

1 **Title: Ecological genomics in the Northern krill uncovers loci for local**
2 **adaptation across ocean basins**

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29 **Abstract:**

30 Krill is a vital food source for many marine animals but also strongly impacted by climate
31 change. Genetic adaptation could support populations, but remains uncharacterized. We
32 assembled the 19 Gb Northern krill genome and compared genome-scale variation among 74
33 specimens from the colder Atlantic Ocean and warmer Mediterranean Sea. The genome is
34 dominated by methylated transposable elements and contains many duplicated genes implied in
35 molting and vision. Analysis of 760 million SNPs indicates extensive homogenizing gene-flow
36 among populations. Nevertheless, we detect extreme divergence across hundreds of genes,
37 governing ecophysiological functions like photoreception, circadian regulation, reproduction and
38 thermal tolerance. Such standing variation may be essential for resilience in zooplankton,
39 necessitating insight into adaptive variation to forecast their roles in future marine ecosystems
40 and support ocean conservation.

41 **One-Sentence Summary:**

42 Genome-scans of Northern krill link genes for photoreception, reproduction and thermal
43 tolerance to ecological adaptation.

44 **Main Text:**

45 Climate change is affecting all life on Earth and forcing species to move or adapt (1). Ocean
46 plankton are crucial to maintaining food webs and fisheries but face many challenges including
47 increased temperatures and acidification (2–4). Many planktonic species are shifting toward
48 higher latitudes (4, 5), and continued warming is expected to impact marine communities and
49 ecosystem services (6). The long-term responses to these changes are unclear, but evolutionary
50 adaptation may be important to sustain populations, particularly when physiological and
51 geographical limits have otherwise been reached (7). This warrants the need to better understand
52 adaptation in key zooplankton that strongly influence marine ecosystems. Krill (Euphausicea; 86
53 spp.), or euphausiids, are macrozooplankton crustaceans inhabiting all world oceans. Some
54 species include trillions of individuals and are among the most abundant animals on Earth (8–
55 10). As grazers of smaller plankton and food for fish and mammals, krill are critical links
56 between primary production and higher trophic levels (3). However, polar krill of both
57 hemispheres have declined in recent decades (11, 12), while boreal species such as the Northern
58 krill *Meganyctiphanes norvegica* spread into new areas (13), impacting native biodiversity (14,
59 15).

60 The Northern krill is the largest and most abundant North Atlantic krill species, possibly
61 structured into 3–4 basin-scale gene pools (9, 16). While many krill species are stenothermal and
62 have narrow latitudinal ranges, it has unusually broad thermal tolerance and range (17, 18). It
63 occurs across a 2–15°C temperature gradient (Fig. 1A) and breeds within 5–15°C (9), much
64 wider thermal envelopes than for example the Antarctic krill *Euphausia superba* that is
65 constrained within -2.0°C to +4.0°C and reproductively challenged already at +1.5°C (19).
66 Northern krill from different climates vary in metabolism, nutrition, maturation and timing of
67 reproduction that track local seasonal cycles (17, 20), ranging from spawning in late winter–early
68 spring in the Mediterranean Sea to summer in the Atlantic Ocean. These phenotypic variations
69 could have genetic bases, making *M. norvegica* an attractive model for environmental
70 adaptation.

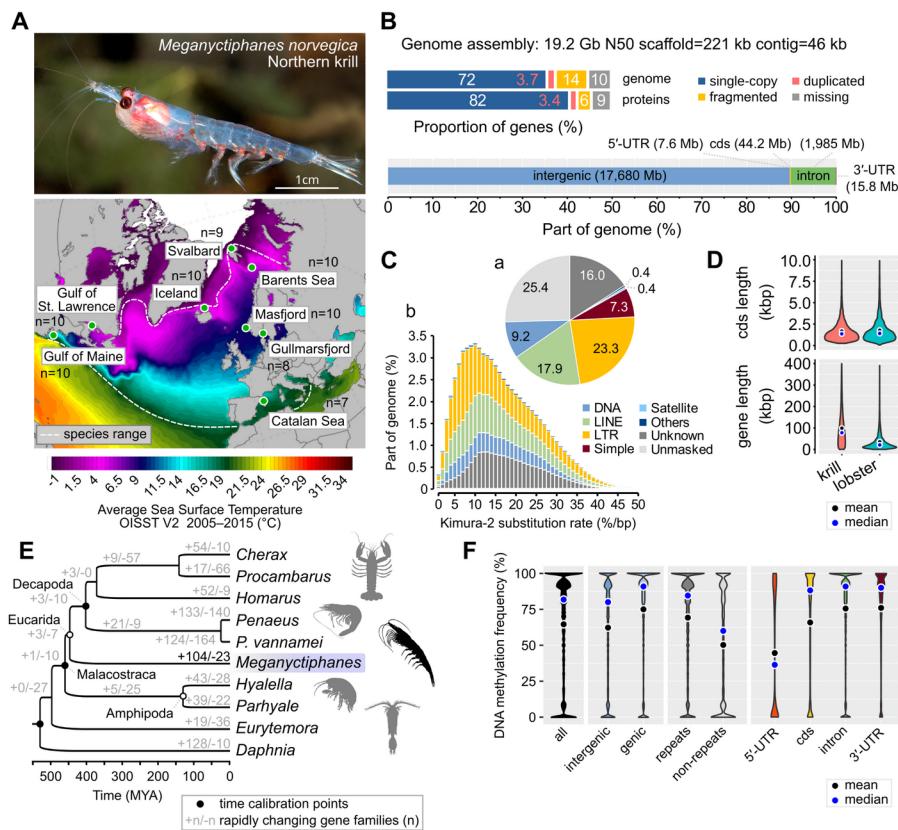
71 Zooplankton generally have large populations with considerable genetic variation, suggesting
72 they have high potential to adapt to changing environments through natural selection (21). Many
73 also exhibit extensive larval dispersal and gene flow, which could either interfere with local
74 adaptation or help introduce adaptive variants (21). Genomic evidence for mechanisms of
75 adaptation is still critically missing for zooplankton (22). In particular, we lack insight into
76 adaptation in euphausiids, due to their large and repetitive genomes ranging between 11–48 Gb
77 (4–16× the human genome), which have hindered genetic analysis until now (23). The recently
78 published Antarctic krill genome represented a major step forward but revealed extensive genetic
79 homogeneity and limited adaptive variation in that circumpolar and panmictic species (24).

