

Ontogeny of osmoregulation in the brackishwater amphipod *Gammarus chevreuxi*

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Abstract

Osmoregulation is a key regulatory function in animals inhabiting brackish waters or areas subject to considerable salinity change, such as estuaries. While our understanding of osmoregulation in adult crustaceans is relatively good, our knowledge of how osmoregulatory ability develops during ontogeny is not well documented. In indirect developers, improvement in osmoregulatory capacity during ontogeny appears to coincide with a major metamorphosis. This is consistent with the 'incomplete adult hypothesis', which assumes that early developmental stages are 'incomplete individuals' operating less efficiently than individuals at the older stages. Evidence for this is not clear in direct developers. Consequently, we tested the 'incomplete adult hypothesis', by characterising the ontogeny of osmoregulation of the euryhaline amphipod, *Gammarus chevreuxi*, a species which undergoes direct development. We investigated the structure and function of putative osmoregulatory tissues, together with the regulation of key osmoregulatory genes. Embryos were examined at key developmental stages: before the dorsal organ (DO), a putative osmoregulatory structure, appeared (<48 hpf), before the gills appeared but the DO was present (9 dpf), and after both DO and gills were present (14-18 dpf). Adult *G. chevreuxi* exhibited a pronounced hyper-hypo-osmoregulatory pattern, matched by a strong pattern of haemolymph ion regulation. At a salinity of 35, eggs were hyposmotic to the external medium (989 mOsm Kg⁻¹) in the DO and gill stages (mean±SD= 584±80.5 and 744±103 mOsm Kg⁻¹ respectively) with less of a difference with the medium before DO development (mean±SD= 810±91 mOsm Kg⁻¹). At a salinity of 2, eggs from all stages were hyperosmotic to the external medium (52 mOsm Kg⁻¹), with the pre-DO stage being closest to the isosmotic line

(mean±SD= 330±29, 510±55 and 502±55 mOsm Kg⁻¹ for pre-DO, DO and gill respectively). Differences between the stages diminished at salinity 15. Thus, the adult hyper-hypo-osmoregulatory pattern was present before the ontogeny of the DO and gills, although it improved during ontogeny. Expression of Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase transcripts was detected throughout ontogeny, further supporting the idea that ion transporting activity may occur before the formation of osmoregulatory organs. The ontogeny of osmoregulatory function in the gammaridean amphipod *G. chevreuxi* is therefore consistent with the incomplete adult hypothesis.

Key words: Crustacea; Development; Dorsal organ; Embryo; Hyper-hypo-osmoregulation; Na⁺,K⁺-ATPase

1 **Introduction**

2 Understanding the ontogeny of physiological function and regulation is essential to
3 predicting how and when selection pressures may operate on a developing individual
4 in any given, or changing, environment (Adolph, 1968; Burggren, 2018; Burggren
5 and Warburton, 2005). Such understanding is important in predicting survival
6 through to the reproductively-active adult stage, and consequently Darwinian fitness
7 (Mueller et al., 2015; Spicer et al., 2018). Burggren (2005) suggested that the focus
8 on adult stages in ecophysiological studies is underpinned by the assumption that
9 increasing anatomical complexity invariably leads to increasing physiological
10 complexity. In this view, the early developmental stages would be seen as
11 incomplete individuals operating less efficiently than individuals at the older stages,
12 the so called 'incomplete adult hypothesis' (Adolph, 1968; Spicer and Gaston, 1999).
13 According to this hypothesis, adults would display the most well-regulated
14 physiological processes. The corollary of this is the 'physiological competency
15 hypothesis', which states that 'at every stage, the complement of properties and
16 regulations is complete...for operation of the body' (Adolph, 1968). In this case, the
17 most complex or best-developed physiological regulations or functions would not
18 always be expected to be restricted to, or even present in, the adult stages (Spicer
19 and Gaston, 1999)

20 Osmoregulation is an important regulatory function that many aquatic animals
21 perform, particularly if they inhabit brackish waters or areas subject to considerable
22 salinity change, such as estuaries (Beadle, 1957; Charmantier et al., 2008; Gilles,
23 1975; Krogh, 1939; Potts and Parry, 1964). Coastal and estuarine crustaceans have
24 received considerable attention in this regard, and tend to show a strong
25 osmoregulatory ability, at least in the adult stage (Lignot and Charmantier, 2015;

26 Lockwood, 1962; Rivera-Ingraham and Lignot, 2017; Robertson et al., 2010;
27 Schoffeniels and E., 1970; Thabet et al., 2017). Such osmoregulatory functions are
28 carried out by combinations of the following structures: the gills, the gut, the antennal
29 gland, and extrabranchial ion exchange tissues (Freire et al., 2008; Henry et al.,
30 2012; Lignot and Charmantier, 2015).

31 While osmoregulation in adult crustaceans has been widely studied, our knowledge
32 of how osmoregulatory ability, and the structures that provide that function, develop
33 during ontogeny, is not well documented (Anger, 2003; Charmantier, 1998;
34 Charmantier and Charmantier-Daures, 2001; Lignot and Charmantier, 2015).

35 The ontogeny of whole animal osmo- and iono-regulation has been investigated
36 mainly in crustaceans that undergo indirect development, such as crabs (Augusto et
37 al., 2009; Brown and Terwilliger, 2007; Charmantier and Charmantier-Daures, 1994),
38 shrimps (Bouaricha et al., 1994; Cieluch et al., 2005; Felder et al., 1986), crayfish
39 (Susanto and Charmantier, 2002) and lobsters (Charmantier and Aiken, 1987; Dall,
40 1970). Some attention has also been paid to the structures, and biochemical
41 mechanisms, associated with developing osmoregulatory ability, such as the
42 ephemeral crustacean larval salt gland (Conte, 1984), and the onset of $\text{Na}^+\text{-K}^+\text{-}$
43 ATPase and carbonic anhydrase activity (Lignot and Charmantier, 2015). This work
44 lends support to the incomplete adult hypothesis, where improvement in
45 osmoregulatory capacity appears to coincide with a major metamorphosis. Such
46 support is more equivocal in direct developing groups such as the peracarids:
47 mysids, isopods and amphipods. Peracarids lay and brood their eggs in a
48 marsupium, a modification of the ventral groove, within which semi- and fully
49 terrestrial species, such as the amphipods (Morritt and Spicer, 1996a) and isopods
50 (Hornung, 2011) can regulate the osmotic concentration of the exosomatic water

51 those eggs are immersed in. Even though the osmotic concentration of the marsupial
52 fluid of the semi-terrestrial amphipod *Orchestia gammarellus* is tightly regulated, all
53 embryonic stages display a strong hyper-hypo-regulation (Morritt and Spicer, 1999).
54 Interestingly, the regulation is much weaker in immediately post hatch individuals
55 (Morritt and Spicer, 1999). In this species, new hatchlings are retained within the
56 marsupium for a further 10 days until they (re)develop the adult pattern of
57 osmoregulation (Morritt and Spicer, 1996b). This does not support the incomplete
58 adult hypothesis.

59 There is some evidence for maternal control of osmolality in the marsupium of
60 aquatic peracarid crustaceans but only for two species, the mysid *Praunus flexuosus*
61 (Mclusky and Heard, 1971) and the isopod *Sphaeroma serratum* (Charmantier and
62 Charmantier-Daures, 1994). There is no published information for amphipods,
63 although preliminary experiments investigating the osmolality of water within the
64 marsupium of *Marinogammarus marinus* and *Gammarus chevreuxi* kept in different
65 salinities, point to no maternal control of marsupium water osmolality. This is
66 perhaps not surprising given the more open nature of the gammarid marsupium, and
67 the fact that the pleopods beating in the posterior part of the marsupium ensure a
68 constant replenishment of groove water (Dahl, 1978). Therefore, it is unlikely that
69 there is effective maternal osmotic control in aquatic amphipods, similar to that found
70 in more semi- and fully terrestrial species.

