

## **The effect of environmental factors on shell growth and repair in *Buccinum undatum***

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1 The effect of environmental factors on shell growth and repair in *Buccinum undatum*

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7

8 Abstract

9 The processes and factors which affect shell growth and repair in molluscs are poorly  
10 understood. In this study, the capabilities of shell growth and repair in the marine gastropod  
11 *Buccinum undatum* were investigated experimentally by implementing laboratory-controlled  
12 mechanical damage to the shell margin/lip. Three key factors, life stage (juvenile or adult),  
13 seawater temperature (5-15°C) and food availability (unfed, weekly, or daily feeding), were  
14 investigated in a series of controlled laboratory experiments to establish their roles in the  
15 processes of shell growth and repair. Significant differences in rates of shell growth and repair  
16 between food and temperature regimes were observed, with the greatest difference occurring  
17 with different life stages. Rates of shell growth in non-damaged whelks were slightly faster but  
18 not significantly different from damaged individuals in any of the experiments. Tank-reared  
19 juveniles maintained in the highest seawater temperature regime (15°C) displayed significantly  
20 faster rates of shell repair ( $F=6.47$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) than conspecifics held at lower seawater  
21 temperatures. Through characterising both biological and environmental factors affecting shell  
22 growth and repair, it is demonstrated that there are multiple aspects influencing shell growth  
23 and shell repair. It is important to be able to understand and establish differences in rates of  
24 growth to better manage this commercial species.

25 Keywords

26 Gastropod mollusc; shell growth; *Buccinum undatum*; fishery; shell damage; repair

27

## 28 1. Introduction

29 Growth is a fundamental process for determining survival and reproductive success within all  
30 taxa and is critical for population growth and resilience, and therefore, understanding what  
31 impacts measurable growth is of key importance (Sebens, 1987; Pepin, 1991). Within living  
32 organisms, growth is primarily defined as a measurable increase in length or mass (e.g., von  
33 Bertalanffy, 1938; France et al., 1996; Ohnishi and Akamine, 2006). For some species, e.g., the  
34 common whelk, *Buccinum undatum*, somatic and shell growth is continuous throughout life  
35 (Kideys et al., 1993). As such, *B. undatum* displays a predictable relationship between size and  
36 age, which has been used to determine growth rates in several studies (Hollyman et al., 2018;  
37 Emmerson et al., 2020; Borsetti et al., 2021).

38 The molluscan shell is vitally important, providing protection and additional support to the  
39 internal body in the form of a calcareous exoskeleton (Ruppert et al., 2004; Bonucci, 2007). As  
40 such, the shell is required to increase as the internal soft tissue grows. The physical process of  
41 shell growth occurs as a result of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  secretions from the mantle epidermis (Findlay et al.,  
42 2011). Damage to the shell can lead to interruptions in growth, with incidents often recorded  
43 in the structure of the shell in the form of shell scarring (Richardson, 2001; Ramsay et al., 2001;  
44 Preston and Roberts, 2007), although there is a paucity of literature surrounding the effects of  
45 shell damage and rates of regrowth in gastropod species. In addition to the normal process of  
46 shell growth with age, it is necessary for gastropods to be able to quickly repair their shells  
47 following predation attacks and to protect them from their local environment and reduce  
48 further predation when vulnerable soft tissues are left exposed following damage. During  
49 periods following damage shell growth can heavily impact on metabolic functioning of the

50 organism, as energy resources are redirected into shell repair (Ebert, 1968; Ruppert et al., 2004;  
51 Melzner et al., 2011; Thomsen et al., 2013).

52 There are a range of factors that inflict damage to the shells of marine gastropods, including  
53 storms and increases in turbulence and exposure (Sepúlveda et al., 2012; Solas et al., 2015).  
54 For *B. undatum*, damage to the shell margin often occurs following unsuccessful predatory  
55 attacks, both against and inflicted by whelks themselves (Checa, 1993; Mensink et al., 2000;  
56 Ramsay et al., 2001). However, one of the key factors leading to shell damage is that caused  
57 from fishing gear, both directly from impact with mobile towed fishing gear and indirectly  
58 following capture. For example, the process by which whelk are graded for size on a ship's deck  
59 can pose additional risk to the shells of under-sized specimens due to the riddling process.  
60 Captured whelks are passed through a series of metal riddle bars which sort the catch and  
61 retain whelks greater than the minimum legal landing size but allow undersized whelks passage  
62 through where the shells may become broken or chipped (Bergman et al., 1994; Cadée et al.,  
63 1995; Fahy et al., 1995; De Vooy et al., 1998; Mensink et al., 2000).

64 This study investigates the impact of environmental factors, seawater temperature, food  
65 availability and ontogeny on shell growth and repair in the common neogastropod whelk  
66 *Buccinum undatum*. This whelk occurs in British coastal waters and has a widespread  
67 distribution throughout North Atlantic shelf waters with records from the Greenland Seas in  
68 the north to the Bay of Biscay in the south (Golikov, 1968; De Vooy and van der Meer, 2010;  
69 Hayward and Ryland, 2011; Magnúsdóttir et al., 2019). They are the largest edible marine  
70 gastropod within the North Atlantic (Fahy et al., 2005) and are of commercial importance.  
71 Between January and March 2020, >4000 tonnes were landed by U.K. vessels into U.K. ports  
72 (price >£1,200 per tonne) (MMO, 2020). The U.K. shellfish industry has long been of importance  
73 economically and historically has relied on sustainable whelk populations that are resilient to

74 environmental change and harvesting pressures (Clark et al., 2016). Any disruption to an  
75 organism's growth through repeated shell damage and repair could potentially result in  
76 impacts on the fishery (Hilborn and Minte-Vera, 2008; Biro and Sampson, 2015), for example  
77 through reduced growth and longer or failure to reach the minimum landing size (currently in  
78 the U.K. MLS = 45 mm McIntyre et al., 2015). Despite the increasing fishery demand for *B.*  
79 *undatum* and need for sustainable management strategies (Fahy et al., 2000), shell damage  
80 and repair are understudied and ecologically-important aspects of research.

81 The aims of this study are to understand both the environmental and biological factors that can  
82 affect shell growth rate and repair in *B. undatum*. It is hypothesised that during shell repair,  
83 shell growth rate (increase in length) is reduced following a re-direction of energy away from  
84 size increase towards shell repair and that this process will be affected by seawater  
85 temperature and food availability for whelk of different age (size) groups.