80 Here we use long-read technologies to assemble and characterize the huge genome of the
81 Northern krill. We perform genome-scale population re-sequencing to map genetic variation and
82 uncover the evolutionary history of this widespread species. Our ultimate aim is to identify
83 genetic adaptations to different environments across its range. Insight into adaptive variation can
84 help monitoring evolutionary processes including migration and adaptation, identify genetic
85 diversity hotspots or offsets and support forecasting resilience of krill stocks under climate
86 change (25).

87 **Results**

88 *A highly repeated genome*

89 The Northern krill is diploid and has 19 large metacentric chromosome-pairs that are
90 homomorphic between sexes (26). We assembled and scaffolded the nuclear and mitochondrial
91 genomes with Nanopore long-reads, Chromium linked-reads and RNA data from mostly a single
92 specimen (tables S1–3; figs. S1–3; materials and methods). We tracked contiguity, completeness
93 and accuracy by mapping coding transcripts (figs. S4–5). The finished genome assembly
94 spanned 19.2 Gb (n=216,568 scaffolds/contigs) with ~90% of BUSCO genes present and ~0.5
95 base-level errors/kb (Fig. 1B, table S4) . The genome is GC-poor (%GC=29.9) and repeat-rich.
96 Low-complexity sequences and simple repeats span 15% of the genome and AT-microsatellites
97 alone cover 6% (table S3). Using a custom transposable element (TE) library, we find that 74%
98 of the genome is repetitive (Fig. 1C; table S5). While we are unable to classify all TEs,
99 retrotransposons (LINEs+LTRs) outweigh DNA-transposons 4:1, similarly to the American
100 lobster or black tiger shrimp (27, 28). This repeatome is different from the recently characterized
101 genome of the Antarctic krill, which is dominated by DNA-transposons (24). Furthermore, TE
102 divergence in the Northern krill is unimodal, without the multiple bursts of proliferation seen in
103 the Antarctic krill. These observations hint at divergent genome composition and lineage-specific
104 evolution of the huge genomes of euphausiids.



105 **Fig. 1. Sampling, genome assembly and genome analyses of the Northern krill *Meganyctiphanes***
106 ***norvegica*.** (A) Photo: Adult specimen from the Norwegian Lysefjord (©Rudolf Svensen; approximate
107 scale). Map: Atlantic and Mediterranean sample locations (n=sample-sizes). Sea Surface Temperatures
108 from Climate Reanalyzer (29). (B) Genome assembly statistics in kilobases (kb), megabases (Mb) or
109 gigabases (Gb). Top: completeness and duplications of BUSCOv5 genes (n=1,013) across the genome
110 assembly and protein models. Bottom: sizes of genomic regions (UTR=untranslated exonic regions;
111 cds=coding). (C) The repeat landscape. (a) Proportions of repeat-masked and unmasked bases (%). (b)
112 The divergence landscape of interspersed repeats. (D) The coding and full sequence lengths of 7,150
113 single-copy orthologs between *M. norvegica* and the lobster *H. americanus*. (E) Time-calibrated species
114 tree (inferred from 1,011 single-copy orthologs; 100% bootstrap support for all nodes) and gene family
115 evolution. (F) The proportion of methylated cytosines across 75 M CpG-dinucleotides in the genome
116 (>10× coverage).

