Community-wide effects of nonindigenous species on temperate rocky reefs
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Published in:
Ecology

DOI:

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2002

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

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Abstract. Ecological interactions among invading species are common and may often be important in facilitating invasions. Indeed, the presence of one nonindigenous species can act as an agent of disturbance that facilitates the invasion of a second species. However, most studies of nonindigenous species are anecdotal and do not provide substantive evidence that interactions among nonindigenous species have any community-level effects. Here, using a combination of field experiments and observations we examine interactions among introduced species in New England kelp forests and ask whether these interactions have altered paradigms describing subtidal communities in the Gulf of Maine. The green alga Codium fragile was observed at the Isles of Shoals, Maine, USA, in 1983 and has since replaced the native kelp as the dominant seaweed on leeward shores. Experiments manipulating kelp and Codium reveal that Codium does not directly inhibit growth or survival of kelp. Codium does, however, successfully recruit to gaps in the kelp bed and, once established, inhibits recruitment of kelp. A second nonindigenous species, Membranipora membranacea, grows epiphytically on kelp, and experiments reveal that the presence of Membranipora reduces growth and survival of kelp, resulting in defoliation of kelp plants and gap formation in kelp beds. In the absence of Codium, kelp recolonizes these gaps, but when present, Codium colonizes and prevents kelp recolonization. Manipulations of herbivores demonstrate that herbivory will reinforce Codium dominance. Thus, the demise of New England kelp beds appears to result from one invasive species facilitating the spread of a second nonindigenous species.

Key words: Codium; Gulf of Maine, USA; herbivory; indirect effects; introduced species; Isles of Shoals, Maine, USA; kelp recruitment and nonindigenous species; Membranipora; nonindigenous species; recruitment; species interactions; Tautogolabrus adspersus.
Maine where, in recent years, numerous species have been introduced and are now established. Recent introductions include a European nudibranch *Tritonia plebeia* (Allmon and Sebens 1988), California tunicares *Styela clava* and *Botrylloides* spp. (Carlton 1989), a western Pacific crab *Hemigrapsus sanguineus* (Gerard et al. 1999), a bryozoan from Europe, *Membranipora membranacea* (Berman et al. 1992), an Asian green alga *Codium fragile* (Carlton and Scanlon 1985), and a European flatworm *Convoluta convoluta* (Rivest et al. 1999). *M. membranacea* and *C. fragile* have become particularly abundant in the Gulf of Maine. We ask if the presence of these invasive species has significantly altered the structure of New England subtidal communities and, if so, whether the impacts have been synergistic. In doing so, we explicitly examine the hypothesis that the presence of one nonindigenous species facilitated the expansion of a second introduced species.

**STUDY SYSTEM**

Diverse and productive forests of kelp fringe many temperate rocky coasts throughout the world, including the Gulf of Maine. The productivity of these complex habitats rivals even the most productive terrestrial habitats, fixing up to 3 kg C·m$^{-2}$·yr$^{-1}$ (Witman 1988). Typically, kelp forests have a three-tiered structure with the top tier consisting of a canopy rising above the bottom. Shading by the kelp canopy results in a middle tier of shrubby, shade-tolerant understory composed of red and smaller brown seaweeds (Johnson and Mann 1988). A bottom tier of encrusting coralline algae covers most of the rocky surfaces.

In the Gulf of Maine, as in other locales, grazing by sea urchins (*Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis*) can convert diverse, productive kelp forests to an alternate, low productivity community dominated by urchins and herbivore-resistant coralline algae (Witman 1987, Keats 1991). Physical factors acting on urchin populations appear to trigger shifts between community states. Although the occurrence of important physical processes is unpredictable in time or space, the outcome following a physical disturbance (kelp forest or urchin-dominated community) was thought to be highly predictable in the Gulf of Maine (Johnson and Mann 1988).

**FOCAL NONINDIGENOUS SPECIES**

*Codium fragile* ssp. *tomentosoides*

During the early 1900s, the green alga *Codium fragile* ssp. *tomentosoides* (hereafter referred to as *Codium*) dispersed from the northwest Pacific to northern Europe, where it expanded its range over the next 50 years. In 1957, *Codium* was discovered along the east coast of the United States on Long Island. It arrived via transplantation of oysters either from Washington State or The Netherlands, and quickly spread south to North Carolina and north to Cape Cod, Massachusetts (Fralick and Mathieson 1972, Carlton and Scanlon 1985). The species was first observed on Appledore Island in the Isles of Shoals (central Gulf of Maine) in 1983 and was abundant throughout all the islands of the Isles of Shoals archipelago by 1991 (Prince 1988, P. S. Levin, J. A. Coyer, R. Petrik, and T. P. Good, personal observations). By late 1992, *Codium* had spread throughout the Northwest Atlantic, including Nova Scotia (Bird et al. 1993).

