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# First record of *Caprella mutica* from the Iberian Peninsula: expansion southwards in European waters

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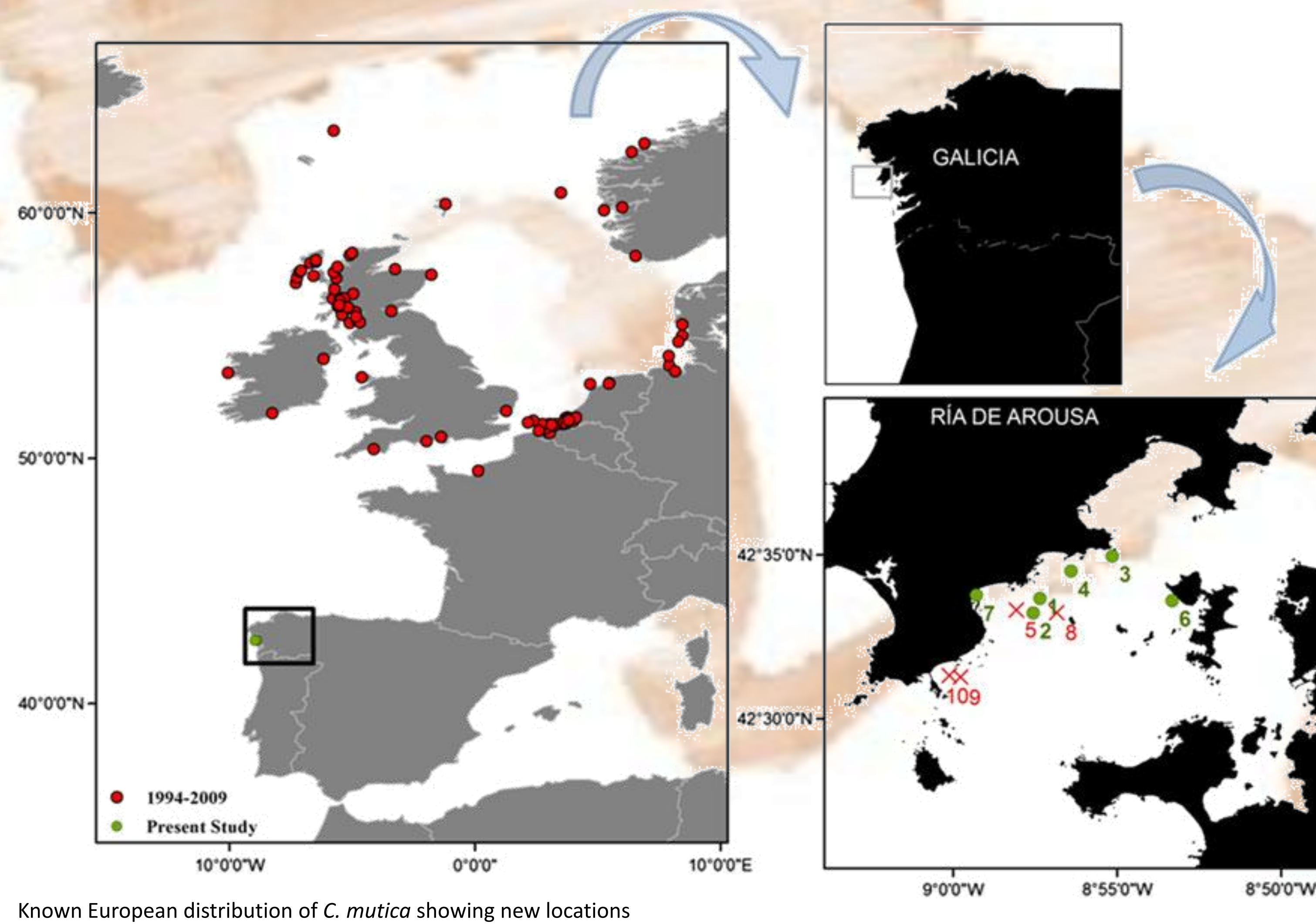
The caprellid amphipod, *Caprella mutica* (Schurin, 1935), is a well-known invasive species, originating in the Sea of Japan, which has been rapidly expanding along the coasts of North America, Europe and Oceania for the last forty years. *Caprella mutica* is frequently associated with man-made structures, especially those dedicated to aquaculture activities, where it can reach high densities of up to 300,000 ind./m<sup>2</sup>. A well-established population of *C. mutica* was recently found by SCUBA-divers in Galician waters (north-west Spain) at 6 different man-made floating structures along Ría de Arousa. The record of this species in this location implies a new southernmost limit of distribution, extending the known distribution range in Atlantic European waters and confirming the continuity of the colonization southwards.



Close-up photograph of a *C. mutica* couple



*C. mutica* colonies covering a whole aquaculture structure



Known European distribution of *C. mutica* showing new locations

*Caprella mutica* has a high reproductive capability, reaching sexual maturity at a body length of 11 mm for males and 7 mm for females. Depending on the temperature, this may occur within two months. Brood sizes vary depending on the female's body length but in most cases, they can produce 2 broods about 20 days apart. This high reproductive capability, combined with a wide tolerance to salinity and temperature and a great adaptability to food, allows the species to colonize new places efficiently.

The vector used by *C. mutica* to colonize new areas is not well understood, although it is suspected that it is more likely to be via commercial and recreational shipping, rather than by the stock movement of cultured species. From a socio-economic point of view, one of the most important issues is the potential impact of this species on native ecosystems and marine aquaculture, limiting the growth of the mussel *Mytilus spp.* on spat collectors.



*C. mutica* colony on mussel epiphytes

Assessing the extent of the invasion will require large sampling efforts and the collaboration of the different sectors involved, as well as the scientific community and the regional administration. This is instrumental to assess the extent of the invasion and its impacts, as well as to minimize its possible influence on both natural and human made ecosystems.



Close-up photograph of *c. mutica*: male (above) and female (below)

