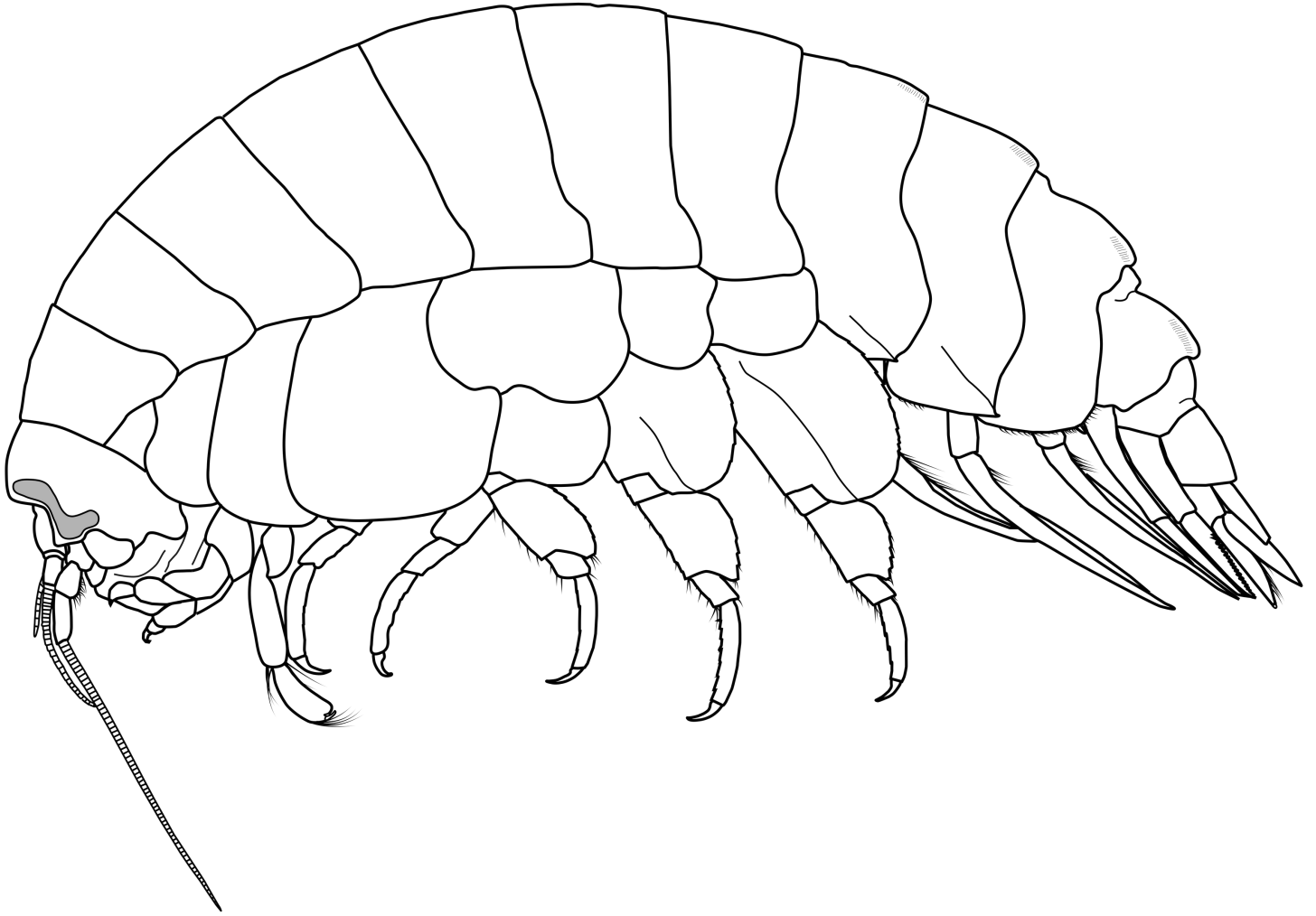


Eurythenes plasticus

The Plastic Amphipod



Far below the ocean's surface lives a tiny crustacean called *Eurythenes plasticus*. She looks a bit like a shrimp, with a curved body, long antennae, and lots of little swimming legs. Scientists discovered her more than 6,500 meters (that's over 21,000 feet!) down in the Mariana Trench—one of the deepest places on Earth.

Why the name "plasticus"?

When scientists first studied her, they found something surprising inside her body—tiny bits of plastic, called microplastics. These pieces came from pollution that had sunk all the way to the bottom of the ocean! Because of this discovery, she was named *Eurythenes plasticus* to remind us how far human pollution can travel.

Why she matters:

Eurythenes plasticus helps scientists learn how life survives in the cold, dark deep sea and how pollution affects even the most remote habitats on our planet. By studying her, we learn how to better protect the ocean for all creatures.

Drawing by Johanna Weston and from the paper:
Weston et al. (2020) Zootaxa doi: 10.11646/zootaxa.4748.1.9

Draw Your New Species!

Scientists discover new ocean species all the time — even today!

Some live in glowing coral gardens, others crawl across the darkest seafloor.

When scientists found *Eurythenes plasticus*, they named her to remind the world how deep pollution can reach.

Now it's your turn to be a deep-sea explorer!

Imagine:

You've just sent a robot to the bottom of the ocean.

On the camera, you see a creature no one has ever seen before.

1

What is the name of your discovery?

3

What does your species eat?

2

Where does this animal live?

4

How does it help the ecosystem?

Thank you for your discovery. Every new species named by scientists adds to our understanding of Earth's incredible biodiversity and helps protect it!