



Fishes in high-CO₂, acidified oceans

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ABSTRACT: Research interest in CO₂-driven ocean acidification has been centered on certain groups of calcifying marine organisms, but knowledge on the possible impacts of ocean acidification on fish is limited. Our survey of the existing literature on the effects of increased pCO₂ on fish (total of 116 papers) revealed that few studies were conducted under pCO₂ conditions relevant to the future scenarios of ocean acidification. Information is nearly absent on reproduction, early development, and behaviour of marine fish. The short experimental durations of these studies preclude forecasting of how mortality and growth of marine fish would be affected by future increases in seawater CO₂. Fish have been shown to maintain their oxygen consumption under elevated pCO₂ conditions, in contrast to declines seen in several marine invertebrates, in spite of possible additional energetic costs incurred by higher pCO₂. Impacts of prolonged CO₂ exposure on reproduction, early development, growth, and behaviour of marine fish are important areas that need urgent investigation. There is also a need to rapidly advance research into possible acclimation of marine fish to high pCO₂ environments, endocrine responses to prolonged CO₂ exposure, and indirect influences through food availability and quality on fish growth, survival and reproduction. Useful guidance could be gained from the rich literature on the effects of freshwater acidification.

KEY WORDS: Fish · Otolith · Ocean acidification · Mortality · Growth · Oxygen consumption

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INTRODUCTION

Research interest pertaining to CO₂-driven ocean acidification has been centered on certain groups of calcifying marine organisms (Kleypas et al. 2006). In contrast, knowledge is limited on the possible impacts of ocean acidification on fish. We surveyed 116 papers (published 1969 through 2008) on the effects of high pCO₂ on fishes and summarize the results in Table 1. The survey revealed that the data from these studies are of limited value to predict the fate of fishes in the future acidified oceans for the following reasons: (1) the pCO₂ levels used were much higher (above 50 000 µatm in 92% of the papers: 1 µatm = 0.76 × 10⁻³ mmHg = 0.1013 Pa) than projected for the oceans in the next centuries (max. 1900 µatm at around the year 2300, Caldeira & Wickett 2003; see also Caldeira & Wickett 2005 for other projections), with only 2 studies covering the pCO₂ range below 2000 µatm (Jones et al. 1985, Ross et al. 2001); (2) CO₂ exposure periods

were less than 4 d in 79% of the *in vivo* studies with only 8 experiments longer than 60 d; (3) marine species were used only in 25% of the studies; (4) research has focused largely on acid–base regulation and cardio-respiratory control (58% of the papers), and other aspects were little investigated; (5) effects on early development have been studied in only 2 papers (Kikkawa et al. 2003, this paper was counted under 'sequestration,' Sawada et al. 2008); and (6) all are laboratory experiments.

Another source of information that might give clues for considering CO₂ impacts on fish is the rich literature on freshwater acidification (Morris et al. 1989). However, extrapolations from freshwater acidification research must be made with caution: (1) the physico-chemical nature of the milieu, and the taxonomy and physiology of the fish are vastly different between freshwater and seawater ecosystems; (2) the pH reductions envisaged in the future scenarios of ocean acidification (max. 0.77 pH units at around the year 2300,

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Table 1. Summary of the literature survey on the effects of CO₂ on fishes. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of papers classified according to fish habitat, pCO₂ level used, exposure duration, and purpose of study. Total number of papers surveyed = 116. 'Miscellaneous' includes CO₂ anesthesia (6 studies), *in vitro* myocardium physiology (6), CO₂ sequestration (6), palatine CO₂ receptors (5), sperm motility (4), metabolism (2), behaviour (2), swimbladder gas (1), fillet attributes (1), Ca metabolism (1), ammonia (1), cataract (1), blood sugar (1), feed intake (1), and early development (1)

Habitat ^a	pCO ₂ (µatm) ^b	Duration (d) ^c	Purpose of study ^d
Freshwater (88)	<5000 (9)	<1 (52)	Acid-base (38)
Seawater (30: teleosts 22, elasmobranchs 8)	5000 to 10 000 (52) 10 000 to 50 000 (44) >50 000 (8)	1 to 4 (27) 4 to 10 (3) >30 (18)	Cardiorespiratory (29) Growth (10) Miscellaneous (39)