71 Our knowledge of embryonic osmoregulation in fully aquatic isopods and amphipods
72 is limited to one species of each. Embryos of the euryhaline isopod *Sphaeroma*
73 *serratum* displayed a weak osmoregulatory ability throughout development but
74 began to improve early after hatching (Charmantier and Charmantier-Daures, 1994).
75 The ontogeny of osmoregulation in the euryhaline brackishwater amphipod

76 *Gammarus duebeni* is more complex than that of the semi-terrestrial amphipod *O.*
77 *gammarellus*, and the aquatic isopod *S. serratum* (Morritt and Spicer, 1995). Early
78 embryos of *G. duebeni* (Stage 2, characterised by a prominent dorsal organ)
79 displayed a hyper-iso-osmotic pattern of regulation of perivitelline fluid when
80 exposed to a range of environmental salinities. This regulation was present before
81 the appearance of the coxal gills possibly *via* extra-embryonic structures, namely the
82 vitelline membrane and/or the dorsal organ (DO) (Morritt and Spicer, 1995). This
83 pattern was also observed for the haemolymph of new hatchlings but, interestingly,
84 stage 5-7 embryos (pre-hatch but undergoing marked organogenesis) displayed a
85 transient hyper-hypo-osmotic pattern of regulation, similar to the embryonic pattern
86 in the semi-terrestrial *O. gammarellus*. This development and loss of what might be
87 regarded as the most complex form of osmoregulation (i.e. hyper-hypo-regulation),
88 does not support the incomplete adult hypothesis. Clearly, there are differences in
89 the patterns and ontogeny of osmoregulation between euryhaline embryonic isopods
90 and amphipods, and differences between semi-terrestrial and aquatic amphipods,
91 but current knowledge does not allow for generalisations. Furthermore, there is little
92 information on the structures, and no information on the molecular basis, responsible
93 for these regulations or their ontogenies.

94

95 Therefore, the aim of this study was to test the incomplete adult hypothesis of
96 Adolph, (1968) and Spicer and Gaston (1999) by 1) characterising the ontogeny of
97 osmoregulation of a congeneric euryhaline amphipod, at different levels of biological
98 organisation, and 2) compare and contrast the picture that emerges specifically with
99 *G. duebeni* and *O. gammarellus*, the only other amphipod species for which we have
100 comparable information. Consequently, we investigated the ontogeny of the structure

101 and function of putative osmoregulatory tissues, together with the regulation of key
102 osmoregulatory genes, in the brackishwater amphipod *Gammarus chevreuxi*. We
103 predicted that, like in *G. duebeni*, the most complex pattern of regulation (hyper-
104 hypo-) would appear early in embryonic development and then revert to the less
105 complex hyper-iso- regulation before or around hatching. *Gammarus chevreuxi* was
106 chosen as it is a euryhaline species, exposed to freshwater (salinity ≈ 0) and full
107 strength sea water (salinity >30) within a tidal cycle, its embryonic development is
108 well characterised, it is lab-hardy (Sexton, 1928), and its transcriptome has recently
109 been sequenced (Collins et al., 2017; Truebano et al., 2013).

110

1111. 2. Materials and Methods

112

113 1.1. Collection and husbandry of animals

114 Amphipods were collected during low tide using a kick net (mesh size = 500 μm)
115 from the Plym estuary, Devon (50° 23' 24" N, 4° 5' 7" W). A Star:Oddi DST CTD
116 logger was deployed for 48 h at the collection site to measure tidal salinity variation.
117 This population experiences a salinity pulse, when salinities reach values of above
118 30 for approximately 4 h during the tidal cycle. Amphipods were returned to a
119 temperature-controlled laboratory and sorted into stock aquaria containing diluted
120 sea water (vol. = 25 L, T = 15 °C, S = 15 \pm 1, light = 12h:12h L:D cycle). Amphipods
121 were held in the stock aquaria in pre-exposure conditions for a minimum of two
122 weeks, and fed carrot *ad libitum*. Water changes were performed weekly. After four
123 weeks, pre-copula pairs were isolated from the stock populations and transferred to
124 individual aquaria (vol. = 0.5 L) maintained under the same conditions as the stock
125 aquaria. Males were removed immediately once the pairs had separated and eggs

126 were visible in the marsupium of the female. Individual eggs of different
127 developmental stages, hatchlings or adults were removed as required to supply the
128 experiments described below.

129

130 1.2. Ontogeny of putative osmoregulatory organs

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132 1.2.1. Morphological observations

133 Each day after fertilization, eggs from a proportion of the females were brushed out
134 of the marsupium using a fine paint brush as described by (Morritt and Spicer, 1995),
135 and placed in double filtered autoclaved sea water adjusted to the same conditions
136 as those used for the pre-exposure period. Eggs were observed and photographed
137 under a high powered light microscope coupled to an Allied Vision Pike 210C real
138 time digital camera (Allied Vision Technology, Germany) and the timing of the
139 appearance and development of putative osmoregulatory structures recorded.

140

141 1.2.2. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) of embryos

142 To further characterise the structure and position of the DO, embryos (>14 dpf) were
143 examined under SEM. Eggs were fixed in 2.5 % glutaraldehyde in diluted sea water
144 for 12 h and rinsed twice for 15 min in sodium cacodylate buffer (0.1 M, pH 7.2) at 4 °
145 C. Eggs were then placed in 30 % ethanol, and carefully dechorionated using two
146 fine dissecting needles. They were then further dehydrated through a graded ethanol
147 series ranging from 30 % through 50, 70, 90 and 100 % and critically point dried in
148 an Emitech K850 critical point drier (Quorum Technologies Ltd., UK). Fully dried

149 samples were coated with gold and examined using a JEOL JSM 5600 LV scanning
150 electron microscope (Jeol, Japan).

151

152 1.2.3. Staining of ion regulatory tissue and permeable areas in embryos

153 Silver staining was used to identify areas of active ion uptake on embryos. Attempts
154 to stain embryos at stages before the DO is visible (< 6 dpf) resulted in cell lysis.

155 Accordingly, the location of putative ion regulatory tissues and permeable areas was
156 determined for eggs 6, 9, 14 and 18 dpf. These stages were selected based on initial
157 morphological observations and mark the appearance and development of structures
158 with putative osmoregulatory function (i.e. DO and gills). Immediately upon removal
159 from the brood pouch, eggs were briefly rinsed twice in deionised water, transferred
160 to a 5 g L⁻¹ AgNO₃ solution for 5-7 min and washed again for 10 min in deionised
161 water. Observations of staining were made under a high powered light microscope
162 and digital images obtained as described above.

163

164 1.3. Ontogeny of osmo- and iono-regulation

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166 1.3.1. Osmoregulatory patterns in embryos

167 The osmolality of homogenised eggs was measured at different stages of
168 development exposed to three salinity treatments (S= 2, 15 and 33) for 24 h. This
169 exposure time was shorter than used for the adults primarily to ensure the exposures
170 of quite discrete and different periods in embryonic development. Although we have
171 no information for embryonic amphipods, we know that salinity acclimation in adults
172 can be very rapid, with most of the change occurring during the first few hours of

173 transfer, and new steady states achieved well within 48 h (Bolt, 1983; Dorgelo,
174 1974).