117 **Expansion of cuticular and opsin gene families**

118 We used RNA and comparative data to annotate 25,301 protein-coding genes along with 2,283
119 TEs (mostly expressed retrotransposons), and also detected another 14,643 potential yet
120 unannotated genes or TEs (tables S6–8; fig. S6). Gene bodies (introns+exons) span 50,276 bp on
121 average and occupy 10% of the genome, while coding sequence covers only 0.22% (Fig. 1B).
122 Orthologous gene bodies between the Northern krill and crustaceans with smaller genomes (table
123 S9) are 3–8× longer in krill, but have similar amounts of coding sequence (Fig. 1D; fig. S7, table
124 S10). Compared to the Antarctic krill (24), genes are ~2.5× longer in the Northern krill,
125 suggesting proliferation of retrotransposable elements has produced long and highly repeated
126 introns (fig. S6B). We estimated high synonymous divergence ($dS=0.46$) between the two
127 species (table S10). Using a decapod molecular clock (30), this divergence suggests they split
128 from a common ancestor ~130 MYA, underscoring separate evolution over long time-scales.

129 We built a crustacean species tree and analyzed gene family evolution. We found 104 rapidly
130 expanding gene families in the Northern krill ($p<0.05$; Fig. 1E; fig. S8A–B; table S11), including
131 those related to chitin, cuticular metabolism, regulation of the molting cycle, which are important
132 processes for growth and reproduction in crustaceans. This is notable as renewal of the
133 exoskeleton is unusually frequent and plastic in euphausiids (9, 31), and similar expansions were
134 independently detected in the Antarctic krill genome (24). Moreover, we detected expansions of
135 the opsin gene repertoire, which encodes the light-sensitive receptors in ommatidia. Fourteen
136 opsins have previously been identified from RNA in the Antarctic krill *E. superba* (32), which
137 are thought to enable vision under the divergent light conditions experienced throughout its life
138 cycle and vertical migrations (33), while 16 opsins have recently been inferred from *M.*
139 *norvegica* RNA (34). We queried our *M. norvegica* gene-set and the KrillDB² *E. superba* RNA
140 database against the curated crustacean opsin dataset in ref 35. We detected 19 genes in the
141 former species and 15 putative genes in the latter (fig. S9–10), including new visual middle
142 wavelength-sensitive (MWS) opsins and non-visual arthropsins. All *E. superba* opsins have
143 homologs in the *M. norvegica* genome and all but one previously identified *M. norvegica*
144 transcripts can now be anchored unambiguously 1:1 to our gene models (fig. S10). Our findings
145 expand the known opsins in both species and suggest that opsin and molting-gene duplications
146 could be common to all euphausiids.

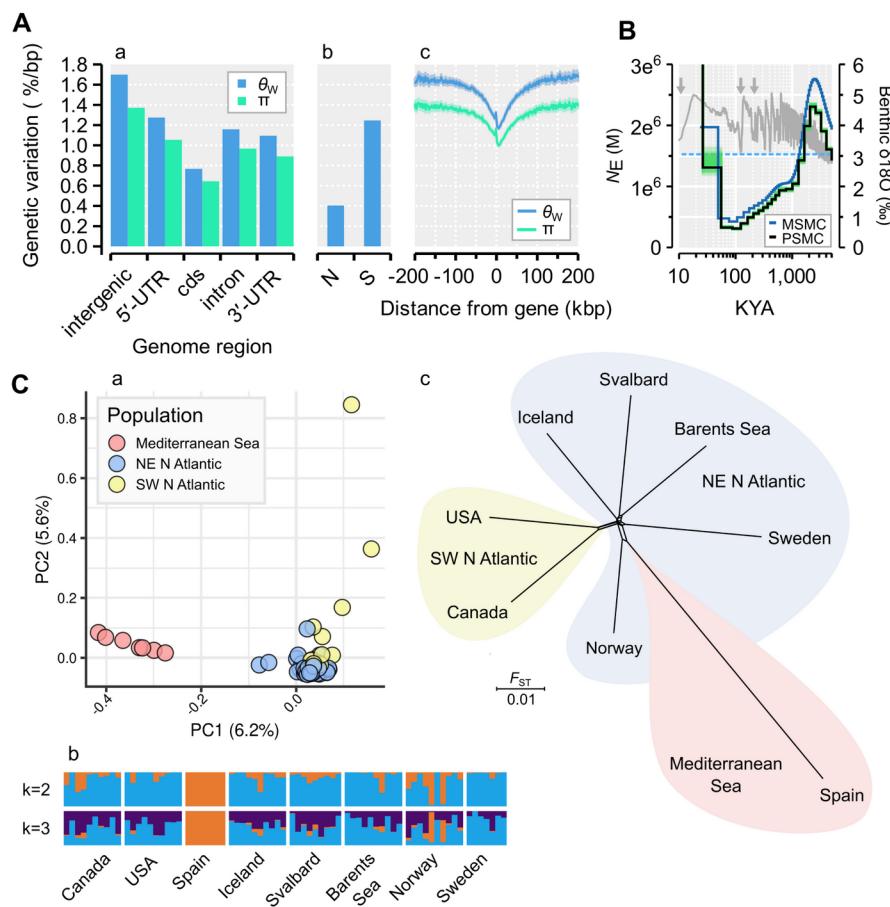
147 Ancient whole-genome duplication (WGD) may explain the evolutionary origins of large
148 genomes but is not commonly reported for crustaceans. To test for WGD, we interrogated
149 divergences between gene-paralogs and searched for Hox-gene duplications, but found no
150 supporting evidence (Supplementary text). Instead, the huge Northern krill genome has likely
151 evolved through TE proliferation and numerous small-scale duplications.

