



**Abundance distribution patterns of intertidal bivalves
Macoma balthica and *Cerastoderma edule* at the Murman
coast tidal flats (the Barents Sea)**

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Keywords:	<i>Cerastoderma edule</i> , cockle, <i>Macoma balthica</i> , Barents sea, Geographic abundance distribution, latitudinal variation, species ranges
Abstract:	<p>Density distribution of the common infaunal bivalves, <i>Macoma balthica</i> and <i>Cerastoderma edule</i>, was studied along the Murman Coast of the Barents Sea during 2002–2010. In both species, abundance was generally higher in West Murman in contrast to East Murman. Highest density of <i>Macoma balthica</i> reaching 1535 ind. m⁻² was observed in the Kola Bay. <i>Cerastoderma edule</i> was less abundant; its density rarely exceeded 10 ind. m⁻² in all but one site, where 282 ind. m⁻² was registered. Reconstruction of abundance distribution across <i>Macoma balthica</i> European geographic range revealed that it does not match “abundant-centre” pattern, having features of ramped north. On the other hand, distribution of <i>Cerastoderma edule</i> abundance across the range generally follows “abundant-centre” pattern but southern edge populations show relatively higher abundances as compared to those at the north edge (the Barents Sea).</p> <p>Nazarova_et_al_abstract.doc</p>

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1 INTRODUCTION

2 Patterns of species' abundance at the biogeographic extremes may provide insights into such
3 essential issues in ecology as identification of borders between adjacent biogeographic regions
4 and causes of species range limits. Large-scale distribution of species abundance is also a key
5 element of applied sciences such as planning of protected areas and designation of species into
6 regional Red Lists. A widespread paradigm, known as “abundant-centre hypothesis” (ACH) is
7 widely used to test whether the highest species abundance belongs to the range centre and
8 declines towards range edges (Sagarin et al., 2006). Intertidal fauna is an ideal test system for
9 studying latitudinal gradients. In Western Europe, many intertidal and high subtidal marine
10 invertebrates have extended ranges with distinct north (or north-eastern) and south (or south-
11 western) limits characterized by diametrically opposed combination of environmental conditions.
12 Recent studies on wide-spread marine coastal invertebrates have shown that abundance centre
13 pattern does not apply to most species equally, and even closely related species could show
14 different spatial patterns (Sagarin & Gaines, 2002; Rivadeneira et al., 2010).

15 Empirical approaches to quantify abundance in different parts of the range vary widely. One of
16 the main challenges for examining the abundant centre pattern is a logistical difficulty of
17 sampling throughout the whole species range. Particularly, it could be a problem to get adequate
18 samples from the range edge, where local populations are not stable in time and can
19 spontaneously become extinct and later reoccupy suitable habitats (Sagarin & Gaines, 2002;
20 Sexton et al., 2009).

21 Species ranges are not stable in time, often shifting, expanding and contracting (Gaston, 2009).
22 Fluctuations of environmental variables, such as climate oscillations, may alter population fitness
23 at the distribution limits and range shifts can lag behind environmental changes (Pfenninger et
24 al., 2007; Svenning et al., 2008). Marginal populations exhibit greater temporal variability in
25 abundance being near the species' limit of environmental tolerance, especially in extreme years
26 (Gaston, 2009). Since temporal variation can introduce errors in estimation of spatial abundance

distribution, it is highly important to apply monitoring data series to improve the understanding of differences in abundance between central and edge populations (Holt & Keitt, 2000; Johnstone & Chapin, 2003). The spatial distribution and patchy structure of population density are also likely to determine range limits. Edge populations usually considered to be smaller and more spatially fragmented than populations in the centre of the range (Brown et al., 1995). They may exhibit reductions in diversity and in number of immigrants due to spatial arrangement only, thus resulting in an isolation-by-distance effect (Sexton et al., 2009).

