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Impact of acidification on phytoplankton and zooplankton communities

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Summary. Literature concerning the impacts of acidification on the phytoplankton and zooplankton composition has been reviewed. Available data on the species richness and composition of phytoplankton, attached algae and zooplankton of acidifying systems have been summarized. The effects of water acidification on the primary productivity and biomass of zooplankton have been discussed.

Key words. Acidification; phytoplankton; attached algae; zooplankton; primary productivity; diversity; biomass.

Introduction

Acidification of fresh waters due to acid precipitation has become a leading environmental concern in many parts of the world. Particularly in Scandinavia and the north-eastern part of North America the pH and alkalinity of many soft water lakes is decreasing^{4,29,31,38,48,63}. Recently, acidification of lakes and small water bodies has been observed in central Europe. In Scotland⁹⁴, Denmark⁶⁷, Western Germany^{4,77,83} and some eastern European countries^{4,99} several lakes have undergone a significant degree of acidification. The freshwater acidification in the Alpine zones in Switzerland⁷⁶ and Italy⁵⁷ is less serious than in Northern Europe because of the more favourable geological environment. However, many alpine lakes and tarns are already suffering a deterioration. In Belgium⁸⁷⁻⁸⁹ and the Netherlands^{6,15,18-20,35,36,52,69-71} acidification has been proved to have taken place in poorly buffered, oligotrophic waters on mineral sandy soils, i.e. moorland pools, some small lakes and dune pools.

The effects of acid precipitation on water acidity depend on the bedrock geology, the buffering capacity of the water and the sediment, hydrology and the potential acid deposition. There are many geomorphological differences between the susceptible surface waters. The acidified systems in northeastern North America and Scandinavia are large and deep, are often influenced by water inlet, and have quartz bearing bedrock and thin reactive sediment layers^{29,48,63}. In the Netherlands and Belgium particularly small, shallow and isolated, poorly buffered waters are highly sensitive to acidification^{52,89}. Acidification of the above-mentioned fresh waters is associated with a variety of physico-chemical changes like decreased turbidity, decreased availability of nutrients, and increased mobilization of (heavy) metals. The most conspicuous biological effects are the reduction and loss of fish populations, particularly salmon and trout. Changes which are less obvious, but not less severe, are the reduction and/or loss of amphibian populations, changes in

phyto- and zooplankton, macro-invertebrate and macrophyte communities^{29,41,48,52,69}. Generally there is a reduced species richness per unit area in acidified systems.

The mechanism of acidification appears to be very complex and is not yet fully understood. Because of many geomorphological differences one has to be careful in generalizing results from different areas. In many cases the impact of acidification cannot be ascribed to a pH decrease alone. Also the mobilization of (heavy) metals, changes in nutrient cycles (N,P,C) and food chains seem to influence the possibilities for life under acid circumstances.

The present paper reviews the available publications dealing with the impact of acidification on phytoplankton and zooplankton assemblages of lentic freshwater habitats.

Phytoplankton composition

Acidification may alter the structure of the phytoplankton communities on several levels i.e. species richness, species composition and dominance.

Several authors have discussed the changes in species composition connected with acidification. The first striking aspect is that with decreasing pH the number of species of Chlorophyta, Bacillariophyceae and Cyanophyta becomes reduced^{41,42,66}. Lakes with pH values < 5.0 display a homogeneous and limited phytoplankton composition consisting of about ten species. The greatest changes in composition were found in the pH interval 5–6². Due to distinct local geomorphological differences the reported phytoplankton composition in Canada differs from area to area. In the Sudbury area the number of species and number of individuals of Chlorophyta decreased, those of Chrysophyta varied little and the Cyanophyta just increased as pH declined⁵⁰. In the La Cloche Mountain area a consistent pattern of decreasing species richness and diversity of phytoplankton with decrease in