^a2 studies used both freshwater and seawater fish
^bSum of the listed studies is 113 since several studies did not report pCO₂ values. For those studies in which several levels of pCO₂ were used, the lowest pCO₂ values were counted. Original papers reported CO₂ levels as concentration (mg l⁻¹) or pCO₂ in mmHg, torr or kPa. We calculated pCO₂ in µatm using reported experimental temperature and CO₂ solubility values (Dejours 1981)
^cSum of the listed studies is 100 since we excluded *in vitro* studies. For those studies in which several exposure durations were tested, the longest duration was counted
^dFor those studies in which more than 1 purpose was stated, we selected the major purpose

Caldeira & Wickett 2003) are of smaller magnitude and will develop on a longer timescale than those caused by freshwater acidification. Freshwater acidification in susceptible areas (several countries in Europe and North America) has occurred more rapidly with larger pH reductions than ocean acidification (e.g. a pH reduction of ~2.0 within 30 yr in a forest lake, Andersson & Olsson 1985), often accompanying episodic further pH declines of 1.0 to 2.5 due to heavy rainfall or snowmelt (Reader & Dempsey 1989); (3) CO₂ often has greater negative impacts on exposed animals than mineral acids at identical pH levels (Crocker & Cech 1996, Hayashi et al. 2004a, Kikkawa et al. 2004).

This review attempts to summarize currently available information about selected aspects of CO₂ impacts on fish to provide a basis for understanding consequences of ocean acidification on the biology of marine fish. We propose research areas that need urgent attention.

MORTALITY

High concentrations of CO₂ kill fish (Lee et al. 2003, Hayashi et al. 2004b, Ishimatsu et al. 2004). The results of Lee et al. (2003) suggested cardiac failure is an important factor in acute death of the yellowtail *Seriola quinqueradiata* when it is exposed to 50 000 µatm of CO₂. Hayashi et al. (2004b) demonstrated that fish death occurred after arterial blood pH was restored to the pre-exposure level. However, the acutely lethal pCO₂ levels (in less than 3 d, >30 000 to 50 000 µatm) used in these studies far exceed those pertaining to ocean acidification and, therefore, will not be considered further.

The information on the prolonged impact of somewhat lower pCO₂ on fish mortality can be found in the aquaculture literature, even though the pCO₂ levels used in these experiments are still higher than those projected for the future oceans (Table 2). We were able to find only 2 aquaculture papers reporting mortality of seawater fish in hypercapnic environments. Although fish mortality appears to be positively dependent on imposed pCO₂ levels and exposure duration, the data are somewhat variable between studies even for the same species, possibly due to differences in experimental temperature and fish size. Furthermore, the interpretation of the 3 freshwater aquaculture studies is complicated by possible involvement of aluminium in fish mortality, which is thought to be a main factor in acid-water toxicity to freshwater fish (Heath 1995). Aluminium is mobilized from the soil by reductions of surface water pH and can reach 100 µmol l⁻¹ (total aluminium) during low pH episodes (Reader & Dempsey 1989). However, aluminium concentration in seawater is usually much lower (<20 nmol l⁻¹ in open oceans but up to 150 nmol l⁻¹ in semi-enclosed seas, Tria et al. 2007). In addition, calcium, which counteracts the toxic effects of aluminium, is higher in seawater (10 mmol l⁻¹ in 35 ppt seawater, Thurman & Trujillo 1999) than in freshwater (0.05 to 5.0 mmol l⁻¹, Appelo & Postma 2006), which makes it unlikely for aluminium to be involved in CO₂ toxicity to seawater fish.