This rapid range expansion was facilitated by the ability of *Codium* to reproduce by both fragmentation and sexual reproduction. *Codium* undergoes extensive fragmentation in winter when intact individuals are often reduced to their basal holdfast. New fronds can grow from the residual holdfast, and drifting fragments can reattach on open substrata (Fralick and Mathieson 1972, Mathieson 1989). Most sexual reproduction occurs in summer in New England (Prince 1988). Billagellated swarmers are released from macroscopic plants and germinate directly into heterotrichous germings (Fralick and Mathieson 1972). The spread of *Codium* has also been accelerated by transplantation of oysters, entrapment in fishing nets, and attachment to ship hulls (Bird et al. 1993). *Codium* is consumed worldwide by a variety of urchins and other herbivores (Prince and LeBlanc 1992, Trowbridge 1995), but it does not appear to be a preferred food source for *Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis* in the Gulf of Maine (Prince and LeBlanc 1992, Scheibling and Anthony 2001).

*Membranipora membranacea*

The encrusting cheilostome bryozoan *Membranipora membranacea* (hereafter referred to as *Membranipora*) grows epiphytically on kelp blades both in Europe (Ryland 1970, Eggleston 1972) and along the North American Pacific coast (Osburn 1953, Yoshioka 1982). It was first observed in the Gulf of Maine in 1987 (Lambert 1990) and has since become the dominant epibiont of laminarian kelps in this region (Berman et al. 1992). In the Gulf of Maine, *Membranipora* grows and reproduces during the summer, and colonies senesce in the fall (Ellison and Harvell 1989, Berman 1994). *Membranipora* has been reported to occur on up to 85% of kelp individuals (Berman et al. 1992), and kelp blades with heavy encrustations of the senesced bryozoan are susceptible to storm damage (Dixon et al. 1981, Lambert et al. 1992). In southern Maine, for example, winter storms of average intensity resulted in the defoliation of a kelp bed that had persisted for >25 yr (Lambert et al. 1992). Similar defoliation events have been observed in Nova Scotia (Scheibling 2000). Although fishes and nudibranchs consume *Membranipora* elsewhere (Bernstein and Jung 1979, Harvell 1984), it does not appear to have significant predators in the Gulf of Maine (Lambert et al. 1992).
METHODS

Study site

Field experiments and descriptive investigations were conducted on rocky reefs at the Isles of Shoals, 10 km offshore of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, USA (42°59' N; 70°37' W). The Isles of Shoals consist of nine small granitic islands with subtidal rock-ledge habitats that are typical of the Gulf of Maine (Witman 1987). All work was conducted in water 4–7 m deep at low tide. For the past two decades, we have studied these sites intensively (Levin 1991, 1993, 1994a, 1996, Levin and Mathieson 1991, Levin et al. 1997, Rivest et al. 1999) as have others e.g., (Witman 1985, 1987, Mathieson and Hehr 1986). Thus, it is possible to place results of our study in a longer term temporal context.

General approach

Our general approach in this project was to first describe the pattern of change in the algal assemblages on rocky reefs at the Isles of Shoals. We then performed a series of field and laboratory experiments to elucidate the mechanisms underlying the potential impacts of Codium and Membranipora on native seaweeds as well as the organisms that use seaweed beds as habitat.

Changes in the structure of algal assemblages

In 1990–1992 and 1996–1998, we quantified the algal habitat on Appledore Island as part of ongoing work on fish recruitment (Levin et al. 1997). Algae were grouped as kelps (mostly Laminaria saccharina), filamentous (mostly Ceramium spp. and Polysiphonia spp.), and Codium (Levin 1991, 1994b). The percent cover of each algal group was estimated by recording the type of alga at 50-cm intervals along randomly placed 15-m transects. A minimum of 10 transects was sampled at each site, and thus, we sampled at least 300 points in each site. We enumerated algal cover only in August in each year because this is when the fish that we were investigating settled from the plankton to macroalgal habitat (Levin 1994a). Because we report only algal cover (not bare cover) this should be viewed as a relative measure of algal abundance. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if the percent cover of each of the three algal groupings changed among years.