## 86 2. Materials and Methods

### 87 2.1 Sample collection and holding

88 Newly-laid egg masses of *Buccinum undatum* attached to the pier pilings of a small jetty and  
89 surrounding rocks at Brynsiencyn, North Wales (UK) 53°09'30.4"N 4°16'46.6"W, were collected  
90 during low water of spring tides (November 2014 and November 2017). Large (>45 mm total  
91 shell length (TSL), assumed to be adult) and small (<45 mm TSL, assumed to be juvenile) whelks  
92 were collected (January & July 2019) using inkwell pots baited with Atlantic mackerel (*Scomber*  
93 *scombrus*), deployed for 24h subtidally at 4m depth off Brynsiencyn. Whelk maturity was  
94 probabilistically determined using a previously calculated size of maturity (SOM) estimation to  
95 group specimens as either adult whelk (AW) or juvenile wild (JW) (see Haig et al., 2015). This  
96 was achieved using the European MLS of 45 mm as opposed to larger, site-specific MLS outlined

97 in Haig et al. (2015). This smaller size was used to ensure juveniles were juveniles, as a larger  
98 TSL could incorporate more mature individuals. Egg masses and whelks were maintained in  
99 laboratory tanks, supplied with flowing ambient temperature seawater (8-10°C), and aerated.  
100 Ten egg masses were placed in each of three 50L tanks with fine mesh over the outflow pipe  
101 to retain any emerging juveniles (tank-reared juvenile whelk (TRJ)). After approximately one-  
102 month, juvenile whelks hatched and were transferred daily to smaller 8L tanks (mesh over  
103 outflow) supplied with ambient temperature flowing seawater, where they were on-grown and  
104 fed daily on a diet of freshly-shucked mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) tissue.

## 105 2.2 Experiment set up

106 A daily frequency of feeding continued throughout the experiments, unless stated otherwise  
107 (see Table 1), to ensure food availability was not a limiting factor for shell repair and shell  
108 growth. After hatching and collection, whelks were on-grown at a range of seawater  
109 temperatures (5, 10 and 15°C) and feeding regimes (unfed, daily fed or weekly fed) (see Table1)  
110 and following ten days acclimation, shell growth and repair were investigated under these  
111 different environmental conditions. For all experiments carried out under ambient conditions,  
112 wild-caught whelks were maintained in a flow-through system in 15L tanks, with TRJ whelk  
113 suspended within these in 8L tanks with mesh inserts to prevent escape. For temperature  
114 experiments, larger 175L temperature-controlled tanks were used for wild-caught whelk with  
115 TRJ again suspended in mesh containers to allow water flow. To achieve acclimation at the  
116 upper or lower temperatures, water temperature was raised or lowered incrementally before  
117 experimental shell damage was undertaken ten days later. Each whelk was individually labelled  
118 with a waterproof paper number adhered with superglue (see Figure 1) so that daily changes  
119 in individual shell growth rates could be followed. Although experiments were run over several

120 different time periods (see Table 1), the size and age of tank-reared juvenile whelks were kept  
121 consistent between years, along with all the environmental factors.

### 122 2.3 Controlled damage and measurements

123 Following several iterations of method development, the shells of the TRJ, JW and AW whelks  
124 were experimentally damaged by cutting out a square portion of the shell lip of each whelk  
125 using a Dremel 3000, with a cutting wheel attachment. Each cut was 40% of the aperture  
126 diameter (see Figure 1). A proportion of whelks within each experiment were left undamaged  
127 to serve as a control comparison. However, for experiments where food and seawater  
128 temperature were controlled, due to a limited number of individuals, TRJ did not have un-  
129 damaged controls. Photographs of each damaged and undamaged whelk shell were taken  
130 against a measurable scale and the area of shell removed and regrown and total shell length  
131 (TSL) determined (to 3 d.p.) using ImageJ (see Figure 1). Measures of TSL were recorded to  
132 monitor growth, not shell repair. The frequency of measurements depended on the rate of  
133 visible shell growth and repair and was consequently different between different age groups.  
134 Measurements were taken every 3 days for (TRJ), 6 days (JW) and 7 days (AW) respectively until  
135 the end of the experiment period to limit disturbance during growth.

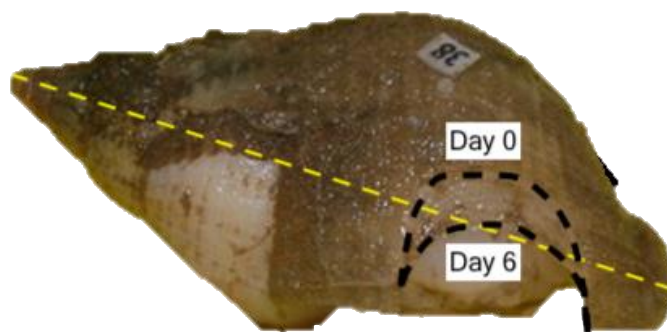
### 136 2.4 Statistical analysis

137 From the measurements of TSL and damage area, an individual cumulative value of TSL increase  
138 and percentage repair was calculated for the experiment period and daily rates calculated from  
139 these final values as percentage repair and growth per day ( $\text{mm}^2.\text{day}^{-1}$  and  $\text{mm}.\text{day}^{-1}$   
140 respectively). General Linear Models (GLM) were used to test whether growth and shell repair  
141 were significantly influenced by environmental variables. Depending on experimental  
142 treatment (Table 1), response variables were either percentage repair (%) or TSL growth  $\text{day}^{-1}$

143 (mm); explanatory variables were either age (TRJ, JW, AW), food (unfed, daily, or weekly) or  
144 temperature (5, 10 or 15°C). Response variables were modelled as continuous variables, and  
145 explanatory variables were modelled as categorical variables. Interactions between life stage  
146 and food or temperature were included to test whether relationships between growth rates or  
147 percentage repair and food/temperature varied amongst age-groups (TRJ, JW, AW). Statistical  
148 significance (p-values) were obtained from F-tests, and backwards model selection based on p-  
149 values was applied (Zuur et al., 2009). When interaction terms were non-significant in the full  
150 model, they were replaced with a non-interactive term and the process restarted. Diagnostic  
151 plots of residuals were checked. For graphical representation, the cumulative values were  
152 plotted in place of actual rates for a clearer comparative view of growth and shell repair  
153 between treatment groups. TSL was presented graphically using an average cumulative growth,  
154 taken as the average increase in shell length, and percentage repair as the average proportion  
155 of shell repaired out of 100% for all individuals per measured day.