152 *An active DNA methylation system*

153 Epigenetic regulation of the genome may contribute to genome evolution, function and plastic
154 responses to environmental change (35). For example, CpG-methylation can silence the
155 expression of harmful transposable elements (TEs), paradoxically allowing them to persist and
156 contribute to genome expansion (36). DNA methylation (DNAm) of both TEs and protein-
157 coding genes is ancestral in Arthropoda, but has frequently been lost (37). Using DNA from
158 muscle, we characterize, for the first time, the DNAm toolkit and genomic patterns in a
159 euphausiid. The genome has low CpG content ($CpG_{OE}=0.53$), indicating DNAm. We find all
160 genes encoding the canonical methyltransferases and genes responsible for repair or
161 demethylation (*Dnmt1–3*, *AlkB2*, *TET2*; fig. S12–16; table S12), hallmarks of functional DNAm
162 (37). We scanned the Nanopore-reads for signals of CpG-methylation at 75 million CpG-sites.
163 Overall, DNAm rates are higher in genes than intergenic regions (75% vs. 62% of reads being
164 methylated; Fig. 1F; fig. S17) and positively associated with splice isoform variation
165 ($n=2.5\pm 0.05$ isoforms/gene with >95% methylation rates vs. 1.8 ± 0.03 isoforms/gene with <5%
166 methylation rates; fig. S17E). In contrast, we observed a lack of methylation in the mitochondrial
167 chromosome (4%). DNAm rates are higher across repeats vs. non-repeated DNA (69% vs. 50%),
168 and appear to target young retrotransposons with similar LTRs, that may have been recently
169 active (S17F). Gene-body methylation is similar to observations in marbled crayfish (38), while
170 repeat-oriented methylation reminds of the myriapod *Strigamia maritima* (37). The krill
171 methylome thus spans both genes and repeats, suggesting dual roles in gene regulation and
172 silencing TEs.

173 ***Genome-scale variation is shaped by linked selection and pervasive gene flow***

174 To uncover patterns of genetic variation, we collected 74 Northern krill specimens from eight
175 geographical regions separated by up to 5,800 km, covering a range of environmental conditions
176 (Fig 1A; Supplementary text). We re-sequenced whole genomes to $\sim 3\times$ /specimen
177 (20–30 \times /population), mapped reads and called 760 million quality-filtered SNPs across
178 accessible sites determined with similar filters (8.4 of 19.2 Gb; fig. S18). We estimate genome-
179 wide nucleotide diversity (π ; the average differences between pairs of sequences) to 1.31% per-
180 base, intermediate among arthropods and low compared to marine broadcast spawners like
181 oysters and sea-squirts (39). The population mutation rate (θ_w) is 1.62%/bp. Assuming mutation-
182 drift equilibrium and a mutation rate from snapping shrimp (30), we estimate the long-term
183 effective population size (N_E) to be 1.53 million, far below the expected census population size
184 of trillions (9). However, Tajima's D is negative (-0.53), indicating excess of low-frequency
185 variants compared to expectation under equilibrium, consistent with population expansion or
186 selection shaping genetic variation. In accordance, we observe $\sim 30\%$ reduction of variation over
187 genes ($\pi=1.15\%$), and more so at coding and non-synonymous sites (Fig. 2Aa–b). This effect
188 extends up to 50–100 kb around genes (Fig. 2Ac), suggesting widespread impact of linked
189 selection. Using heterozygous genotypes in the reference specimen ($\sim 5,000$ scaffolds >500 kb),
190 we applied the Sequentially Markovian Coalescent to model demographic history (40, 41). The
191 results indicate populations expanded half way through the last glacial period (42) (Fig. 2B).
192 Levels of variation are similar among populations (fig. S19A). Population structure is limited but
193 recapitulates geography (the fixation index F_{ST} is ≈ 0.06 on average; Fig. 2C) and previously
194 detected mitochondrial gene pools (9). Genetic distances (d_{XY}) only increase marginally with
195 geographic distance (fig. S19B–D; S20). The Mediterranean Sea sample is the most divergent,
196 but average d_{XY} is only 1.04 \times higher compared to distances among Atlantic populations (1.71%
197 vs. 1.64%). The majority of non-singleton variants are polymorphic in most populations (fig.
198 S21), indicating extensive gene flow among stocks.



