

## New records of *Monodaeus couchii* (Couch, 1851) and *Goneplax rhomboides* (Linnaeus, 1758) in the North Sea (Crustacea, Decapoda, Brachyura)

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Although common off the western coasts of the British Isles, the crabs *Monodaeus couchii* (Couch, 1851) and *Goneplax rhomboides* (Linnaeus, 1758) have very rarely been recorded in the North Sea. Through the kindness of Mr. Jean-Paul Kreps, who has regular contacts with Belgian fishermen, I have recently received North Sea specimens of both species. The available data on these crabs in the area are hereafter reviewed. The specimens examined have been deposited in the collections of the Institut royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique / Koninklijk Belgisch Instituut voor Natuurwetenschappen.

### *Monodaeus couchii* (Couch, 1851)

Material examined.

- Smiths Knoll (Yarmouth area), 30 m depth, July 2000: 1 adult male.

Colour pattern.

- The crab was reddish speckled with some small darker red dots.

Previous North Sea records.

- Adema (1982) states that "One male specimen of *Monodaeus couchii* (Couch) was collected during the "Aurelia"-cruises on 15.x.1974 at 54°57'N 02°25.6W (Sta. 298, off the British coast near New Castle)". According to Clark (1986), the coordinates given by the Dutch author are actually erroneous and should be read 54°57'N 00°26'W. Clark (1986) also reports the occurrence of *M. couchii* in Eastern Shetland and Southeastern Orkney.

### ***Goneplax rhomboides* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Material examined.

- Doggerbank, NW Rough, 54 m depth, sand and gravel, June 1998: 1 adult male
- Smiths Knoll (Yarmouth area), 30 m depth, July 2000: 1 adult male.

Previous North Sea records.

- Moore (1987) reports the first record of *G. rhomboides* in the North Sea (Northumberland) as follows: "One taken from 40 fathoms 11 miles east of Blyth, October 1963 (J.A.A.)" [J.A.A. = J.A. Allen]. Ingle (1996) also indicates the occurrence of *G. rhomboides* in the North Sea, again in Northumberland. It is possible that Ingle's record is based on the specimen already reported by Moore (1987), but that is however not sure, since Ingle (1996) does not cite Moore's paper.

Discussion.

- Although probably more widespread in the North Sea than previously thought, *M. couchii* and *G. rhomboides* are obviously quite rare in that sea. So far, there is no evidence that sustainable populations do exist in the area. Actually, the occurrence of *M. couchii* and *G. rhomboides* in the North Sea is possibly dependent on an afflux of larvae drifted by the currents and coming from the English Channel and/or the Northeastern Atlantic.

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Samenvatting**

Nieuwe waarnemingen van de krabben *Monodaeus couchii* en *Goneplax rhomboides* in de Noordzee worden hier besproken. *M. couchii* werd in de Smiths Knoll (vóór Yarmouth) gevonden. *G. rhomboides* werd zowel in de Smiths Knoll als in de Doggerbank (NW Rough) waargenomen.

## References

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