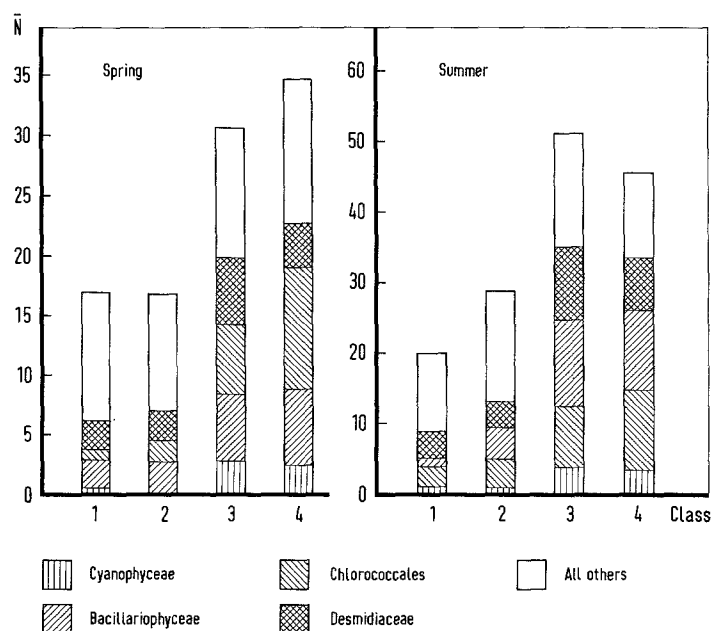


Figure 1. The mean number of phytoplankton taxa (\bar{N}) in poorly buffered waters within different pH-classes. Class 1: strongly acidified waters (pH < 5), class 2: slightly acid waters (pH 5.0–6.2), class 3: 'relatively' undisturbed waters (pH 6.2–9.2), class 4: eutrophicated waters (pH 6.6–10.4).

pH was observed. In acidic Florida lakes (USA) a decrease in the number of rare species was associated with decreasing pH¹¹.

The mean number of species for some phytoplankton groups in acidifying moorland pools in the Netherlands is illustrated in figure 1. In spring as well as in summer the mean species richness in strongly acidified waters is significantly lower than in the other waters and significantly fewer species of Cyanophyta, Bacillariophyceae, Chlorococcales and Desmidiaceae are observed.

The next phenomenon that has been noticed is that changes in the species spectrum take place. Many species found in circumneutral waters are absent or rare in acidic lakes. Van Dam et al.¹⁸⁻²⁰ studied the diatom assemblages of several moorland pools in the Netherlands. They concluded that in clear water pools the diversity decreases and the species spectrum shifts in the direction of acidobiontic organisms. Also, the dissimilarity among the pools has decreased in the last decades. This means that through acidification the diatom assemblages have become poorer in species and continually show more similarities. In the acidified systems the relative abundance of *Eunotia exigua* increases particularly strongly. The same phenomenon has been observed in Belgium, Denmark and Western Germany^{21,86}. Also paleolimnological studies on diatoms give evidence for a continuous decrease in species number and a shift to acidobiontic species^{5,9,13,22,26,33,68,83}. Coesel et al.¹⁵ showed large changes in the desmid assemblages in Dutch acidified moorland pools also.

Nearly all acidified Dutch moorland pools were characterized by taxa indifferent to pH, i.e. mainly filamentous green algae (*Microspora*, *Oedogonium*, *Ulothrix*) and nanoplankton < 50 µm. A few strongly acidified pools⁶ were characterized by desmids (*Cylindrocapsa brebissonii*, *Bambusina brebissonii*, *Closterium striolatum*, *Closterium directum*, *Staurastrum jaculiferum*), filamentous green algae (*Binuclearia tectorum*, *Microspora stagnorum*), pyrrhophytes (*Peridinium inconspicuum*) and chrysophytes (*Dinobryon divergens*). The observed desmids belong to a fairly common community, poor in species, which is characteristic for extremely oligotrophic, occasionally slightly disturbed, *Sphagnum*-rich waters with a pH of 4–5¹⁴. According to Rosén⁷³ *Peridinium inconspicuum* is often a characteristic species in acidified lakes (pH < 5.5) and may establish large populations (> 1 mg · l⁻¹).

Also during acidification the phytoplankton assemblages become dominated by special phytoplankton groups or species. In acidified lakes in Sweden dinoflagellates (*Peridinium inconspicuum* and *Gymnodinium* spp.) become dominant^{2,43,46,73}. In the Jasne Lake, Poland, at a mean pH of 4.3, phytoplankton is composed exclusively of nanoplankton: *Cryptomonas marssonii* and *C. erosa* var. *reflexa* dominate in the metalimnion⁹⁹. Chrysophyceae and *Chlamydomonas* are most abundant in all high mountain lakes in Switzerland with pH 5.2–6.0 and 9–14 species of phytoplankton per lake⁷⁴.