156 Due to differences in experiment length, with adult whelk studies run for longer periods than  
157 juveniles, and disparity in the degree of shell repair recorded, with some whelks attaining 100%  
158 repaired shell long before the end of the experiment, the values have not been taken as a final  
159 day measure. To resolve this, for statistical purposes, experiment duration for measures of  
160 repair rate have been taken as the day at which the first 75% of individuals from one single  
161 experiment have repaired to 100%.





162

163 Figure 1: Experimentally damaged TRJ *Buccinum undatum* (number 38) showing the area of  
164 shell removed at the shell lip at day 0 and then repaired by day 6 (black dashed lines).  
165 Percentage repair area measurement calculated through the remaining area to be deposited  
166 until a value of 0 was reached. Total shell length (TSL) is indicated by the yellow dashed line.

#### 167 2.5 Calcein staining

168 To investigate qualitative changes in shell structure during shell repair, whelks were marked  
169 with the fluorescent dye Calcein to distinguish the original shell growth prior to damage  
170 (Kaehler and McQuaid, 1999). Twenty whelks whose shell margins (lips) had been mechanically  
171 damaged were stained in a  $50 \text{ mgL}^{-1}$  Calcein-seawater solution for 24 hours, to mark the point  
172 in growth when the shell was damaged. The whelks were then on-grown and fed for 7 days in  
173 flowing ambient temperature seawater after which the edge of the shell lips of ten of the shells  
174 that had repaired 50% of their shell were again damaged for a second time and then on-grown  
175 for a further 7 days. At the end of the experiment, whelks were frozen at  $-20^\circ\text{C}$  as a means of  
176 dispatch and upon thawing, the flesh was removed avoiding damage to the shell margin.  
177 Organic material was removed from the shell surface by immersion for 30 mins in a 0.01M  
178 NaOH solution, rinsed in fresh water and air-dried before the complete shell was embedded in  
179 Klear-set™ polyester casting resin (see Hollyman et al., 2020). The embedded shell lip and area  
180 of shell damage were sectioned using a precision diamond saw blade (Beuhler isomet 4000)

181 and the cut surface ground on successively finer silicon carbide abrasive papers (FEPA P400 and  
182 P1200 grade) before attaching the dry, cut surface to a microscope slide using superglue. Once  
183 dry, the attached resin and shell were sectioned again using the saw to create a 1 mm thin  
184 section. The thin section was ground with successively finer grades of silicon carbide paper and  
185 polished to a final grade using a 3  $\mu\text{m}$  diamond suspension to achieve an approximate 0.2 mm  
186 thick polished section. Low power (10x magnification) images of the shell structure were taken  
187 under transmitted light, using a compound microscope. Matching (10x magnification) images  
188 of the fluorescing Calcein marks were taken using a UV fluorescent light microscope and  
189 photographed using an attached eyepiece camera. This produced comparative composite  
190 images of the repaired shell and structure and Calcein marks.

191

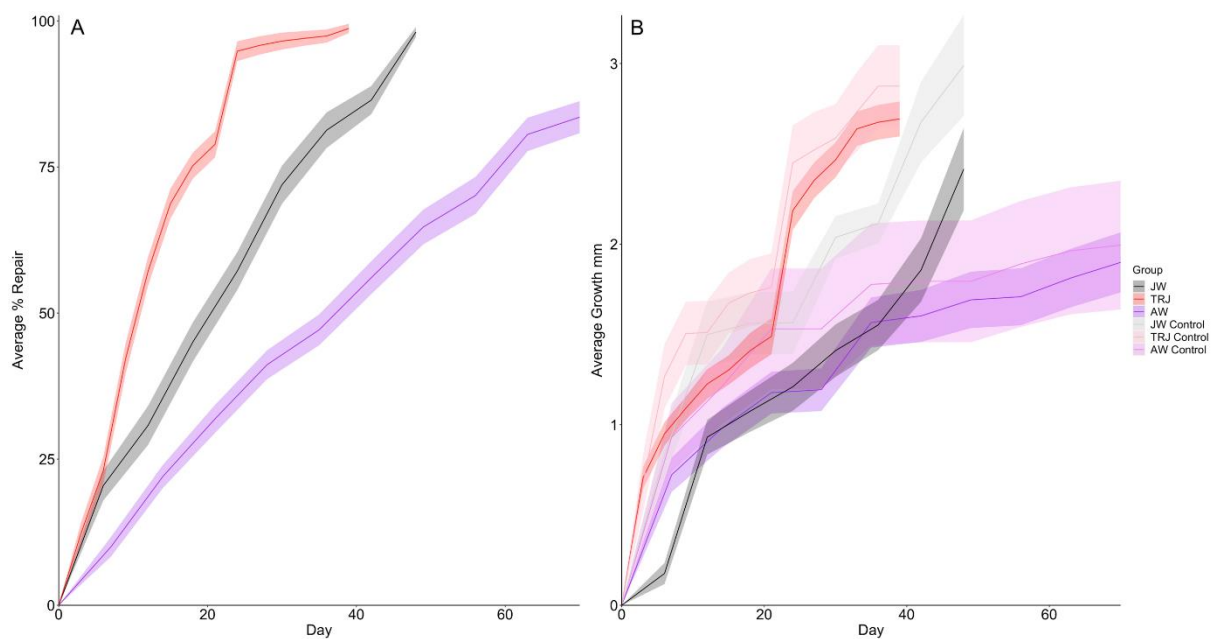
192 Table 1: Summary of experimental design with key differences and experimental conditions outlined

Treatment	Timeframe	Experiment Length (days)	Life Stage	Tank arrangement	Food Availability	Seawater Temperature
Life stage	January 2019	39	Tank Reared Juvenile (TRJ)	8L within 15L tank 20 per tank	Daily	Ambient (8-10°C)
		48	Juvenile Wild (JW)	15L tank 20 per tank	Daily	
		70	Adult Wild (AW)	15L tank 10 per tank	Daily	
Food availability	July 2019	15	Tank Reared Juvenile (TRJ)	8L within 15L tank 15 per tank	Unfed, daily, once weekly	
		21	Adult Wild (AW)	15L tank 10 per tank	Unfed, daily, once weekly	
Temperature	January 2016	15	Tank Reared Juvenile (TRJ)	8L within 175L tank 20 per tank	Daily	
	January 2019	21	Adult Wild (AW)	175L tank 40 per tank	Daily	5 and 10°C