175 Samples were selected at stages representing embryos in which the DO had not
176 started to develop (<48 hpf), the DO was present but not the gills (9 dpf), and both
177 the DO and gills were present (14 -18 dpf). For each salinity treatment and stage,
178 batches of eggs were carefully removed from the brood pouch and photographed as
179 previously described. The length and width of each egg was measured using ImageJ
180 (Schneider et al., 2012) and used to calculate egg volume as an oblate ellipsoid.
181 Pools of eggs (n = 20 per salinity) were washed twice in milliQ water, and
182 homogenised with a manual homogeniser. The osmolality of the homogenates (0.03
183 – 0.05 μL) was determined using a direct-reading nanolitre osmometer (Clifton
184 Technical Physics) (Morritt and Spicer, 1996). Variation between replicates was < 35
185 mOsm Kg^{-1} . Homogenates, rather than haemolymph or perivitelline fluid, have been
186 used previously to investigate the ontogeny of osmoregulation in crab embryos
187 (Seneviratna, 2006).

188

189 1.3.2. Osmo- and iono- regulatory patterns in adults

190 Analysis of haemolymph osmolality and key ionic concentrations (sodium (Na^+),
191 calcium (Ca^{2+}) and magnesium (Mg^{2+})) was performed for large adult *G. chevreuxi*
192 (>10 mm length) exposed to one of four salinity treatments (S = 2, 10, 25 and 35) for
193 seven days. Haemolymph was extracted by inserting the needle of a microsyringe
194 (vol.= 10 μL) directly into the heart, dorsally through the second and third dorsal
195 plates of the pereon. The osmolality of untreated pooled haemolymph samples (n =
196 12-15 individuals) was measured in duplicate using a Vapro 5520 vapour pressure
197 osmometer (Wescor, USA) fitted with a reduced volume sample holder (2 μL). as

198 described above. The ionic content of the haemolymph was estimated as follows:
199 Immediately after extraction, 0.5 μ L haemolymph (3-5 individuals) was pooled in a
200 microcentrifuge tube, diluted in 1 mL milliQ water, and refrigerated before analysis.
201 Ionic concentrations in adult haemolymph and corresponding treatment media were
202 measured using inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectroscopy (ICP-
203 OES). Samples were analysed for Na^+ , Mg^{2+} and Ca^{2+} ions, using a Varian 725ES
204 ICP-OES instrument (Varian, Australia) fitted with a V-groove nebuliser coupled with
205 a Sturman-Masters spray chamber, calibrated using four standards and one blank.
206 Operating parameters were set to a forward power of 1.4 kW, plasma flow of 15 L
207 min^{-1} , auxiliary flow of 1.5 L min^{-1} and nebuliser gas flow of 0.68 L min^{-1} , a viewing
208 height of 8 mm above the load coil and a read time of 4 s.

209

210 1.3.3. Gene expression analysis of Na^+/K^+ -ATPase

211 The transcriptome of *G. chevreuxi* at different embryonic stages has been recently
212 sequenced, assembled and annotated as described in Truebano et al (2016). Six
213 transcripts were putatively identified as Na^+/K^+ -ATPases beta (four transcripts) or
214 alpha (two transcripts) subunits. Of these, we found differences in expression
215 between early and late developmental stages in two mRNA transcripts putatively
216 identified as Na^+/K^+ -ATPase alpha subunit (**GeneBank accession no.**
217 **HADC01011431.1 and HADC01011432.1**, length: 4398 and 4317 bp respectively).
218 To investigate whether the two transcripts are differentially expressed during
219 ontogeny across the developmental stages studied here, expression analysis was
220 carried out in eggs at different developmental stages using qPCR. Expression
221 patterns of both transcripts were investigated in pools of embryos pre-DO (<16 cells,
222 <48 hpf), DO present (9 dpf), gills present (18 dpf) and adults. The <16-cell embryos

223 were included in order to determine whether there is evidence of iono-regulatory
 224 capacity in the earliest stages of development. Total RNA was isolated from three
 225 pools of 50 embryos per each of the four developmental stages (n=12) or three pools
 226 of 10 adults using the Reliaprep RNA tissue Miniprep System (Promega,
 227 Southampton, UK) following manufacturer's instructions. RNA purity and
 228 concentrations were measured using a NanoDrop 2000 Spectrophotometer (Thermo
 229 Scientific, Loughborough, UK) and integrity was assessed using gel electrophoresis.
 230 200 ng total RNA was reversed transcribed using the High-Capacity cDNA Reverse
 231 Transcription Kit (Applied Biosystems, California, USA). Samples were amplified in
 232 triplicate in 10 μ L reactions containing 2 μ L cDNA (1:10 dilution) in the presence of
 233 SYBR Green (iTaq Universal SYBR Green Supermix, BioRad, Hertfordshire, UK) in
 234 a StepOne Real-Time PCR system (Life Technologies, Paisley, UK) according to
 235 manufacturers' instructions. A melt curve was added to each run. Ct values were
 236 normalised to the geometric mean of 18S ribosomal subunit (18S) and elongation
 237 factor (EF α) after checking their stability via geNorm (Vandesompele, et al., 2002).
 238 Data are presented as Δ Ct (Ct_{reference}-Ct_{target}). Fold changes were calculated we 2^{Δ Ct.
 239 Primers were designed by qStandards (EF α and 18S, Edgware, UK) or Primerdesign
 240 Ltd (Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase, Southampton, UK) (Table 1).

241

242 Table 1. Primer information for two target Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase transcripts (named long
 243 and short for convenience) and the reference genes elongation factor (EF α) and 18S
 244 ribosomal subunit (18S).

245

| Target gene | Primer Sequence | Amplicon length (bp) | Tm (°C) | Efficiency (%) | R ² |
|--|---|----------------------|---------|----------------|----------------|
| Na ⁺ /K ⁺ -ATPase long | F: gccacaaaaatgagtgatagcg R: tctccctgaaagtacggtatc | 92 | 75.3 | 90-100 | - |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|------|--------|-------|
| Na ⁺ /K ⁺ -ATPase short | F: ttactgataataccttgatactgt R: ttcgccttcttctcgaatcac | 97 | 70.3 | 90-100 | - |
| EF α | F: caaccgtctgtacatgaaggct R: accgaagggtccagatcttcatgg | 163 | 87.3 | 103 | 0.999 |
| 18S | F: tgaacgaaagttagaggatcgaagg R: cggattgatggttggcatcgt | 77 | 80.7 | 98 | 0.999 |

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247

248

249 2. Results

250

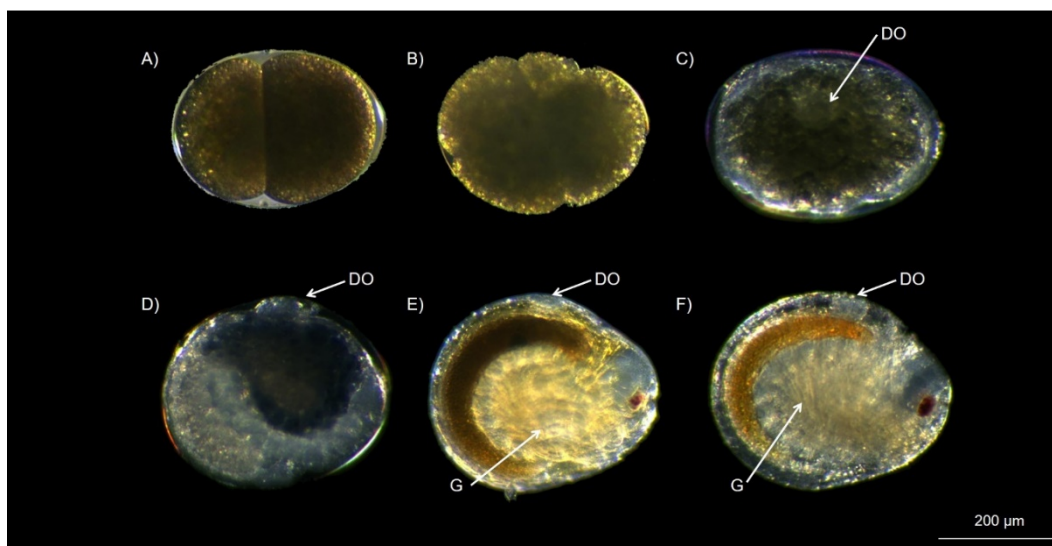
251 2.1. Ontogeny of putative osmoregulatory organs

252

253 2.1.1. Morphological observations

254 Embryogenesis (fertilization to hatching) under the experimental conditions (T =

255 15°C, S = 15) took 400-450 h in *Gammarus chevreuxi* (Figure 1).



