

Metal to phosphorus stoichiometries for freshwater phytoplankton in three remote lakes

Aine M Gormley-Gallagher ^{Corresp. 1}, Richard W Douglas ², Brian Rippey ³

¹ School of Environmental Sciences, University of Ulster, Coleraine, United Kingdom

² School of Geography & Environmental Sciences, University of Ulster, Coleraine, United Kingdom

³ School of Geography and Environmental Sciences, Ulster University, Coleraine, United Kingdom

Corresponding Author: Aine M Gormley-Gallagher

Email address: a.m.gormley-gallagher@rug.nl

Simultaneous measurements of changes in phytoplankton biomass and the metal and phosphorus (P) content of cells have been captured to attest metal to P stoichiometries for freshwater phytoplankton. Three Scottish lakes that have received high, medium or low metal contamination from the atmosphere were selected for study. Phytoplankton cells were collected and Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry was used to measure their lead (Pb), cadmium (Cd), mercury (Hg), copper (Cu), zinc (Zn), nickel (Ni), chromium (Cr), manganese (Mn), cobalt (Co) and P content. Increased phytoplankton growth in the lakes resulted in significant algae growth dilution of the mass-specific Pb, Cd, Hg, Cu, Ni and Cr in the phytoplankton. Changes in the phytoplankton cell count and their Hg, Pb, Cd, Cu, Mn, Co, Ni and Cr concentrations showed the process of algae bloom dilution to be subject to exponential decay, which accelerated in the order of Mn < Cu < Ni < Pb and Cd < Cr and Hg < Co. This indicated a metabolic and detoxification mechanism was involved in the active selection of metals. For the first time simultaneous measurements of metals and P stoichiometry in freshwater phytoplankton are reported. The mean metal to P stoichiometry generated was $(C_{106}P_1N_{16})_{1000}Pb_{0.019}Hg_{0.00004}Cu_{0.013}Cd_{0.005}Cr_{0.2}Co_{0.0008}Mn_{0.2}Ni_{0.012}$ based on field measurements and the Redfield average C, N and P stoichiometry of $(CH_2O)_{106}(NH_3)_{16}H_3PO_4$.

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2 **three remote lakes**

3 Aine M. Gormley-Gallagher², Richard W. Douglas and Brian Rippey

4 School of Geography and Environmental Sciences, Ulster University, Coleraine, Northern Ireland, BT52 1SA.

5 ²Corresponding author current address: University College Groningen, University of Groningen, 9712 CP
6 Groningen, Netherlands.

7
8 **Abstract**

9 Simultaneous measurements of changes in phytoplankton biomass and the metal and phosphorus
10 (P) content of cells have been captured to attest metal to P stoichiometries for freshwater
11 phytoplankton. Three Scottish lakes that have received high, medium or low metal contamination
12 from the atmosphere were selected for study. Phytoplankton cells were collected and Inductively
13 Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry was used to measure their lead (Pb), cadmium (Cd),
14 mercury (Hg), copper (Cu), zinc (Zn), nickel (Ni), chromium (Cr), manganese (Mn), cobalt (Co)
15 and P content. Increased phytoplankton growth in the lakes resulted in significant algae growth
16 dilution of the mass-specific Pb, Cd, Hg, Cu, Ni and Cr in the phytoplankton. Changes in the
17 phytoplankton cell count and their Hg, Pb, Cd, Cu, Mn, Co, Ni and Cr concentrations showed the
18 process of algae bloom dilution to be subject to exponential decay, which accelerated in the order
19 of Mn < Cu < Ni < Pb and Cd < Cr and Hg < Co. This indicated a metabolic and detoxification
20 mechanism was involved in the active selection of metals. For the first time simultaneous
21 measurements of metals and P stoichiometry in freshwater phytoplankton are reported. The mean
22 metal to P stoichiometry generated was $(C_{106}P_1N_{16})_{1000}Pb_{0.019}Hg_{0.00004}Cu_{0.013}Cd_{0.005}Cr_{0.2}Co_{0.0008}$

- 23 $\text{Mn}_{0.2}\text{Ni}_{0.012}$ based on field measurements and the Redfield average C, N and P stoichiometry of
- 24 $(\text{CH}_2\text{O})_{106}(\text{NH}_3)_{16}\text{H}_3\text{PO}_4$.

