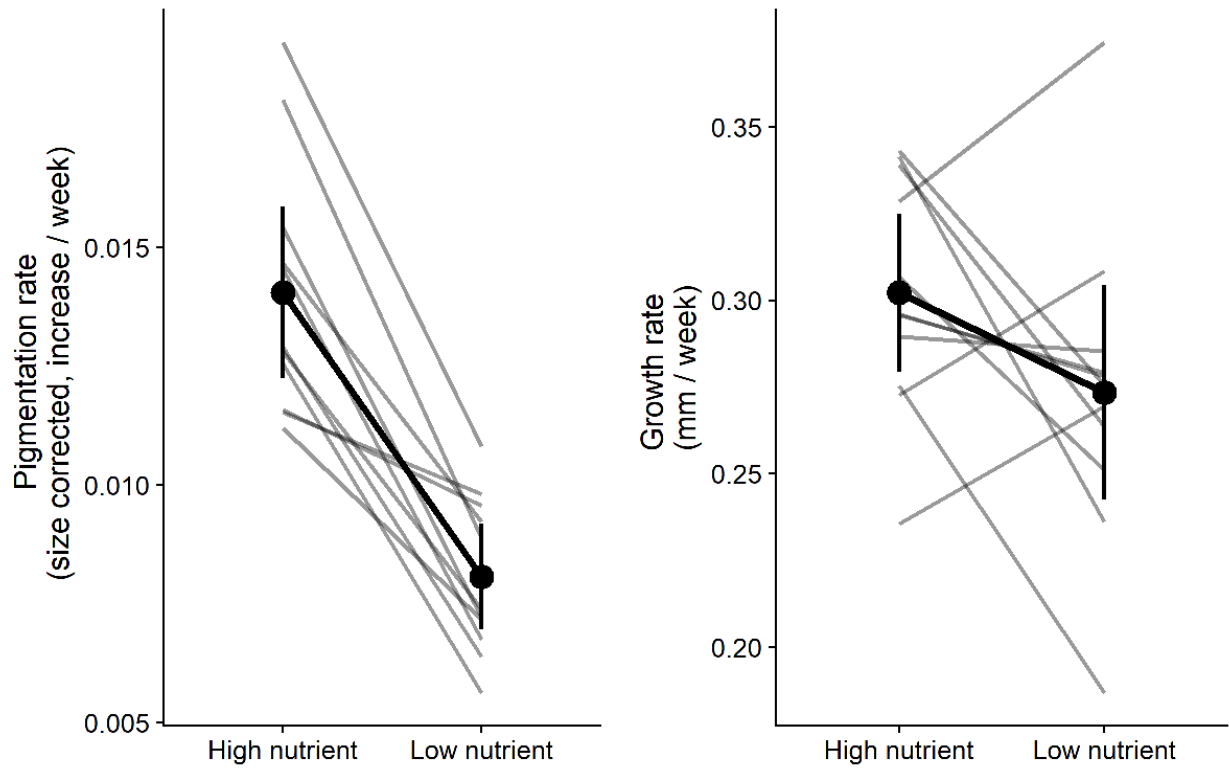


Fig. 6. Rates of increase in pigmentation (left panel) and body size (right panel) of *A. aquaticus* were higher under high nutrient diet (significant main interactive effect of time and diet in M4 and M5). Points are the weekly average change in pigmentation or body size of individuals across all families (mean \pm CI), gray lines indicate family level reaction norms.

Tables

Table 1: Select examples of studies on adaptive population divergence in animals from field observations and laboratory experiments, ordered alphabetically. In all of these examples, at least two studies have found that different environmental factors may affect phenotypes through putative agents of selection and plasticity. We searched for studies using the Paperpile (Google Chrome Extension) literature search, using the words “Adaptive divergence”, and “Phenotypic plasticity”.