Impacts of Codium and Membranipora on kelp

Does Codium inhibit recruitment of kelp?—Because of the dense cover of Codium we observed at our study sites and that has been reported elsewhere (Chapman 1999, Scheibling and Anthony 2001), we reasoned that Codium may inhibit kelp recruitment (see also Scheibling 2000). To test the hypothesis that increases in Codium cover have occurred because Codium outcompetes kelp by inhibiting recruitment of juvenile kelp, we performed an experiment in which algal cover was manipulated. In June 1997 we established eight circular experimental plots (9 m²) in three sites along the western (leeward) shoreline of Appledore Island at 4–7 m depth. Following a randomized block design, we either removed all Codium or removed no algae (i.e., the control). In order to ensure that all experimental treatments were independent, we separated experimental plots within experimental blocks by 10 m, with blocks separated by >15 m. Divers removed Codium by hand, placed all algae in mesh bags, and disposed of the algae several meters downcurrent from the study site. Control plots received similar diver disturbance, but no algae was removed. In addition, two cement slabs (27 cm long × 18 cm wide × 2.25 cm tall) were placed within plots to evaluate recruitment of algae.

In September 1997 and March, May, and August 1998, we estimated the percent cover of algae on cement slabs by enumerating the presence of species beneath a 27 × 18 cm grid of 50 points. As L. saccharina produces unilocular sporangia through the winter (Mathieson et al. 1981), and young kelp sporophytes are apparent in spring, we quantified kelp cover before, and for varying periods after, the recruitment of juveniles. We used repeated-measures ANOVA to test for differences in kelp cover in the presence or absence of Codium (main effect) and among sampling dates (repeated measure).

Do Codium or Membranipora affect kelp growth or survival?—Embedded within the experiment described above, we evaluated the effect of both Codium and Membranipora on survival and growth of kelp. Within the central 4.5-m² area of each experimental plot, we randomly attached two kelp plants (length: 30.1 ± 1.3 cm [mean ± 1 se]) to the substratum by weaving the holdfast of kelp into polypropylene line attached to the bottom with epoxy. On one kelp individual within each plot we removed all Membranipora growth by gently removing colonies using a fingernail (Harvell et al. 1990). These kelp individuals were paired with a second individual that had at least 50% cover of Membranipora. All kelp individuals subsequently were tagged with sequentially numbered plastic cable ties fastened loosely around the stipe of the plant. Previous work had indicated that tag chafing would be minimal and that this method would have minimal effects on kelps (Coyer and Zaugg-Haglund 1982).

We revisited each plant five times over 19 d and recorded the presence/absence of tagged individuals. We also measured kelp growth by following the movement of a small hole, 0.8 cm in diameter and 5 cm from the blade–stipe junction, punched into the blade. A new hole was punched on each visit to the plant; the distance between the newly and previously punched holes represented simple linear growth (Coyer and Zaugg-Haglund 1982). Differences in kelp growth were assessed using a two-way ANOVA with the presence or absence of Codium and Membranipora as main effects. Differences in the proportion of individuals sur-
viving to the end of the experiment were assessed with a likelihood-ratio chi-square test. It was possible to unambiguously determine if a plant survived, since in all cases where an individual was missing, its holdfast remained.

Mechanisms underlying shifts in algal assemblage structure

Is kelp with or without Membranipora more susceptible to herbivory?—Because Membranipora may increase the nutritional value of kelp (Nestler and Harris 1994), we also tested the relative palatability of kelp (L. saccharina) with and without Membranipora to herbivory by offering a sea urchin (Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis) or a snail (Lacuna vincta) a choice between the two. Kelp pieces were damp-dried to remove excess water, weighed to the nearest milligram, and offered to an individual herbivore held in a 1.6-L tub with flow-through seawater. Each herbivore was offered a choice between similar-sized (damp-dried mass = 285 ± 15.6 mg [mean ± 1 SE] per piece) kelp pieces. Pieces with and without Membranipora came from the same individual kelp, and each kelp plant, as well as herbivore, was used in only one replicate. Paired kelp pieces (i.e., from the same individual kelp) were also set up without herbivores to control for autogenic changes in mass (Peterson and Renaud 1989, Renaud et al. 1990). After ~76 h the pieces were reweighed and the amount consumed was calculated using the equation

\[
(H_0 \times \frac{C_i}{C_0}) - H_i
\]

where \(H_0\) and \(H_i\) were the initial and final masses, respectively, in the presence of herbivores, and \(C_i\) and \(C_0\) were initial and final masses in the absence of herbivory (Cronin and Hay 1996). Differences in consumption were analyzed with a paired-sample \(t\) test.

