

ON THE OCCURRENCE AND HABITAT OF *TELMATOGETON JAPONICUS* TOKUNAGA (DIPTERA; CHIRONOMIDAE) IN THE SOUTHERN BIGHT OF THE NORTH SEA

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Prior to the construction of offshore wind farms, high densities of *Telmatogeton japonicus* Tokunaga, 1933 (Diptera: Chironomidae) larvae were present on navigational buoys situated off the Belgian coast. Low numbers of pupae and adults were living on these buoys throughout the year. Soon after the installation of offshore wind farms *T. japonicus* colonised the splash zone of the new structures. The midge was also identified from the fouling assemblage on the hulls of research ships and military vessels operating in Belgian waters, which may explain how it was able to rapidly colonise the new habitats. Despite being widespread and abundant on offshore hard substrates, *T. japonicus* larvae were not found in samples taken in the intertidal and splash zone of coastal hard substrata such as groins, pilings and harbour structures. The failure of *T. japonicus* to similarly abundantly colonise these artificial constructions in Belgium may be due to more intensive predation.