None of the aquaculture studies examined mortality during early developmental stages (see initial body weight in Table 2). Acute (up to 72 h) mortality under pCO₂ of 3000 to 148 000 µatm was studied for embryos and larvae of marine teleosts (*Pagrus major* and *Sillago japonica*), which demonstrated that the most susceptible stages were cleavage and juvenile, whereas the

Table 2. Mortality of fish under elevated CO₂ conditions reported in aquaculture papers. FW: freshwater; SW: seawater. (1) Fivelstad et al. (2007), (2) Fivelstad et al. (1999), (3) Fivelstad et al. (2003), (4) Hosfeld et al. (2008), (5) Fivelstad et al. (1998), (6) Foss et al. (2003)

Species	Medium	pCO ₂ (μ atm) ^a	Temp (°C)	Period (d)	Initial body weight (g)	Mortality (%) ^b	Source				
<i>Salmo salar</i>											
Parr	FW	380	5	47	10 to 13	0	1				
		15 800				0					
		660				0					
		15 800				0					
Smolt	FW ^c	2600	3–7	62	53	1.5	2				
		6600				4.6					
		11 800				7.7					
	FW ^c	2600	7–9	60	66	3	3				
		6600				2.4					
		9200				4.5					
Postsmolt	FW ^c	920	6.4 to 9	42	50	0	4				
		7100				0					
		790				15 to 16		43	170 to 260	0	5
		6400								1.1	
15 800	1.1										
26 300	4.3										
<i>Anarhichas minor</i>											
Juvenile	SW	480	6	70	16	0	6				
		8000				0					
		14 700				0					
		26 100				0					

^aOriginal papers reported CO₂ levels as concentration (mg l⁻¹) or pCO₂ in mmHg, torr or kPa. We calculated pCO₂ in μ atm using reported experimental temperature and CO₂ solubility values (Dejours 1981)

^bPercent mortality recorded at the end of the experiments

^cFish were transferred to normocapnic seawater subsequent to the freshwater periods

preflexion and flexion stages were more tolerant (Kikkawa et al. 2003). Recently, Sawada et al. (2008) reported that 150 min exposure to pCO₂ of 92 000 μ atm resulted in significantly higher mortality in the embryos of the striped jack *Pseudocaranx dentex*. Studies of CO₂ impacts on early developmental stages of marine fish are particularly important since freshwater acidification studies have revealed that embryonic and larval stages are often the most sensitive stages to acute acid stress (Morris et al. 1989, Sayer et al. 1993, Heath 1995). Kurihara (2008, this Theme Section) discusses effects of high pCO₂ on early development of marine invertebrates.

The cause for fish mortality in long-term high pCO₂ exposure remains unknown. Aquaculture studies often reported occurrence of calcareous precipitates in the kidney (nephrocalcinosis), which may obstruct the lumen of kidney tubules (Fivelstad et al. 1999, 2003). Among the 2 studies on seawater fish, Foss et al. (2003) found increased percentage of fish with nephrocalcinosis, whereas Fivelstad et al. (1998) did not. Long-lasting reductions of plasma Cl⁻, possible reductions of hepatic metabolism, and a shift to anaerobic metabolism (see 'Energetic costs of living in high CO₂

oceans') deserve attention in elucidating mechanism(s) of fish mortality during long-term exposure to environmental hypercapnia. Recently, Kikkawa et al. (2008) indicated an inverse relationship between acute CO₂ mortality and oxygen consumption among marine animals.

ENERGETIC COSTS OF LIVING IN HIGH CO₂ OCEANS

Elevations of ambient pCO₂ may require fishes to spend more energy for physiological adaptations, in particular, acid–base regulation and cardiorespiratory control. Many excellent reviews have been already published on these topics (Milsom 2002, Perry & Gilmour 2002, Evans et al. 2005, Marshall & Grosell 2006, Perry & Gilmour 2006); therefore we limit our discussion to the energetic aspects of these physiological processes.