Is Codium or kelp more susceptible to herbivory?—The relative palatability of Codium and kelp was first assessed by offering sea urchins a choice between the two algal species using the protocol described above. Algae were damp-dried, weighed to the nearest milligram, and offered to an individual sea urchin held in a 1.6-L tub with flow-through seawater. Each sea urchin was offered a choice between similar-sized pieces (damp-dried mass = 454 ± 12.1 mg [mean ± 1 SE] per piece). Again, each sea urchin and alga was used in only one replicate, and paired algal pieces were established without herbivores to control for autogenic changes in mass (Peterson and Renaud 1989, Renaud et al. 1990). After 48 h, the plants were reweighed, and the amount consumed was calculated as above.

We also assessed the palatability of Codium relative to kelp using a no-choice assay (sensu Cronin and Hay 1996) with either S. droebachiensis or L. vincta as herbivores. A piece of each alga was placed alone in a flow-through 1.6-L container with a randomly assigned herbivore. Herbivores were allowed to feed for 72 h. A paired piece of algal tissue (from the same plant) was placed in a similar tub without an herbivore to control for autogenic changes in mass. Treatments were arrayed in a sea table randomly. At the end of the experiment, algae were reweighed and the amount each plant consumed was calculated as described above. Data were analyzed with a \(t\) test assuming unequal variances.

Our laboratory experiments used S. droebachiensis and L. vincta because these are the dominant herbivores at our sites (Witman 1985, 1987). Nonetheless, other herbivores exist in the system and may differentially consume algae. Therefore, we performed an additional experiment in which similar-sized pieces of Codium and kelp (damp-dried mass = 974 ± 9.9 mg) were attached to the sea floor by weaving their holdfasts into three-stranded polypropylene line that was epoxied to the substrate. We choose a location where urchins were locally abundant. Pairs of Codium and kelp \((N = 20\) pairs) of each species were placed at ~3-m depth and exposed to all herbivores (cf. Hay 1981). After 24 h we retrieved the algae, reweighed individual pieces, and calculated the amount consumed as the difference between the initial and final masses.

Potential community-level consequences of Codium/Membranipora invasion

Potential effects on the algal assemblage.—In 1997 and 1998 we sampled algae in seven sites around the Isles of Shoals archipelago. Using the same transect procedure described above, we sampled percent cover of L. saccharina, Codium, Ulva lactuca, Chondrus crispus, crustose coralline algae, and filamentous red algae (mostly Ceramium spp. and Polysiphonia spp.) along a minimum of 10 transects per site in both years. We selected these species and functional groups because previous work has demonstrated their importance to other species in kelp bed communities (Levin 1991, 1994b, Bologna and Steneck 1993, Tupper and Boutillier 1995b). We expressed the relative abundance of native kelp vs. nonindigenous Codium as the ratio

\[
\frac{\%\text{kelp} + 1}{\%\text{Codium} + 1}.
\]

We then asked if differences in the algal assemblage were associated with the relative abundance of kelp vs. Codium using a general linear model (GLM). Percent covers of filamentous red algae, crustose corallines, U. lactuca, and C. crispus were dependent variables in the model, and the ratio of kelp to Codium, year, and wave exposure (windward vs. leeward side of the Isles of Shoals) were independent variables. Prior to analysis, we followed the procedures described by Wilkinson et al. (1996) to access multivariate normality. No patterns were evident that would indicate violation of the assumption of homogeneity.

To illustrate the association of the kelp and Codium
with the algal assemblage we performed correlations between the ratio of kelp to Codium with the algal species we identified in our surveys. We performed these correlations only to illustrate the results of the GLM above; significance was determined with the GLM.