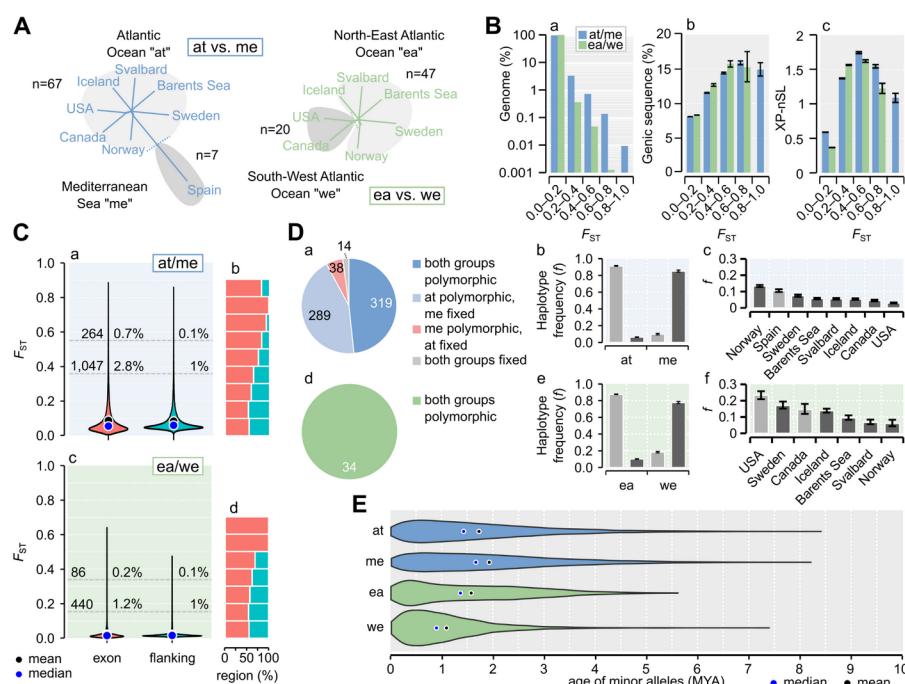
199 **Fig. 2. Genome-scale patterns of genetic variation, demographic history and population structure.**
200 (A) The mean levels of genetic variation across: (a) the genome; (b) at non-synonymous (N) and
201 synonymous sites (S); or (c) across 1 kb non-overlapping windows upstream or downstream of putative
202 protein-coding gene bodies. Shaded regions are 95% confidence intervals (200 bootstrap replicates). (B)
203 Historical fluctuations in effective population size (N_E) inferred using PSMC and MSMC (y1-axis;
204 green=100 PSMC bootstrap replicates; KYA=thousands of years ago). The dashed line is long-term N_E .
205 The LR04 benthic $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ isotope (gray line, y2-axis) indicates ice volume and sea temperature (arrows=last
206 three interglacials). (C) Sample and population interrelationships. (a) Main clustering of genetic variation
207 in a principal component analysis. (b) Admixture analyses indicating levels of shared ancestry. (c)
208 NeighborNet network of pairwise F_{ST} -distances.

209 **Signatures of ancient adaptive divergence across hundreds of genes**

210 To reveal genomic signatures of adaptation, we partitioned the dataset into two major contrasts:
211 i) Atlantic vs. Mediterranean samples (at/me); and ii) North-Eastern vs. South-Western North
212 Atlantic samples (ea/we; Fig. 3A). For each contrast, we computed pairwise divergence in allele
213 frequencies. While most variation segregates at low differences ($F_{ST(\text{at/me})}=0.056$; $F_{ST(\text{ea/we})}=0.017$;
214 Fig. 3B; fig. S20A), we also detect about 8 \times as many highly divergent variants compared to
215 expectations from simulations of neutral drift (figs. S22B–C). Divergent regions ($F_{ST}>0.4$) span
216 <1% of the genome and are about 2 \times enriched for gene sequences and for extended haplotypes,
217 compared to undifferentiated regions ($F_{ST}<0.2$; Fig 3B), consistent with gene-centered signatures
218 of selective sweeps (43). We compared F_{ST} between genes and similarly sized 50 kb flanking
219 regions 50–100 kb away from genes, which may more often evolve neutrally. At extreme levels

220 of divergence (the top 0.1% most divergent flanking regions), genes outweigh flanking regions
 221 by 7× (at/me) or 2× (ea/we), respectively, consistent with natural selection driving divergence
 222 across many genes (Fig. 3C; table S13; fig. S23).

223 We analyzed the geographic distribution of putatively adaptive variation by defining gene-level
 224 haplotypes (having at least four diagnostic SNPs with $F_{ST}>0.5$). At many divergent genes (exon-
 225 wide $F_{ST}>0.4$), both haplotypes are often present in both groups ($n_{at/me}=319/660$; $n_{ea/we}=34/34$),
 226 indicating widespread standing variation (Fig. 3D). Southern or Scandinavian populations are
 227 more polymorphic than Barents Sea and Svalbard populations (Fig. 3D), which could reflect
 228 genetic drift or ongoing selection at the margin of the Arctic species range (44). We estimated
 229 the ages of minor alleles on the divergent haplotypes to learn for how long haplotypes may have
 230 been segregating in the species. We first estimated a genome-average recombination rate
 231 ($r=0.32\text{cM/Mb}$, $n=652$ scaffolds) and then applied the Genealogical Estimation of Variant Age
 232 (GEVA) (45). This coalescent method infers the time to the most recent common ancestor using
 233 mutation and recombination rates, without requiring *a priori* assumptions about demographic
 234 history. Most variation originated over 1 MYA, predating multiple glacial cycles, and adaptive
 235 variation segregating between Atlantic and Mediterranean populations may predate that
 236 segregating in the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 3E).