256

257 Figure 1. Light microscopy images of *Gammarus chevreuxi* embryos developed in

258 the marsupium of females and removed for examination at A) 2-cells, B) <16 cells,

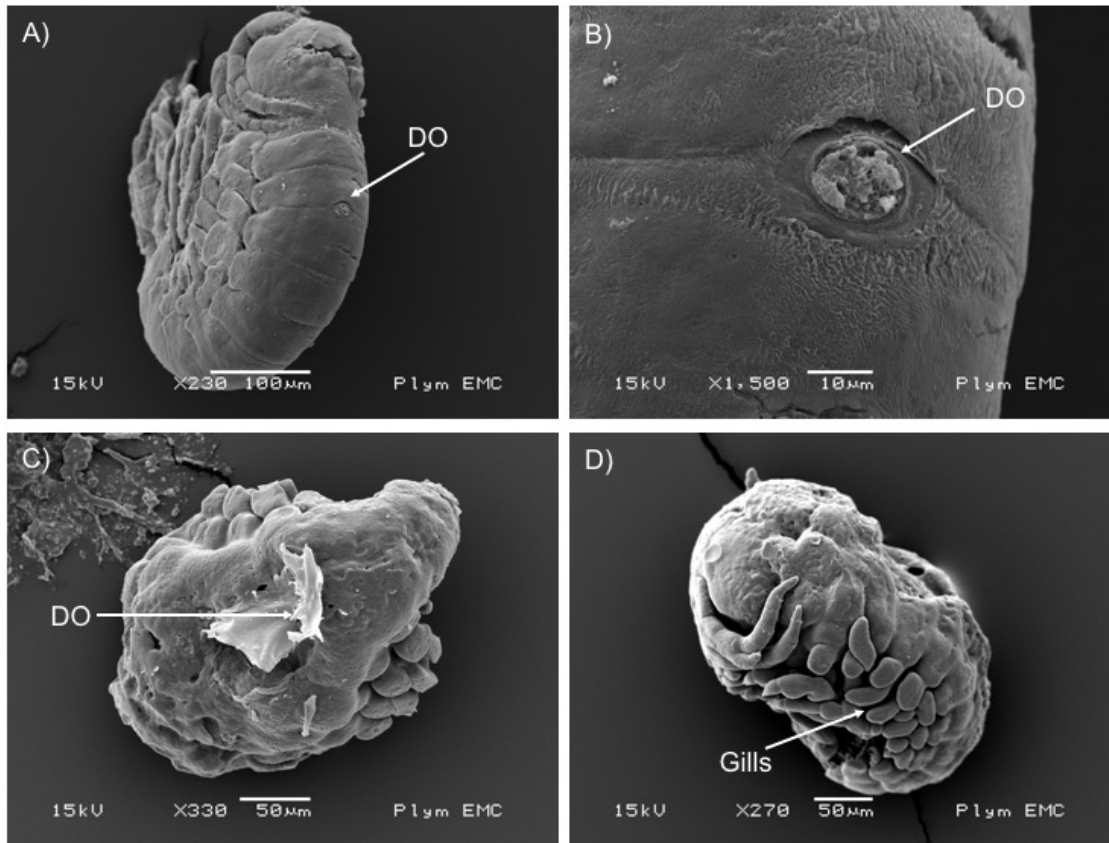
259 C) 6 dpf, D) 9 dpf, E) 14 dpf and F) 18 dpf. DO and G indicate embryonic dorsal
260 organ and gills respectively. Scale bar = 200 μm .

261

262 The first cell division (2-cell stage) occurred within 10 hpf (Figure 1A), fertilization
263 being defined as the time at which the mating pair separates. Cell boundaries are
264 clearly visible under light microscopy until approximately the 16-cell embryo (Figure
265 1B), after which time individual cells are not easily identifiable. The timing of the
266 initial aggregation of cells forming the DO cannot be identified visually using light
267 microscopy during early development. However, 5-6 days after fertilization, the DO is
268 easily identifiable unaided under light microscopy as an aggregation of cells located
269 dorsally (e.g. 6 dpf, Figure 1C). It becomes a well-defined structure that remains
270 located on the anterior dorsal surface through development (Figure 1D, E, F). Upon
271 fixing and dechoriation of the embryos, the DO appears the only point of
272 attachment between the egg membrane and the embryo.

273

274 2.1.2. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) of embryos



275

276 Figure 2. Scanning electron microscopy images of dechorionated *Gammarus*
 277 *chevreuxi* embryos fixed at 14 dpf indicating, A) the position of the embryonic dorsal
 278 organ, B) the dorsal organ, C) the association between the dorsal organ and the
 279 chorion, and D) the position of the gills. DO and G indicate embryonic dorsal organ
 280 and gills respectively. Scale bars (10-100 μm) and magnifications (x230-1500) are
 281 shown for each image.

282

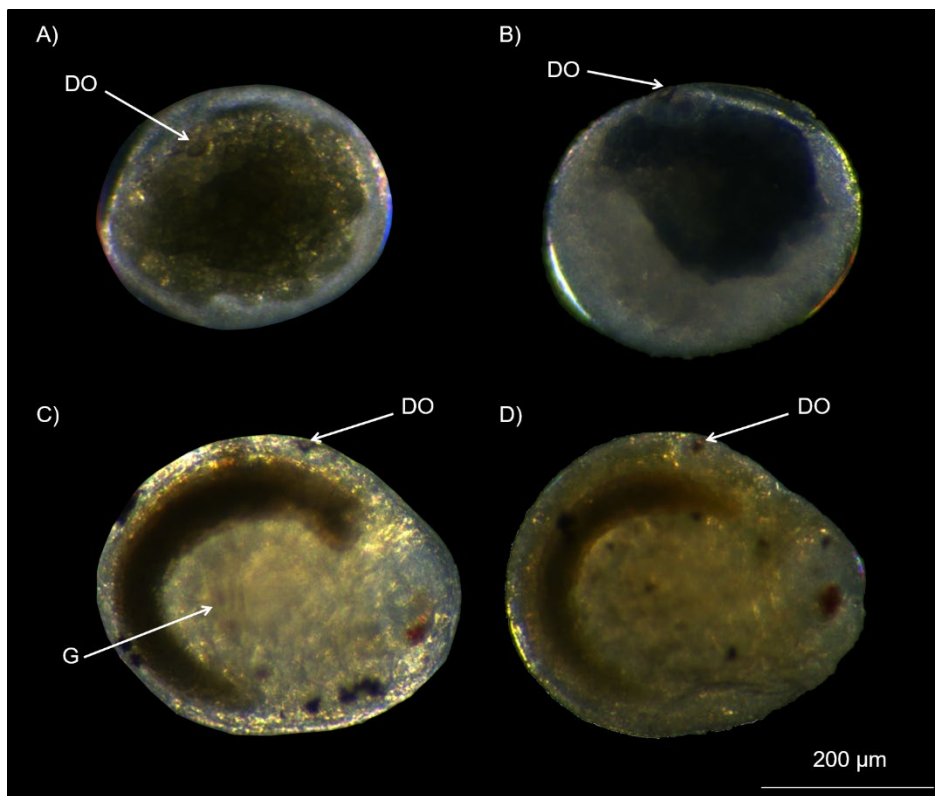
283 SEM of 14 dpf individuals clearly shows the DO as an oval structure (approx. 15 μm
 284 diameter), located on the dorsal surface of the embryo between the second and third
 285 cuticular segments of the pereon (Figure 2A, B). Figure 2C shows a fragment of the
 286 egg membrane apparently attached to the area of the DO, providing further evidence
 287 that this is the only point of attachment between the embryo and the egg membrane.
 288 The gills are also observable in the same individual (Figure 2D), confirming the co-