Cost of osmoregulation in seawater fish has been estimated to be 6 to 15 % of resting oxygen consumption (Kirschner 1993, Kidder et al. 2006). On top of this baseline cost for osmoregulation, elevation in seawater pCO₂ would require additional energy expenditure for

acid–base regulation. When the body fluid becomes acidic, fish excrete excess H^+ ions into the ambient water across different epithelia (gills, kidney and intestine) to restore body fluid pH near to its normal level (Heisler 1986). Fish are usually more efficient in extracellular acid–base regulation than invertebrates (Widdicombe & Spicer 2008). One consistent finding for teleosts, but not elasmobranchs, is that plasma Cl^- concentration decreases at a nearly 1:1 ratio with increasing plasma bicarbonate in both freshwater and seawater species (Ishimatsu et al. 2005). Such reductions of plasma Cl^- persisted even after 70 d when a seawater spotted wolffish *Anarhichas minor* was exposed to 8000 to 26 000 μatm $p\text{CO}_2$ (Foss et al. 2003). Because Cl^- is actively extruded in marine fish (Marshall & Grosell 2006), the observed further reductions of plasma Cl^- during exposure to high CO_2 would require the fish to expend additional energy. Similar long-lasting reductions of plasma Cl^- were observed also in freshwater species exposed to high $p\text{CO}_2$ (Fivelstad et al. 1999, Danley et al. 2005).

Ventilation of water-breathing animals is energetically more costly than in air-breathing animals. This is due to the relative scarcity of oxygen in water compared to air, the higher density and viscosity of water than of air (Dejours 1981), and is reflected in much higher energetic cost of ventilation in water breathers (around 10% at rest and up to 70% during exercise in fish) than in air breathers (1 to 2%, Gilmour 1998). It appears that fish would show little respiratory acclimation during long-term exposure to a high $p\text{CO}_2$ environment. Fivelstad et al. (1999) found that ventilatory frequencies remained significantly higher (ca. 125% of the control) in Atlantic salmon smolt exposed to 12 000 μatm $p\text{CO}_2$ than in the control fish throughout a 62 d exposure period. Similarly, Hosfeld et al. (2008) reported significant increases in ventilatory frequency for the same species throughout a 36 d exposure to 7900 μatm $p\text{CO}_2$. These observations indicate that the fish needed to expend more energy in ventilation throughout the hypercapnic period.

OXYGEN CONSUMPTION

Notwithstanding the possible higher energetic costs during hypercapnic exposure, oxygen consumption did not change significantly when resting fish were exposed to sublethal levels of CO_2 (Table 3). A transient increase in oxygen consumption was observed

in 2 elasmobranchs, and a significant rise reported for *Leiostomus xanthurus* might be due to the short duration of the experiment. The constant oxygen uptake of fish during hypercapnic exposure is at variance with the data for invertebrates, where oxygen consumption decreased significantly (Table 3). Fabry et al. (2008) also reported unpublished data showing 20 to 50% reductions in oxygen consumption for marine invertebrates during hypercapnia. In spite of the insignificant changes in oxygen consumption of fish during hypercapnia, an *in vitro* study by Langenbuch & Pörtner (2003) demonstrated a reduction of oxygen consumption by hepatocytes of 2 Antarctic fish when incubated at a $p\text{CO}_2$ of 10 000 μatm . They estimated that 60% of the observed reduction in oxygen consumption was accounted for by a decline in protein synthesis in both species. A recent study on a seawater fish, *Sparus auratus*, subjected to a $p\text{CO}_2$ of 5000 μatm suggested a shift from aerobic to anaerobic metabolism on the basis of changes in metabolic enzyme activities (Michaelidis et al. 2007). Because published data on oxygen consumption in fish during hypercapnic exposure are all of short duration (<24 h) and under $p\text{CO}_2$ higher than levels projected for future oceans, long-term measurements of oxygen consumption are needed under $p\text{CO}_2$ conditions relevant to the ocean acidification scenarios.

