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2 **Foraging behaviour, swimming performance and malformations of early**
3 **stages of commercially important fishes under ocean acidification and**
4 **warming**
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34 **Abstract**

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2 35 Early life stages of many marine organisms are being challenged by climate change,
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4 36 but little is known about their capacity to tolerate future ocean conditions. Here we
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6 37 investigated a comprehensive set of biological responses of larvae of two
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8 38 commercially important teleost fishes, *Sparus aurata* (gilthead seabream) and
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10 39 *Argyrosomus regius* (meagre), after exposure to future predictions of ocean
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12 40 warming (+4 °C) and acidification ($\Delta\text{pH}=0.5$). The combined effect of warming and
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14 41 hypercapnia elicited a decrease in the hatching success (by 26.4 and 14.3% for *S.*
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16 42 *aurata* and *A. regius*, respectively) and larval survival (by half) in both species. The
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18 43 length for newly-hatched larvae was not significantly affected, but a significant
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20 44 effect of hypercapnia was found on larval growth. However, while *S. aurata* growth
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22 45 was reduced (24.8-36.4% lower), *A. regius* growth slightly increased (3.2-12.9%
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24 46 higher) under such condition. Under acidification, larvae of both species spent less
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26 47 time swimming, and displayed reduced attack and capture rates of prey. The
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28 48 impact of warming on these behavioural traits was opposite but less evident. While
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30 49 not studied in *A. regius*, the incidence of body malformations in *S. aurata* larvae
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32 50 increased significantly (more than tripled) under warmer and hypercapnic
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34 51 conditions. These morphological impairments and behavioural changes are
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36 52 expected to affect larval performance and recruitment success, and further
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38 53 influence the abundance of fish stocks and the population structure of these
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40 54 commercially important fish species. However, given the pace of ocean climate
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42 55 change, it is important not to forget that species may have the opportunity to
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44 56 acclimate and adapt.

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46 57
47 58 **Keywords:** Ocean climate change, fish early stages, survival and growth,
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49 59 malformations, behaviour, ecophysiology
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62 Introduction

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64 Atmospheric CO₂ levels are rising at an unprecedented rate. The continuous
65 absorption of atmospheric CO₂ by oceans is causing a decline in ocean's pH, which
66 is expected to decrease 0.4-0.5 units by the year 2100. In parallel, sea surface
67 temperature is expected to rise by up to 4 °C by the end of the century (Collins et
68 al. 2013). Ocean warming and acidification represent a major threat to many
69 marine organisms by affecting their acid-base balance, metabolism, growth and
70 behaviour (Munday et al. 2011; Pörtner et al. 2004) in ways that often compromise
71 species fitness and survival (Wittmann and Pörtner 2013).

72 Fishes were thought to be quite resilient to exposure to elevated CO₂, given their
73 strong ability to regulate acid-base balance by bicarbonate accumulation and ion
74 exchange across the gills (Melzner et al. 2009). Nevertheless, fish early life stages
75 have shown to be more susceptible to elevated CO₂ than adult fish (reviewed by
76 Pörtner et al. 2005). Several studies have reported direct effects of elevated pCO₂
77 on survival, growth, metabolism, behaviour, otoliths and skeletal development of
78 marine fish larvae (Baumann et al. 2012; Frommel et al. 2014; Munday et al. 2011;
79 Pimentel et al. 2014). Other studies have found no significant effects of increasing
80 pCO₂ on fish larvae (Harvey et al. 2013; Hurst et al. 2013; Maneja et al. 2013b),
81 suggesting species-specific responses to changing ocean conditions.

82 To date, very few studies have investigated the susceptibility of early stages of
83 commercially important fish species to climate-driven changes, including codfish
84 (Frommel et al. 2014) and yellowfin tuna (Bromhead et al. 2015). Given the
85 importance of larval growth and survival rates to the year-class success in marine
86 fish populations (Peck et al. 2012), deleterious effects of climate-driven changes in
87 pCO₂ and temperature may have profound consequences on the distribution and
88 abundance of marine fish stocks (Pörtner and Peck 2010).

89 Here we analysed the effects of ocean warming (+4 °C) and acidification (ΔpH=0.5)
90 on the development and behaviour of early life stages of two commercially
91 important fish species in the NE Atlantic Ocean, namely the gilthead seabream
92 *Sparus aurata* and the meagre *Argyrosomus regius*.

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94 Methods

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96 *Egg collection*

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98 Eggs of *S. aurata* were collected at the hatchery Maresa (Mariscos de Estero,
99 Spain), in November 2013. Eggs of *A. regius* were obtained from Instituto
100 Português do Mar e da Atmosfera (IPMA) - Centro Regional de Investigação
101 Pesqueira do Sul (CRIPSul, Olhão, Portugal), in May 2014. Meagre eggs were
102 obtained from a wild-caught broodstock of four females and two males. Eggs were
103 collected immediately after spawning and transferred to the aquaculture facilities
104 in Laboratório Marítimo da Guia (Cascais, Portugal). At approximately 5 hours
105 after spawning, eggs were acclimated to the different experimental conditions.

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107 *Egg incubation and larval rearing*

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109 Following an acclimation period of about 2 h, *S. aurata* and *A. regius* eggs were
110 exposed to four experimental treatments, a cross-factor design of two
111 temperatures and two $p\text{CO}_2$ levels: **(1)** control temperature and normocapnia
112 ($p\text{CO}_2 \sim 350 \mu\text{atm}$, $\text{pH}=8.0$); **(2)** control temperature and hypercapnia
113 ($p\text{CO}_2 \sim 1400 \mu\text{atm}$, $\text{pH}=7.5$, $\Delta\text{pH}=0.5$); **(3)** the expected warming scenario ($+4 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$)
114 and normocapnia; and **(4)** warming and hypercapnia. Control temperatures
115 represented the average temperature during the spawning season of *S. aurata* (18
116 $^\circ\text{C}$; Arias 1980) and *A. regius* ($20 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$; Quéro and Vayne 1987).