## 194 3. Results

## 195 3.1 Effect of age on shell repair and growth.

196 The effect of life stage on shell repair rate is shown in Figure 2A. Mean repair rate with time  
197 decreased with increase in life stage, with an overall range in rates of 2.1% day<sup>-1</sup> between the  
198 three measured groups (see Table 2 for rates). Laboratory tank-reared whelks (TRJ) (TSL 11.5-  
199 21.25mm) repaired their shells rapidly and all shells were repaired within 30 days. Juvenile wild-  
200 caught (JW) (TSL <45mm) and adult wild-caught (AW) (TSL >45mm) whelks repaired their shells  
201 more slowly so that by day 40 all the JW whelks had repaired their shells but none of the AW  
202 whelks had completely repaired their shells by day 65. The cumulative increase in total shell  
203 length with time (Figure 2B) for the three different whelk age groups showed a similar trend to  
204 repair rate. Repair rate and increase in total shell length were significantly different between  
205 age groups (both  $p < 0.001$ ; Table 2). Compared with the experimentally-damaged whelks, the  
206 undamaged control whelks generally achieved a larger total length (Figure 2B), although this  
207 was not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ; Table 2).

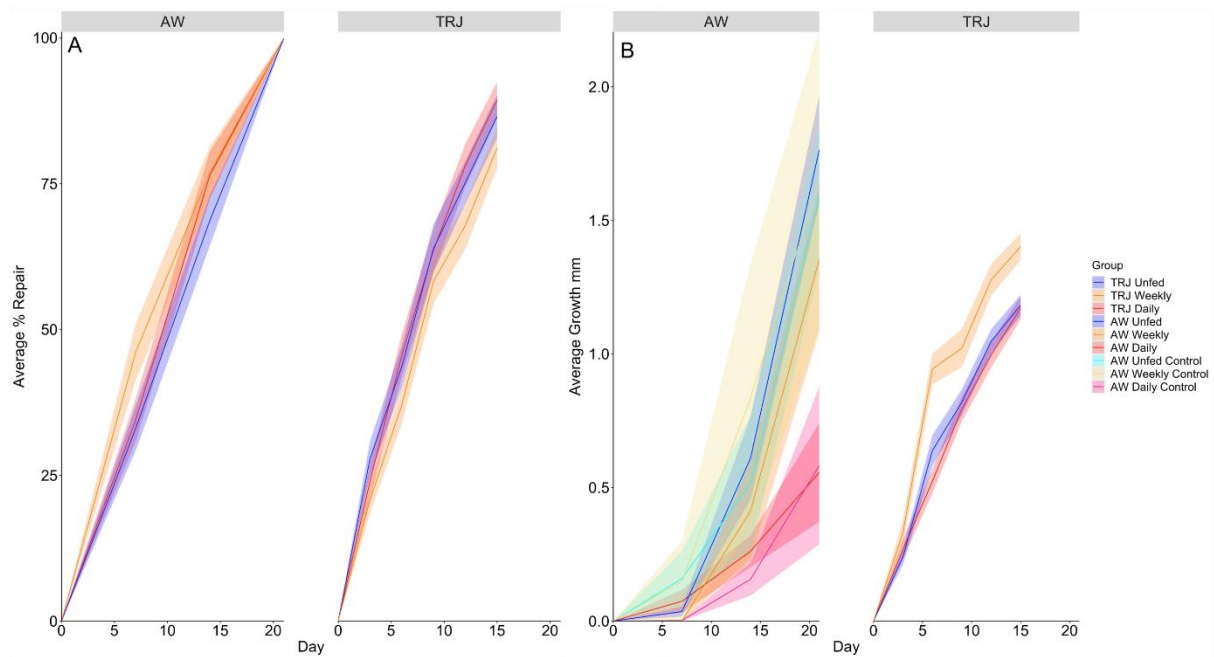


208

209 Figure 2: *Buccinum undatum*: A) average cumulative % shell repair ( $\pm$  1S.E. ribbon) with time  
210 and B) average cumulative increase in total shell length growth ( $\pm$  1S.E. ribbon) with time for  
211 three different age groups during a 70-day (AW – adult wild-collected), 48-day (JW – juvenile  
212 wild-collected) and 39-day (TRJ – tank-reared juvenile) laboratory experiment.

### 213 3.2 Effect of food ration on shell repair and growth.

214 Damaged juvenile (TRJ) whelks repaired their shells significantly faster than AW whelks  
215 ( $p < 0.001$  Table 2) but there were no significant effects of ration or the interaction between  
216 age and ration on repair rate (both  $p > 0.05$ ; Table 2). A plot of cumulative repair rate (Figure  
217 3A) showed juveniles that had no food or were fed daily had a faster repair rate than those fed  
218 once a week. AW whelks fed once a week repaired their shells at a similar rate to TRW  
219 individuals fed a similar ration. However, those AW whelks fed daily or unfed repaired their  
220 shells more slowly (Figure 3A). When the effects of ration on cumulative total shell length  
221 (Figure 3B) were investigated statistically, TRJ whelks grew significantly faster ( $p < 0.001$ ; Table  
222 2) than damaged and control AW whelks (Figure 3B). Generally, the AW control whelks grew  
223 faster than the damaged AW whelks, although the exceptions were the AW control whelks and  
224 AW whelks fed daily which grew the slowest,  $0.028 \text{ mm}\cdot\text{day}^{-1}$  and  $0.027 \text{ mm}\cdot\text{day}^{-1}$  respectively  
225 (Table 2 and Figure 3B). Whilst shell growth rate was depressed in AW damaged and control  
226 whelks, growth rate was promoted in whelks fed once a week, particularly in TRJ whelks (Figure  
227 3B). The effect of ration and the interaction between ration and age were both significant  
228 ( $p < 0.001$  and  $p < 0.05$  respectively; Table 2).