237 **Fig. 3. Genetic divergence among Northern krill sampled across the Atlantic Ocean and**
238 **Mediterranean Sea.** (A) The two contrasts used to measure divergence. (B) Features of genomic regions
239 at increasing divergence (mean F_{ST} across 1 kb windows). (a–b) The proportion of the genome or genic
240 sequence (cds+intron+UTRs). (c) The absolute extended haplotype statistic |XP-nSL| scores (95%
241 confidence intervals from 2,000 bootstrap replicates). (C) (a–c) Atlantic-Mediterranean contrast: (a) The
242 distribution of per-gene F_{ST} -values computed across the exons of genes (cds+UTRs; n=36,997) vs.
243 flanking intergenic regions (n=31,101). Gray lines are 1% and 0.1% percentiles of flanking F_{ST} . Numbers
244 and proportions of genes are indicated at each percentile. (b) The proportion of genes vs. flanking regions
245 at each F_{ST} -level. (c–d) Eastern-Western contrast: statistics as in a–b (n=36,397 vs. n=31,103). (D)
246 Haplotype distribution for divergent genes (exon-wide $F_{ST}>0.4$). (a–c) Atlantic-Mediterranean contrast.
247 (a) Numbers of genes with shared or private haplotypes (n=660). Mean frequencies of common and rare
248 haplotypes in each group (b) and population (c) (95% confidence intervals as in (B)). (d–f) as in (a–c) but
249 for 34 genes in the Eastern-Western contrast. (E) Age distributions of minor alleles across (at/me: ~22–25
250 K SNPs in 660 genes; we/ea: ~2.5 K in 34 genes).

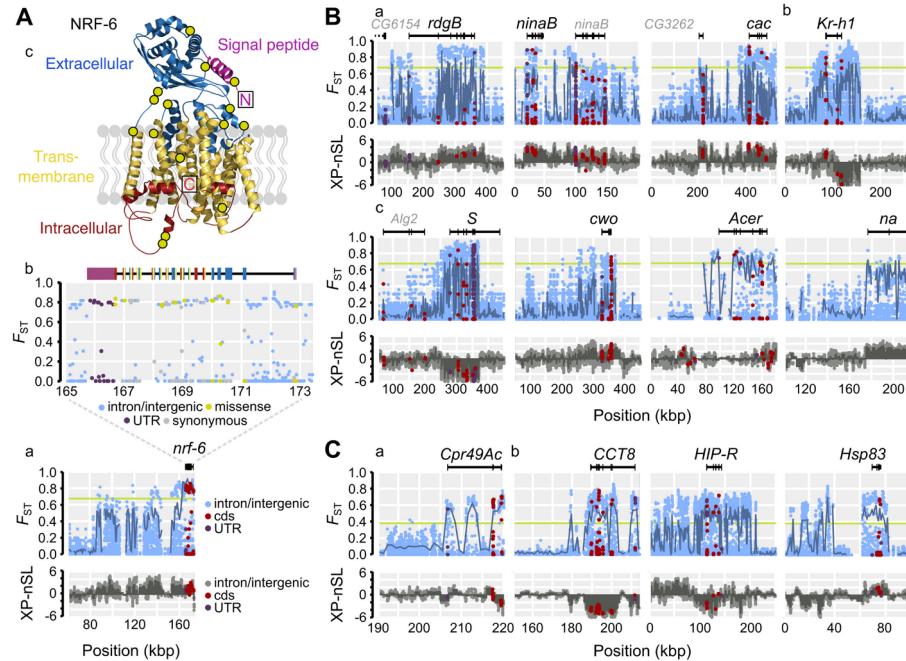
251 ***Candidate genes for ecological adaptation associated with ecophysiological functions***

252 For each contrast, we ranked all genes by exon-wide F_{ST} . The top gene between Atlantic and
253 Mediterranean krill is *nose resistant to fluoxetine protein 6 (nrf-6)* (table S13), encoding a
254 membrane protein facilitating lipid transport. It is located within a high-divergence region and
255 the Mediterranean samples are fixed for an *nrf-6* haplotype with low frequency among Atlantic
256 samples (6%). Exon-wide F_{ST} is >0.8 and high XP-nSL scores indicate loss of variation
257 consistent with a selective sweep among Mediterranean samples (Fig 4Aa–b). We also detect
258 accelerated protein evolution on the Mediterranean haplotype (dN/dS : 0.54 vs. 0.31; fig. S24A–
259 B), consistent with positive selection. We predicted the protein topology and detected 1.7×
260 enrichment of missense variants in its extracellular part compared to synonymous variants (9/16
261 vs. 5/15; Fig 4Ac; fig. S24C–D; table S14), which may alter its function. This is noteworthy as
262 *nrf-6* is important for yolk transport into eggs in worm (46) and ovary development and
263 oogenesis in fly (47), and overexpressed in the ovaries of sexually precocious crabs (48). In the
264 Northern krill, Mediterranean stocks depend on a short spring phytoplankton bloom to
265 accumulate lipid stores and trigger vitellogenesis and reproduction in early spring (9, 49). The
266 Mediterranean *nrf-6* variant could contribute to advanced reproductive timing, making it a strong
267 candidate for local adaptation.