117 For each species and treatment, eggs and larvae were reared in 3 independent
118 recirculating systems (12 per species in total), each composed of a 19 L cylindrical
119 rearing tank connected to a 100 L sump. To ensure an accurate water temperature
120 in each experimental treatment, the rearing tanks were placed inside 400-L water
121 bath tanks. All rearing systems were filled with filtered ($1 \mu\text{m}$) and UV-irradiated
122 seawater (salinity 35). Temperatures were kept stable via seawater chiller
123 systems. pH levels were monitored with glass pH probes (Schott®Instruments)
124 connected to a ProfiLux system (GHL, Germany). pH was automatically adjusted
125 via solenoid valves, by injecting a certified CO_2 gas mixture into the water or by
126 aerating the water with CO_2 filtered air (by using CO_2 scrubbers with soda lime).
127 Salinity, temperature and pH levels were also manually monitored daily. Total

128 alkalinity was spectrophotometrically determined (at 595nm) according to Sarazin
129 et al. (1999). pH and alkalinity measurements were used for $p\text{CO}_2$ calculation (see
130 Supplementary Table 1 for seawater carbonate chemistry), using the CO2SYS
131 program (Lewis and Wallace, 1998), with dissociation constants from Mehrbach et
132 al. (1973) as refitted by Dickson and Millero (1987). Ammonia and nitrites were
133 monitored regularly and maintained within recommended levels.

134 For the embryonic development experiment, 10 eggs were randomly placed inside
135 a small rearing box in each rearing tank, and followed for approximately 43 hours
136 until hatching. The remaining eggs were distributed in egg-incubation tanks and
137 further used for the larval experiment. After hatching, larvae were carefully
138 counted and transferred to the rearing tanks. *S. aurata* larvae were randomly
139 distributed at a density of 70 larvae L^{-1} and reared until 15 days post-hatch (dph).
140 Larvae were fed on rotifers (*Brachionus plicatilis*) at an increasing density of 5 to
141 10 rot mL^{-1} between 2 and 15 dph, and *Artemia* nauplii (0.2-2 art mL^{-1}) from 10 to
142 15 dph [adapted from Fernández et al. (2008)]. *A. regius* larvae were reared at a
143 density of 45 larvae L^{-1} for 10 days. Larvae started to feed on rotifers (from 5 to 10
144 rot mL^{-1}) between 2 and 10 dph, and *Artemia* nauplii (0.2-2 art mL^{-1}) was gradually
145 introduced at 6 dph until the end of the experiment [based on Pousão-Ferreira et
146 al. (2013)]. Both rotifers and *Artemia* nauplii were enriched with Red Pepper. At
147 the end of each day, prey availability in each rearing tank was checked to ensure
148 that prey density was never a limiting factor regardless of the treatment. The light
149 regime in both experiments was 14 L:10 D.

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151 *Hatching success, survival and growth*

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153 The hatching success and larval survival were determined per rearing tank, based
154 on the number of surviving larvae at hatching and at the end of the experiment,
155 respectively. In each tank, the standard length at hatching and at the end of the
156 experiment (i.e., 15 dph and 10 dph for *S. aurata* and *A. regius*, respectively) was
157 measured for 4 individuals (12 per treatment) using a dissecting microscope. The
158 somatic length growth (SLG) was calculated as the difference between the mean
159 length at hatching and the length of each larva at the end of the experiment divided
160 by the time elapsed.

161

162 *Body malformations*

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164 At the end of the experiment, 20 *S. aurata* larvae per tank (60 per treatment) were
165 sampled and fixed in 4% buffered paraformaldehyde for 24 h, and then transferred
166 to 70% ethanol. Larvae were observed under a microscope to identify and quantify
167 body structure malformations and/or axial deviations, based on Boglione et al.
168 (2001). Malformations were classified according to the affected area (cranium,
169 abdominal and caudal region). Cranium malformations included asymmetric eye,
170 deformed meckel's cartilage in the jaw and deformed ceratobranchial in the
171 opercle. Abdominal and caudal malformations included abnormal body curvatures
172 such as side-to-side, excessive inward and outward curvatures, and abnormal
173 urostyle flexion. Malformations were quantified as the percentage of fish exhibiting
174 a specific deformity. The incidence of body malformations in *A. regius* larvae was
175 not assessed.

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177 *Behavioural patterns*

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179 Behavioural observations of *S. aurata* and *A. regius* larvae were conducted at the
180 end of both experiments. A preliminary study was performed to establish the
181 ethogram for both species (Table 2). Swimming (S) and spin (Sp) behaviours were
182 recorded as time variables, whereas miss (M), attack (A) and capture (C)
183 behaviours were recorded as frequency variables. The capture success was
184 calculated as the fraction of successful attack events (based on Drost 1987). The
185 behavioural patterns were analysed through direct observation by a "blind
186 observer", using the focal animal technique. Four larvae per rearing tank (12 per
187 treatment) were randomly selected and the behaviour of each larva was analysed
188 inside the rearing tanks during 1 minute, 30 min after feeding.