Here, we present the results of the study of abundance distribution of *Macoma balthica* and *Cerastoderma edule*, two key bivalve species at the tidal flats of the Barents Sea. *Macoma balthica* is currently regarded as a complex of Pacific *Macoma balthica balthica* and Atlantic *Macoma balthica rubra* subspecies (Nikula et al., 2007). In Europe this complex spreads from Bay of Biscay up north to the western Kara sea (Figure 1 A). Southern distribution range limit of *Macoma* has shifted several hundreds of kilometres north during last decades (Beukema et al., 2009). Pure *M. balthica balthica* northern distribution limit belongs to the Varanger Peninsula, while populations in the White and Barents seas are proved to form a broad “hybrid swarm” - their genetic composition is intermediate between Atlantic and Pacific forms (Strelkov et al., 2007). *Cerastoderma edule* range is shaped into at least two genetically different groups of populations along the North Atlantic coast, but separation between these groups does not have a subspecies level (Krakau et al., 2012). Earlier we suggested that low density of individuals is typical for *C. edule* in the Barents Sea, a North-Eastern distribution limit for the species (Genelt-Yanovskiy et al., 2010)(Figure 1A). To study latitudinal clines in geographical abundance distributions, we put together published records of mean *M. balthica* and *C. edule* density across species' European ranges with our own observations from the Barents Sea.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

Murman Coast is a northern border of the Kola Peninsula with a coastal line of about 700 km, including numerous bays and fjords. The longest among them, Kola Bay, divide Murman Coast into two regions: Western Murman and Eastern Murman. Murman environmental conditions are determined by westerly warm Murman Coastal Current (Denisov & Dzhenyuk, 1995). Interaction between Murman Coastal Current and Arctic water backflow causes remarkable cooling gradient from West to East Murman. Owing to gradient changes in environment this whole area has transitional biogeographical status – from boreal to arctic zone (Zenkevich, 1963). After E.F. Gourjanova, I.G. Zaks and P.V. Ushakov (Gourjanova & Ushakov, 1929; Gourjanova et al., 1929; Gourjanova et al., 1930) we consider Western Murman, Kola inlet and Eastern Murman as three distinct regions of Murman Coast.

Sampling

Samples were collected at 18 sites across the Murman Coast (all for *C. edule* and 12 of them for *M. balthica*) (Figure 1, table 1). The sampling took place in July–August, from 2002 to 2010. At sites inhabited by *Macoma* alone, 5 cm deep cores with a surface area 0.03 m² were taken; for sites where *Macoma* and *Cerastoderma* occurred together, 0.1 m² corers were used. All samples were sieved through 1 mm mesh. Each tidal level was characterized with five samples at all soft-bottom sites studied.

All collected bivalves were sorted, identified and counted. Shell length of each individual was measured using callipers to the nearest 0.5 mm. Age of individuals was determined by counting annual growth marks on outer side of the shell. This method of age estimation was used basing on previous studies of *Macoma* and *Cerastoderma* in the region, confirming that structural marks on shells of the molluscs in the subarctic seas reflect the annual growth patterns, due to the strong seasonal variation in sea water temperature (Agarova, 1979; Maximovich et al., 1992; Maximovich & Gerasimova, 2004; Nazarova et al, 2010).

Statistical analysis

77 Similar statistical procedures were employed for both species. We started with describing the
78 abundances from each site. We used both medians and means as measures of central tendency
79 and created Tukey boxplots (Tukey, 1976) to illustrate abundance variability. Data on abundance
80 from individual samples from one site was used for plotting. Also year-to-year variability of
81 mean abundance and size-frequency distributions of the species were analysed. Kruskal-Wallis
82 test (Hollander, Wolfe, 1973) was used to compare regional average abundances. The data from
83 published records of mean *C. edule* and *M. balthica* abundance are presented together with our
84 own observations in two maps (Figure 5). For the comparisons we used only mean densities of
85 bigger than spat-sized individuals of *Macoma* and *Cerastoderma*. Full details on all papers used
86 in assessment of global distribution patterns are listed in electronic supplementary (appendix A).

87 All calculations were done with R (R-core, 2014). In all cases, statistical significances
88 were tested at 5% probability level.

89 RESULTS

90 The abundance of *Macoma balthica* at Western Murman and Kola Bay sites varied from
91 hundreds to thousands individuals per square meter. *M. balthica* mean density was significantly
92 different at three regions of the Murman coast (Kruskal-Wallis test: $\chi^2 = 17.6$, $p < 0.0001$).
93 Highest mean *M. balthica* density (3350 ± 520 ind. m^{-2}) was observed in 2005 at Cape Abram
94 (Kola Bay). *M. balthica* density at other Kola bay sites (Pala, Retinskoe and Nagornoe) was
95 much alike Western Murman sites (figures 2A and 3A). The Eastern Murman *M. balthica* mean
96 density was lower than in Western Murman and Kola bay and rarely exceeded 100 ind. m^{-2}
97 (Figure 3A). However, two major exceptions from general pattern were found in 2008
98 (1208 ± 73 ind. m^{-2} in Ivanovskaya bay and 387 ± 77 ind. m^{-2} in Yarnyshnaya bay respectively). In
99 Dalne-Zelenestkaya bay (Eastern Murman), mean long-term (from 2002 to 2008) abundance was
100 47 ± 3 ind. m^{-2} (Figure 2A).