Potential effects on mobile animals.—To determine if a shift in the algal assemblage from kelp to Codium domination might impact rocky-reef invertebrates and fishes, we conducted an experiment in which we created 1-m² patches of algae on otherwise barren substratum. Algal patches (N = 6 patches per algal species) were constructed in June 1998 by attaching 16 kelp or Codium plants to four 1-m-long ropes, which in turn were attached to two parallel pieces of chain separated by 1 m (Levin and Hay 1996). A density of 16 plants/m² was sufficient to create patches of 100% cover for both algal species. Replicates of each treatment were separated from each other and from natural reef by at least 10 m and arranged in blocks separated by at least 12 m.

Algal patches were sampled visually 5 times from 12 to 26 August 1998, during the peak settlement of the rocky-reef fish, cunner (Tautogolabrus adspersus) (Levin 1994a). Densities of newly settled cunner (<20 mm standard length [SL]) as well as other mobile animals (crabs, lobsters, snails, other fish species, etc.) were censused following procedures developed by Sale and Douglas (1981), and used with success in the Gulf of Maine by P. S. Levin (e.g., Levin 1994a). Specifically, a diver approached a patch and at a distance of 2 m slowly circled the patch while recording the number of active species within 1 m of the patch. The diver then moved closer and counted demersal species associated with the algae. Finally, the algae themselves were searched. We used the mean value of the five censuses as the response variable in a one-way ANOVA testing for differences in numbers of conspicuous animals between kelp and Codium patches.

Results

Changes in the structure of algal assemblages

In 1990–1992 the subtidal community at Appledore Island (Isles of Shoals, Gulf of Maine) consisted of a kelp canopy with an understory of filamentous species. Since the early 1990s there has been a significant shift in the algal assemblage (Fig. 1, Table 1). In 1990, kelp coverage averaged 44 (±6.44)% (mean ± 1 SE), and percent cover of filamentous algae was >50 (±6.3)%.

Codium was rare at the site with a cover of 3.1 (±1.3)%. Kelp declined as the decade progressed, and by the late 1990s, average kelp cover did not exceed 2%. Similarly, the cover of understory filamentous red algae declined from a peak of nearly 80% cover in 1992 to below 32% since 1996 (Fig. 1, Table 1). While kelp and associated understory species declined during the last decade, there was a marked increase in the coverage of Codium (Table 1). Codium cover at Appledore Island increased more than 20 fold by 1998, and is now the dominant seaweed at the site (Fig. 1).

Impacts of Codium and Membranipora on kelp

Does Codium inhibit recruitment of kelp?—We observed marked differences in kelp recruitment to plots in which we removed Codium vs. those left as controls (Fig. 2). Kelp recruits appeared on our cement slabs in March 1998, just after the peak period of kelp reproduction. The cover of kelp recruits peaked in May 1998 and averaged nearly 8-fold higher in plots in which Codium was removed vs. controls, although this was significant only at an α of 0.06 (F₁,₀ = 4.496, P = 0.06). By August 1998 no kelp recruits remained in control plots, while cover of kelp recruits averaged >4% in Codium-removal plots.

Do Codium and Membranipora affect kelp growth or survival?—Growth rates of kelp did not vary between experimental plots from which Codium was either removed or left intact as a control (F₁,₄₁ = 0.52;
Table 1. Results of a general linear model testing the hypothesis that major algal species or functional forms varied as a function of the relative abundance of kelp and Codium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chondrus</td>
<td>9.061</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.061</td>
<td>2.135</td>
<td>0.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>284.281</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.243</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulva</td>
<td>3.481</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.481</td>
<td>3.262</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>71.486</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.067</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algal crust</td>
<td>620.134</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12.92</td>
<td>48.862&lt;0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1727.789</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25.788</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filamentous algae</td>
<td>297.177</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>297.177</td>
<td>11.524</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Results are shown only for the ratio of kelp to Codium effect. Multivariate test statistic, Wilks’ lambda = 0.409, F = 23.082, df = 4, 64, P < 0.001.

*Source of variation* indicates that percent covers of filamentous red algae, crustose corallines, Ulva lactuca, and Chondrus crispus were dependent variables in the model, and the ratio of kelp to Codium, year, and wave exposure (windward vs. leeward side of the Isles of Shoals) were independent variables.