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190 *Statistical analyses*

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192 Experiments led to data expressed as (1) proportions (hatching success, survival
193 success, and malformations), (2) counts (number of observed behaviours), and (3)

194 positive quantities (measures of lengths and growths). All data were analysed via
195 generalized linear mixed models (GLMM, e.g. Zuur et al. 2009). The distributional
196 family considered was binomial (logit link function), Poisson (logit link function)
197 and Gaussian (identity link function) for proportions, counts and positive
198 quantities, respectively. Model's residuals were checked for departures from the
199 assumed distributions and no significant deviations were found. The mixed model
200 component was introduced to respect the properties of the experimental design,
201 i.e., box/tank were always included as a random effect to account for possible
202 dependency within tanks. Following the recommendation from Barr et al. (2013),
203 we kept the random effects in the model irrespectively of the amount of variation it
204 explained. All models considered included the same 2-level fixed effects, i.e.,
205 temperature and pH, as well as their all second order interaction. For body
206 malformations, behaviour and survival, which response could be conditional on
207 the rearing time, we did not include species as an explanatory variable in the
208 model to avoid confounding between effects by species and rearing time. For
209 variables not dependent on rearing time, we considered species as an additional
210 fixed effect, as well as the corresponding three second order interactions. The most
211 parsimonious models were selected based on Akaike Information Criterion and
212 used for inference. This potentially allowed to borrow strength across species to
213 find significant treatment effects. Odds ratios and confidence limits are also
214 presented for Binomial models, allowing a more informative discussion of the
215 results. Odds were defined as the ratio of the probability of success and the
216 probability of failure, and odds ratios were build by the ratio of odds under control
217 temperature or normocapnia and odds under warming or hypercapnia. All
218 statistical analyses were implemented in R (R Core Team, 2014), using the hglm
219 package (Ronnegard et al. 2010).

221 **Results**

223 *Hatching success and survival*

225 Regarding hatching success (Fig. 1A,B), the most parsimonious model included the
226 main effects of temperature ($\beta=-0.721$, $SE=0.272$, $p=0.008$) and pCO_2 ($\beta=-0.599$,

227 SE=0.271, $p=0.027$). Neither the effect of species ($p=0.579$) nor the interaction
228 between both factors ($p=0.981$) was significant. The odds of hatching under
229 warming were only 0.39 (95% CI: 0.29, 0.76) times the odds of hatching under
230 control temperature, i.e., the odds ratio of hatching were approximately 2.6 higher
231 at control temperature. The odds of hatching under hypercapnia were only 0.59
232 (95% CI: 0.32, 1.15) times the odds of hatching under normocapnia i.e., the odds
233 ratio of hatching were approximately 1.69 higher under normocapnia.. Specifically,
234 the hatching success of *S. aurata* decreased from $88.3\pm 7.6\%$ in the control to
235 $65.0\pm 10.0\%$ in the future scenario, while the hatching success of *A. regius*
236 decreased from $93.3\pm 5.7\%$ in the control to $80.0\pm 10.0\%$ in the future scenario.
237 In terms of survival, a model was considered for each species. Regarding *S. aurata*
238 (Fig. 1C), the main effects of temperature ($\beta=-1.237$, $SE=0.130$, $p<0.001$) and pCO_2
239 ($\beta=-0.313$, $SE=0.130$, $p=0.016$) were significant, with survival being lower under
240 higher temperature and hypercapnia. The odds of survival under warming were
241 only 0.29 (95% CI: 0.22, 0.37) times the odds of survival under control
242 temperature, i.e., the odds ratio of survival was approximately 3.5 higher at control
243 temperature. The odds of survival under hypercapnia were 0.73 (95% CI: 0.57,
244 0.94) times the odds of survival under normocapnia, i.e., the odds ratio of survival
245 was approximately 1.4 higher at normocapnia. However, the interaction between
246 temperature and pCO_2 was not significant ($p=0.414$). Survival rates of this species
247 decreased from $43.3\pm 2.8\%$ under control conditions to $20.8\pm 2.9\%$ under the
248 future scenario. Regarding *A. regius* (Fig. 1D), the main effects of temperature ($\beta=-$
249 1.015 , $SE=0.113$, $p<0.001$) and pCO_2 ($\beta=-0.301$, $SE=0.113$, $p=0.008$) were
250 significant, but the interaction between them was not ($p=0.236$). The odds of
251 survival under warming were only 0.36 (95% CI: 0.29, 0.45) times the odds of
252 survival under control temperature, i.e., the odds ratio of survival was 2.8 higher at
253 control temperature. The odds of survival under hypercapnia were 0.74 (95% CI:
254 0.59, 0.92) times the odds of survival under normocapnia, i.e., the odds ratio of
255 survival was 1.4 higher at normocapnia. The survival of this species decreased
256 from $40.0\pm 10.0\%$ under control to $20.0\pm 5.0\%$ under future conditions.

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258 *Length and growth*

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260 The mean standard length of newly-hatched larvae (at 0 dph) was independent of
261 the treatment (Fig. 2A,B), with no terms found to be significant ($p=0.284$, $p=0.982$
262 and $p=0.393$ for temperature, $p\text{CO}_2$ and the interaction between both factors,
263 respectively). Size at hatching ranged between 2.6 ± 0.2 and 2.7 ± 0.3 mm for *S.*
264 *aurata*, and between 2.5 ± 0.5 and 2.7 ± 0.3 mm for *A. regius*. Considering growth
265 (Fig. 2C,D), the main effect of $p\text{CO}_2$ was significant ($\beta=-0.028$, $\text{SE}=0.008$, $p=0.009$),
266 as well as the interaction between $p\text{CO}_2$ and species ($\beta=0.037$, $\text{SE}=0.012$, $p=0.003$).
267 However, neither temperature ($p=0.098$) nor species ($p=0.107$) had a significant
268 effect. SLG was higher for *A. regius*, with values ranging from 0.09 to 0.11 mm day⁻¹,
269 while for *S. aurata* it ranged from 0.06 to 0.09 mm day⁻¹. The significant
270 interaction between $p\text{CO}_2$ and species arises from the fact that growth was higher
271 under normocapnia for *S. aurata* but higher under hypercapnia for *A. regius*.

