

Monster discovered in Canadian Arctic

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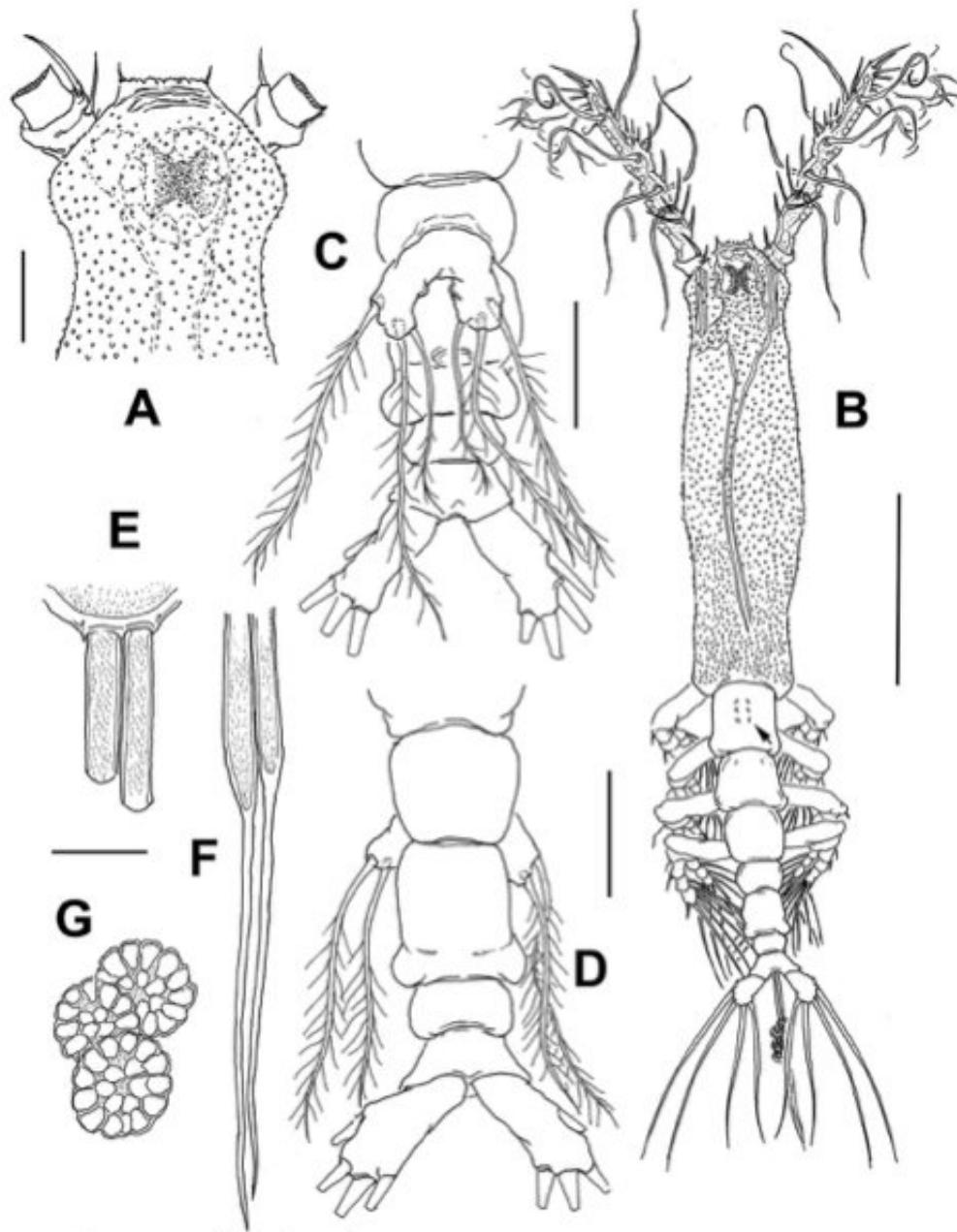
Monstrilopsis planifrons, or "flat headed monster." Credit: Aurelie Delaforge

A University of Manitoba graduate student discovered Canada's first, genuine, scientifically sound monster lurking under our Arctic sea ice.

In adult form, the beast uses eight bristly legs to paddle its mostly translucent body through the dark water. It has one weak eye, no mouth, and two antennas adorned with ragged, flowing hairs. Thankfully, for sleep's sake, it is only 2mm long.

Aurelie Delaforge did not purposefully seek this monster out in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. But she found it, and now Canada's arctic biodiversity includes a new copepod of the Monstrilloida family, derived from the word "monster". There are more than 160 different Monstrilloida zooplankton floating around the oceans, and now Canada's Arctic has a species of its own. Happy Halloween.

This discovery came thanks to two noteworthy coincidences. One, Delaforge studied the taxonomy of small [ocean](#) animals and plants for her masters back home in France and so knew enough to recognize the oddity. Two, while living on an ice camp in Canada's high arctic, she was sampling the ocean to support her PhD thesis on what causes plankton blooms under the sea ice, and she took the samples during the short two-month window these animals take adult form—May and June. Outside of these months, the animal would be nearly invisible as larvae or busy living as a parasite inside [animals](#) like clams and sponges. But by luck, the creature kept showing up in her samples, suggesting it didn't just drift over from somewhere else. It was local.



Monstrillopsis planifrons sp. n., adult female holotype from the canadian arctic. (A) cephalic region, dorsal view (B) habitus, dorsal view (C) urosome, ventral view, showing fifth legs (D) urosome, dorsal view (E) insertion of ovigerous spine on dorsal surface of genital double-somite (F) terminal section of ovigerous spines (G) eggs along ovigerous spines. Credit: University of Manitoba

After returning to her lab at the U of M, Delaforge sent a text to a Department of Fisheries and Oceans researcher, Wojciech Walkusz: "I have this alien!!!" He immediately suspected it was a Monstrilloida so she sent her specimen to Mexico where the world's foremost monster identification specialist resides. Eduardo Suárez-Morales dissected the tiny creature and confirmed the Canadian Arctic's first, true monster: *Monstrillopsis planifrons*, or flat headed monster.

Delaforge and her colleagues published their discovery, "A new species of *Monstrillopsis* (Copepoda, Monstrilloida) from the lower Northwest Passage of the Canadian Arctic", in the latest edition of the ZooKeys journal.



Aurélie Delaforge did not purposefully seek this monster out in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. But she found one while living on an ice camp. Credit: University of Manitoba

More information: Aurélie Delaforge et al. A new species of *Monstrillopsis* (Crustacea, Copepoda, Monstrilloida) from the lower Northwest Passage of the Canadian Arctic, *ZooKeys* (2017). [DOI: 10.3897/zookeys.709.20181](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.709.20181)

Provided by University of Manitoba

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