101 The most typical type of *M. balthica* size structure was bimodal, but both cases of
102 prevalence of larger and smaller molluscs could occur in same or subsequent year. So, in 2008

Yarnyshnaya was dominated by 4 mm molluscs, while 17-18 mm-long *M. balthica* prevailed in nearby Dalne-Zelenetskaya and Gavrilovo (Figure 4A).

Alive individuals of *C. edule* were revealed only at 11 sites out of 18. We have not found any alive cockles in Klimkovka, Dolgaya, Tyuva, Gavrilovo, Drozdovka, Ivanovskaya and Gremikha. Density of *C. edule* in Pechenga, Retinskoe, Bolshaya Volokovaya was so low that there was no possibility to estimate it using our sampling scheme, only solitary individuals were present at the tidal flats during our observations. Only empty shells of *C. edule* were found in Gavrilovo and Drozdovka, while Shelpino population completely become extinct after 2009.

In Ura bay only solitary cockles were present in 2005, but in 2010 abundance increased up to 282 ± 68 ind. m^{-2} . The other site with rather high abundance was Pala bay (45 ± 9 ind. m^{-2} in 2006). In subsequent 2007 cockle abundance at this site had dropped, and only solitary cockles were present (Figure 2B). Cockle abundance was notably lower at all other sites (less than 10 ind. m^{-2} at majority of sites studied) (Figure 3B). Mean abundance at the Western Murman was significantly higher than at other two regions (Kruskal-Wallis test: $\chi^2 = 21.4$, $p < 0.001$).

Unimodal age structures with prevalence of single *C. edule* generation was typical for most sites (22-24 mm-long cockles in Ura bay, 2005; 26-28 mm in Shelpino, 2005 and 20-24 mm in Pala, 2007) (Figure 4B).

DISCUSSION

Our results generally match with the expectation that amphi-boreal species *Macoma balthica* will show higher densities in the Barents Sea in comparison to the more temperate-zone *Cerastoderma edule*. Cockle is supposed to be the most sensitive bivalve to low air temperatures on European shores - severe winters were shown to cause mass mortalities among adult *Cerastoderma edule* in the Wadden Sea (Strasser et al., 2001). What effects of severe winters are more critical for cockle survival is still unclear, but probably the sudden rise of the air temperature in subsequent spring may be even more crucial than winter freezing of upper bottom level during low tides (Strasser et al., 2001). The long-term monitoring data from the Wadden

129 Sea provided evidences that long-term variability in average winter temperatures affects bivalve
130 population dynamics in numerous ways (Beukema et al., 2009; Beukema & Dekker, 2014).
131 Community-level analyses revealed that mild warm winters in the Wadden Sea give advantage to
132 recruitment in decapods *Crangon crangon* and *Carcinus maenas*, which in turn essentially feed
133 on postlarvae of bivalves *Macoma balthica*, *Cerastoderma edule*, *Mya arenaria* and *Mytilus*
134 *edulis* (Beukema & Dekker, 2014). The Barents Sea is lacking *Carcinus maenas*, and distribution
135 edge of this species belongs to North Norway. *Crangon crangon* also cannot be regarded as
136 important predator on the Barents Sea intertidal because it does not seem to form permanent
137 populations in the Murman Coast (Kuznetsov, 1960).

138 Regional variability in mean abundance, found in both *M. balthica* and *C. edule* could be
139 interpreted by difference in general environmental conditions between Western and Eastern
140 Murman. West Murman is an area of numerous fjord-like bays, among which Kola Bay is the
141 longest (57 km) and Pechenga and Ura bay are more typical – 16 and 19 km long respectively.
142 Eastern Murman coast contrary is comparatively straight. Also, westerly Murman Coastal
143 Current dominates the nearshore hydrodynamics in Eastern Murman, while longer bays of
144 Western Murman are more isolated and thus provide more stable conditions (Denisov &
145 Dzhenyuk, 1995).