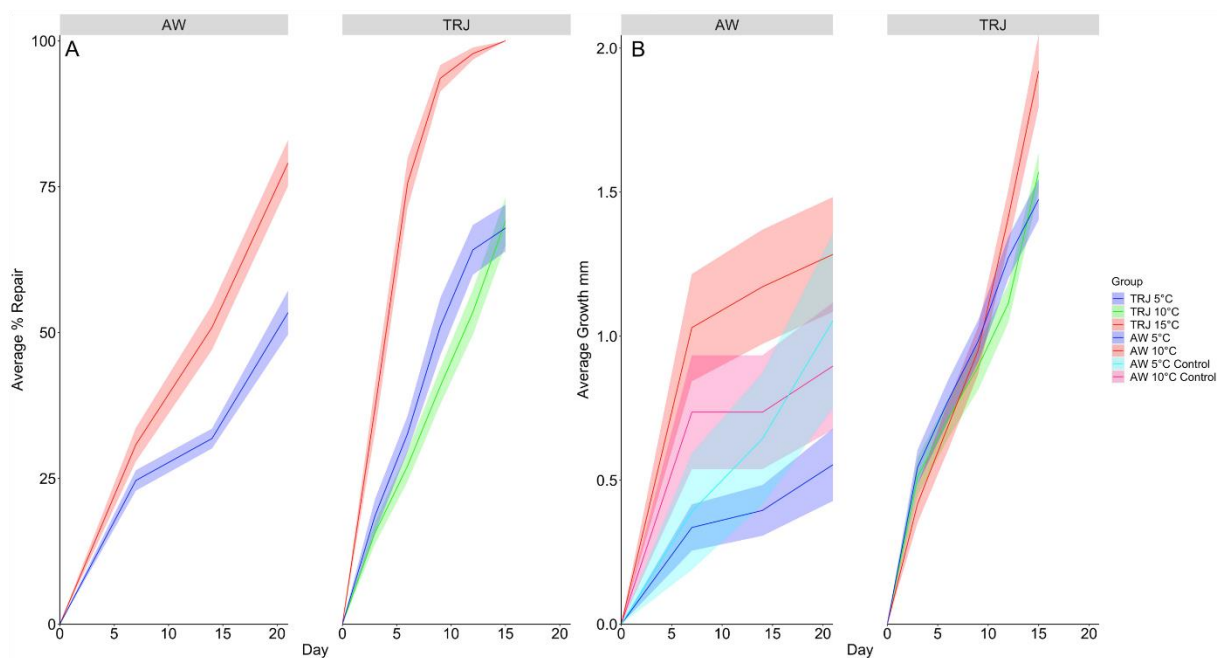
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230 Figure 3: *Buccinum undatum* grown during a 21-day (AW) and 15-day (TRJ) laboratory  
 231 experiment with different feeding regimes. A) average cumulative % shell repair ( $\pm$  1S.E. ribbon)  
 232 with time for two different groups, tank-reared juveniles (TRJ) and wild-collected adult whelks  
 233 (AW) provided with three different rations (unfed, daily, weekly) and B) average cumulative  
 234 increase in total shell length growth ( $\pm$  1S.E. ribbon) with time for three different groups, tank-  
 235 reared juveniles (TRJ), wild-collected adult whelks (AW) and undamaged wild-collected adult  
 236 whelks (control) (AW control) provided with three different rations (unfed, daily, weekly).

### 237 3.3 Effect of Temperature on shell repair and growth.

238 Experimentally-damaged juvenile whelks (TRJ) repaired their shells faster than adult whelks  
 239 (AW) at all three seawater (SW) temperatures ( $p < 0.001$ ; Table 2; Figure 4A). TRJ whelks  
 240 maintained at 15°C repaired their shells at an average of 10.4% day<sup>-1</sup> with >95% of shells being  
 241 repaired by day 9. A faster initial increase in repair rate (between days 0 and 12) was observed  
 242 for TRJ whelks maintained at 5°C compared to TRJ whelks maintained at 10°C. At 15°C juveniles  
 243 repaired their shells completely in 14 days with a repair rate more than double the rate of TRJ  
 244 whelks held at 10°C and 5°C which repaired 70% of their shell over the same time-period (Figure

245 5A). Adult whelks reared at 10°C and 5°C repaired 75% and 50% of their shell respectively by  
 246 day 20 (Figure 4A). The effects of SW temperature and the interaction between SW  
 247 temperature and age were both significant ( $p < 0.001$  and  $p < 0.05$  respectively; Table 2). When  
 248 the effect of SW temperature on cumulative total shell length (Figure 4B) was investigated  
 249 statistically (Table 2), TSL increased in TRJ whelks independent of SW temperature (Figure 4B).  
 250 In AW whelks TSL generally increased independent of SW temperature for the first 5 days  
 251 whereupon TSL increase slowed down (Figure 4B). Adult whelks increased in TSL the fastest at  
 252 10°C (AW and AW control) whereas TSL increase in adult whelks was slow at 5°C (Figure 4B).  
 253 The effect of SW temperature on TSL was significant ( $F = 3.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) but the interaction  
 254 between SW temperature and age was non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ; Table 2).