272

273 *Body malformations*

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275 Malformations were only assessed for *S. aurata* (Figs. 3 and 4). Regarding total
276 malformations (Fig. 4A), both the main effects temperature ($\beta=0.946$, $\text{SE}=0.328$,
277 $p=0.004$) and $p\text{CO}_2$ ($\beta=1.730$, $\text{SE}=0.332$, $p<0.01$) were significant, but the
278 interaction between both factors was not ($p=0.287$). The odds of total
279 malformations under warming were 2.57 (95% CI: 1.35, 4.90) times the odds of
280 malformations under control temperature, while the odds under hypercapnia were
281 5.64 (95% CI: 2.95, 10.80) times the odds under normocapnia. The incidence of
282 malformations increased from $25.00\pm 13.23\%$ under control conditions to
283 $81.67\pm 10.41\%$ under the warmer and acidified scenario. The only term included in
284 the cranium malformations model was $p\text{CO}_2$ ($\beta=1.704$ $\text{SE}=4.272$, $p<0.001$), with a
285 higher proportion of malformations observed under hypercapnia (Fig. 4B). Neither
286 temperature ($p=0.729$) nor the interaction between both factors ($p=0.166$) was
287 significant. The odds under hypercapnia were 5.50 (95% CI: 2.52, 12.02) times the
288 odds under normocapnia. Under elevated $p\text{CO}_2$, the incidence of cranium
289 malformations increased significantly from 8.33 ± 2.88 to $21.67\pm 2.87\%$ under
290 control temperature, and from 6.67 ± 2.89 to $40.00\pm 5.00\%$ under warming. With
291 respect to abdominal malformations (Fig. 4C), none of the variables was significant
292 ($p=0.232$, $p=0.232$ and $p=0.539$ for temperature, $p\text{CO}_2$ and the interaction between

293 both factors, respectively). For caudal malformations (Fig. 4D), there was not
294 enough information to build a model, since this type of malformation was only
295 observed in one of the four treatments. However, a great proportion ($26.7\pm 2.9\%$)
296 of the fish in the warmer and acidified scenario presented this malformation.

298 *Behavioural patterns*

299
300 In terms of behaviour (Fig. 5), a model was considered for each species. For *S.*
301 *aurata*, swimming (Fig. 5A) was only significantly affected by $p\text{CO}_2$ ($\beta=-18.333$,
302 $\text{SE}=2.590$, $p<0.001$), and not by temperature ($p=0.164$). Additionally, no significant
303 interaction was found between both factors ($p=0.243$). Swimming duration
304 significantly decreased with $p\text{CO}_2$ from 47.6 ± 6.3 to 32.5 ± 6.1 sec at normal
305 temperature, and from 53.2 ± 12.4 to 31.6 ± 9.4 sec at the warming condition. For
306 attack (Fig. 5C), both temperature ($\beta=0.352$, $\text{SE}=0.163$, $p=0.031$) and $p\text{CO}_2$ ($\beta=-$
307 1.214 , $\text{SE}=0.261$, $p<0.001$) were found significant, as well as the corresponding
308 interaction ($\beta=0.862$, $\text{SE}=0.308$, $p=0.005$). More attacks happened under higher
309 temperatures, but this increase was more pronounced under hypercapnia than
310 normocapnia. The capture success (Fig. 5E) was also significantly affected by $p\text{CO}_2$
311 ($\beta=-1.466$, $\text{SE}=0.320$, $p=0.000$), but not by temperature ($p=0.145$). Moreover, the
312 interaction between both factors ($\beta=0.802$, $\text{SE}=0.382$, $p=0.036$) was also
313 significant. The capture success of this species decreased significantly under
314 hypercapnic conditions, from 4.3 ± 1.7 to $1.0\pm 0.4\%$ under control temperature, and
315 from 5.7 ± 1.4 to $3.0\pm 0.9\%$ at warmer temperatures. For spin behaviour (Fig. 5G),
316 there was not enough information to build the model because this behaviour was
317 only observed under warming and hypercapnic conditions.

318 Regarding *A. regius*, swimming (Fig. 5B) was significantly affected by temperature
319 ($\beta=8.750$, $\text{SE}=1.817$, $p=0.001$) and $p\text{CO}_2$ ($\beta=-10.917$, $\text{SE}=1.817$, $p=0.000$), but no
320 significant interaction was found between factors ($p=0.627$). Warmer temperature
321 significantly increased the time larvae spent swimming from 40.1 ± 5.6 to 49.7 ± 4.4
322 sec under normocapnia, and from 30.1 ± 5.8 to 37.9 ± 5.1 sec under hypercapnia. In
323 contrast, swimming duration significantly decreased with $p\text{CO}_2$, from 40.1 ± 5.6 to
324 30.1 ± 5.8 sec at normal temperature, and from 49.7 ± 4.4 to 37.9 ± 5.1 sec at the
325 warming condition. The attack (Fig. 5D) and capture rates (Fig. 5F) were only

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326 significantly affected by $p\text{CO}_2$ ($\beta=-0.367$, $\text{SE}=0.146$, $p=0.012$ and $\beta=-0.693$,
327 $\text{SE}=0.158$, $p<0.001$, respectively). Neither the effect of temperature ($p=0.250$) nor
328 the interaction ($p=0.459$) was significant. Attack rates decreased significantly with
329 $p\text{CO}_2$ from 5.3 ± 2.7 to $1.6\pm 0.9\%$ at control temperature, and from 7.6 ± 2.1 to
330 $5.3\pm 2.0\%$ at warming. The capture success also decreased significantly with
331 acidification from 4.8 ± 2.7 to $2.1\pm 0.8\%$ under present-day temperature, and from
332 5.2 ± 2.4 to $2.9\pm 1.4\%$ under warming. No spin behaviour was observed for this
333 species (Fig. 5H).