146 According to our data, mean *Macoma* abundance was significantly lower in Eastern
147 Murman sites in comparison to Western Murman and Kola Bay sites. In 1973 mean density of
148 *M. balthica* at Dalne-Zelenetskaya bay (23 ± 9 ind. m⁻²) was much alike the present-day values
149 (Agarova et al., 1976). At Western Murman and in Kola Bay clam densities were comparable
150 with their densities in the White Sea, in the Baltic Sea and in the nearest waters – the northern
151 part of the Norwegian Sea (for example Semenova, 1974; Aschan, 1988; Bostrom & Bonsdorf,
152 2000; Oug, 2001; Varfolomeeva & Naumov, 2013; Rousi et al., 2013; Gerasimova &
153 Maximovich, 2013). Similar to the Eastern Murman values of mean *Macoma* abundances were
154 typical to the southern part of the Norwegian Sea and the Wadden Sea (Sneli, 1968; Beukema,

155 1976; Jensen & Jensen, 1985; Reise et al., 1994) (Figure 5A).

156 Populations of *Macoma balthica* in the South-Western Barents Sea (Murman coast) are
157 certainly not marginal within the species' European part of the range (figures 1A and 5A) –
158 *Macoma* also occur in the Kara sea on the North-East and quite typical for the White Sea
159 intertidal communities, where it reaches high densities (Semenova, 1974; Denisenko et al., 2003;
160 Strelkov et al., 2007; Gerasimova & Maximovich, 2013).

161 Densities of *M. balthica* in Ivanovskaya, the easternmost site for this species in our dataset,
162 were dissimilar with other Eastern Murman localities, because in this site *Macoma* appeared to
163 be more subtidal than intertidal species – it occurs just below the low water level. Subtidal
164 *Macoma balthica* population was previously reported in the Pechora Sea (southeastern part of
165 the Barents Sea) with mean densities of 654 ind. m⁻², which is twice lower than in Ivanovskaya
166 (Denisenko et al., 2003).

167 Our data suggest that *Macoma balthica* abundance distribution within the species range does not
168 clearly follow the “abundant centre” (Figure 5A) and is more likely a “ramped north” (for names
169 of distribution shapes see Sagarin & Gaines, 2002). Surprisingly, mean individual densities of
170 bigger than spat-sized *Macoma* in Western Murman sites were more similar to those in the White
171 and Baltic Seas, and were higher than long-term mean values available for North Sea and Bay of
172 Biscay (see appendix A).

173 Mean densities of adult *Cerastoderma edule* on the Murman Coast of the Barents Sea,
174 varying in most sites around 10 ind. m⁻² were generally lower than in other parts of the species
175 range, presumably in the North and Irish Seas (Beukema, 1989; Ivell, 1989; André & Rosenberg,
176 1991; Bachelet et al., 1992; Ramon, 2003; Dare et al., 2004) (Figure 5B). Long-term mean
177 density of cockles in the Dalne-Zelenetskaya bay was equal to previously reported values
178 (Agarova et al., 1976). Very similar to the Barents Sea cockle density was previously reported
179 from Tromsø, North Norway (Oug, 2001). That data also supports hypothesis that low abundance
180 is typical feature of the northern part of the species range. Taking into account that at

southernmost distribution limit, Merja Zerga (Morocco), cockle density may reach 1200 ind. m⁻² with long-term mean of 638 ind. m⁻² (Gam et al., 2010), abundance pattern could be probably characterized as an “abundance center”, but with a higher abundance at the southern range edge, as compared to the Barents Sea.(Figure 5B). Current easternmost *Cerastoderma* local population is located in Tryashina (~68° 59’ N, ~36° 30’ E), we did not find any alive cockles further east. However, in Drozdovka (~100 km east from Tryashina) we have found out two non-fossilized cockle shells, which mean that temporary outbreak settlement of this species occurred here some years ago. Murman coast clearly is a dynamic range edge for *Cerastoderma*, and thus in five other sites (Pechenga, Retinskoe, Tyuva, Bolshaya Volokovaya, Gavrilovo) there was no possibility to estimate cockle density using standard sampling methods and only shells were found. No cockles were also found in the inner part of the Kola Bay, Cape Abram and Nagornoe (Figure 3B). We suppose that it could be explained by known sensitivity of *Cerastoderma* to pollution load (Savari et al., 1989), which should be significant near the city and port of Murmansk, largest coastal industrial area in the Barents Sea region.