255

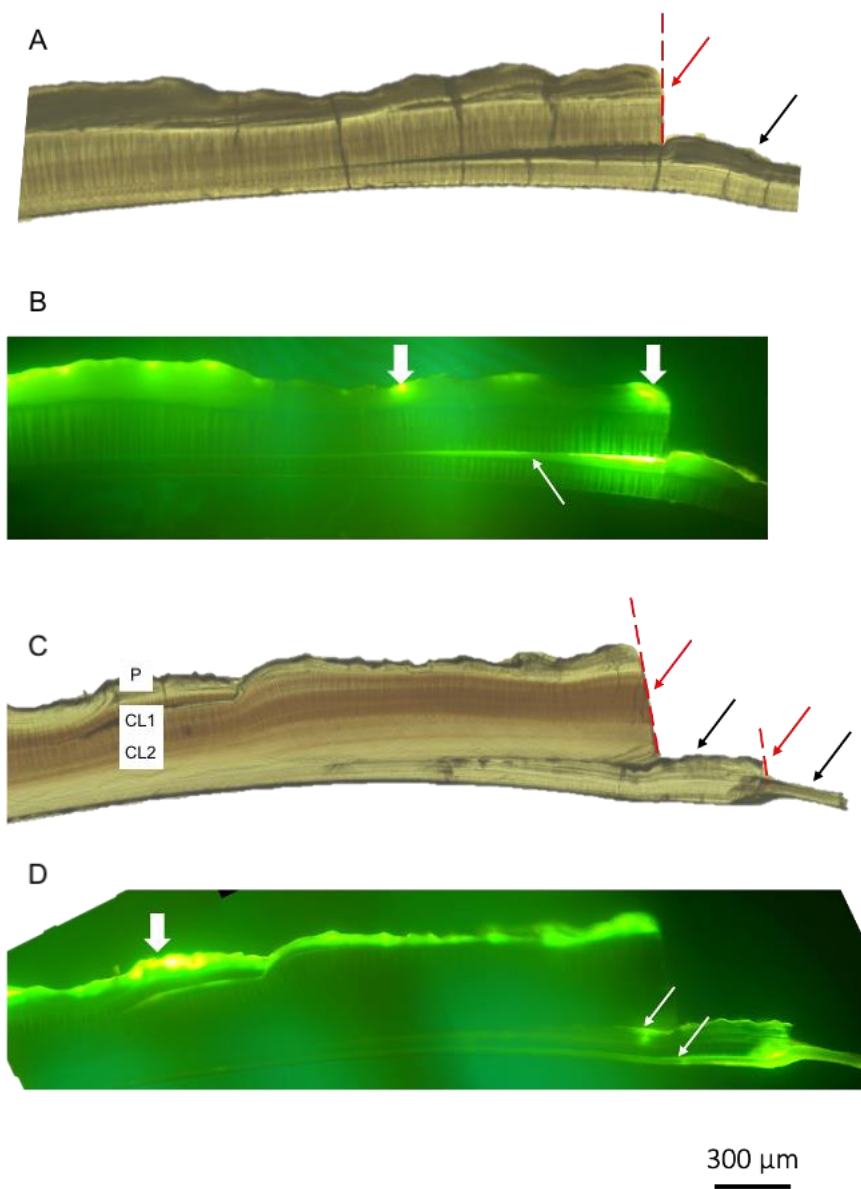
256 Figure 4: Shell repair in *Buccinum undatum* grown during a 21-day (AW), 15-day (TRJ) laboratory  
 257 experiment at different seawater temperatures. A) Average cumulative % shell repair ( $\pm$  1S.E.  
 258 ribbon) with time for juvenile (TRJ) and adult (AW) whelks grown at 5, 10 and 15°C (TRJ) and 5  
 259 and 10°C (AW). All adult whelks died at 15°C. B) Average cumulative increase in total shell  
 260 length ( $\pm$  1S.E. ribbon) with time for juvenile (TRJ) and adult (AW) (damaged and control) whelks

261 grown at 5, 10 and 15°C (TRJ) and 5 and 10°C (AW). More than 75% mortality was observed  
262 within adults in the 15°C experiment within the first 5 days, so it was not continued. Tank-  
263 reared juveniles (TRJ), wild-collected adult whelks (AW).

#### 264 3.4 Structure of shell growth

265 Figure 5 shows the appearance of *B. undatum* thin shell lip sections viewed in transmitted light  
266 (A and C) and the same sections illuminated with U.V. light (B and D). The point where the shell  
267 was damaged is a truncated cut perpendicular to the growing shell (red arrow), with the  
268 subsequently deposited thinner post-repaired shell (black arrow). Following exposure to  
269 Calcein, post-shell damage, a bright fluorescent line is visible under U.V. light (small white arrow  
270 Figure 5B). A similar response to shell damage and Calcein incorporation is visible in shells that  
271 were damaged twice followed by Calcein exposure. Figure 5C shows two truncated cuts (red  
272 arrows) and subsequent thinner shell re-growth (black arrows). The same section viewed in  
273 U.V. shows two fluorescent lines corresponding to the two periods of Calcein exposure (small  
274 white arrows Figure 5D). The thin sections show that following shell damage, new shell  
275 deposition begins rapidly following Calcein incorporation on the inner surface of the crossed  
276 lamellar layer with newly forming outer prismatic layer developing approximately 1mm inside  
277 the point of shell damage (Figure 5A). Shell extension occurs rapidly as the removed shell is  
278 quickly replaced to repair the missing shell at the lip and is thickened on the inner surface with  
279 crossed lamellar shell structure. The extension of repaired shell following the second damage  
280 incident however appears to be less than when the shell was first damaged (Figure 5C).





281

282 Figure 5: Thin shell sections of *Buccinum undatum* viewed in transmitted light (A and C) and in  
 283 U.V. light (B and D). A) section to show the appearance of the damaged shell (red arrow) and  
 284 subsequent shell repair (black arrow), B) shell section in (A) to show damage and incorporation  
 285 of Calcein (bright fluorescent line – thin white arrow (incorporation), thick white arrow  
 286 (absorption)), C) section to show appearance of a double damaged shell (red arrows mark the  
 287 first and second incidents of damage. Black arrows indicate post-damage re-growth) and D)  
 288 shell section in (C) to show damage and incorporation of Calcein (bright fluorescent line – white  
 289 arrows). P = periostracum, CL1 and CL2 = crossed lamellar layer. The outer periostracum  
 290 absorbs the Calcein and fluoresces under U.V. light (Large white arrow). Scale bars = 300 $\mu$ m.

291 Table 2: Summary of repair rates ( $\text{mm}^2.\text{day}^{-1}$ ) and growth rates ( $\text{mm}.\text{day}^{-1}$ ) of experimentally-damaged *Buccinum undatum* grown under different food  
 292 rations and seawater temperatures.