Mechanisms underlying shifts in algal assemblage structure

Is kelp with Membranipora more susceptible to herbivory?—Our laboratory feeding assays revealed that the relative palatability of kelp with and without Membranipora also varied. Sea urchins consumed more than twice as much kelp with vs. without Membranipora (68 ± 12.4% vs. 29.2 ± 11.8% (mean ± 1 se); t = 4.13, df = 21, P < 0.001). Similarly, Lacuna vincta consumed 5 times more kelp with vs. without Membranipora (26.5 ± 16.0% vs. 5.1 ± 10.5%; t = 2.95, df = 17, P = 0.008).

Is Codium or kelp more susceptible to herbivory?—Given a choice between Codium and kelp, sea urchins consumed nearly 10-fold more kelp than Codium (t = 2.31, df = 18, P = 0.03; Fig. 5a). Additionally, evidence from no-choice feeding assays suggests Codium is not preferred by urchins. In both control and urchin-present treatments, Codium increased in mass and this increase did not vary significantly between treatments (t = 1.85, df = 18, P = 0.08; Fig. 5b). In contrast, the
loss of kelp biomass was a significant 6-fold greater in the presence vs. absence of urchins ($t = 3.59$, df = 10, $P = 0.005$; Fig. 5b). Results from no-choice feeding assays with $L. vincta$ were qualitatively similar. We were unable to detect differences in the change in Codium biomass between Lacuna-present or control treatments ($t = 1.47$, df = 14, $P = 0.16$; Fig. 5c); however, we did observe greater biomass loss of kelp in the presence vs. the absence of Lacuna ($t = 8.00$, df = 13, $P < 0.001$; Fig. 5c).

When we placed kelp and Codium in the field exposed to ambient herbivores, our results were similar to our laboratory results. After 24 h, more than 3 times more kelp than Codium had been consumed (Fig. 5).

**Potential community-level consequences of Codium/Membranipora invasion**

**Potential effects on the algal assemblage.**—Our censuses around the Isles of Shoals revealed that Codium cover was nearly 10-fold greater on wave-protected than exposed shores (403.04% vs. 4.6 ± 3.04% (means ± 1 SE); $t = 10.357$, $P < 0.001$). After statistically removing the effect of wave exposure (by including it in our general linear model) we found that the algal assemblage associated with kelp differed from that associated with Codium (Table 1). Generally, we observed a lower percent cover of Ulva lactuca, Chondrus crispus, crustose coralline algae, and filamentous red algae when the ratio of kelp to Codium was high (i.e., kelp dominance) (Table 2). However, the total percent cover of all algal species combined was positively associated with kelp dominance ($R = 0.47$, $P = 0.002$).

**Potential effects on mobile animals.**—When we created patches of kelp and Codium on an otherwise barren substratum, a number of adult decapods moved into the experimental plots. However, we were unable to detect differences in the densities of crabs ($Cancer irroratus$ and $Carcinus maenas$) or lobsters ($Homarus americanus$) between kelp and Codium plots (Fig. 6).

The fish, cunner ($T. adspersus$), also occurred on experimental patches. Cunner on plots were small (<20 mm SL) and newly settled from the plankton. We observed nearly 6-fold more cunner on kelp than on Codium patches (Fig. 6).

**Discussion**

The previously predictable dynamics of New England (USA) subtidal communities (Johnson and Mann 1988) have clearly been altered by biotic invasions. In addition to urchin- and kelp-dominated habitats, there now appears to be a new and third state—the nonindigenous Codium-dominated habitat. Although present at the Isles of Shoals since 1983, the occurrence of expansive Codium meadows was unknown until the mid-1990s, after a shift from kelp to Codium dominance. The replacement of kelp communities appears to be widespread within the Northwest Atlantic Ocean.
Fig. 5. Palatability of *Codium* compared to kelp (*Laminaria saccharina*) in various tests at Appledore Island in the Isles of Shoals, Gulf of Maine, USA. (A) A choice assay in which both *Codium* and kelp were offered to sea urchins in the laboratory. (B) A no-choice assay in which either *Codium* or kelp were offered to sea urchins in the laboratory. (C) A no-choice assay in which either *Codium* or kelp were offered to snails (*Lacuna vincta*). (D) A field assay in which *Codium* and kelp were exposed to all herbivores. Data are means ± 1 se of the mass of seaweed consumed during the feeding assay (negative means it was eaten, 0 means no change, and positive means it grew).