In the Sudbury area in Canada *Dinobryon tabellariae* was dominant in the most acidic lakes, while *Synura uvella*, *Dinobryon divergens* and *Chromulina* spp. were dominant in the less acidic lakes⁵⁰. Dillon et al.²⁸ noted for the acidic Sudbury lakes and Bleiwas et al.⁷ for the poorly buffered

lakes in the La Cloche Mountain area that they were dominated by dinoflagellates in contrast to the circumneutral shield lakes, which were dominated by diatoms and/or chrysophytes. However, the dominance of Dinophyceae and Cryptophyceae in Carlyle Lake in Sudbury, with a pH of 4.5–6.0⁹⁶ is similar to the situation in Swedish lakes with pH levels of about 5⁴⁶. Also lakes in the Sault Ste. Marie District were dominated by Chrysophyceae (*Chromulina*), while dinoflagellates were unimportant⁴⁹. In three acid-stressed lakes in Nova Scotia, phytoplankton communities were even more diverse; one lake was dominated by diatoms, one by chrysophytes and green algae and one by cyanophytes⁸. In acidic Florida lakes (USA) blue-green algae were replaced by green algae, which made up 60% of the total phytoplankton^{11,17}. In two acidic Adirondack Mountain lakes (USA) Chrysophyceae dominated both in terms of species number and biomass all year. The Dinophyceae, particularly *Peridinium inconspicuum*, made up a significant portion of the biomass. Dinophyceae become increasingly impor-

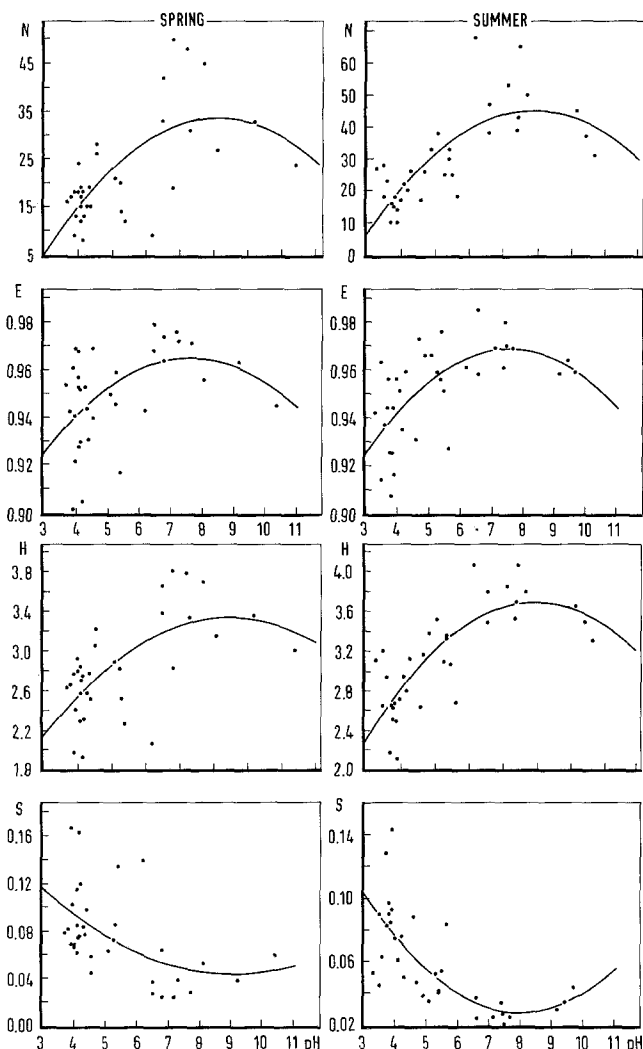


Figure 2. The relations between different diversity indices of phytoplankton assemblages in the 'open' water zone and the pH of poorly buffered waters. N: number of species; E: evenness; H: Shannon-Weaver index; S: Simpson Index.

tant contributors to the communities with decreasing pH, but do not dominate as is reported for some acidic lakes⁴⁰. In the Dutch acidified moorland pools⁶ only six taxa are dominant: *Binuclearia tectorum*, *Microspora* spec., *Mougeotia* spec., *Closterium striolatum*, *Cryptomonas erosa* and *Cryptomonas ovata*. Only the dominance of *Binuclearia tectorum*, *Closterium striolatum* and *Microspora* spec. is pH-dependent. *Cryptomonas erosa* and *C. ovata* are indifferent to pH.