289 occurrence of both organs in the late stages of development. As the gills are located
 290 beneath the coxal plates, their development is difficult to visualise in live embryos.
 291 Therefore, it is possible that rudimentary gills develop earlier than suggested here.
 292 The gills are clearly visible under light microscopy at the late stages (>12 dpf, Figure
 293 2F, G).

294

295 2.1.3. Staining of ion regulatory tissue and permeable areas in embryos

296



297

298 Figure 3. Light microscopy images of *Gammarus chevreuxi* embryos developed in
 299 the female marsupium. Embryos were stained with AgNO_3 at A) 6 dpf, B) 9 dpf, C)
 300 14 dpf, and D) 18 dpf. Arrows with accompanying letter indicate silver stained areas,
 301 corresponding with the locations of the embryonic dorsal organ (DO) and gills (G).
 302 Scale bar = 200 μm .

303

304 Silver-stained embryos at 6, 9, 14 and 18 dpf present an oval shaped dark area with
 305 a darker outer ring that can be identified on the surface of the embryo (Figure 3),
 306 corresponding with the position of the DO, as shown in Figure 2. The stained area is
 307 likely to be a silver precipitate, which is indicative of active ion uptake. At 14 dpf,
 308 weak staining of the gills is observed. Note that the lower intensity does not
 309 necessarily indicate a lower active uptake of ions, but could equally indicate a
 310 decrease in permeability.

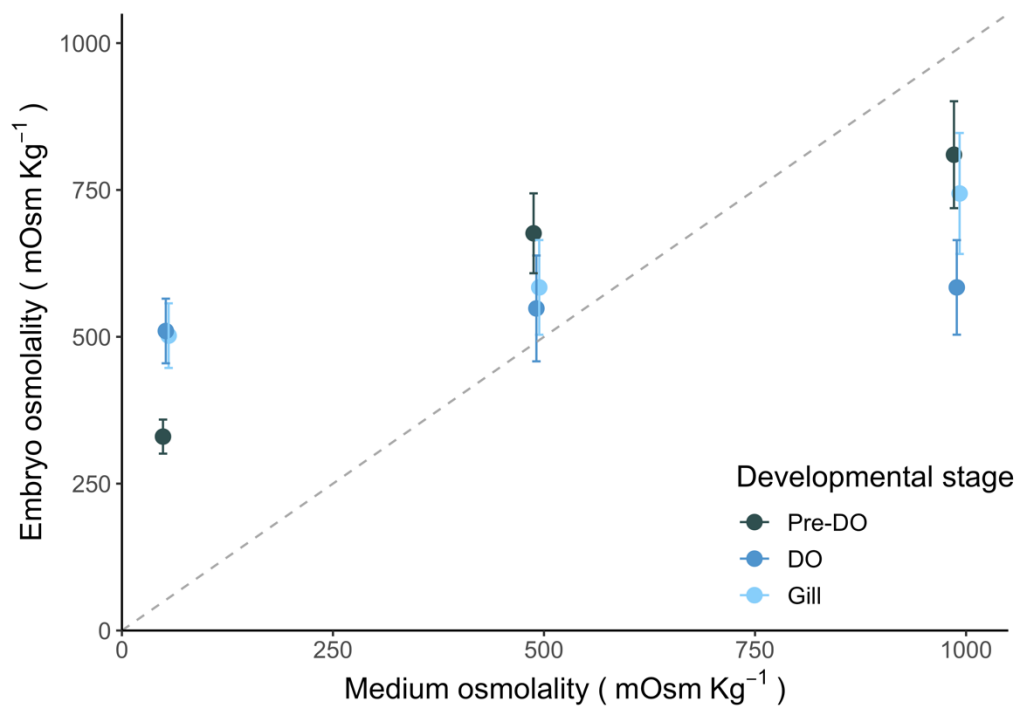
311

312 2.2. Ontogeny of osmo- and iono-regulation

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314 2.2.1. Osmoregulatory patterns in embryos

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316

317

318 Figure 4. Osmolality of *Gammarus chevreuxi* homogenate of embryos removed from
319 the mother at three different stages of development (i.e. pre-dorsal organ (pre-DO,
320 dark grey), dorsal organ present (DO, dark blue), and gills present (Gill, light blue))
321 and subsequently exposed to salinities of 2, 15 and 33 for 24 h *in vitro*. Points
322 represent mean concentrations and standard deviations of three biological replicates
323 per treatment, each consisting of pools of 25 embryos. Broken line represents the
324 isosmotic line.