334 335 **Discussion**

336
337 In the present study, we showed that early life stages of *S. aurata* and *A. regius*
338 were quite sensitive to future ocean conditions. Both warming and acidification
339 significantly lowered the hatching and survival rates of both species. In
340 comparison to the present day scenario, the survival of 15 dph seabream and 10
341 dph meagre decreased by half under future warming and acidified conditions. The
342 standard length of newly-hatched larvae was not significantly affected, but
343 hypercapnia had a significant effect on larval growth. However, while the SLG of *S.*
344 *aurata* showed a 24.8-36.4% decrease under hypercapnic conditions, a slight
345 increase (3.2-12.9%) was observed in *A. regius*. The former results may suggest a
346 weak control and maintenance of internal pH on *S. aurata* and a consequent
347 decrease in protein biosynthesis (Langenbuch and Pörtner 2003). In this species,
348 the energy budget may have been allocated away from non-essential processes,
349 such as growth, towards maintenance (Pörtner and Peck 2010). The present
350 difference observed between species reinforces the absence of consensus among
351 studies on the effect of ocean acidification on the size and growth of marine fish
352 larvae. While some studies have reported decreased size and growth under high
353 $p\text{CO}_2$ levels (Baumann et al. 2012; Frommel et al. 2014; Pimentel et al. 2014),
354 others indicate that larvae may grow equally well or even faster under high $p\text{CO}_2$
355 conditions (Hurst et al. 2013; Hurst et al. 2012; Schade et al. 2014). If the impact on
356 growth is truly species-specific, then ocean acidification and warming may have a
357 complex impact on the dynamics of marine food webs, since larval growth and
358 body size can mediate susceptibility to predation mortality (Anderson 1988).

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359 Nonetheless, we can also argue that such contradictory findings may be the result
360 of experiments being carried out at temperatures with unclear positioning on
361 thermal performance curves, or possibly due to experimental rearing artefacts (e.g.
362 different feeding regimes). It is worth noting that our findings on survival and
363 growth under present-day conditions were quite similar to those found in the
364 literature for these species under intensive rearing conditions (Papandroulakis et
365 al. 2000; Roo et al. 2010).

366 Ocean warming and acidification also had a significant effect on the incidence of
367 malformations, with the exception of abdominal malformations. At present-day
368 conditions, the formation pattern of the axial skeleton elements in *S. aurata* was
369 similar to that reported for other teleost larvae (Sfakianakis et al. 2004). Under the
370 combined effect of hypercapnia and warming, the incidence of malformations
371 greatly increased. The incidence of total malformations was more than 3 times
372 higher under future warming and acidified conditions than when compared to
373 present-day conditions. Cranium malformations also increased significantly with
374 ocean acidification. Under the future scenario, the occurrence of this malformation
375 was 31.7 percentage points higher than in present-day conditions. Although there
376 was not enough information to build a model for caudal axial deviations, it has to
377 be noticed that almost 30% of the fish presented this malformation when exposed
378 to the combined effect of warming and acidification. Other studies also found
379 greater incidence of abnormal development in fish larvae under elevated
380 temperature and/or $p\text{CO}_2$ (Baumann et al. 2012; Pimentel et al. 2014; Ahnelt et al.
381 2015). During early development, axial deviations may result from defective
382 development of the notochord and perinotochordal connective sheet (Sanatamaría
383 et al. 2005), which can in turn lead to further skeletal malformations in the
384 vertebral column such as lordosis, scoliosis and kyphosis. We argue that such
385 malformations may affect the larval capacity to maintain the position in the water
386 column, and further compromise their swimming, foraging and predator avoidance
387 (Powell et al. 2009).

388 In the present study, larval behaviour was affected by future ocean conditions.
389 Temperature increased the time *A. regius* larvae spent swimming, but did not affect
390 *S. aurata* swimming. In contrast, hypercapnia decreased the time spent swimming
391 in both species. Interestingly, *S. aurata* larvae showed an erratic “spin” movement

392 only at higher temperatures and $p\text{CO}_2$ levels. Even though some previous studies
393 have found no effect of ocean acidification on fish swimming behaviour (e.g.
394 Maneja et al. 2013a), others have reported significant changes in this behaviour
395 under such environmental conditions (e.g. Dixon et al. 2010; Munday et al. 2010).
396 Reduced swimming skills and the occurrence of erratic movements by the larvae in
397 the wild may potentially affect their vulnerability to predation. Moreover,
398 hypercapnia also decreased the attack and capture rates of prey. The lower
399 capture success of prey will most certainly impact their growth and development,
400 and further affect larval performance, survival and recruitment rates (Stanley
401 2009). It is however important to keep in mind that some bias may potentially
402 arise from the effects that ocean changes might have on live prey and larvae-prey
403 interaction, which directly affects food availability and fish larval behaviour.
404 In conclusion, the biological responses of *S. aurata* and *A. regius* larvae presented
405 in the present study provide an insight of how future warming and acidification
406 may impact the development of wild fish larvae and their fitness in a changing
407 ocean. However, results should be carefully interpreted, given the reduced genetic
408 variability that may arise from a limited number of spawners. Moreover, given the
409 time frame in which ocean warming and acidification are expected to occur, it is
410 important not to forget that there will be an opportunity for acclimatization and
411 adaptation. Although the mechanisms for adaptation remain poorly known, some
412 studies have already shown that parental (transgenerational) acclimation can
413 modify the response of fish larvae to climate change conditions (e.g. Schade et al.
414 2014; Welch et al. 2014). It is therefore expected that such processes can moderate
415 the negative impacts of future ocean conditions on *S. aurata* and *A. regius* larvae.
416 Future efforts should focus on how these environmental factors may affect
417 commercially important fish species at higher levels of organization (e.g. at a
418 population-level) in a way to help managers and policy-makers to take proactive
419 measures.

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425 **Author contributions**

426 R.R. and M.S.P. designed the experiment; M.S.P. and G.D. performed the
427 experiments; M.S.P., F.F., T.M., R.B., G.D., J.M., P.P.F. and R.R. analysed the data;
428 M.S.P., F.F., T.M., R.B., G.D., A.M.F., J.M., M.P., H.P., E.J.G. and R.R. wrote the main
429 paper. All authors discussed the results and their implications, and commented on
430 the manuscript at all stages.