The relations between the pH and several diversity indices are illustrated in figure 2. Apparently phytoplankton assemblages in poorly buffered circumneutral waters possess both in spring and in summer a large number of species (N), a high evenness (E), a high Shannon-Weaver index (H) and a low Simpson index (S). This means that relatively undisturbed, poorly buffered waters show a large species richness and an equal distribution of abundances over the species. Changes in pH in these waters result in a strong decrease of diversity (low N and H) and an increase of the dominance of a few species (low E and high S).

One may conclude that there is general agreement that phytoplankton species composition changes and richness decreases at low pH, in spite of considerable differences between the lakes examined, and in the methodology used in plankton analysis.

Attached algae

Reports in the Scandinavian literature indicate that in acidic lakes attached filamentous algae such as *Mougeotia*, *Batrachospermum*, *Lyngbya*, *Oscillatoria*, and *Pseudonabaena* become abundant^{37,41,51}. Hendrey et al.⁴¹ observed that *Binuclearia tectorum*, *Mougeotia* spp., *Eunotia lunaris*, *Tabellaria flocculosa* or *Dinobryon* spp. at any sampling date constituted at least 20% of the microflora. Filamentous algae grow densely over macrophytes; dense mats of benthic algae and undecomposed plant litter are recorded from Sweden. In Lake Colden, N.Y., similar mats of algae occur. The primary species are *Phormidium tenue*, *Tabellaria fenestrata*, *Fragilaria virescens* and *Diatoma*. The aquatic macrophytes are heavily covered by filamentous algal clouds of *Mougeotia* and *Tabellaria fenestrata*⁴³. *Mougeotia scalaris* has also frequently been observed free-floating in the pelagial of many acidified lakes; this species is apparently well adapted to acid waters². With increasing acidification filamentous algae such as *Mougeotia*, *Microspora* and *Binuclearia* become dominant⁶¹. The same phenomenon has been observed in Dutch moorland pools⁶.

According to Brock¹² benthic blue-green algae are completely absent at a pH < 4, while Lazarek⁵¹ found mats of blue-green algae in acidified Swedish lakes. Blue-green algae are indeed more sensitive to a low pH, but particularly *Oscillatoriaceae* can become dominant in acidifying waters, owing to raised mucilage production⁵¹.

In the Jasne Lake, Poland, the bottom is overgrown with a dense meadow of the moss *Drepanocladus fluitans*, covered with abundantly growing filamentous algae⁹⁹. The extensive growth of attached algae may inhibit the transport of nutrients from sediments to the overlying water; also, the nutrients of these algae may not be recycled through the system at a normal rate⁴⁰.

Biomass and productivity of algae

The primary production and/or biomass of (free-floating) algae can be affected by the tolerance of individual species with respect to water quality, seasonal succession and interactions between species (i.e. ability to compete for nutrients, grazing), nutrient availability and light penetration. It is evident that all of these factors are altered by acidification. However, no consistent pattern emerges for the net effect of all changes.

In some studies phytoplankton biomass has been shown to be reduced by lake acidification^{7,17,37,41}. On the other hand, in acidifying oligotrophic lakes in Norway⁶⁶, and moorland pools in the Netherlands^{6,52} no significant correlations between chlorophyll a content and the pH of the water were apparent. Several other studies gave no indications for a decrease or drastic change in phytoplankton biomass or primary production rate^{3,28,50,56}. During artificial acidification of a Canadian Shield lake a slight elevation of chlorophyll a and increased algal production and biomass was observed^{32,75}. It is clear that the literature on this point is far from unanimous. Fortunately the discrepancies in data have been explained^{28,50,95}. Single surface samples of phytoplankton may not be sufficient to characterize productivity or biomass in acid lakes. Under acidic conditions the depth of the euphotic zone increases, and column samples through the whole photic zone are required for calculations of primary productivity or standing crop^{50,75}. For example Kwiatkowski and Roff⁵⁰ noticed that primary production expressed volumetrically ($\text{mg C} \cdot \text{m}^{-3} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$) was reduced in lakes with a pH below 5.5, whereas production expressed on an area basis ($\text{mg C} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$) remained high in waters with a pH down to 4.4. Also Raddum et al.⁶⁶ suggested that the changes in transparency in lakes could be important. This has been proved by a good correlation between the ratio phaeopigment/chlorophyll a and Secchi-disc transparency.