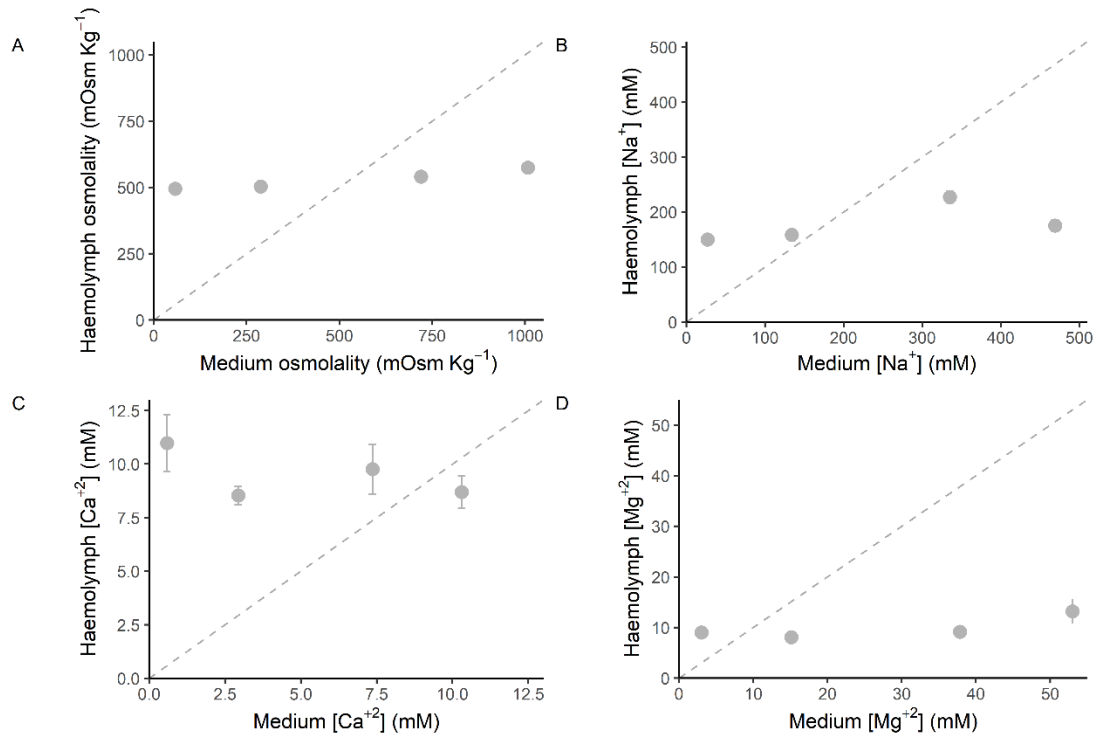
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326 For *G. chevreuxi* embryos, extraction of periembryonic fluid was not possible until
327 approximately 8 dpf. Therefore, in order to compare osmoregulatory capacities of
328 embryos before and after the development of the DO and gills, osmoregulatory
329 curves were produced using osmolality of embryo homogenates, from embryos
330 removed from the marsupium and exposed to different salinities *in vitro* (S= 2, 15
331 and 33). The osmolality of the homogenate is expressed as a function of the
332 corresponding external osmolality (Figure 4). All embryonic stages investigated
333 showed some degree of hyper-hypo-osmoregulation. At a salinity of 35, eggs were
334 hyposmotic to the external medium (989 mOsm Kg^{-1}) by several hundred mOsm Kg^{-1}
335 in the DO and gill stages (mean \pm SD= 584 ± 80.5 and $744\pm 103 \text{ mOsm Kg}^{-1}$
336 respectively) (Figure 4 B,C), with less of a difference with the medium before DO
337 development (mean \pm SD= $810\pm 91 \text{ mOsm Kg}^{-1}$) (Figure 4A). At a salinity of 2, eggs
338 from all stages were hyperosmotic to the external medium (52 mOsm Kg^{-1}), with the
339 pre-DO stage being closest to the isosmotic line (mean \pm SD= 330 ± 29 , 510 ± 55 and
340 $502\pm 55 \text{ mOsm Kg}^{-1}$ for pre-DO, DO and gill respectively). Differences between the
341 stages diminished at salinity 15.

342

343 2.2.2. Osmo- and iono-regulatory patterns in adults

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345

346

347 Figure 5. Osmotic and ionic regulation in adult *Gammarus chevreuxi* acclimated to
 348 four salinities (S= 2, 10, 25 and 35) for seven days. Haemolymph (A) osmolality (B)
 349 sodium (Na⁺) concentration, (C) calcium (Ca²⁺) concentration and (D) magnesium
 350 (Mg²⁺) concentration. Points represent mean concentrations and standard errors of
 351 pooled biological replicates from the respective treatments (n= 12, 15, 15 and 15 for
 352 salinities 2, 10, 25 and 35 respectively (A); n= 40, 44, 40 and 19 for salinities of 2,
 353 10, 25 and 35 respectively (B-D)). Broken lines represent isosmotic lines.

354

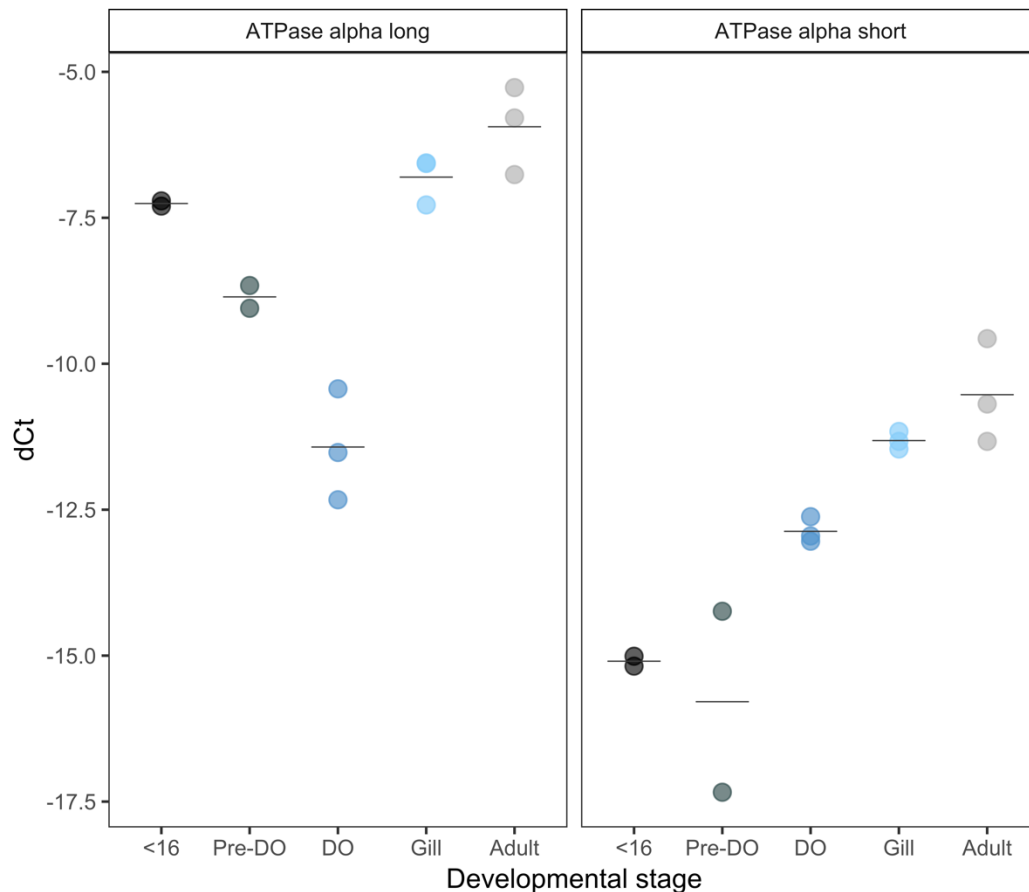
355 Regulation of osmolality and selected key ions in the haemolymph of amphipods
 356 exposed to different environmental salinities is presented in Figure 5. In each case, a

357 hyper-hypo-regulation pattern was observed. Total osmolality and the concentrations
 358 of all three ions were tightly regulated across the salinities tested.

359

360 2.2.3. Gene expression profiles of putative osmoregulatory genes during ontogeny

361



362

363 Figure 6. Expression levels (dCt) for two isoforms putatively identified as Na^+/K^+ -
 364 ATPase alpha subunit in four embryonic stages corresponding with <16-cells (<24
 365 hpf), pre-dorsal organ (pre-DO, <48 h), dorsal organ present (DO, 9 dpf), gills
 366 present (Gill, 18 dpf) and adults ($n = 2-3$ pools of 50 embryos per developmental
 367 stage, and $n = 3$ pools of 10 adults). Transcripts are labelled ATPase alpha long
 368 (transcript length= 4398 bp) and ATPase alpha short (transcript length= 4317 bp) for
 369 convenience.