26 Introduction

27 Phytoplankton cells are typically composed of carbon (C), nitrogen (N) and phosphorus
28 (P) and have a commonly accepted average stoichiometry of $(\text{CH}_2\text{O})_{106}(\text{NH}_3)_{16}\text{H}_3\text{PO}_4$ (Redfield
29 et al., 1963; Sanudo-Wilhelmy et al., 2004). Phytoplankton can exploit iron (Fe), manganese
30 (Mn), zinc (Zn), copper (Cu) and nickel (Ni) for N acquisition, oxygen cycling, chlorophyll
31 synthesis, and sulfate reduction (Moffett et al., 1997; Twining et al., 2004). These nutrient metals
32 can be replaced at their metabolic site by micronutrient metals such as cadmium (Cd), mercury
33 (Hg), lead (Pb) and chromium (Cr) (Bruland et al., 1978; Sunda and Huntsman, 1998).

34 The cells can accumulate metals because they have a large surface area that has
35 hydrophilic groups or hydroxy complexes with O-containing donor groups (-COH; -COOH; -
36 $\text{P}(\text{O})(\text{OH})_2$), which bind to ambient metal cations (Vasconcelos et al., 2002). These sites on the
37 cell surface are ligands from which metals can either dissociate back into solution or travel into
38 the cytoplasm (Sunda and Huntsman, 1998). This has been reported as a dominant process of
39 trace metal removal from solution (Whitfield, 2001; Lohan et al., 2005). Alternatively, cellular
40 metal uptake may also occur through transport proteins or porins that are embedded in the outer
41 membrane and allow for non-selective passive diffusion of metal ions across the outer membrane
42 (Ma et al., 2009).

43 Due to the realisation of the proclivity of metals to bind non-specifically to cell surfaces,
44 studies have extended the concept of Redfield et al.'s nutrient stoichiometry to include metals.
45 Ho et al. (2003) calculated a mean stoichiometry (mol:mol) of
46 $(\text{C}_{124}\text{N}_{16}\text{P}_1\text{S}_{1.3}\text{K}_{1.7}\text{Mg}_{0.56}\text{Ca}_{0.5})_{1000}\text{Sr}_{5.0}\text{Fe}_{7.5}\text{Zn}_{0.80}\text{Cu}_{0.38}\text{Co}_{0.19}\text{Cd}_{0.21}\text{Mo}_{0.03}^*$, while Twining et al.
47 (2004) found $(\text{C}_{72}\text{P}_1\text{S}_{0.70})_{1000}\text{Zn}_{5.4}\text{Fe}_{1.8}\text{Ni}_{0.61}\text{Mn}_{0.26}$ for marine phytoplankton. Research has
48 identified the risk posed to ecosystems and humans via toxic metal accumulation by

* Sulphur (S), potassium (K), magnesium (Mg), calcium (Ca), strontium (Sr), cobalt (Co), molybdenum (Mo).

49 phytoplankton with consequential transfer through the aquatic food chain (UNECE, 1998; Chen
50 el al., 2000; Schultz and Seaward, 2000). As a result, the United Nations Economic Commission
51 for Europe adopted the Heavy Metals Protocol to encourage modelling, research and descriptions
52 of metal pathways (UNECE, 1998). Yet simultaneous measurements of metal to nutrient
53 stoichiometry in freshwater phytoplankton have only been estimated (Wang and Dei, 2006).