Life Stage		Mean $\pm$ Standard Error						ANOVA	Where within Group	Fig.		
Group	Tank Reared Juvenile (TRJ)			Juvenile Wild (JW)		Adult Wild (AW)						
	Damaged	Control		Damaged	Control	Damaged	Control					
Repair Rate	3.951 $\pm 0.071$	-		2.044 $\pm 0.017$	-		1.933 $\pm 0.039$	-	Group: F= 865, p<0.001	All	2A	
Growth Rate	0.091 $\pm 0.004$	0.102 $\pm 0.009$		0.050 $\pm 0.005$	0.062 $\pm 0.006$		0.027 $\pm 0.002$	0.029 $\pm 0.005$	Group: F= 90.6, p<0.001	All	2B	
Food ration		Mean $\pm$ Standard Error						ANOVA	Where within Group	Fig.		
Group	Unfed			Weekly			Daily					
	TRJ Damaged	AW Damaged	AW Control	TRJ Damaged	AW Damaged	AW Control	TRJ Damaged	AW Damaged	AW Control			
Repair Rate	5.765 $\pm 0.025$	4.756 $\pm 0.002$	-	5.405 $\pm 0.226$	4.760 $\pm 0.001$	-	5.954 $\pm 0.203$	4.761 $\pm 0.001$	-	Age: F= 54.6, p<0.001 Group: F= 1.87, p>0.05 Age*Group: F= 2.01, p>0.05	None	3A
Growth Rate	0.079 $\pm 0.003$	0.084 $\pm 0.010$	0.075 $\pm 0.012$	0.093 $\pm 0.003$	0.065 $\pm 0.013$	0.079 $\pm 0.026$	0.078 $\pm 0.003$	0.027 $\pm 0.009$	0.028 $\pm 0.014$	Age: F= 17.2, p<0.001 Group: F= 11.1, p<0.001 Age*Group: F= 6.53, p<0.05	Daily/ Unfed Daily/ Weekly	3B
Temperature		Mean $\pm$ Standard Error						ANOVA	Where within Group	Fig.		
Group	5°C			10°C			15°C					
	TRJ Damaged	AW Damaged	AW Control	TRJ Damaged	AW Damaged	AW Control	TRJ Damaged	AW Damaged				
Repair Rate	4.527 $\pm 0.266$	2.545 $\pm 0.179$	-	4.605 $\pm 0.269$	3.766 $\pm 0.186$	-	10.397 $\pm 0.253$	-	Age: F= 296, p<0.001 Group: F= 183, p<0.001 Age*Group: F= 6.47, p<0.05	All	4A	
Growth Rate	0.098 $\pm 0.005$	0.026 $\pm 0.006$	0.050 $\pm 0.014$	0.105 $\pm 0.004$	0.061 $\pm 0.009$	0.045 $\pm 0.010$	0.106 $\pm 0.009$	-	Age: F= 72.7, p<0.001 Group: F= 3.41, p<0.05 Age*Group: F= 1.05, p>0.05	All	4B	

## 294 4. Discussion

295 This study used a series of controlled laboratory experiments to investigate the rate of shell  
296 repair and shell growth in juvenile and adult common whelk, *Buccinum undatum* following  
297 damage to the shell lip and examined how these rates are affected by food availability and  
298 seawater temperature. The responses to shell damage recorded help provide an insight into  
299 the factors involved in the recovery process of damaged individuals in wild populations  
300 following shell damage as a result of storms, predation or demersal fishing activities. Our  
301 findings reveal significant variation in responses between juvenile and adult *B. undatum*, with  
302 these differences synchronous under all tested conditions for both rates of shell repair and  
303 growth (i.e., TSL increase). Responsiveness to changing temperature and food availability  
304 presented further differences in growth and repair rates, suggesting that there are multiple  
305 factors influencing these rates in gastropod molluscs. The study therefore provides insight into  
306 the key environmental drivers influencing shell repair in the wild.

307 Results from calcein staining showed that a damaged area did not only fill in with new shell  
308 growth but continued the build-up of new shell layers on the inner surface of the shell and back  
309 into the shell whorls throughout periods of damage and repair. The re-building of shell layers  
310 by depositing beneath existing layers, although strengthening the repaired section, is likely to  
311 result in heavier shells occurring within natural populations of areas with increased damage  
312 incidents (Thomas and Himmelman, 1988; Ramsay et al., 2001; Stafford et al., 2015). Such  
313 variation is often observed within wild whelk populations, with shell thickening and scarring  
314 occurring more in certain geographical areas than others (Ramsay et al., 2001; Preston and  
315 Roberts, 2007). In addition, this variation in shell scarring due to fishery disturbance has been  
316 noted for other species, for example in the dog cockle *Glycymeris glycymeris*, with areas of  
317 higher fishing seeing higher rates of damage and consequent repair (Kaiser et al., 2000;

318 Mensink et al., 2000). Additionally, predation pressures and wave action see further shell  
319 variation in scarring events, as seen within the painted top shell *Calliostoma*  
320 *zizyphinum* (Preston and Roberts, 2007) and the hydrothermal whelk species *Buccinum*  
321 *thermophilum* (Martell et al., 2002), through incidents of shell chipping. Although the  
322 thickening of the shell would increase resistance to a re-break, the process itself leaves the  
323 individual vulnerable to its surroundings immediately post-damage, due to the large metabolic  
324 implications of shell growth along with the damaged shell leaving the soft tissues exposed  
325 (Palmer, 1992; Frieder et al., 2017).

326 Total shell length was found to continue to increase throughout periods of repair and, although  
327 a significant difference in the rate of TSL increase was not observed, shell damage did result in  
328 some deviation in daily growth trends of repairing animals, when compared with control  
329 groups. It was expected that due to the high metabolic cost of shell growth and  
330 biomineralization, the rate of TSL increase would dramatically reduce due to the shell repair  
331 process in damaged whelks (Ebert, 1968; Ruppert et al., 2004; Melzner et al., 2011; Thomsen  
332 et al., 2013). However, the results indicate the importance of continual shell growth even when  
333 the shell is damaged, with little difference in TSL between the control and damaged groups.  
334 This is likely an evolutionary development to ensure that whelks continue to increase in size so  
335 that they reach a spatial size refuge from a range of predators as quickly as possible. Although  
336 there has been limited research into this, continual shell growth has recently been observed in  
337 the brachiopod *Liothyrella uva* (Cross et al., 2015). This build-up occurring, with the complete  
338 re-growing of new shell layers could further be an influencing factor in the continued TSL  
339 increase due to increased shell deposition and biomineralization.

340 The influence of age on an individual's growth trajectory has long been studied across a range  
341 of animal taxa (von Bertalanffy, 1938; Richardson, 2001; West et al., 2001; Sibley et al., 2015).

342 As expected from theory, the results of this study show ontogenetic differences in rates of shell  
343 growth and repair, with slower rates for both processes observed in older individuals; tank-  
344 reared juvenile whelks repairing their damaged shell at a rate almost twice that of adult whelks.  
345 These responses have often been seen as a result of constraints to body size and development,  
346 with larger older individuals seeing reduced rates of growth (Tanabe, 1988; Richardson, 2001).  
347 With an increased body size, the trade-off between additional metabolic costs, including  
348 maturation and reproductive success, outweighs the requirement of further shell production  
349 resulting in a further decline in growth rates, as energy allocation is shifted from growth to  
350 reproduction (Tanabe, 1988; Palmer, 1990; Kideys, 1996; Richardson, 2001; Thomsen et al.,  
351 2013). In addition, an increased need for protection at a smaller size would further require  
352 faster rates of growth and repair, as an individual needs to grow until they reach a size  
353 threshold at which predation vulnerability is reduced, i.e., a size refuge is reached (Chase, 1999;  
354 Karythis et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the capacity for retraction into and protection from the shell  
355 is of key importance for increased rapid escape capabilities from a surrounding threat (Tanabe,  
356 1988; Palmer, 1990; Seed and Hughes, 1995; Kideys, 1996).

