

Ocean Sci. Discuss., author comment AC1  
<https://doi.org/10.5194/os-2021-74-AC1>, 2021  
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## Reply on RC1

Ken-ichi Nakamura et al.

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Author comment on "Carbon and nitrogen dynamics in the coastal Sea of Japan inferred from 15 years of measurements of stable isotope ratios of *Calanus sinicus*" by Ken-ichi Nakamura et al., Ocean Sci. Discuss., <https://doi.org/10.5194/os-2021-74-AC1>, 2021

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### *Response to Reviewer #1*

#### *General comments*

*In the introduction the authors mentioned quite extensively the anthropogenic impact on coastal seas, but it seems the data and consequently the results do not directly link to this topic. Although, they bring up interesting ideas (partly supported by literature) of possible links in the discussion.*

We acknowledge the reviewer 1's comments. We believe our revision based on these comments will improve the quality of our manuscript. We reduced the descriptions of anthropogenic impacts because we cannot evaluate whether the variation is anthropogenic or not. We fully revised the discussion based on both of two reviewers' comments. At first, we found the duplicates in our data sets, and thus we removed 7 observations from the analyses. Secondly, we found the C:N ratio of all of our samples. The C:N ratio and the stages of *C. sinicus* were treated as the explanatory variables in the GLMs. Thirdly, we used the residuals of the GLMs for identifying the monthly and interannually variations. These revisions changed our results on the statistical analyses, in particular, the trend of the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ . The residuals of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  in the GLM indicated that the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of *C. sinicus* was significantly decreased. Therefore, we revised our manuscript completely.

*In my opinion, the objectives presented at the end of the introduction are a bit too vague and it would help if the authors could present some of their expectations (they kind of do in the abstract) regarding the isotope values and mechanisms behind. It seems that the authors talk a lot about anthropogenic impacts but their aims and data are a bit vague to the subject. Similarly, they talk about lower-trophic-level ecosystems but never bounce back on this idea with their data analysis and results and only briefly brings it back to the discussion. For this reason, the introduction and discussion felt a bit disconnected from the data and their results.*

We acknowledge this comment. Aforementioned, we found new data, and revised the

manuscript. As the reviewer suggested, our manuscript did not confirm that our detected interannual variations is anthropogenically impacted. Based on our revision, we detected the decline trends of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ . However, our observed parameters were very limited, and we considered the decline trends of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  is exactly impacted by human activity. Therefore, we revised the aims of this study, and concept of this study the descriptions on the anthropogenic effect was reduced, and descriptions of local interests is increased.

*The environmental data that have measured while sampling copepods are temperature, salinity and chlorophyll. The analysis they performed on this data (I have no complaints about it) are somehow disconnected from context (and aims) of 1) showing copepods isotope ratio would record anthropogenic impacts (as written in the abstract) and 2) of a shift/change in lower trophic level. I would have expected other proxies for anthropogenic impact (e.g., nutrients concentrations) and trophic level estimation (i.e., isotope signal of POM) to support such hypotheses in relationship with copepod's isotope data. From the literature cited in discussion, it seems such data are available (at least POM isotope signal, Antonio et al 2012) which they could have used in some analyses to strengthen their says in discussion.*

We acknowledge this comment. Because this study is the result of long-term monitoring, the environmental data were very limited. Now, we reduced the descriptions on the anthropogenic effects: anthropogenic effects would be important, but we considered that our observations cannot be detected its effects. We cannot understand the meaning of the last sentence exactly. We collected stable isotope values of POM in two cruises nearby the observation area (April 2017 and May 2019). We added this data, and revised our discussion based on this data. On the basis of our stable isotope ratios of POM, the  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  of *C. sinicus* were considered to be reflected that of  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  of POM, but  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of *C. sinicus* were not reflected the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of POM. The physiological processes of *C. sinicus* must be considered. However, the GLM approach indicated physiological processes are also controlled with the environmental parameters. Therefore, the residuals of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  can be treated as the index of temporal variations. We considered that our revised discussion is more careful and stronger than the previous.