| Organism | Traits | Putative agents of selection | References (selection) | Putative agents of plasticity | References (plasticity) |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Barnacle (<i>Semibalanus balanoides</i>) | Cirral length | Temperature, diet, salinity | (Flight, Schoepfer, & Rand, 2010) | Microhabitat (wave action) | (Marchinko, 2003) |
| Bivalve (<i>Cerastoderma edule</i>) | Shell mass | Predation | (Bijleveld, Twietmeyer, Piechocki, van Gils, & Piersma, 2015) | Microhabitat (wave action) | (de Montaudouin 1996) |
| Daphnia (<i>Daphnia</i> spp.) | Pigmentation | Predation, UV radiation | (Miner & Kerr 2011; Scoville & Pfrender, 2010) | Predation, UV radiation | (Tollrian & Heibl 2004; Scoville & Pfrender, 2010) |
| Guppy (<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>) | Life history | Predation | (Reznick, Shaw, Helen Rodd, & Shaw, 1997) | Food | (Reznick & Yang, 1993) |
| Lizard (<i>Anolis</i> spp.) | Limb length | Predation | (Calsbeek & Cox 2010) | Microhabitat (shelter shape) | (Losos, Schoener, Warheit, & Creer, 2001) |
| Moor frog (<i>Rana arvalis</i>) | Body length, tail length, maximum body depth, maximum tail muscle depth and maximum tail depth | Predation, acidity | (Egea-Serrano, Hangartner, Laurila, & Räsänen, 2014) | Predation, acidity | (Teplitsky & Räsänen, 2007) |
| Snail (<i>Littorina saxatilis</i>) | Shell shape | Predation, microhabitat (wave action) | (Garcia, 201; Westram et al., 2014; Johannesson & Johannesson, 1996) | Predation, microhabitat (wave action) | (Hollander & Butlin, 2010) |
| Stickleback (<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>) | Size and age at maturity | Predation, competition | (Leinonen, Herczeg, Cano, & Merilä, 2011) | Food | (Lucek, Sivasundar, Roy, & Seehausen, 2013) |

Table 2: Statistical significance of isopod density, pigmentation and body size in the two experiments (mesocosm and laboratory). M1-M3 test for tank level effects of macrophytes and fish, M4 tests for interactive effects of body size and treatment on individuals, M5 and M6 tests the effect of diet on individuals. All models are linear mixed effect models using type III sum of squares. Significant p-values (<0.05) are in **bold**.

| Model | Response variable | Fixed effects | df | F | p | Random effect | df | X ² | p | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--|----------------------------|----------|------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Mesocosm experiment | M1 | Density | Macrophytes | 1, 40 | 0.048 | 0.762 | Block | 1 | 5.876 | 0.015 |
| | | | Fish density | 2, 40 | 10.183 | <0.001 | | | | |
| | | | Macrophytes x fish density | 2, 40 | 5.864 | 0.006 | | | | |
| | M2 | Pigmentation (size corrected) | Macrophytes | 1, 40 | 4.990 | 0.031 | Block | 1 | 0.017 | 0.897 |
| | | | Fish | 2, 40 | 0.235 | 0.791 | | | | |
| | | | Macrophytes x fish density | 2, 40 | 0.100 | 0.906 | | | | |
| | M3 | Body size | Macrophytes | 1, 40 | 0.272 | 0.605 | Block | 1 | 0.293 | 0.588 |
| | | | Fish | 2, 40 | 0.352 | 0.705 | | | | |
| | | | Macrophytes x fish density | 2, 40 | 0.389 | 0.680 | | | | |
| M4 | Pigmentation | Body size | 1, 2795 | 8531.919 | <0.001 | Block | 1 | 45.178 | <0.001 | |
| | | Macrophytes | 1, 40 | 15.654 | <0.001 | Tank | 1 | 198.174 | <0.001 | |
| | | Fish density | 2, 40 | 0.924 | 0.405 | | | | | |
| | | Body size x macrophytes | 1, 2795 | 0.081 | 0.776 | | | | | |
| | | Body size x fish density | 2, 2795 | 1.287 | 0.276 | | | | | |
| | | Macrophytes x fish density | 2, 40 | 0.236 | 0.791 | | | | | |
| | | Body size x macrophytes x fish density | 2, 2795 | 0.594 | 0.552 | | | | | |
| Laboratory experiment | M5 | Pigmentation (size corrected) | Diet | 1, 85 | 3.305 | 0.073 | Family | 1 | 109.780 | <0.001 |
| | | | Time | 1, 333 | 188.311 | <0.001 | Individual | 1 | 99.358 | <0.001 |
| | | | Diet x time | 1, 333 | 89.549 | <0.001 | | | | |
| | M6 | Body size | Diet | 1, 85 | 2.604 | 0.110 | Family | 1 | 14.940 | 0.002 |
| | | | Time | 1, 333 | 562.316 | <0.001 | Individual | 1 | 184.337 | >0.001 |
| | | | Diet x time | 1, 333 | 4.120 | 0.043 | | | | |