Furthermore, some authors state that there is little evidence that low pH per se can directly reduce phytoplankton biomass or productivity. Dillon et al.²⁸ reported that phytoplankton biomass and productivity of acid lakes were similar to those of circumneutral lakes of the same nutrient status. Generally phytoplankton community biomass is better correlated with phosphorus concentration than with pH^{17,28,95}. Crisman et al.¹⁷ mentioned that chlorophyll values displayed a pronounced increase with increasing phosphorus concentrations for all pH-intervals (0.5 pH units) in poorly buffered waters with a pH above 5.6, while the responses in more acidic lakes were diminished. Phosphorus additions in enclosures of an acid lake indeed showed that chlorophyll and phytoplankton biomass significantly increased; no large changes in H^+ concentrations were observed during the experimental manipulations^{25,91}. Also in acid Sudbury lakes of Canada small additions of phosphorus caused significant increases of the mean phytoplankton biomass²⁸.

Grahn et al.³⁷ already stated that the primary production in acid lakes may be influenced by reduced nutrient levels. They suggested that the primary biological effects, on individuals and populations, of a continuous supply of acid substances to a lake induce profound, long-term

changes, forcing the lake into an increasingly more oligotrophic state. This oligotrophication of lakes generally tends – by means of a feedback mechanism – to accelerate further the process of acidification. Some other authors^{27,40} stated that acidification may lead to a reduced availability of nutrients, for instance that soil acidification results in high concentrations of aluminium, iron and other metals, which can form precipitates of phosphate in the water column. Thus atmospheric deposition of acid might lead to reduced phytoplankton production and biomass by altering the availability of critical nutrients, such as phosphorus.

Johnson et al.⁴⁷ concluded that high acidity also limited the availability of inorganic carbon, resulting in a reduction of primary production of phytoplankton. Roelofs et al.^{69–71} pointed out that changes in inorganic carbon content, which occur as a result of acidification, also play a very important role in the changes of macrophyte communities. The increase in the (heavy) metal content of acidifying systems can affect the biomass of phytoplankton. In moorland pools in the Netherlands a negative correlation between chlorophyll a and aluminium content exists⁶.

In acidic clear water lakes a very extensive growth of attached algae is ubiquitous. Particularly dense mats of benthic algae were observed, whereas filamentous algae overgrow macrophytes^{37,40,43,51,61}.

There are several explanations for the increase in biomass of attached algae. Removal of algae by grazing of fish, macroinvertebrates and zooplankton is probably diminished^{37,39,41,43,61,84}. Benthic and epiphytic algae are less dependent on environmental fluctuations. Dead cells remain within the algal community, so that the released nutrients can be re-used. Such a community possesses an effective survival strategy under nutrient-poor circumstances⁵¹. Many filamentous algae display a raised mucilage production at high acidity. Through this adaptation they may possibly become resistant to the high acidity

and the higher concentrations of (heavy) metals and aluminium^{34,51,61}.

Epiphytic algae probably take advantage of CO₂ excreted by macrophytes⁵¹. When poorly buffered waters are acidified and the sediment contains carbonate, a temporary increase of the CO₂-concentrations in the sediment will occur^{69,71}. Benthic algae may profit by the diffusion of CO₂ from the sediment to the water layer. To explain the unusual accumulation of several algae, a number of authors e.g. Evans³¹ and Hendrey et al.⁴¹ cite the statement of Moss⁶⁰ that the intolerance of various species to low pH or to consequent chemical changes will allow just a few algal species to utilize the nutrients available in these predominantly oligotrophic waters. However, Shoesmith and Brook⁷⁸ warned that the experiments of Moss^{58–60} must be viewed with due caution, because he based his conclusions on the behaviour of cultured algae. Besides, the remaining species may have a better ability to ingest nutrients, and possess morphological adaptations to escape predation such as large cells, long filaments, durable cell walls or gelatinous sheaths that preclude ingestion or digestion by zooplankton^{55,65}.

Zooplankton composition

A negative relationship between zooplankton species diversity and lake pH has been reported for Scandinavian countries^{2,42,56,66}, for Canada^{7,8,72,81,82,97} and for Florida^{11,16,17}. These studies present evidence that the low pH of some lakes is a recent condition associated with acid rain (pH < 5.6). In some previous studies^{72,81} an effect of pH on zooplankton was not observed until lake pH dropped below values of 5–5.5. In lakes of the La Cloche Mountains (Canada) with pH < 5.0 many species are completely eliminated and even tolerant species become progressively rarer. In some lakes only a single species (*Diaptomus minutus*) remains⁸¹.

