

Pacific oysters and parasites: Species invasions and their impact on parasite-host interactions

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Invasive species can have strong direct effects on native species, communities and ecosystems via predation and competition. However, invasive species can also exert indirect effects on invaded ecosystems by modifying parasite-host dynamics in a variety of ways. Newly established hosts can act as reservoirs by co-introducing a parasite that also infects native hosts (spill-over effect). In addition, invaders may act as an alternative host for native parasites, thus increasing the parasites' population sizes and subsequently intensifying parasite burdens in native hosts (spill-back effect). Alternatively, invasive species can reduce the disease risk for native hosts, e.g. by preying on infective stages (transmission interference). In this talk, I will present the highlights of my PhD research which investigated these and other effects the Pacific oyster, one of the most prominent invaders of European coastal waters.

The research presented in this thesis was carried out at the Department of Coastal Systems of the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ), 't Horntje (Texel), The Netherlands in collaboration with the Alfred Wegner Institute (AWI), Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research, List (Sylt), Germany.

This work was financially supported by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and the German Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) (NWO-ZKO project 839.11.002 awarded to David W. Thielges).