

New species

Geoff Boxshall & Sophie Conroy-Dalton

THE OCEANS ARE HOME TO AN AMAZING variety of living organisms. Documenting and characterising this diversity has been an important aim of European marine biologists and biological oceanographers for over two centuries. Given the vastness of the oceans, it is not surprising that the immense task of naming and describing all the organisms even in European seas is far from complete. Fortunately, there are many taxonomists in MARBEF and we plan to feature a newly-described species from European waters in every issue of the MARBEF newsletter.

In this, the first edition, I have invited Sophie Conroy-Dalton from the Natural History Museum in London to introduce you to a new copepod she has just described. Copepods are the diminutive relatives of the crabs and shrimps...but what they lack in size they make up for in abundance and diversity. One of every ten species of living organisms listed as present in European seas is a copepod, and if that doesn't impress you, it has also been calculated that there are more

copepods on Earth than insects. So, copepods are both abundant and diverse, but they are also beautiful, as Sophie's wonderful illustrations show.

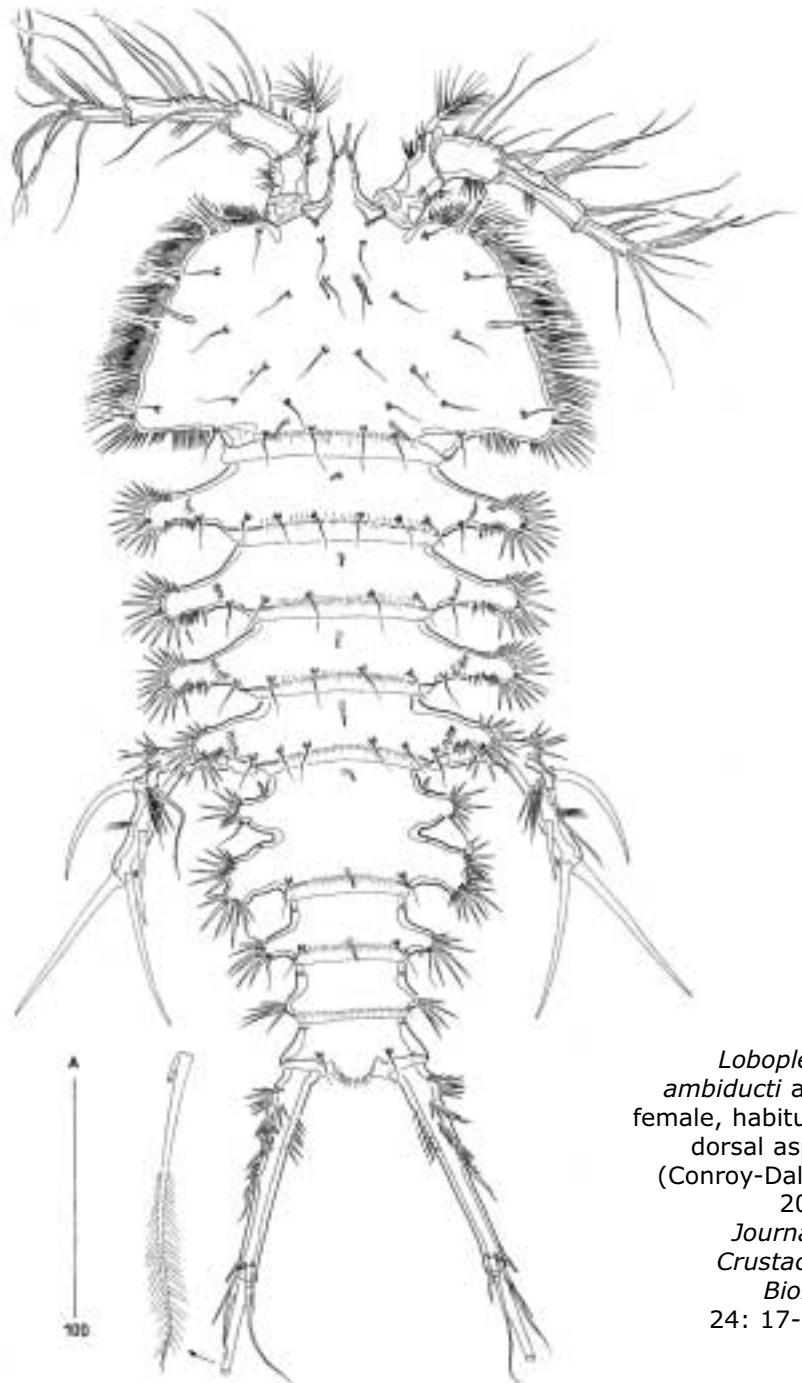
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New copepods: taxonomic gold nuggets

By Sophie Conroy-Dalton

MEMBERS OF THE COPEPOD ORDER Harpacticoida are primarily free-living, marine and benthic, although a few species are ectoparasitic, commensal or planktonic. Their body form, shape and size can vary considerably according to the micro-environment they inhabit. The Ancorabolidae is one of the most visually striking families in the Harpacticoida. Most ancorabolids are instantly recognisable by their conspicuous outgrowths, which arise from the dorsal and lateral surfaces of the body, ranging from simple thorns to highly elaborate branched processes.

Ancorabolids have frequently been recorded from European waters and they have traditionally been thought of as a rare and not very diverse group, assuming a limited distribution in the North Atlantic. Investigations over the last two decades



Lobopleura ambiducti adult female, habitus in dorsal aspect (Conroy-Dalton, 2004: *Journal of Crustacean Biology* 24: 17-36).

Figure courtesy of JCB