In figure 3 the mean diversity indices (N,S,E and H) for

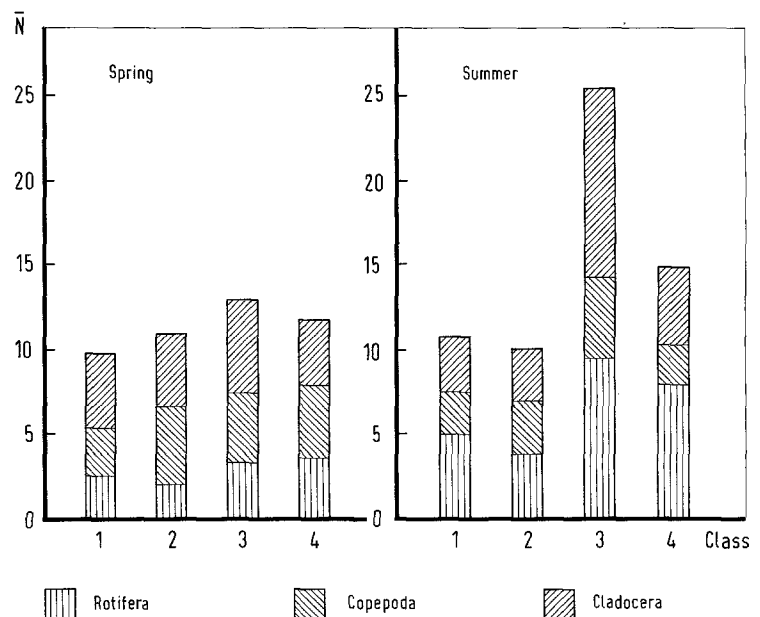


Figure 3. The mean number of zooplankton taxa (\bar{N}) in poorly buffered waters within different pH-classes. Class 1: strongly acidified waters (pH < 5), class 2: slightly acid waters ($5 \leq \text{pH} < 6$), class 3: 'relatively' undisturbed waters ($6 \leq \text{pH} < 7$), class 4: alkaline waters (pH ≥ 7).

the zooplankton communities of Dutch moorland pools are represented^{6,52}. In the relatively undisturbed poorly buffered waters (class 3) on an average more species (N), a higher evenness (E) and a higher Shannon-Weaver index (H) and a lower Simpson index (S) were found compared to the other systems (class 1, 2 and 4). The zooplankton communities in the undisturbed waters thus show, just like the phytoplankton communities, a large diversity and an equal distribution of the number of individuals over the species. In the acidified waters (class 1 and 2) and the poorly buffered waters with high pH (class 4) the species richness is clearly lower and some species become dominant.

In the relative undisturbed waters (class 3) on an average more species of rotifers and cladocerans are observed (fig. 4). This is particularly the case in summer, when a macrophyte vegetation occurs. In spring only a little difference can be observed in the mean numbers of zooplankton species in waters with different pH.

There is a significant relationship between the diversity of zooplankton in the open water and amongst the vegetation, indicating that high diversity indices in the vegetation are related to high diversities in the open water and vice versa. There are correlative relations between the physico-chemical parameters and the diversity of the zooplankton communities in the open water too. The diversity of the zooplankton community as a whole, in spring, is only correlated with aluminium, whereas in summer positive correlations ($p < 0.05$) with Al^{3+} , NO_2^- , DOC, pH, alkalinity, Ca^{2+} and acidity are found. At high (toxic) aluminium concentrations the diversity is lower,

while in these waters some species become dominant e.g. at an aluminium content of $10\text{--}20 \mu\text{mol} \cdot \text{l}^{-1}$ *Chydorus sphaericus* and *Scapholeberis mucronata* ($p < 0.001$) and *Keratella serrulata* ($p < 0.01$)^{6,52}.

The diversity of the phytoplankton and that of the zooplankton of the Dutch moorland pools are strongly correlated with each other. When a high phytoplankton diversity was found, the zooplankton diversity was also high, and conversely. These correlations are probably direct as well as indirect. The zooplankton will influence the diversity of the phytoplankton directly by predation. The indirect correlation is the decreasing diversity of both biota under the influence of acidification.