*To me there is also a conceptual problem of using copepods to mirror anthropogenic changes due to their relatively short life cycle, mobile nature and fast tissue turnover. I would expect those to reflect seasonal variability in their food source and eventually anthropogenic activities. A direct link to such variables would thus be appreciated.*

We do not agree with this comment. We considered that zooplankton including *C. sinicus* is better target to understand the environmental changes. Of course, as the reviewer 1 pointed, the seasonality of stable isotope ratio must be considered, but they moved with water masses, and sampling and measurements are easier than POM or fish. The collection of fish may be easy, but the environmental parameters cannot obtain. Besides, in Ohshimo et al. (2021), we evaluated the long-term variation of stable isotope ratios of fish, but to evaluate the trend, we must apply the time-series analysis because the time series data of fish contained auto-correlations. The stable isotope ratio of POM is considered as best to evaluate the trend because they directly reflected the environmental conditions. However, we need much water for measuring the stable isotope analysis of POM. in the coastal area, water environments were heterogenous, and so frequent

samplings were necessary for understanding the temporal-spatial variations. The high-resolution samplings of stable isotope ratio of POM were quite difficult; therefore we considered the zooplankton observation is better for monitoring.

*I also think the structure of the results could be improved by following the objective(s) and the methods (in the methods it is clear which equation the authors used to test their questions, but the questions are unclear in intro and do not appear in results). Results should be restructured to mirror the objectives and analyses for instance from the temporal aspect (long term and seasonal) and spatial (comparing stations) so it doesn't read as a report or a textbook. As an example, 3.3. currently named 'Generalized linear models' should absolutely be changed (and maybe split in different sections) to something more informative such as 'temporal trends' or 'seasonal patterns in copepods isotopes' ... the idea is to better connect aims with the statistical analyses the authors chose and to the results they found. Again, I would recommend the author to consider some kind of data analyses more directly related to anthropogenic impacts and to trophic level estimation to better support their say in discussion and the general thematic of the introduction.*

We agree with the reviewer's comment. We firstly compose the complex model, but we removed the model in the final version. The model can contain temporal trend (interannual and monthly variations) as well as the environmental parameters. We did not apply the temporal variations directly in the model to avoid the collinearity with the environmental parameters. To overcome this problem, we calculated the residuals, and show their temporal variations. We found that residuals of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  are significantly decreased in these 15 years. These suggested that  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of *C. sinicus* is decreasing. We added this in the revised manuscript.

*The discussion is well documented and the author explored different explanation they bring up. However, some statements would need a bit more in depth connexion with the literature they cite and also with the data. It seems sometimes some statements are disconnected from the results.*

We carefully revised the discussion.

*A last remark, I am not myself a native speaker but the manuscript was not so smooth to read through. Even though the manuscript has been revised by professional editors, one being a native speaker, it reads odd in some parts and there is a lot of repetitive sentences around one same idea/say that could be condensed for a better reading flow (see examples in detailed comments).*

We are sorry for that. We are not native speakers, and so we usually depended on the revised sentences by the natives. We revised based on the detailed comments. If our revisions are insufficient, our manuscript will be checked again in the next revision.

*Detailed comments*

*Abstract & introduction*

*L 12-13. Move 'during the last half century et the beginning of the sentence.*

We deleted this sentence (L12).

*L 19. high d13C values in copepods were associated...*

We deleted this sentence (L16).

*L 27-31. These three sentences read odd and feel a bit repetitive... human activities is repeated three times over two lines.*

We shortened the first sentence as "Coastal ocean ecosystems are important for human activities and have been greatly changed as a result of those activities." (L26–27)

*L37-46. This selection of lines should be a paragraph all together, talking about stable isotopes. Lines 45-46 are redundant with lines 37-38.*

We revised as suggested (L34–42).

*L 47. 'in this study' this should be the beginning of a paragraph in itself talking about Calanus.*

We revised as suggested (L43).