268 We next queried the ranked lists for shared gene ontologies using used fly homologs. Atlantic–
269 Mediterranean divergence is enriched for genes involved in oogenesis, muscle function,
270 phototransduction and eye development, regulation of circadian rhythm and heterochronic
271 development (fig. S25A; table S15). These include homologs for *ninaB* that synthesize visual
272 pigment (50), *S* that regulate sleep/wake cycles in animals and the transcription factor *Kr-h1* that
273 acts in the juvenile hormone signaling pathway to govern vitellogenesis and reproduction in
274 arthropods (51) (Fig 4B). Overall, 30 genes in the 0.1%-percentile ($F_{ST}=0.60–0.72$; n=264) are
275 associated with vision-related ontologies, 1.5× more than expected by chance (p=0.033), and 112
276 genes in the 1%-percentile ($F_{ST}=0.36–0.72$; n=1,024), including four MWS opsins (table S15).
277 Photoreception candidates often involve paralogs (fig. S26) and belong to rapidly expanded gene
278 families, which are otherwise underrepresented in the 1%-percentile (2.98× vs. 0.6×; table S15).

279 Between the two Atlantic basins, the most divergent gene encodes a larval cuticular protein
280 (homolog of *Cpr49Ac*; Fig 4C), while this contrast is enriched for signaling ontologies (fig.
281 S25A–B). Among the top 20 genes we identify three heat-shock chaperones/co-chaperones,
282 including *CCT8* (Fig 4C), that fold proteins and promote proteostasis under thermal stress. Heat-

283 shock proteins contribute to protective thermal tolerance in krill and many other species (52).
 284 Chaperonins (*CCT-n*) influence cold shock response in crustaceans and other eukaryotes (53),
 285 and *CCT8* evolution is implied in freeze-tolerance in Amur sleeper fish (54). North-Eastern krill
 286 have a sweep-like signature of extended *CCT8* haplotypes, suggesting natural selection for cold
 287 tolerance in these stocks.



288 **Fig. 4. Adaptive divergence and candidates for local adaptation.** (A) High divergence between
 289 Atlantic and Mediterranean samples across the gene *nrf-6*. (a) Top: per-SNP F_{ST} along the locus (green
 290 line=0.1% percentile for SNPs; dark-blue line= F_{ST} for 1 kb windows; black=gene model). Bottom: per-
 291 SNP XP-nSL (dark-gray bars=mean window-based XP-nSL). Positive values imply a selective sweep in
 292 the Mediterranean sample, negative values mark the Atlantic Ocean sample. (b) Magnified view of *nrf-6*.
 293 Exons colored by UTR (purple) or NRF-6 protein topology. (c) Modeled protein structure and topology
 294 (including signaling peptide; boxes=N/C terminals; green circles=non-synonymous/missense variants).
 295 (B) Examples of highly differentiated genes between Atlantic and Mediterranean samples. (a)
 296 Photoreception: *retinal degeneration B* (*rdgB*), *neither inactivation nor afterpotential B* (*ninaB*) and
 297 *cacophony* (*cac*). (b) Heterochronic development: *Kruppel homolog 1* (*Kr-h1*). (c) Circadian regulation:
 298 *Star* (*S*), *clockwork orange* (*cwo*), *Angiotensin-converting enzyme-related* (*Acer*) and *narrow* (*na*).
 299 Statistics as in (A). (C) (a) The top gene in the Atlantic comparison was *Cuticular protein 49Ac*
 300 (*Cpr49Ac*) (b) Three chaperon genes implied thermal tolerance: *Chaperonin containing TCP1 subunit 8*
 301 (*CCT8*), *Hsc/Hsp70-interacting protein related* (*HIP-R*) and *Heat shock protein 83* (*Hsp83*).

302 Conclusions and implications

303 We here provide novel insight into the evolutionary history of the Northern krill. Our genome
 304 assembly reveals a highly methylated repeatome and many expanded gene families. Paralogous
 305 genes may have arisen from ectopic recombination between non-homologous repeated loci,
 306 which is more likely to occur when genomes accumulate transposable elements (55). The krill
 307 genome appears to continuously have evolved new genes, including those involved in molting
 308 and vision.