Copepods, cladocerans and rotifers all contribute to the reduced number of species, but the cladocerans are apparently most affected⁴⁵. However, acidic lakes in Scandinavia and Canada are characterized by a dominance of Bosminidae and a scarcity of Daphnidae and Rotifera^{2,7,38,66,81,97}. The data of Morling⁵⁶ and Brezonik¹¹ contrast with the above-mentioned data. In western Swedish lakes most zooplankton species were observed during the whole acidification period⁵⁶. In Florida more acidic lakes had more species than less acidic lakes had, but three measures of species diversity showed no significant differences between the two types of lakes¹¹.

In strongly acidified moorland pools in the Netherlands about ten zooplankton species were encountered (fig. 4). Species which were observed frequently and are sometimes dominant are the cladocerans *Alonella excisa*, *Bosmina longispina*, *Chydorus sphaericus*, *Daphnia obtusa*, *Scapholeberis mucronata*, *Polyphemus pediculus* and the rotifers *Keratella serrulata* and *Lecane* spp. Only calanoid copepodites become dominant.

According to Raddum et al.⁶⁶ only two species are characteristic for acid waters, viz. *Bosmina longirostris* and *Keratella serrulata*, the last species being considered to be an indicator of acidification. The Dutch zooplankton community is obviously composed of small species⁶, as has been observed also in northeastern North America^{16,81,97}. This is in contrast to an increase of large copepods, particularly *Heteroscoepus saliens*, as observed in Scandinavia, as a result of increased predation by invertebrate predators, e.g. *Chaoborus*, whose densities increase following the extinction of fish^{30,40,66}.

Most species of Copepoda and Cladocera are able to tolerate considerable variations of pH. This does not justify the conclusion that pH is without influence. There is probably an optimum pH for every single species⁵⁴. The influence of pH on survival of some cladoceran species has been investigated. Experimentally it has been demonstrated that a pH < 6 is unfavourable for *Daphnia longispina* and at a pH 5.3 the harmful effect is evident. At pH 3.0 *D. longispina*, *D. pulex* and *Bosmina longispina* and at a pH 2.8 *Chydorus sphaericus* die in a few hours⁸⁰. Experiments in which the pH tolerance of *Daphnia pulex* was studied²³ showed that this species was able to survive between pH 4.3 and 10.4, but the potential for reproduction was limited to pH 7.0–8.7. Experimental studies with *Daphnia magna* show that this species tolerates low pH for short periods; however, chronic exposure indicates that continuous survival is unlikely at a pH below 5.0⁶⁴. These experiments have been criticized by Walton et al.⁹⁰, particularly because of a lack of detailed analysis of re-

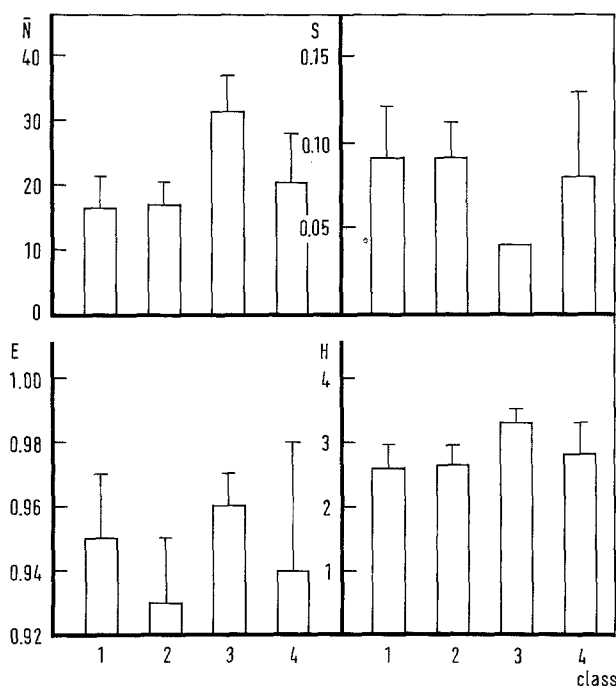


Figure 4. The mean values (+S.D.) of different diversity indices of zooplankton communities in poorly buffered waters with different pH. N: number of species; E: evenness; H: Shannon-Weaver index; S: Simpson index. Class 1: strongly acidified waters (pH < 5), class 2: slightly acid waters ($5 \leq \text{pH} < 6$), class 3: 'relatively' undisturbed waters ($6 \leq \text{pH} < 7$), class 4: alkaline waters (pH ≥ 7).

