

SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET

Hippolyte varians

English name: Chamaeleon prawn	Scientific name: <i>Hippolyte varians</i>	
Taxonomical group: Class: Malacostraca Order: Decapoda Family: Hippolytidae	Species authority: Leach, 1814	
Subspecies, Variations, Synonyms: –	Generation length:	
Past and current threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): Eutrophication (by deterioration of algal belts; H01.05)	Future threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): Eutrophication (by deterioration of algal belts; H01.05)	
IUCN Criteria: B1ab(iii)	HELCOM Red List Category:	VU Vulnerable
Global / European IUCN Red List Category: NE/NE	Habitats Directive: –	
Protection and Red List status in HELCOM countries: Denmark –/–, Estonia –/–, Finland –/–, Germany –/D (Data deficient, Incl. North Sea), Latvia –/–, Lithuania –/–, Poland –/–, Russia –/–, Sweden –/VU		

Distribution and status in the Baltic Sea region

The main distribution area of *H. varians* within the HELCOM area is in the Kattegat, primarily the shallow offshore banks. The species is also reported from the Swedish part of Öresund but the data for these observations has not been available. Outside the HELCOM area the species occurs in the Skagerrak, and is reported from the Norwegian coast up to Västlandet. A comparison between historical and present Swedish data indicates a decline in distribution, both in the Skagerrak and the Kattegat, primarily in coastal areas.

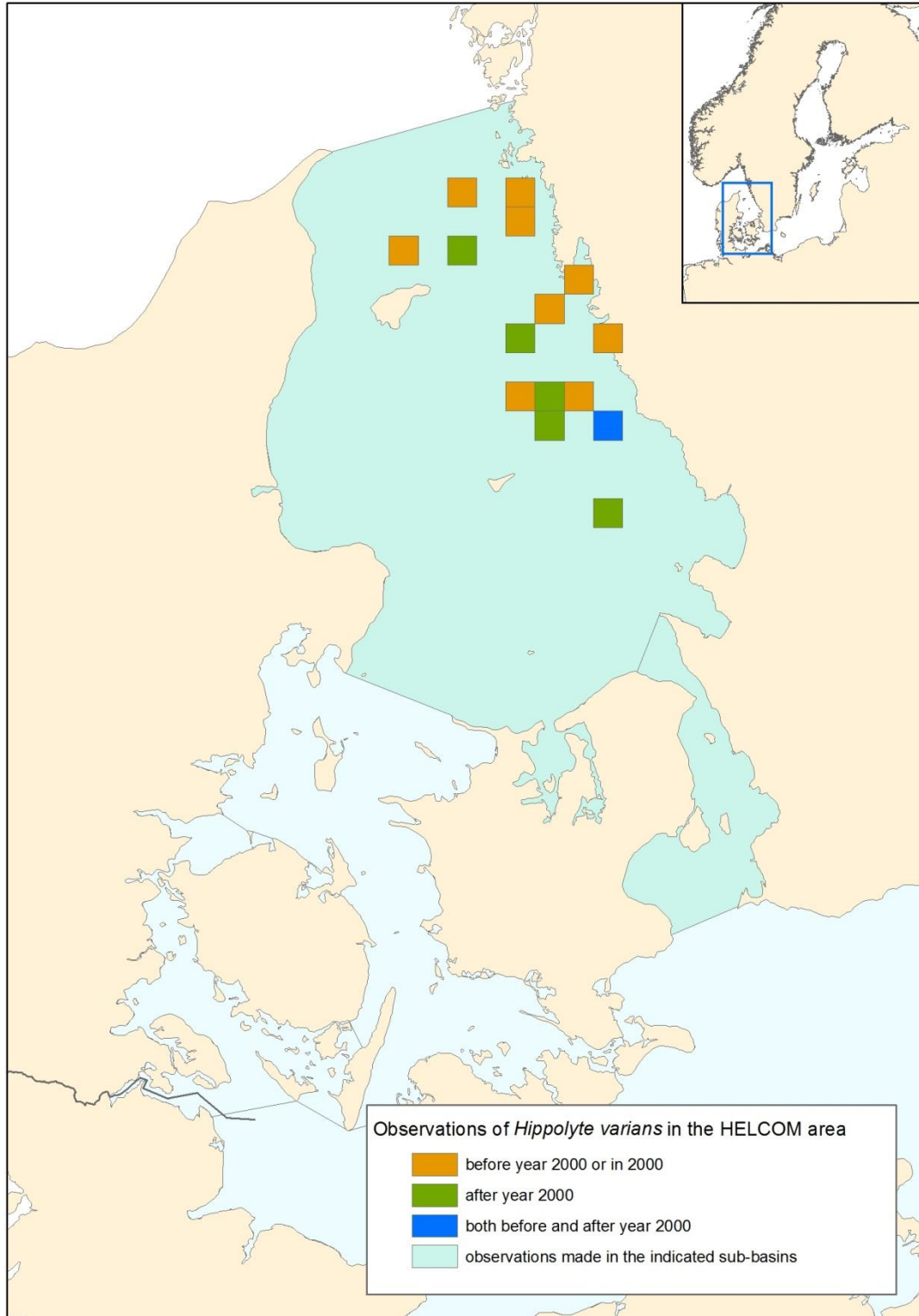


Hippolyte varians. Photo by Matz Berggren. University of Gothenburg, Biological and Environmental Sciences.

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*Hippolyte varians***Distribution map**

The records of species obtained from the species database of the Swedish Species Information Centre (Artportalen).



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Habitat and ecology

Hippolyte varians is a prawn belonging to the family Hippolytidae. It is very variable in colour, and may reach a size of 30 mm. The species is found amongst algae in the algal belt, most commonly on brown algae like *Halidrys siliquosa*. Deeper down it can also be found on red algae, and below the algal belt it has been found on both Dead men's fingers *Alcyonium digitatum* and the feather star *Antedon bifida*. *H. varians* may sometimes be parasitized by the isopod *Bopyrina ocellata*. Around the British Isles the species appears to breed practically throughout the year as egg-bearing females have been found in all months. The ecology in Scandinavian waters is less well known.

Description of major threats

The species is probably negatively affected by eutrophication, which causes deterioration of coastal algal belts.

Assessment justification

Only limited data has been available and all of that has been from Swedish sources. These indicate a decrease in distribution, primarily in coastal areas. The species' present distribution within the HELCOM area seems to be primarily on the shallow offshore banks in the Kattegat. The estimated extent of occurrence (EOO) in the Kattegat is 4 000 km² (2000–6000), and the number of locations is estimated to be 5 (3–7). The restricted geographic range together with continuing decline in habitat quality qualifies for the category Vulnerable (VU) according to B1ab(iii).

Recommendations for actions to conserve the species

The emission of eutrophication substances to the marine environment need to be reduced.

Common names

Denmark: kamæleonreje, Estonia: –, Finland: –, Germany: farbwechselnde Garnele, Latvia: –, Lithuania: –, Poland: –, Russia: –, Sweden: kamouflageräka

References

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