*L 65. The aim of the study should be clearer and it would be great that the authors give some expectations regarding the results. For instance, their expectations of isotope changes in copepods regarding anthropogenic activities.*

We appreciate and agree with this comment. We revised our aims with the leading sentences (L56–60). We did not describe anthropogenic impacts, and only described as “identify the long-term variations”, because the previous studies pointed that stable isotope ratios of carbon and nitrogen in food of small pelagic fish in the Japan Sea with chemical environments.

*L 66. The spatiotemporal variations of lower-trophic levels ... variation of what ? chemistry ? food quality ? trophic interactions ? food web structure ?*

We deleted this sentence (L60).

*Material and methods*

*L 84. Remove 'a temperature below'*

We revised as suggested (L76).

*L 100-103. Unclear how copepods were collected, pooled. 94 nets but 274 dried samples ? Please clarify this section.*

We revised the sentences to clarify the meaning (L94–99).

*L 103-104. At some stations [...] data from the same station. This sentence should be in data analysis section.*

We revised as suggested (L115–116).

*L 113-114. An example of sentence to rewrite. It is confusing the way it is currently written, especially mentioning twice the 'database' that was not introduce before. Maybe something like this could be an option: 'The amounts of carbon and nitrogen in each sample were also measured from which the C/N ratio of C. sinicus was calculated, however, this information was missing for 69 samples.'*

We revised. We re-searched the raw data, and finally found. Therefore, we can show the C/N of all subsamples. Based on the C/N ratio, we calculated the lipid free d13C values based on Smyntek et al. 2007, and used the C/N ratio as the explanatory variables in the

GLM (L108-109).

*L 116. Cite which environmental parameters.*

We revised as suggested (L117).

*In the 2.3. you mention what each equation is meant to test. Please keep the same idea of a structure in the way to present the results.*

We appreciate the comments. We revised the descriptions of results (L203–230).

*L 128. Interannual variations of stable isotope at every station*

We revised as suggested (L130).

*L 141. Note that we considered ...*

We revised as suggested (L143).

*Results*

*L 146. 3.1. Environmental variables, not factors*

We revised as suggested (L148).

*L 147. Please write fully the acronyms SST SSS SSC at the beginning of each section (here results section).*

We revised as suggested (L149, 151 and 153).

*L 149. Why giving the range of SST and SSC and not SSS ? Or at least an average and sd ?*

We added the range (L152).

*L 157. It is unclear if you describe the ANOVA in the methods.*

We added the descriptions (L112–116).

*L 173. This section could have its own title.*

We entitled as "Relationships between environmental parameters" (L193).

*L 182. 3.3. title of this section should reflect the findings or objectives and not mention the type of analysis. From line 173 to the end of the results, it would be very nice to link it with objectives of the study (e.g. spatial patterns, temporal patterns, link with environmental data). For instance, l 196, this is the beginning of the temporal aspect it seems.*

We revised and entitled as "Temporal variations of residuals" (L219).

#### *Discussion*

*L 227. This statement needs more support or explanations.*

We added the results of POM, and also added discussion. The discussion was completely revised (L232266).

*L 229. Carbon and nitrogen in copepod tissues*

We revised as suggested (L235).

*L 240-244. This is typically an example of redundant sentences that makes the manuscript hard to read. Please condense, rephrase or reorganize.*

We reorganized the discussion and sentence (L255–258).

*L 251-252. This statement can be tested with POM isotope values (for one given year for instance depending on available data).*

We revised based on this comment (L243–278).

*L 260-261. This statement needs more support.*

We revised, and we reached a conclusion as neither  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{bulk}}$  nor  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{ex}}$  of *C. sinicus* is not reflected the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of POM at the same station (L243–278).

*L 277-278. I do not agree with this statement. It doesn't seem that your data support this local hypothesis or need to be explained in a clearer way (that you have local differences in isotope signal of copepods, then have a spatial hypothesis to be tested). It needs stronger evidences.*

*L 280-284. This needs to be brought up in the introduction.*

We deleted these discussion to clarify our message.

Please also note the supplement to this comment:

<https://os.copernicus.org/preprints/os-2021-74/os-2021-74-AC1-supplement.pdf>