370

371

372 Both Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase transcripts were expressed throughout development. The
373 expression of the longer transcript differed significantly between stages (ANOVA,
374 $F_{4,8}=32.39$, $P<0.001$), showing greater expression at <16 cells, followed by a
375 significant downregulation in dorsal organ embryos (approximately 30%
376 downregulation compared to the <16-cell stage) before increasing again in embryos
377 presenting gills and in adults to levels similar to those of the <16-cell embryos (1.37
378 and 2.49-fold increase respectively compared to <16-cell embryos). The expression
379 of the short transcript increased with ontogeny (ANOVA, $F_{4,8}=15.41$, $P<0.001$) being
380 lowest in the early stages (<16 cells and pre-DO) and highest at the late stages
381 following a 4.67, 13.68 and 23.59-fold increase in dorsal organ embryos, gill
382 embryos and adults respectively in relation to the <16-cell stage (Figure 6). The
383 expression ratio between the two transcripts was reasonably stable throughout
384 ontogeny with the long transcript having higher expression levels ($\Delta\text{Ct long} - \Delta\text{Ct}$
385 $\text{short} = 1.66\text{-}2.08$, except for dorsal organ embryos, where expression levels were
386 most similar 1.13).

387

388 **3. Discussion**

389

390 3.1. Adult osmo- and iono-regulatory pattern

391 Adult *Gammarus chevreuxi* exhibited a pronounced hyper-hypo-osmoregulatory
392 pattern. The only other gammarideans for which this pattern is recorded is the high
393 shore *Orchestia gammarellus* (Moore and Francis, 1985; Morritt, 1988) and
394 individuals of a brackishwater population of the predominantly marine amphipod

395 *Gammarus oceanicus* (Normant et al., 2005). However, in *G. oceanicus* where
396 population differentiation is well attested (Crocker and Gable, 1977), individuals from
397 more oceanic populations show a hyper-iso- osmoregulatory pattern (Aarset and
398 Zachariassen, 1988; Brodie and Halcrow, 1978) in common with the adult stage of
399 many marine or estuarine gammaridean amphipod species (Dorgelo, 1974; Kiko et
400 al., 2009; Werntz, 1963). The strong osmoregulatory capacity of adult *G. chevreuxi*,
401 is matched by an equally strong pattern of haemolymph ion regulation including
402 sodium, which is a major component of effective osmoregulation (Lignot and
403 Charmantier, 2015).

404

405 3.2. Ontogeny of osmoregulation and the dorsal organ

406 The adult pattern of hyper-hypo-osmoregulation appeared in embryonic *G. chevreuxi*
407 well before the ontogeny of the gills (14 dpf), the presumed primary site of ion
408 exchange in crustaceans (Freire et al., 2008; Henry et al., 2012), and the pattern did
409 not change thereafter. This points to an osmoregulatory role for extrabranchial
410 structures prior to gill ontogeny. Appearing at 6 dpf the oval shaped, silver-stained
411 area on the egg surface, which has a darker outer ring surrounding it, corresponds
412 with the position of the DO. This is consistent with the DO ultrastructural description
413 of Meschenmoser (1989). The most dense staining occurs where the DO connects
414 to the vitelline membrane in *G. chevreuxi* (this study) and other peracarids (Bregazzi,
415 1973; Meschenmoser, 1989), and is likely to be indicative of active ion pumping.
416 While the DO may well be implicated in osmoregulation, the adult pattern of hyper-
417 hypo-regulation in *G. chevreuxi* was present before the DO becomes visible (6dpf).
418 However, before 6dpf, both hyper- and hypo-regulatory ability were not as strong as
419 they were post-DO formation. The results of silver staining and the correlation

420 between improved osmoregulation and the appearance of the DO, support the idea
421 that, for *G. chevreuxi*, and in many other amphipod and isopod crustaceans, the DO
422 is involved in osmotic and ionic regulation (Bregazzi, 1973; Martin and Laverack,
423 1992; Meschenmoser, 1989; Morritt and Spicer, 1995; Strömberg, 1972; Vlasblom
424 and Bolier, 1971; Wright and O'Donnell, 2010).

425 At 14 dpf, the DO began to degenerate in *G. chevreuxi* and at the same time the gills
426 became visible and showed weak silver staining. The centre of the DO stained
427 (unlike the vitelline membrane) in all developmental stages, up until the point where
428 it had totally degenerated, suggesting it remained functional until very late in
429 embryonic development. Interestingly, like *G. chevreuxi*, the coxal gills of late stage
430 *G. duebeni* embryos also showed little stain retention. Morritt and Spicer (1995)
431 suggested therefore, that the coxal gills may only provide major osmoregulatory
432 function post-hatching in this species, as it is only then the gills stain darkly.
433 However, the lower staining intensity could equally be indicative of a decrease in
434 chorion permeability.

435

436 3.3. Gene expression and osmoregulation

437 Na^+/K^+ -ATPases are ubiquitous, highly conserved transport proteins consisting of
438 alpha and beta subunits. The alpha subunit is the catalytic unit, and the beta subunit
439 facilitates insertion in the membrane (Skou, 1990). In adult crustaceans, Na^+/K^+ -
440 ATPase activity is largely responsible for epithelial movement of monovalent ions
441 across specialized ion-regulatory cells and tissues, mostly located in the gills (Leone
442 et al., 2017; Lignot and Charmantier, 2015). Its activity is associated with
443 osmoregulation in euryhaline crustaceans, with significant increases in activity

444 demonstrable during both hyper- and hypo-osmoregulation (reviewed by Lucu and
445 Towle, 2003). Long-term increases in activity are likely a result of enzyme activation
446 and *de novo* protein synthesis *via* enhanced transcription (Havird et al., 2013). An
447 increase in the activity of Na⁺/K⁺ -ATPase during embryonic development has been
448 recorded in a wide range of decapod species (Felder et al., 1986; Ituarte et al., 2008;
449 Taylor and Seneviratna, 2005; Wilder et al., 2001). While gill Na⁺/K⁺ -ATPase activity
450 has been measured in adult amphipods (Brooks and Lloyd Mills, 2006), nothing is
451 known of how enzymatic activity, or its associated gene expression, changes during
452 embryonic development in these peracarids.

453

454 In *G. chevreuxi*, we found evidence of regulation during ontogeny of two different
455 transcripts encoding the alpha subunit. More than one copy of the Na⁺/K⁺ ATPase
456 alpha gene is reported in crustaceans including the waterflea *Daphnia pulex* (Macias
457 et al., 1991), the brine shrimp *Artemia franciscana* (Baxter-Lowe et al., 1989) and the
458 barnacle *Balanus improvisus* (Lind et al., 2013), which is divided into two classes;
459 Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase 1 and 2. In addition, some crustacean species present different
460 isoforms of the alpha 1 variant, representing different splice variants. This has been
461 well characterised in the barnacle, *B. improvisus*, where the long and short forms
462 differ by 27 amino acids at the N-terminus. Analysis of the transcripts identified in *G.*
463 *chevreuxi*, suggests that these mRNAs represent a long and short splice variant
464 differing only by 81 bp. Alignment of these mRNA sequences to the long and short
465 Na⁺/K⁺ ATPase alpha 1 splice variants identified in the barnacle *B. improvisus*, the
466 shrimp *Penaeus monodon* and the crab *Pachygrapus marmoratus* (alignment given
467 in Lind et al., (2013)), revealed similarity between the two main variants for each
468 individual including or excluding the 27 amino acids. This suggests that the *G.*