431

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Figure 1

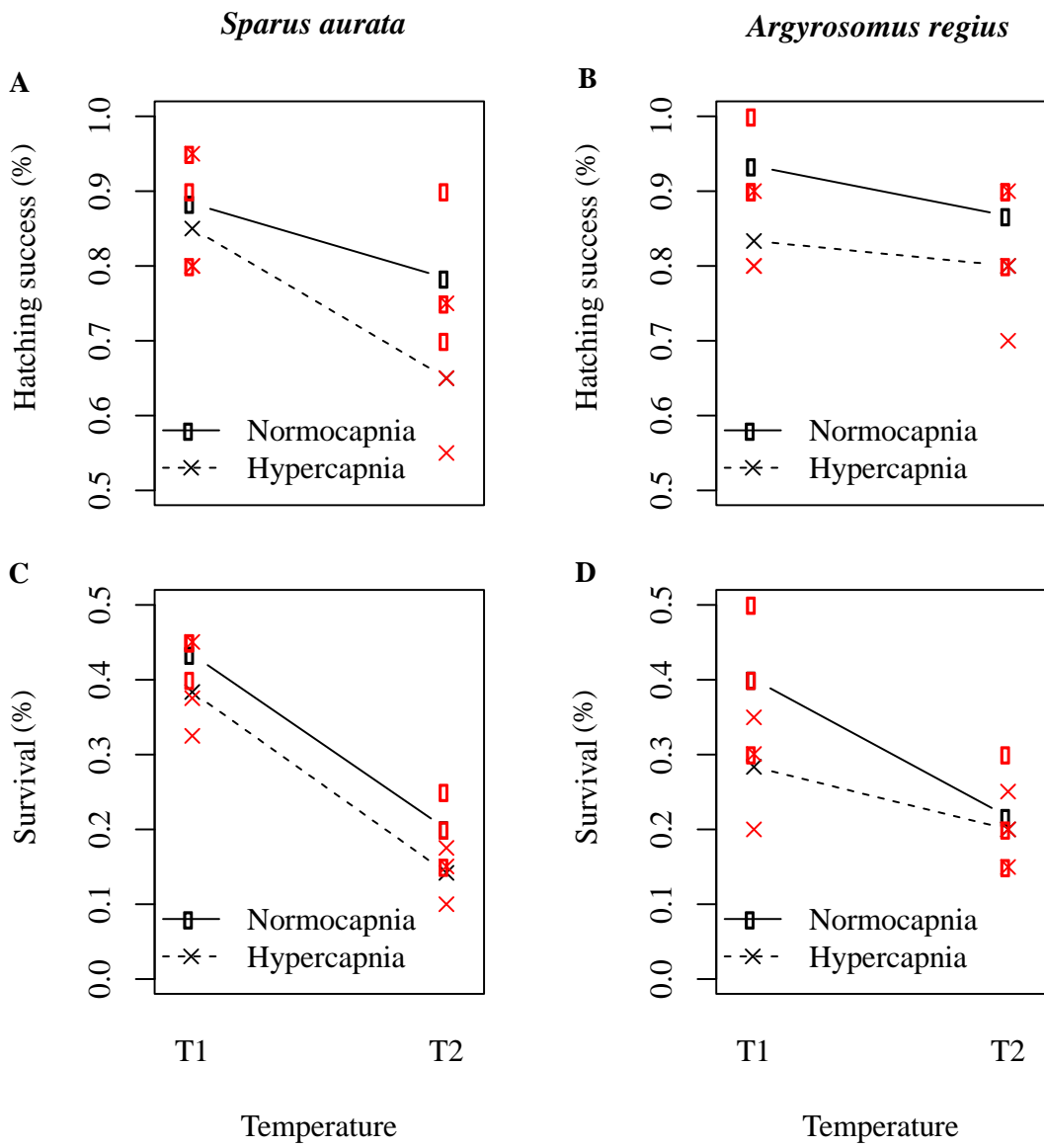


Figure 2