GROWTH

It may be inferred that fish growth is reduced due to the possible additional energetic costs imposed by elevated $p\text{CO}_2$, when overall oxygen consumption re-

Table 3. Effect of hypercapnia on oxygen consumption of selected marine animals. The 5 upper fish species are teleosts; the bottom 2 fishes are elasmobranchs. FW: freshwater. SW: seawater. Source: (1) Kinkead et al. (1993), (2) Takeda (1991), (3) Cochran & Burnett (1996), (4) Graham et al. (1990), (5) Randall et al. (1976), (6) Michaelidis et al. (2005), (7) Pörtner et al. (1998)

Species	Medium	$p\text{CO}_2$ (μatm)	Temp ($^{\circ}\text{C}$)	Duration (h)	Control %	Source
Fishes						
<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>	FW	7500	9 to 11	0.5	No change	1
<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	FW	13 200	25	6	No change	2
<i>Fundulus heteroclitus</i>	25 ppt	92 000	30	Not stated	No change	3
<i>Palaemonetes pugio</i>	25 ppt	92 000	30	Not stated	No change	3
<i>Leiostomus xanthurus</i>	25 ppt	92 000	30	Not stated	147	3
<i>Raja ocellata</i>	SW	9900	12	24	No change ^a	4
<i>Scyliorhinus stellaris</i>	SW	6600	16 to 19	4	No change ^a	5
Invertebrates						
<i>Mytilus galloprovincialis</i>	SW	5000	18	20 90 d	35 (adults) 65 (juveniles)	6
<i>Sipunculus nudus</i>	SW	10 300	15	2 to 3	80	7

^aTransient significant increases at the onset of hypercapnia

mains unchanged. Again, information is only available from aquaculture investigations that employed relatively high pCO₂. Increments of body weight were in general unaffected by exposure to pCO₂ of up to 15 000 µatm irrespective of salinity (Fivelstad et al. 1998, 1999, 2003, Foss et al. 2003, Hosfeld et al. 2008). The condition factor ($[100 \times \text{body weight}] / [\text{body length}]^3$) tended to decrease at high pCO₂, but the threshold for this effect appears to depend on species, fish size and salinity. Growth was invariably reduced at pCO₂ > 26 000 µatm. Fivelstad et al. (2007) recently demonstrated that negative CO₂ effect on fish growth was more pronounced at a low temperature when exposed to the same pCO₂ (16 000 µatm). Feeding may be suppressed at a very high pCO₂ (55 000 µatm, Cecchini et al. 2001; 26 500 µatm, Foss et al. 2003).

Inspection of these growth studies revealed that the smallest initial fish size was 4 g (juvenile *Acipenser transmontanus*, Crocker & Cech 1996). To our knowledge, no paper has been published on growth from fish eggs or larvae under pCO₂ of < 2000 µatm. There is an urgent need to conduct CO₂ exposure experiments from fish eggs and larvae to compare subsequent growth and survival at pCO₂ of < 2000 µatm.

SKELETONS AND OTOLITH FORMATION

Gil-Martens et al. (2006) is probably the only study that investigated effects of high pCO₂ on fish bones, minerals of which are composed of calcium phosphate in the form of hydroxyapatite Ca₁₀(PO₄)₆(OH)₂. After rearing Atlantic salmon for 135 d under control (pCO₂ 3300 µatm) and gradually increasing pCO₂ conditions (4700 to 16 600 µatm), they found higher Ca and P contents in vertebral bones of the experimental fish than in control fish. Histological examinations suggested higher bone remodeling activities in the high CO₂ group, while no morphological difference was detected by X-ray radiography.

In contrast to bones, fish otoliths usually deposit aragonite, the orthorhombic polymorph of calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) (Carlström 1963). Aragonite is more soluble than calcite, the other most common marine CaCO₃ (Zeebe & Wolf-Gladrow 2001, Morse et al. 2007). Thus, elevated environmental pCO₂ could reduce CaCO₃ saturation of the endolymph, in which the fish otolith is formed, and thereby affect otolith growth. There is limited information available on aragonite saturation and on the acid–base status of the endolymph of the inner ear sacs, and on the mechanisms of otolith formation in fish. Takagi (2002) and Takagi et al. (2005) reported that endolymph is supersaturated with respect to aragonite in rainbow trout under normocapnic conditions. However, the

reported pCO₂ of the saccular endolymph (11 000 to 16 500 µatm) is high compared with values commonly reported for arterial plasma of chronically cannulated fish (2600 to 5300 µatm, Heisler 1986); therefore, this value needs confirmation. Payan et al. (1997, 1998) demonstrated that endolymph in rainbow trout is characterized by higher pH and total CO₂ than in plasma, although the reported values of low arterial pH (7.2 to 7.3, as opposed to the typical 7.8 to 8.0 at the experimental temperature of Payan et al. 1997, 1998, see Heisler 1986) and high pCO₂ (8000 to 12 000 µatm) might be due to some sampling and/or analytical problem. We are not aware of any study that addressed the impacts of high CO₂ on otolith formation in fish.