Cerastoderma edule population dynamics has a very typical feature of periodically occurring mass mortality events, when adult densities sharply reduces from thousands of individuals to single cockles per square meter due to a variety of factors. After that slow population recovery takes place (Strasser et al., 2001; Malham et al., 2012; Callaway et al., 2013). In the Wadden Sea during periods, called after Ducrotoy et al. (1991) as “recovery”, cockle density may reach 54000 ind. m⁻² including individuals of all age groups (Malham et al., 2012). According to our study, *Cerastoderma* local population in Ura bay on Western Murman unambiguously had features of recovery phase of population dynamics in 2010 after “crisis” phase observed in 2005 (Figure 2B). During our first visit, only solitary individuals were found across the tidal flat, while in 2010 mean cockle density was 282 ind. m⁻², which is highest density value for the Barents Sea. Our results on cockle local population recovery in Ura bay support the dependence (at least, partial) of Barents sea populations of invertebrates and pelagic fish on larval drift from

207 west (Gjøsaeter, 1995; Mikkelsen & Pedersen, 2004).

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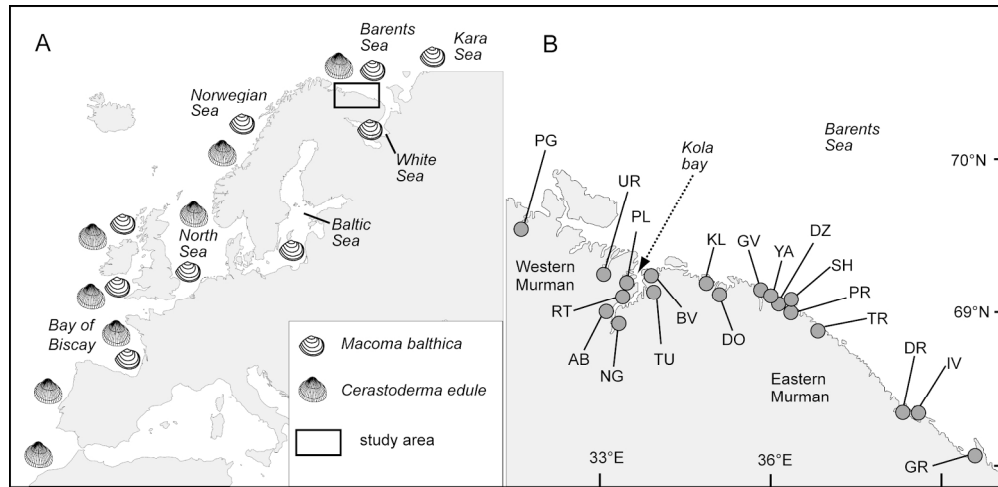
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Table 1. Investigation sites and sampling details

Region	Site (code)	Latitude, longitude	Observation years
Western Murman	Pechenga (PG)	69.58, 31.27	2005
	Ura bay (UR)	68.99, 36.51	2010
Kola bay	Pala bay (PL)	69.19, 33.37	2006-2007
	Retinskoe (RT)	69.11, 33.38	2005
	Cape Abram (AB)	68.98, 33.03	2008
	Severnoe Nagornoe (NG)	68.90, 33.06	2005
	Tyuva (TU)	69.17, 33.63	2005
	Bolshaya Volokovaya (BV)	69.27, 33.62	2005
	Klimkovka (KL)	69.23, 34.64	2009
Eastern Murman	Dolgaya (DO)	69.17, 33.63	2009
	Gavrilovo (GV)	69.17, 35.86	2008
	Yarnyshnaya (YA)	69.09, 36.05	2004 - 2008
	Dalne-Zelenetskaya (DZ)	69.11, 36.10	2002 - 2009
	Shelpino (SH)	69.10, 36.21	2005, 2008
	Porchnikha (PR)	69.08, 36.25	2006 - 2007
	Tryashina (TR)	68.99, 36.51	2008
	Drozdovka (DR)	68.30, 38.44	2008
	Ivanovskaya subtidal (IV)	68.29, 38.71	2008
	Gremikha (GR)	68.03, 39.85	2009



**Fig 1.> Distribution range map of *Macoma balthica* (European part) and *Cerastoderma edule* (A) and study area map (B). See table 1 for sample sites details.
175x85mm (300 x 300 DPI)**