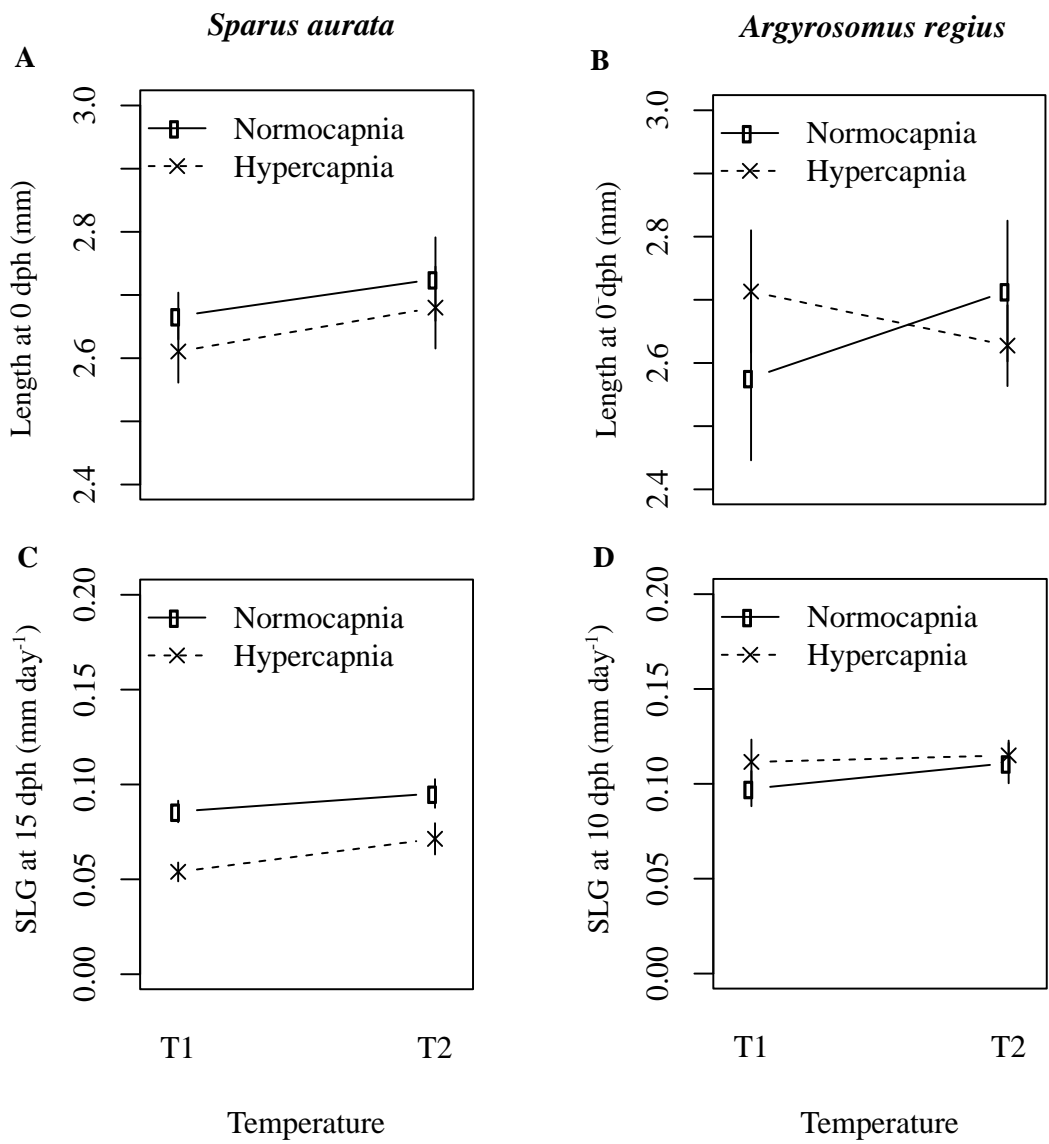


Figure 3

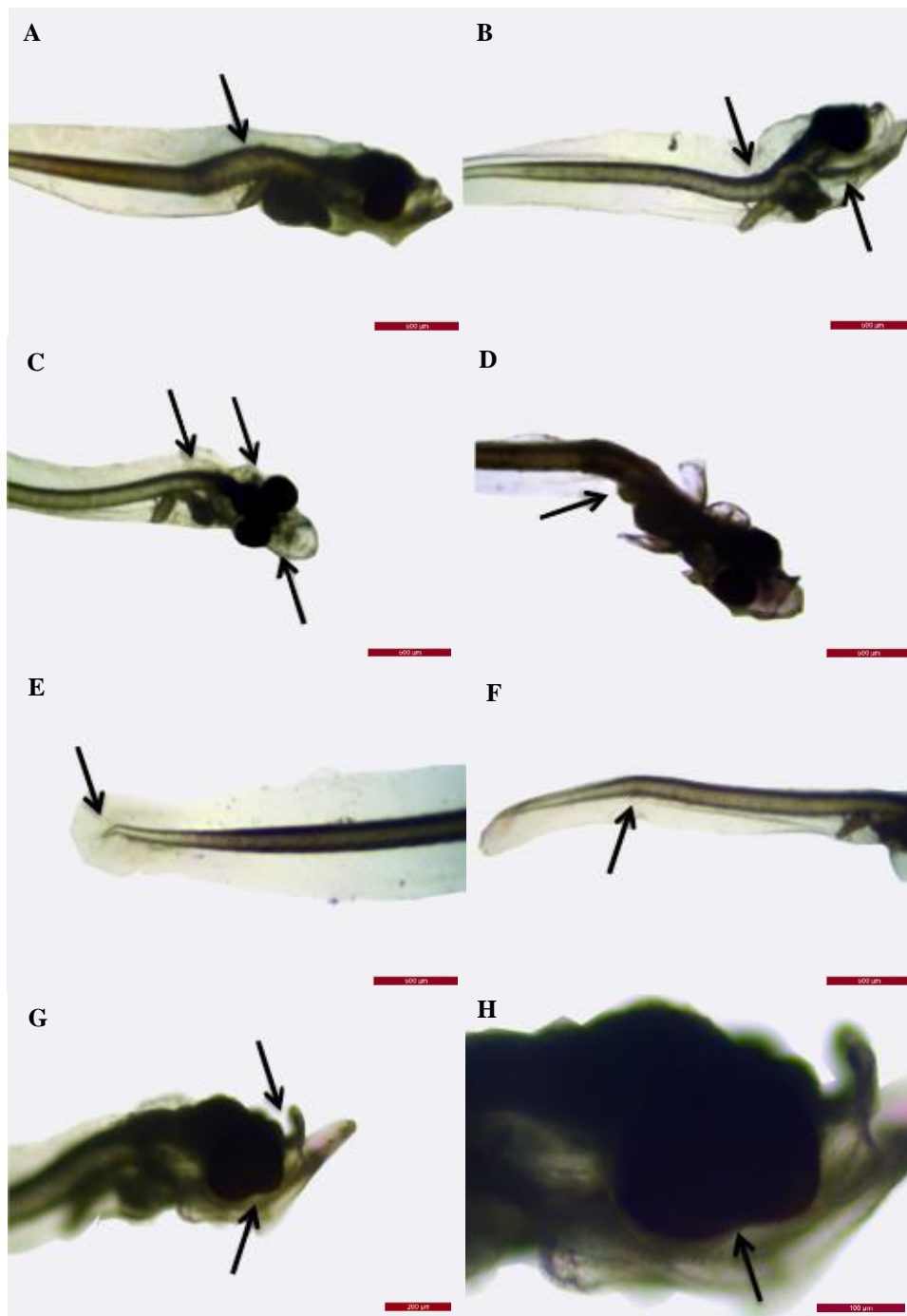


Figure 4