Fish otolith is involved in both sound perception and the maintenance of postural equilibrium. The data by Gagliano et al. (2008) suggest that asymmetry of the saccular otolith affects the ability of larvae to distinguish between different sound frequencies in a coral reef fish (*Pomatocentrus ambioinensis*), which possibly lead to higher mortality by impairing navigation in coral reefs. As a more extreme case, Riley & Moorman (2000) demonstrated that bilateral loss of utricular otoliths disrupts vestibular functions and is invariably lethal for zebrafish larvae. Gagliano et al. (2008) also found that otolith asymmetries arising early in the embryonic stage were not corrected during the subsequent larval stage. Otoliths, as well as labyrinth, are formed before hatching (Noakes & Godin 1988) when the capacity for acid–base regulation may not be fully developed (Alderdice 1988). Thus, there is a need to investigate effects of CO₂ on otolith growth, including asymmetry.

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH NEEDS

Here we summarize some of the research areas of high priority to understand effects of ocean acidification on fish. Several recent reviews have discussed future research needs in broader contexts (Fabry et al. 2008, Guinotte & Fabry 2008, Doney et al. 2009).

(1) Effect of CO₂ acidified seawater on reproduction of fish needs urgent attention. To our knowledge, no information is available on fecundity, egg viability and hatching, and progeny survival of marine fish under high pCO₂ conditions, for which ample evidence for negative impacts is available in the freshwater acidification literature (Heath 1995). Kitamura & Ikuta (2000) reported that nest-digging behaviour of female hime salmon (land-locked *Oncorhynchus nerka*) was significantly inhibited by a pH reduction of 6.8 (control) to only 6.4.

(2) Long-term exposure experiments covering entire life stages need to be conducted under realistic future

ocean CO₂ conditions and sublethal impacts must be carefully investigated on developmental and homeostatic processes from molecular, biochemical and physiological viewpoints, with particular attention to early developmental stages.

(3) Behaviour (e.g. feeding, prey capture, escape from predators) must be quantitatively analyzed using fish reared under hypercapnic conditions. Behavioural responses can be a sensitive indicator of environmental stress and have significant ecological implications (Roast et al. 2001).

(4) Possible acclimation of marine fish to hypercapnic marine environments needs to be studied. One example is the finding that a strain of Japanese dace, inhabiting an acid lake (pH 3.5), exhibits a marked acid tolerance, while individuals of the same species inhabiting circumneutral lakes died rapidly when exposed to pH 3.5 conditions (Kaneko et al. 1999, Hirata et al. 2003). Interspecific differences in acclimation capacity could alter species composition of fish communities.

(5) Endocrine responses to prolonged exposure to high pCO₂ are not known. Acute CO₂ exposure did not affect blood concentrations of catecholamines and somatolactin in rainbow trout (Kakizawa et al. 1997, Julio et al. 1998). Endocrine responses to acidic freshwater stress were reviewed by Wendelaar Bonga & Balm (1989).

(6) Indirect impacts through changes in food availability and quality are another important issue in considering the fate of fish in high CO₂ oceans (Guinotte & Fabry 2008). Effect of high pCO₂ on the appetite of fish is not well understood. Yoshii & Yoshii (1997) reported suppression of taste nerve responses by CO₂.

Few research efforts have been directed to marine fishes to test possible impacts of ocean acidification. The present review has demonstrated that the existing knowledge of CO₂ impacts on fish could provide no more than useful starting points to understand possible alterations of marine fish populations in future oceans. We hope this review will provide momentum in research into fish biology in high-CO₂, acidified oceans.

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