

Whale-eating deep-sea shrimp discovered

August 5 2015



The *Paracallisoma alberti* species of Amphipod

Two new species of submarine shrimp-like creature, capable of 'stripping' a pig carcass in a matter of days, have been discovered by a team of scientists from the National Oceanography Centre (NOC).

These 3mm long scavenging crustaceans, known as amphipods, live in depths of up to 4500 metres in the North Atlantic Ocean. They act in

swarms to strip the carcasses of dead [marine animals](#), including whales, fish and seabirds.

The lead author of this study, published today in *Zootaxa*, Dr Tammy Horton from the NOC, said "Amphipods are incredibly diverse and adaptable; there are currently around 10, 000 species known to science. They live in all marine environments, from shallow waters to the ocean's deepest trenches, on land and in fresh water"

In order to catch these [new species](#), scientists put mackerel bait in a trap and let it descend into the deep waters. When the traps were retrieved they contained up to 40,000 amphipods!

The new amphipod species have been named in honour of the late, great taxonomist, Roger Bamber, who passed away in February this year. Taxonomy is the science of description, naming and classification of animals or plants.

Tammy added "I gave the species name 'lemarete' to one of the amphipods because it translates from Greek to 'Bold and Excellent', which is the motto on Roger Bamber's coat of arms. I chose this name because it is an accurate description of Roger, as well as being a little cryptic. Roger always put a lot of thought into the names he gave species, such as the tanaid species he named after a many-legged creature in Terry Pratchett's Discworld. "

The study also describes two groups of closely related [species](#) (genera), one of which has been named Haptocallisoma, which means grasping in Greek, because their feet are able to cling to whatever they are eating.

The amphipods were first discovered by NOC scientists off the coast of south-west Ireland, which is the nearest deep water to the UK. Similar creatures have also been discovered by the same scientists during

environmental assessments for the oil and gas industry off the coast of Angola in West Africa.

This research forms part of the NOC's ongoing study of the deep-sea environment, in addition to the centre's work with the oil and [gas industry](#) on environmental impact assessments.

More information: "A revision of the genus *Paracallisoma* Chevreux, 1903 (Crustacea: Amphipoda: Scopelocheiridae: Paracallisominae) with a redescription of the type species of the genus *Paracallisoma* and the description of two new genera and two new species from the Atlantic Ocean." DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.3995.1.12](https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.3995.1.12)

Provided by National Oceanography Centre, Southampton

Citation: Whale-eating deep-sea shrimp discovered (2015, August 5) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-08-whale-eating-deep-sea-shrimp.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.