productive capabilities. A chronic 21 days life table test indicated a gradually increasing impairment of population growth rate potential (r) at $\text{pH} \leq 5.0$. This was due primarily to reduced survival and delayed onset of reproductive maturity⁹⁰. According to Brehm and Meijering¹⁰ *Daphnia magna* is more sensitive to low pH than *D. pulex*. Mortality increased in close relation to reduction of pH (< 5) and is mainly caused by the increasing concentration of free hydrogen ions. For survival a pH of 5.3–4.5 for *D. magna* and a pH of 4.9–3.9 for *D. pulex* is critical. Primarily the respiration is influenced, as has been shown by Alibone and Fair¹. The effect of low pH values on *Daphnia magna* severely depresses the O_2 uptake rates. At low pH the CO_2 concentration inhibits the diffusion of CO_2 from the gills, and the CO_2 tension of the blood increases, raising the acidity of the blood, which decreases the blood's affinity for O_2 ¹.

Zooplankton biomass

It has been proved in the previous paragraphs that in acidifying freshwater systems the species composition of both phytoplankton and zooplankton changes, and due to an altered predator-prey system a dominance of only a few species, tolerant to low pH, may occur. The net effect of all these factors will determine the zooplankton biomass. However, studies of zooplankton have not been sufficiently intensive to assess whether acidification results in reduction of zooplankton standing stocks³¹.

Acidification has had a strong effect on zooplankton biomass in northeastern North American lakes. In lakes in northern Ontario (Canada) zooplankton showed a significant reduction in species and numbers at the lower pH levels; the Rotifera showed the greatest changes. Significant relationships were found between the zooplankton standing crop and chlorophyll *a* concentrations and between the zooplankton standing crop and areal primary productivity. Dry weights for *Holopedium gibberum* and *Diaptomus minutus* were lowest in the most acidic lakes⁷². The results suggest a continuous change in biomass over the entire range of pH (4.5–7.2)¹⁶. In contrast with this observation, in the La Cloche area (Ontario, Canada) zooplankton biomass was not correlated with pH⁷. The mean abundance of zooplankton in Florida decreased from 145 specimens per litre in nonacidic lakes to 75 specimens per litre in acidic lakes^{11,17}. In West-Swedish lakes, Morling⁵⁶ observed small changes in species composition, but the frequencies of zooplankton organisms were mostly reduced. The reduction was most pronounced for Cladocera; particularly *Ceriodaphnia quadrangula* and *Daphnia longispina* occur sparsely in some lakes, while acidification reduced their numbers to extremely low values. Also *Holopedium gibberum* and *Polyphemus pediculus* almost disappeared from some lakes. In contrast to the general trend of frequency reduction, some rotifers increased in numbers e.g. *Keratella serrulata* and *Conochilus unicornis*.

In the Adirondack (USA) lakes the number of rotifers declined with decreasing pH. However, their density in humic lakes was usually high. It appears that the organic substances in the humic lakes may complex much of the dissolved matter, mitigating metal toxicity. Siegfried et al.⁷⁹ assumed that the differences in the structure of the

rotifer communities in relation to pH may also represent an indirect relationship. Because in acidifying systems many structural and functional changes occur, there may be other factors influencing the diversity of rotifers. These statements also hold for other zooplankton communities¹⁶. Simplification of the plant communities in lakes reduces the variability of food available to the next higher trophic level, while changes in phytoplankton biomass may decrease the food supply to herbivorous zooplankton⁴¹.

Many authors assume that the size and composition of the zooplankton communities are also in large part regulated by the kind of predators^{24,30,44,45,53,62,92,97,98}. The change from a predator-prey system dominated by fish to one dominated by invertebrates may be responsible for several ecological changes reported from acidified lakes.

Conclusions

In spite of geomorphological differences between acidifying systems and discrepancies in methods of plankton analysis, this review allows some general conclusions. In acidifying systems there is a strong decrease in the diversity of phytoplankton communities, whereas a few species become dominant. There are no clear indications for changes in the biomass and primary productivity of phytoplankton, however, the biomass of attached algae tends to increase. The scarce data on zooplankton indicate a decrease in standing stock.

It is evident that not only the pH, but also some other environmental factors are responsible for the structural and functional changes in acidifying systems. Decreased nutrient availability, changes in trophic relationships between primary and secondary producers and altered predator-prey systems may contribute to the simplification of acidifying aquatic ecosystems. Unfortunately the importance of the key factors involved, and the mechanism of acidification processes, are not yet fully understood.

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