

1st Hour

Then I knew. This was not the end of life. There could never be an end to life.

2nd Hour

Within this body, within these rotting tissues that are rocking gently in the sea, is the source of ten million-million lives.

3rd Hour

A rapid colonization by various microorganisms and bacteria starts. They enter the exposed tissues, eyes, these cavities.

4-6th Hour

There is a continued increase of bacterial biomass, an abundance. Several species of crustaceans, particularly large mobile amphipods¹ colonise this body and start feeding on the soft tissue. They enter the abdominal cavity and their activities regularly lift and move the entire torso.

6-24th Hour

More amphipod species² colonise the scene. Fish, such as herring³ and a lone pike⁴ are often seen swimming over or resting nearby, but they show little direct interest. This is the first day.

The 2nd day

The muscle tissue starts to soften by bacterial degradation, which makes it easier for amphipods to feed. Decapod crustaceans, such as pink horseshrimp⁵, Baltic prawn⁶ and rockpool shrimp⁷ make an entrance. The first hungry fish, a roach⁸ is followed by a perch⁹. Sculpins [e.g. four-horned sculpin¹⁰] start feeding on the legs.

3-7 days

The large Baltic isopod¹¹ start finding me in increasing numbers and rip the gluteal muscles to shreds. This facilitates continued and intensified feeding by amphipods, decapod shrimps and fish. The carcass moves by approximately 2 meters to a location 90 degrees from its original site.

7-31 days

Worms, such as the ragworm¹², start feeding on the increasingly dissolving tissue. They feed all over the carcass, and enter the body cavity to remove tissue, and open up areas from the inside, and also graze the face. A coelacanth¹³ swims by and an axolotl¹⁴ quietly slips over the remains.

The following 6 months

It's a feast. Degradation flourishes and continues with increasing numbers of all the fauna described above. Depending on exposure to waves and abrasion, the time to complete degradation can take several months to a year[s]. In reality, a body would first sink and then start floating after body cavities expand due to bacteria-induced gas formation, and then sink again.

1 [Gammarus salinus]

2 [Gammarus oceanicus, Gammarus salinus, Gammarus tigrinus]

3 [Clupea harengus membras]

4 [Esox lucius]

5 [Crangon crangon]

6 [Palaemon adspersus]

7 [Palaemon elegans]

8 [Rutilus rutilus]

9 [Perca fluviatilis]

10 [Myoxocephalus quadricornis]

11 [Saduria entomon]

12 [Hediste diversicolor]

13 [Latimeria chalumnae]

14 [Ambystoma mexicanum]