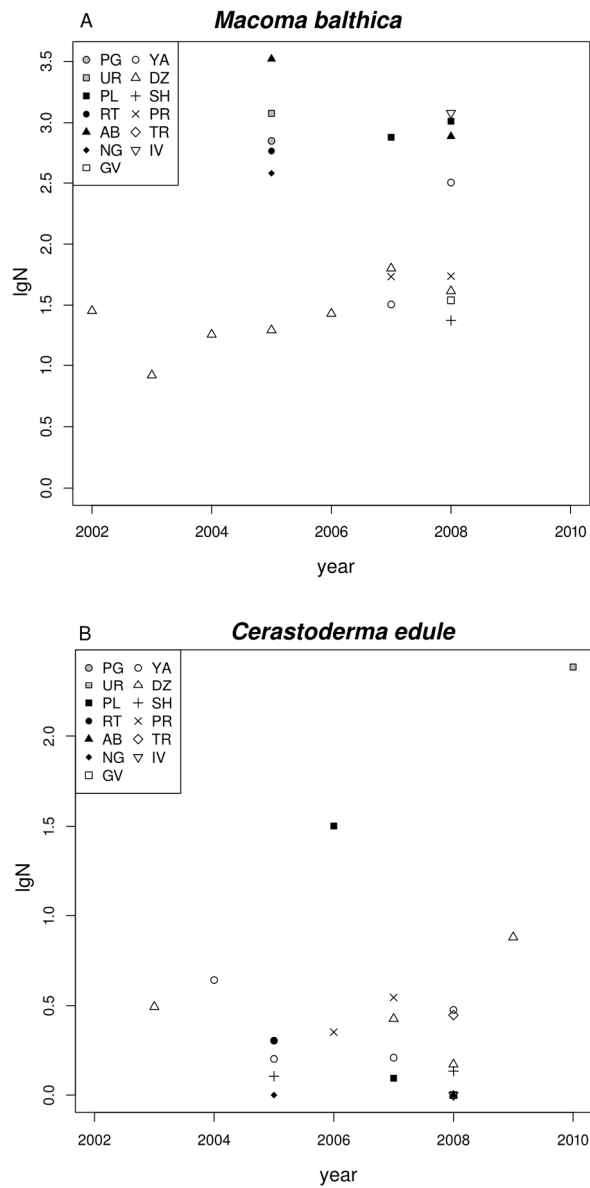


Fig. 2. Year-to-year variability of *Macoma balthica* (A) and *Cerastoderma edule* (B) mean abundance (lgN). Symbol colour corresponds to the region: Western Murman – solid grey, Kola bay – solid black and Eastern Murman – open symbols.

101x208mm (300 x 300 DPI)

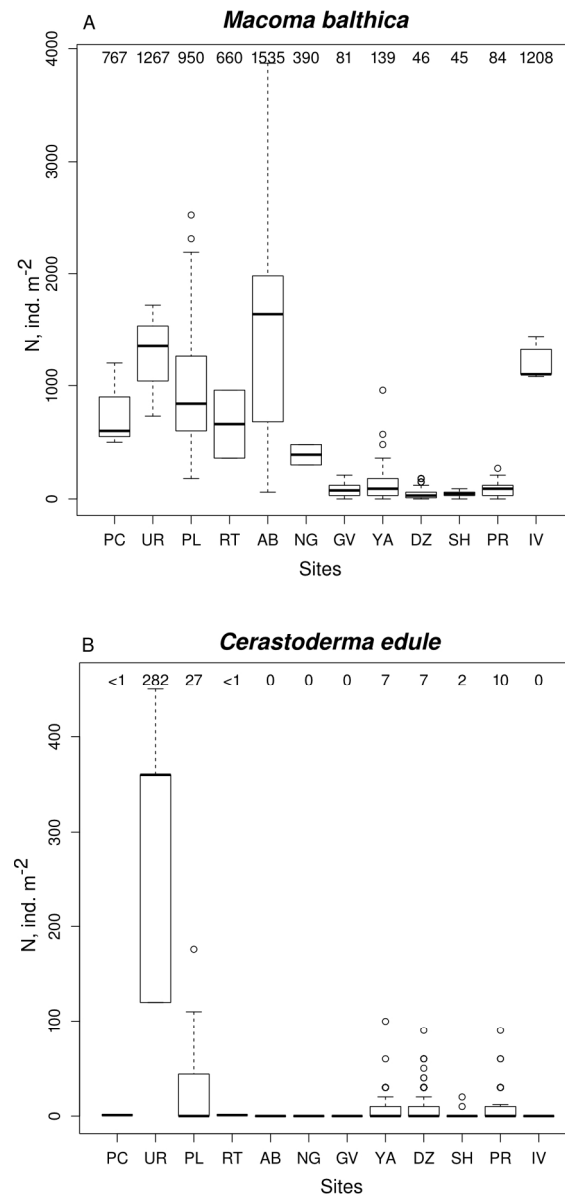


Fig. 3. Mean abundance (N, ind.m⁻²) of *Macoma balthica* (A) and *Cerastoderma edule* (B) in the Barents sea. Samples are arranged from West to East. At the box-plots box marked Q1, median and Q3, whiskers marked 1.5 IQR. Mean abundance indicated at the top.
101x210mm (300 x 300 DPI)