357 Metabolic cost is a fundamental part of growth, with energy consumption vital for development  
358 and survival. It is interesting to note that the results of this study indicate that food availability  
359 had no significant effect on shell repair rates with unfed individuals and those fed daily showing  
360 similar rates of shell repair. However, differences in growth (as indicated by changes in TSL)  
361 were observed between the different feeding groups. Under unfed or daily feeding conditions,  
362 juvenile whelks displayed faster repair rates than those offered food once per week, whereas  
363 for TSL growth, weekly food conditions for juvenile and non-damaged adult whelks saw the  
364 fastest overall rates. Although the response to a lack of food did not follow expected responses,  
365 whereby for many marine organisms, energy is often saved for increased survival capabilities,

366 or processes are reduced until more favourable conditions arise (Tomanek and Somero, 1999;  
367 Stillman, 2003; Melzner et al., 2011). The observed response in our experiments likely suggests  
368 that the need to repair the shell is overwhelmingly important for protection and growth. Palmer  
369 (1983) however, showed that starved gastropods used body reserves and supplementary  
370 energy sources to fulfil the needs of shell formation, often through protein catabolism, a  
371 process that continues throughout normal feeding but is relied upon more heavily when food  
372 becomes scarce or unavailable. Without knowledge of the whelk's feeding behaviour in the  
373 wild prior to capture, we do not know whether sufficient energy reserves may still have been  
374 available to the unfed whelks or they were using protein catabolism to provide energy to repair  
375 their shells and increase their TSL during their laboratory experimental conditions. Our initial  
376 hypothesis was that there would be a link between food supply and shell repair rate, i.e., whelks  
377 fed daily would repair their shells faster than those fed weekly and those with no food supply.  
378 Our results demonstrated that there was no difference in repair rates between the three  
379 different feeding regimes although there was a significant difference in growth rate between  
380 the three groups of whelks. The daily fed whelks grew the slowest possibly because they over  
381 ate as they had access to an unlimited food supply and were subsequently stressed. However,  
382 throughout all daily feeding conditions no sign of distress to the whelks was observed and the  
383 highest number of mortalities were in the unfed whelk groups and not those fed daily. We  
384 postulate that during the summer the daily fed whelks may have allocated surplus energy from  
385 their food intake to gametogenesis, a few months prior to when individuals would be engaging  
386 in reproduction in the autumn, at the expense of increasing their TSL. Likewise, shell deposition

387 and rates of biomineralization are further affected through gene expression, and further  
388 through temperature changes (Joubert et al., 2014).

389 Temperature is a key environmental factor, with fluctuations in seawater temperature  
390 dramatically affecting physiological processes within marine organisms, with a range of  
391 responses and metabolic adjustments seen (Page and Hubbard, 1987; Prosser, 1991; Sokolova  
392 and Portner, 2003; Harley et al., 2006). Benthic organisms have an increased susceptibility to  
393 thermal stress (Foster, 1971; Harley et al., 2006) with greater impacts/effects observed in  
394 juvenile/ smaller individuals (Pechenik et al., 2019; Levinton, 2020), a response observed within  
395 this study. Temperature was found to have a significant effect on both rates of growth and  
396 repair with juvenile whelks reared at 15°C presenting the highest rates observed. A similar  
397 result was observed for adult whelks that showed increased rates at 10°C compared to 5°C but  
398 could not be tested at 15°C due to their mortality rates increasing as their thermal limit was  
399 reached and exceeded. It appears that juvenile whelk can handle much warmer seawater  
400 temperatures demonstrated by the 15°C degree TRJ whelks that showed the fastest growth.  
401 The observed responses would allow for early life development of whelks at shallower depth,  
402 although as adult whelks (AW) are generally found in deeper, cooler waters, this could be  
403 further reflective of the metabolic changes occurring (Valentinsson et al., 1999; McIntyre et al.,  
404 2015).

405

406 In some gastropod species certain environmental conditions (e.g., a combined change in pH  
407 and elevated seawater temperature) have been observed to reduce morphological size and  
408 have a negative effect on growth, as observed, for example, in the periwinkle (*Littorina*  
409 *saxatilis*) and gold-ringed cowry (*Monetaria annulus*) (Sokolova and Pörtner, 2000; Irie and  
410 Fischer, 2009; Melatunan et al., 2013). Observations from our study support previous work into

411 metabolism and temperature, with increased temperatures causing an increased rate of  
412 growth, up until the thermal tolerance is reached (Emmerson et al., 2020; Borsetti et al., 2021).  
413 In these studies, elevated temperature resulted in increased rates of calcification, due to  
414 heightened enzyme activity associated with the biomineralization process and consequently  
415 raised uptake of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  ions (Bevelander and Nakahara, 1969; Pons et al., 2002; Thomsen et al.,  
416 2010; Lervik et al., 2013). Although the results from our study showed a difference in response  
417 to changing temperatures. Plasticity to surrounding temperature has been seen to be  
418 dependent on pH, and external stimuli in other marine molluscs (Melatunan et al., 2013).

419 In conclusion, our study has shown that shell growth and shell repair rates in *B. undatum* are  
420 strongly influenced by factors such as age, seawater temperature, and food availability. The  
421 growth and repair of shells of marine gastropods can vary greatly both within and between  
422 species (Palmer, 1990). This variability is not only a result of phenotypic differences, such as  
423 shell thickness and shape (Brookes and Rochette, 2007; Magnúsdóttir et al., 2018), but also as  
424 a response to individual genotype (Magnúsdóttir et al., 2019; Goodall et al., 2021) and  
425 environmental cues such as predator presence and seawater temperature changes (Zdelar et  
426 al., 2018). It is important to understand how a combination of these factors impact the  
427 populations of *B. undatum*, particularly given their current commercial importance, and  
428 interest in fishery management strategies. In understanding how shell growth and repair occurs  
429 in the whelk, and its impacts on the organism, we can better understand its resilience to both  
430 direct and indirect fishery impacts.

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