### Table 2. Pearson correlation of algal species or functional form with the ratio of kelp to *Codium* at the Isles of Shoals (Gulf of Maine, USA).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Algal species or functional form</th>
<th>Correlation with kelp: <em>Codium</em> ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhodophyta</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ceramium rubrum</em></td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Chondrus crispus</em></td>
<td>−0.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Corallina officinalis</em></td>
<td>−0.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Phycodrys rubens</em></td>
<td>0.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Polysiphonia</em> spp.</td>
<td>−0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algal crusts</td>
<td>−0.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phaeophyceae</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Agarum cribrosum</em></td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Desmarestia aculeate</em></td>
<td>−0.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>D. viridis</em></td>
<td>−0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chlorophyta</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enteromorpha</em> spp.</td>
<td>−0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ulva lactuca</em></td>
<td>−0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total filamentous algae</td>
<td>−0.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cover of algae</td>
<td>0.466</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chapman 1999, Scheibling and Anthony 2001). We argue below that the transformation of *Codium* from a naturalized to invasive species was facilitated by the introduction of *Membranipora* (Fig. 7).

Established kelp forests can resist invasion by *Codium* by monopolizing primary space. Earlier work has demonstrated that the presence of established seaweed beds inhibits the recruitment of *Codium* (Fralick and Mathieson 1972, Mathieson 1989). *Codium* can, however, recruit to gaps in kelp forests after disturbances. Gap formation thus sets the stage for a shift from kelp to *Codium* dominance. Historically, grazing by sea urchins was the major source of biotic disturbance in New England kelp forests (Witman 1987, Johnson and Mann 1988, Keats 1991), and our feeding assays suggest they would avoid *Codium* in favor of kelp. However, recent overexploitation of urchins has greatly reduced their abundance in the Gulf of Maine (Vadas and Steneck 1995, Steneck 1997). Indeed, at the Isles of Shoals localized extirpations of urchins are common (Harris 1997, P. S. Levin, J. A. Coyer, R. Petrik, and T. P. Good, personal observations), and we rarely observed urchins in our experimental plots. Presently, defoliation of kelp and gap formation in kelp beds are ostensibly due to encrustation with *Membranipora* because of the negative effects it has on kelp growth and survival. These negative effects are particularly pronounced after winter storms, as *Membranipora*-encrusted blades are less able to withstand water motion (Dixon et al. 1981, Lambert et al. 1992, Scheibling 2000). Additionally, our results showing decreased kelp survival in the presence of both *Membranipora* and *Codium* suggest that once *Codium* meadows are established, the negative impact on kelp—and thus opportunities for *Codium* colonization—are enhanced. Moreover, once kelp densities are reduced, it is possible that the lack of spore
sources inhibits subsequent reestablishment of the population (Reed et al. 1988).

In the absence of Codium, however, kelp forests reestablish following even severe defoliation (Berman et al. 1992, Lambert et al. 1992, Scheibling 2000). Indeed, kelp forests still persist in wave-exposed sites at the Isles of Shoals, where Codium is probably unable to thrive (see also Trowbridge 1995). In sites where Codium and Membranipora co-occur, though, gaps are colonized by Codium, which in turn inhibits kelp recruitment.

By creating gaps in kelp forests, Membranipora facilitates the invasion of Codium. However, the relationship between Codium and Membranipora is indirect and likely both positive and negative in nature. Membranipora requires an algal substratum upon which to grow, and at our site occurred almost exclusively on kelps (Berman 1994). Membranipora does not occur on Codium because of its siphonous anatomy (Berman 1994). Through negative interactions with kelp, Codium has an indirect negative effect on Membranipora. By facilitating the rise of Codium and the demise of kelp, Membranipora may contribute to its own local reduction in abundance.

The ultimate impact of Membranipora on kelp forests also appears to depend on the presence of Codium. Membranipora ostensibly reduces growth and survival of kelp wherever it occurs; however, a reduction in the growth and survival of kelp does not necessarily lead to a shift from kelp to Codium dominance. Obviously, if Codium is not present or cannot grow successfully at a site then the community-level impact of Membranipora is reduced. Thus, Membranipora occurs on kelp blades on exposed shores at the Isles of Shoals and causes severe damage to kelp. However, kelp forests remain at such sites because gaps in kelp forests are recolonized by kelp rather than Codium. The physical stress associated with waves probably prevents Codium from establishing (Trowbridge 1995). Similarly, at a nearby site along the coast of southern Maine, winter storms resulted in the defoliation of Membranipora-encrusted kelp in a bed that had persisted for >25 yr (Lambert et al. 1992). However, Codium was absent from this site and the kelp forest reestablished in one year (Lambert et al. 1992).