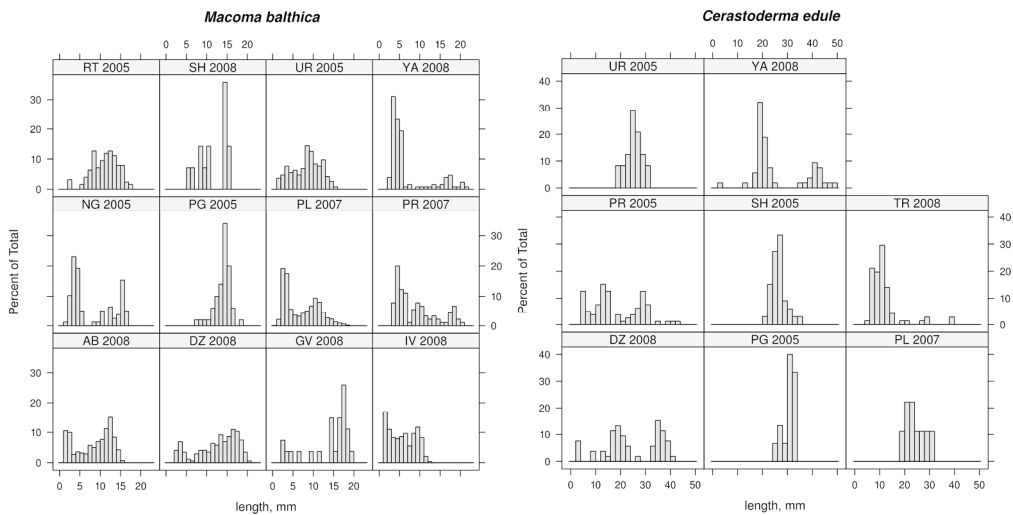


Fig. 4. Size frequency distributions of *Macoma balthica* (A) into 1 mm classes and *Cerastoderma edule* (B) into 2 mm classes.
209x105mm (300 x 300 DPI)

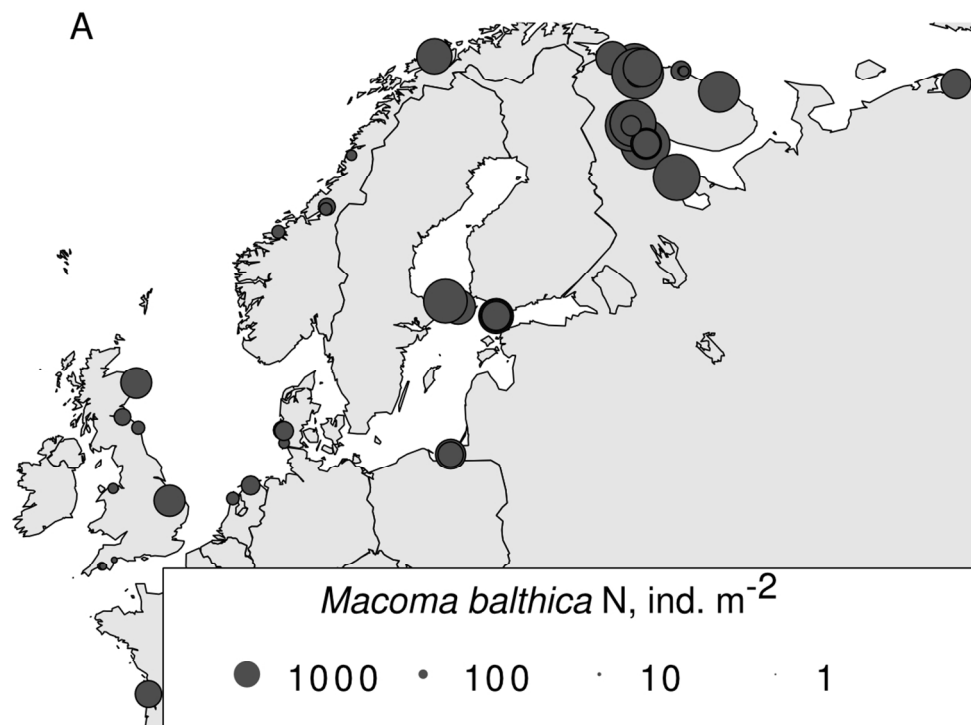


Fig. 5. Geographic abundance distributions of *Macoma balthica* (A) and *Cerastoderma edule* (B). Circles squares are proportional to mean abundance. For sources of data see Appendix A.
109x84mm (300 x 300 DPI)