309 Molting is a crucial process in krill, being interlinked with growth and reproduction, and

310 controlled by environmental cues including light (9, 56). Some of the top gene candidates for
311 local adaptation belong to expanded gene families, including two *ninaB* paralogs and four *ninaE*
312 paralogs that synthesize visual pigment or encode MWS opsins. We detect elevated divergence
313 in fifteen genes encoding cuticular proteins, several belonging to expanded families. Expanded
314 cuticular and opsin gene families and functionally diverged paralogs may have enabled
315 development and photoreception under diverse conditions in ancestral krill and provide substrate
316 for adaptation also today (57).

317 We have detected many functionally related genes with small-to-moderate shifts in allele
318 frequencies, consistent with signatures of polygenic adaptation (58). Evolve-and-resequence
319 experiments in copepods have similarly found polygenic signals of adaptation to temperature and
320 acidity in laboratory conditions (59). Genetic adaptation in zooplankton could commonly involve
321 numerous loci, warranting genome-scale assays to map adaptive variation. Many of our
322 candidate genes have roles in photoreception, circadian rhythm, and oogenesis, ecophysiological
323 functions also implied in adaptation in other widespread pelagic species, such as the Atlantic
324 herring (60). The variants may help krill respond to light, temperature and resources in different
325 environments.

326 Photoreception varies among *M. norvegica* populations: krill from turbid waters around the Gulf
327 of Maine are more light sensitive than those from clearer waters (61). Water clarity and light
328 penetration influences behavior in *M. norvegica*. To avoid predators, stocks prefer deeper depths
329 in more clear Norwegian fjords (62), while the deepest daytime depths (400–800 m) are known
330 from the oligotrophic Mediterranean Sea (9). Moreover, light sensitivities in the North Pacific
331 krill *E. pacifica* are tuned to local conditions. Individuals inhabiting shallow green water in the
332 Saanich Inlet are more sensitive to green light compared to those from the deeper blue water of
333 the San Diego Trough (63). At least thirty genes involved in eye function diverge strongly
334 between Atlantic and Mediterranean krill (including 4 *ninaE*/MWS paralogs), and another six
335 genes segregate across the Atlantic Ocean, suggesting heritable variation could contribute to
336 these phenotypes. Eye traits are generally fast-evolving among krill species and associated with
337 ecological niche (64). Our candidates could help reconstruct the genomic architecture of vision
338 and behavior in krill.

339 Seasonal and daily cycles of ambient light are central to zooplankton and influence diapause,
340 vertical migrations and entrainment of endogenous circadian clocks that control the daily rhythm
341 of physiological processes (65). *E. superba* and *Thysanoessa inermis* krill have endogenous
342 circadian rhythms (ECR) that oscillate faster than 24 h in the absence of light, or respond to
343 minute irradiance. This may reflect adaptation to extreme photoperiodic variability at high-
344 latitudes where the sun is either below or above the horizon for extended periods (66, 67),
345 although the genetic mechanisms of these adaptations are unknown. *M. norvegica* also shows
346 ECR and expresses a full set of circadian clock genes (68). We find that genes likely involved in
347 regulating its circadian clock diverge across its range, including homologs of *narrow abdomen*,
348 *glass* and *clockwork orange*. Functional assessments of the variants could illuminate how
349 biological clocks are set in different environments.

350 Marine ecosystems are changing at unprecedented rates, causing redistribution of organisms and
351 impacting food webs (5, 15). The Antarctic krill is already declining, which could severely
352 impact the Antarctic ecosystem (11, 14). The Northern krill could be declining around Iceland
353 (69), but increasing in the Barents Sea (13). Where will krill thrive in the future? We found many

354 variants that could help krill adapt to new or changing environments, many of which are widely
355 distributed, old and possibly maintained by long-term balancing selection under slowly
356 fluctuating conditions. These adaptive variants could be important for coping with rapid climate
357 change, and Scandinavian stocks in particular may serve as sources of genetic diversity typical to
358 southern populations. The next frontier for the Northern krill is the Arctic Ocean (13, 15).
359 Standing variants supporting physiological processes under darker or colder conditions may help
360 establish it there. The most divergent population is that of the Mediterranean Sea, which is close
361 to its southern limit. This population appears to lack variation at many adaptive loci, which
362 might limit its evolutionary potential, although our analysis is limited by a small sample size.

363 With the exception of the Antarctic krill (8), long-term monitoring of krill abundance is typically
364 performed or reported in aggregate (12), obscuring how individual species fare under climate
365 change. Our results suggest that krill may commonly be genetically fine-tuned to their
366 environments, while previous research underscore limited thermal tolerances in many species
367 (18, 19). Genetic adaptation could be the major process determining whether krill will persist or
368 perish. The many candidate genes reported here can be used as biomarkers to diagnose and
369 monitor change of adaptive variation also in other species and climates, in order to better forecast
370 their distributions and estimate risks of the great many species that depend on them.

371 References and Notes

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586 <https://github.com/NBISweden/genecovr> and <https://github.com/andreaswallberg/Ecological-Genomics-Northern-Krill>. Reference specimen tissue is deposited in the LIB Biobank at
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588

589 **Supplementary Materials**

590 Materials and Methods

591 Supplementary Text

592 Figs. S1 to S26

593 Tables S1 to S15

594 References (##–##)