While our data and the work of others support the hypothesis that the invasion of Membranipora led to the local rise of Codium and ultimately to the declining kelp populations, we cannot definitively rule out other causes for the decline of kelp. Changes in water temperature, for instance, may affect kelp populations (Ottersen et al. 2001). However, trends in climate indices such as the North Atlantic Oscillation do not correspond to changes in the algal assemblage at the Isles of Shoals (Hurrell 1995, Ottersen et al. 2001). Although our results suggest herbivory could cause the patterns we observed, overharvesting of urchins at our study sites suggests this mechanism is unlikely. Additionally, field notes from Arthur Borror (former Associate Director, Shoals Marine Laboratory) produced while he circumnavigated Appledore Island in a dory on an annual basis, show that kelp persisted at our study site for at least 20 yr, even when urchins were much more abundant.

The introductions of Codium and Membranipora are clearly associated with shifts in the algal assemblage of New England rocky reefs. Kelp and associated ma-

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**Fig. 6.** The number of cunner (Tautogolabrus adspersus) and three common decapods colonizing experimental 1-m² Codium or kelp (Laminaria saccharina) plots. Data are means ± 1 se.

***P < 0.001; NS = nonsignificant at P < 0.05.
croalgae are important nursery grounds for fish (Levin 1991, 1994b, Carr 1994, Tupper and Boutilier 1995a, Steneck 1997), and also provide important recruitment habitat for numerous other invertebrate species (Duggins et al. 1990). Settling post-larval cunner show a strong preference for understory kelp-bed habitats when settling from the water column (Levin 1991). As a result, the distribution of cunner recruits shows a positive correlation with the percent cover of these habitats, both within (Levin 1991) and among (Levin et al. 1997) sites. In our experiment in which we provided kelp or Codium habitat, cunner recruitment was six-fold higher on kelp than on Codium. Thus, our results suggest that the shift from kelp to Codium dominance may result in a reduction in the settlement of cunner at larger spatial scales.

Alternatively, cunner populations may not decline but may be concentrated into rarer kelp patches. In the absence of density dependence (e.g., Levin 1994a), small-scale changes in algal habitat may not be expressed as large-scale changes in cunner density. However, newly settled cunner can experience density-dependent mortality (Tupper and Boutilier 1995a), and a shift in the spatial structure of the habitat may amplify this density dependence (Levin et al. 2000). Moreover, after settlement, cunner prey upon animals that themselves depend on understory kelp forest habitat for food (e.g., amphipods, Levin 1994b). Such prey species are likely to be less abundant in Codium since it is largely unpalatable (Prince and LeBlanc 1992). The shift to Codium and corresponding reduction in the prey base for juvenile cunner may therefore result in reduced performance of fish that settle to Codium beds.

Although it has been nearly 50 yr since Elton (1958: 31) noted that we were “witnessing one of the great historical convulsions in the world’s flora and fauna,” we have only a rudimentary understanding of the mechanisms underlying most biological invasions (Ruiz et al. 1997). Several authors have suggested this lack of knowledge arises from the rarity of mechanistic experiments used to study invasions (e.g., Grosholz and Ruiz 1996, Kareiva 1996, Petren and Case 1996). Our experiments suggest that the invasion of one nonindigenous species facilitated the spread of a second introduced species with consequences for the entire community.

Acknowledgments

We thank Ron Etter, Chris Harvey, Peter Kareiva, John Williams, and our referees for critical comments on the manuscript. Diving and moral support was provided by Julie Ellis, Brent Finely, John Grabowski, Tracey Fix, and Ebett Calvert. Logistical help from Paul Pelletier and the R/V Gulf Challenger, Mark Silberstein of the Elkhorn Slough Foundation,
and the staff of the Shoals Marine Lab is also greatly appreciated. We thank Art Borror for graciously sharing his remarkable field notes, and Drew Harvell for a passing, side comment that led to our Membranipora manipulations. Funding was provided by NSF grants DEB-9610353 and DEB-9700331.

LITERATURE CITED


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