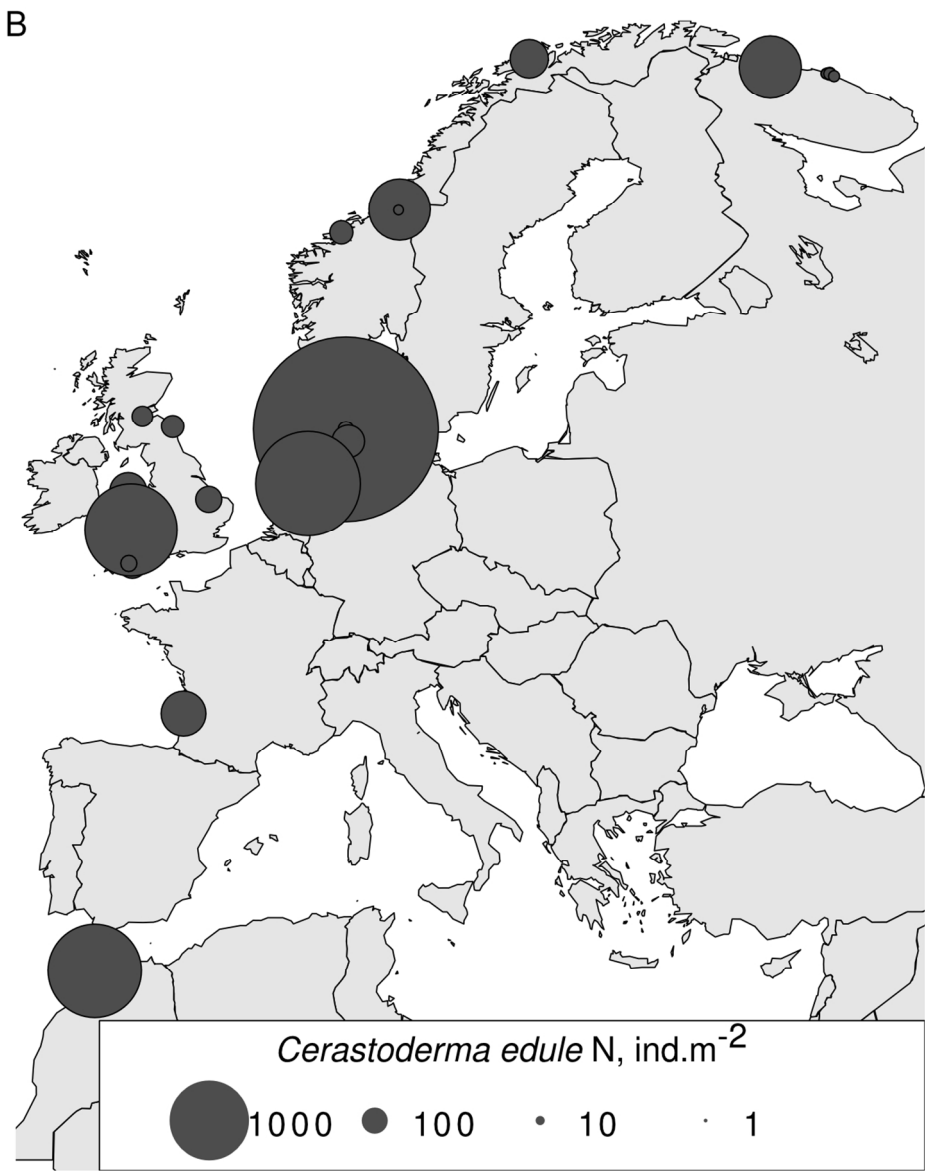


Fig. 5. Geographic abundance distributions of *Macoma balthica* (A) and *Cerastoderma edule* (B). Circles squares are proportional to mean abundance. For sources of data see Appendix A.
108x139mm (300 x 300 DPI)