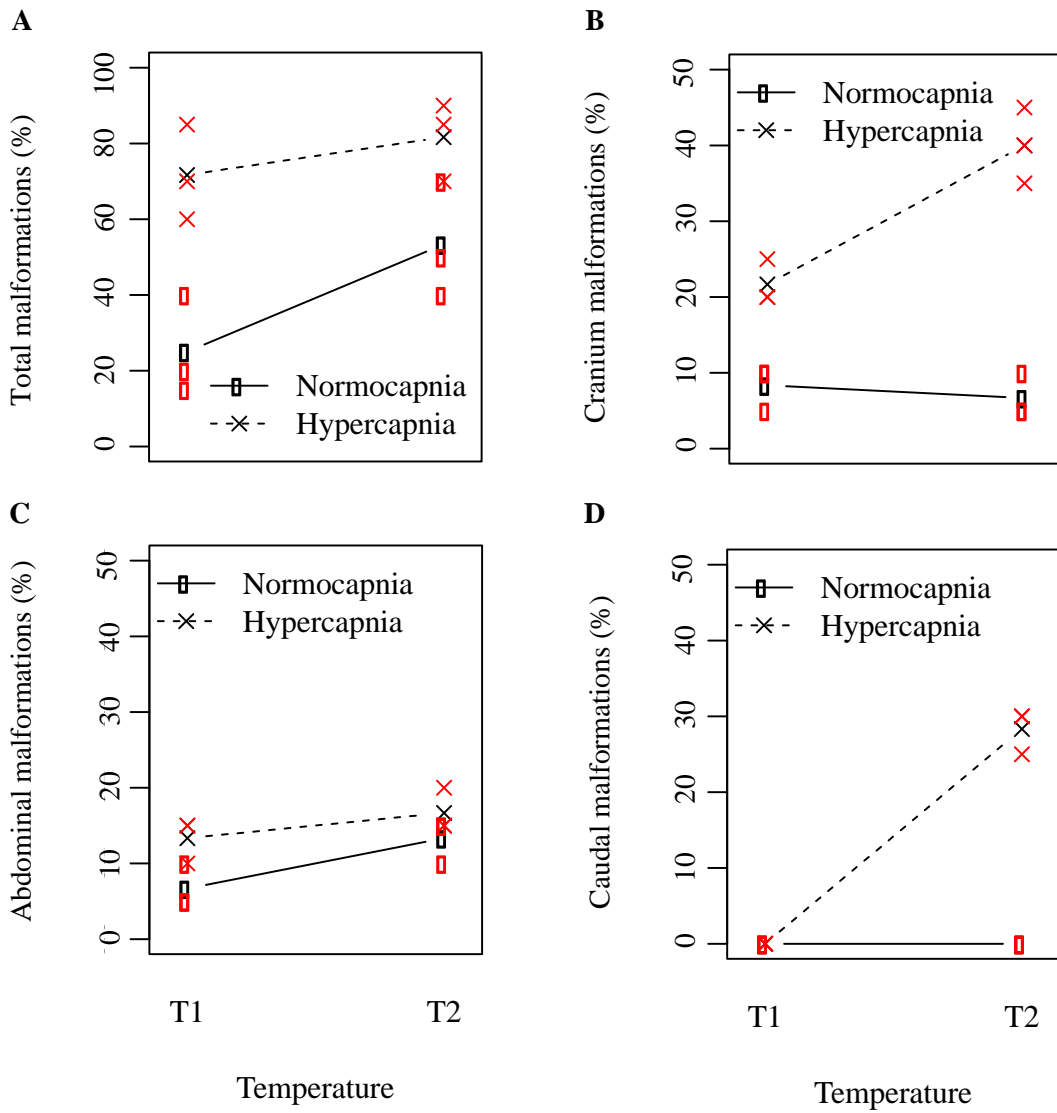
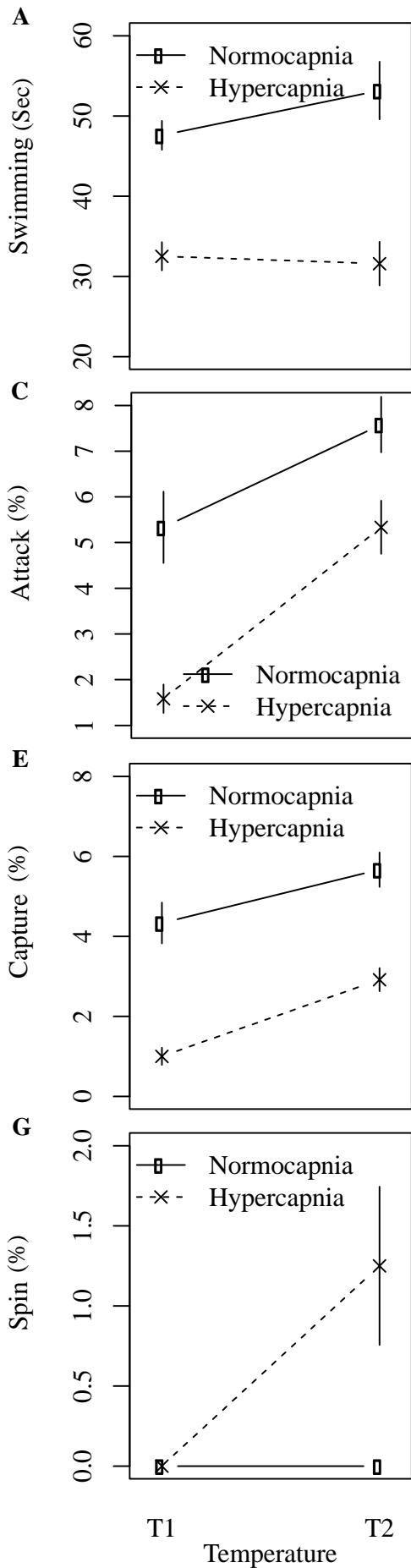


Figure 5

Sparus aurata



Argyrosomus regius