469 *chevreuxi* transcripts identified herein belong to the Na⁺/K⁺ ATPase alpha 1 class,
470 and are homologous products of alternative splicing of a 27 amino acid exon (Figure
471 S1). While the functional importance of this exon in the encoded proteins is not
472 known, we have observed differences in expression patterns between the two
473 homologs. Expression of both transcripts was detected in all three developmental
474 stages examined. This supports the idea that ion transporting activity may occur
475 before the formation of osmoregulatory organs, potentially through Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase-
476 rich ionocytes. Such activity may be required to ensure the maintenance of osmotic
477 balance during hydration. Overall, the expression of both transcripts was greatest in
478 the late stages, embryos with gills and adults, which is consistent with the increased
479 activity levels observed during ontogeny in other crustaceans (Felder et al., 1986;
480 Ituarte et al., 2008; Taylor and Seneviratna, 2005; Wilder et al., 2001). However,
481 while the expression in one of the transcripts increased with ontogeny, the other
482 showed complex patterns, with reduced expression after the appearance of the
483 dorsal organ, compared to all other stages, suggesting different stage specific splice
484 variants may play a role during ontogeny. Differences in expression of different
485 splice variants of the alpha subunit between life stages have been described in the
486 barnacle *Amphibalanus* (as *Balanus*) *improvisus*, with dominance of a longer mRNA
487 over the short variant in cyprids, whereas in the adult, the short isoform was clearly
488 dominant (Lind et al., 2013). Interestingly, the long mRNA form is up-regulated in
489 relation to the short form during low salinity conditions, indicating the long protein
490 might have a more prominent functional role in maintaining haemolymph
491 hyperosmotic to the surrounding water under low salinity (Lind et al., 2013). The
492 expression ratio between the two transcripts remain constant throughout ontogeny,
493 except in dorsal organ embryos, where expression of both transcripts was most

494 similar. Differences in the ratio between two different isoforms during development
495 have been previously observed in the brine shrimp *Artemia salina* (Salon et al.,
496 1989), but the functional significance of these changes is not known and warrants
497 further investigation. It should be acknowledged, that, while the ontogenic changes in
498 expression of these two transcripts is interesting, they only represent a minor
499 component of the osmoregulatory genes in *G. chevreuxi*. Further gene expression
500 profiling across developmental stages and salinities is required to fully characterise
501 the molecular mechanisms underpinning the development of osmoregulation in this
502 species.

503

504 3.4. Comparison with other amphipod species

505 The ontogeny of osmoregulation in the three gammaridean species that have been
506 investigated to date all fit “Pattern 2” of Charmantier and Charmantier-Daures
507 (2001). Here, the ‘adult’ pattern is established around hatching, and adults are
508 euryhaline and can live in environments where salinity is high, low or variable.

509 While the ontogeny and development of osmoregulatory function in embryonic *G.*
510 *chevreuxi* was similar to that of embryonic *O. gammarellus* (Morritt and Spicer,
511 1999, 1996c), it differed from embryonic *G. duebeni* (Morritt and Spicer, 1995). A
512 hyper-hypo-regulatory pattern was already established in the earliest embryonic
513 (stage 2/3) examined of *O. gammarellus* and persisted through to hatching, although
514 it disappeared and developed again in hatchlings (Morritt and Spicer, 1999).

515 Paradoxically, the embryonic pattern was stronger than that of the adult (Morritt and
516 Spicer, 1996b) even though embryos are retained within the brood pouch where
517 there is tight maternal control of osmotic pressure of the exosomatic water within

518 (Morritt and Spicer, 1996a). This species can be subject to salinity extremes over a
519 number of different timescales (Moore and Francis, 1985).

520

521 *G. duebeni*, although more aquatic than *O. gammarellus*, also lives in habitats
522 subjected to large salinity variations but shows a slightly different osmoregulatory
523 pattern. Adult and early embryonic (stage 2/3) *G. duebeni* are hyper-iso-
524 osmoregulators. However, in medium and late embryos (stages 5-7) regulation was
525 hyper-hypo-osmotic, before reverting to hyper-isosmotic in hatchlings (Morritt and
526 Spicer, 1995). The significance of this transient ability to hyper-hypo-regulate is not
527 known, although Morritt and Spicer (1995) suggested it may be associated with the
528 appearance of the coxal gills, the putative primary osmoregulatory organs in
529 juveniles and adults, and with the concomitant disappearance of the DO. However,
530 while in *G. duebeni* the DO begins to degenerate around stage 5 and has
531 disappeared by hatching, in *G. chevreuxi* the DO remains visible right up until
532 hatching.

533 To conclude, the ontogeny of osmoregulatory function in the gammaridean
534 amphipod *G. chevreuxi* is consistent with the incomplete adult hypothesis proposed
535 by Adolph (1968) and Spicer and Gaston (1999), However the ontogenies of that
536 same function in the closely-related *G. duebeni* and in the talitrid amphipod
537 *Orchestia gammarellus* are more consistent with the physiological competency
538 hypothesis.

539

540

541 **Figure captions**

542

543 Figure 1. Light microscopy images of *Gammarus chevreuxi* embryos developed in
544 the marsupium of females and removed for examination at A) 2-cells, B) <16 cells,
545 C) 6 dpf, D) 9 dpf, E) 14 dpf and F) 18 dpf. DO and G indicate embryonic dorsal
546 organ and gills respectively. Scale bar = 200 μm .

547

548 Figure 2. Scanning electron microscopy images of dechorionated *Gammarus*
549 *chevreuxi* embryos fixed at 14 dpf indicating, A) the position of the embryonic dorsal
550 organ, B) the dorsal organ, C) the association between the dorsal organ and the
551 chorion, and D) the position of the gills. DO and G indicate embryonic dorsal organ
552 and gills respectively. Scale bars (10-100 μm) and magnifications (x230-1500) are
553 shown for each image.

554

555 Figure 3. Light microscopy images of *Gammarus chevreuxi* embryos developed in
556 the female marsupium. Embryos were stained with AgNO_3 at A) 6 dpf, B) 9 dpf, C)
557 14 dpf, and D) 18 dpf. Arrows with accompanying letter indicate silver stained areas,
558 corresponding with the locations of the embryonic dorsal organ (DO) and gills (G).
559 Scale bar = 200 μm .

560

561 Figure 4. Osmolality of *Gammarus chevreuxi* homogenate of embryos removed from
562 the mother at three different stages of development (i.e. pre-dorsal organ (pre-DO,
563 dark grey), dorsal organ present (DO, dark blue), and gills present (Gill, light blue))
564 and subsequently exposed to salinities of 2, 15 and 33 for 24 h *in vitro*. Points
565 represent mean concentrations and standard deviations of three biological replicates

566 per treatment, each consisting of pools of 25 embryos. Broken line represents the
567 isosmotic line.

568

569 Figure 5. Osmotic and ionic regulation in adult *Gammarus chevreuxi* acclimated to
570 four salinities (S= 2, 10, 25 and 35) for seven days. Haemolymph (A) osmolality (B)
571 sodium (Na⁺) concentration, (C) calcium (Ca²⁺) concentration and (D) magnesium
572 (Mg²⁺) concentration. Points represent mean concentrations and standard errors of
573 pooled biological replicates from the respective treatments (n= 12, 15, 15 and 15 for
574 salinities 2, 10, 25 and 35 respectively (A); n= 40, 44, 40 and 19 for salinities of 2,
575 10, 25 and 35 respectively (B-D)). Broken lines represent isosmotic lines.

576

577 Figure 6. Expression levels (dCt) for two isoforms putatively identified as Na⁺/K⁺-
578 ATPase alpha subunit in four embryonic stages corresponding with <16-cells (<24
579 hpf), pre-dorsal organ (pre-DO, <48 h), dorsal organ present (DO, 9 dpf), gills
580 present (Gill, 18 dpf) and adults (n = 2-3 pools of 50 embryos per developmental
581 stage, and n= 3 pools of 10 adults). Transcripts are labelled ATPase alpha long
582 (transcript length= 4398 bp) and ATPase alpha short (transcript length= 4317 bp) for
583 convenience.

584

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592

593

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