54 When Reynolds and Hamilton-Taylor (1992) calculated stoichiometries of $C_{106}P_1Zn_{0.034}$
55 for Lake Windermere, United Kingdom (UK), they estimated P based on regressions of
56 dissolved P concentrations and the C: Si atomic ratio of 1:0.40 in phytoplankton cells. Likewise,
57 Sigg (1985, 1987) presented mean stoichiometries of $C_{113}P_1Zn_{0.06}Cu_{0.008}$ and
58 $(CH_2O)_{106}(NH_3)_{16}H_3PO_4Cu_{0.0006}Zn_{0.03}$ for the phytoplankton of Lake Constance and Lake Zurich
59 (Switzerland) respectively. However, the mean surface areas of the algae cells were estimated
60 from correlation of the organic material content of the settling particles using typical cell
61 dimensions of diatoms. Sigg therefore acknowledged that the stoichiometries are approximations
62 that could vary if different algal species were taken into account.

63 Another mechanism (in addition to the influence of surface communities) that has been
64 proposed to explain variations in metal to nutrient stoichiometries in phytoplankton is algae
65 bloom density dilution. If phytoplankton share a finite pool of metals and have a constant uptake,
66 enhanced lake productivity reduces metal concentrations per unit mass of phytoplankton (Chen
67 and Folt, 2005). Additionally, if the trace element to macronutrient (i.e. phosphorus or carbon)
68 ratios is a balance of net steady-state uptake and growth rates (Sunda and Huntsman, 1997, 2004)
69 – growth rates will increase as nutrients become more available, inducing a decline in cellular
70 element to nutrient ratios. This suggests that, because P is a limiting nutrient for phytoplankton
71 growth, increased cellular P would correlate with a decline in cellular metal concentrations.

72 Recommendations have been made that metal to P stoichiometries be incorporated into
73 Biotic Ligand Models (BLM) (De Schamphelaere et al., 2005). When BLM were first
74 developed, they provided a way to predict the ambient metal concentration that will have an
75 effect (e.g. lethality) on organisms (e.g. fish), and emphasised the importance of including
76 biological ligand concentration (e.g. physiologically active sites at the gills of fish) for that
77 prediction (Di Toro et al., 2002). The models assumed a fixed rate of metal uptake occurred
78 according to ambient concentrations, thus they were extended to include ambient water
79 chemistry (Paquin et al., 2002). De Schamphelaere et al. (2005) then showed that cellular metal
80 concentrations were better than ambient metal concentrations for predicting the threat of toxicity
81 to freshwater phytoplankton. They stressed that cell surfaces should be used as the ligand for
82 metals in the same way as fish gills apply to the BLM for predicting metal toxicity to fish
83 species. Wang and Dei (2006) then showed that the metal to nutrient stoichiometry in
84 phytoplankton cells better predicts metal toxicity than cellular metal burden. Determining what
85 biogeochemical characteristics influence toxic metal uptake and accumulation in the aquatic food
86 chain is important for identifying communities and species at risk of adverse impacts from metal
87 contamination – and for developing management strategies to mitigate this risk (Ward et al.,
88 2010).

89 The need for a simultaneous measurement of metal to nutrient (in this case P)
90 stoichiometry in freshwater phytoplankton will be addressed in this contribution. Our underlying
91 hypothesis is that cellular metal to P ratios decline as P becomes more available – and thus the
92 dilution of metals in freshwater phytoplankton is a function of increased phytoplankton growth.

93

94 **Site descriptions**

95 Investigations were undertaken in three UK lakes that have received varying degrees of
96 metal contamination from the atmosphere (Rippey and Douglas, 2004). One lake was selected in
97 each of the high, medium and low metal contaminated regions (Figure 1). The three lakes receive
98 metal contamination solely from atmospheric deposition – and thus metal contamination from
99 runoff or direct discharges would not influence our results (Murray, 1987; Rippey and Douglas,
100 2004). Additionally, the size and bathymetry of the lakes meant that regular sediment
101 resuspension events (and by association high suspended particulate matter) would be unlikely to
102 influence our investigation outcome (Hilton, 1985; Douglas and Rippey, 2000; Douglas et al.,
103 2003; Gormley-Gallagher et al., 2015).

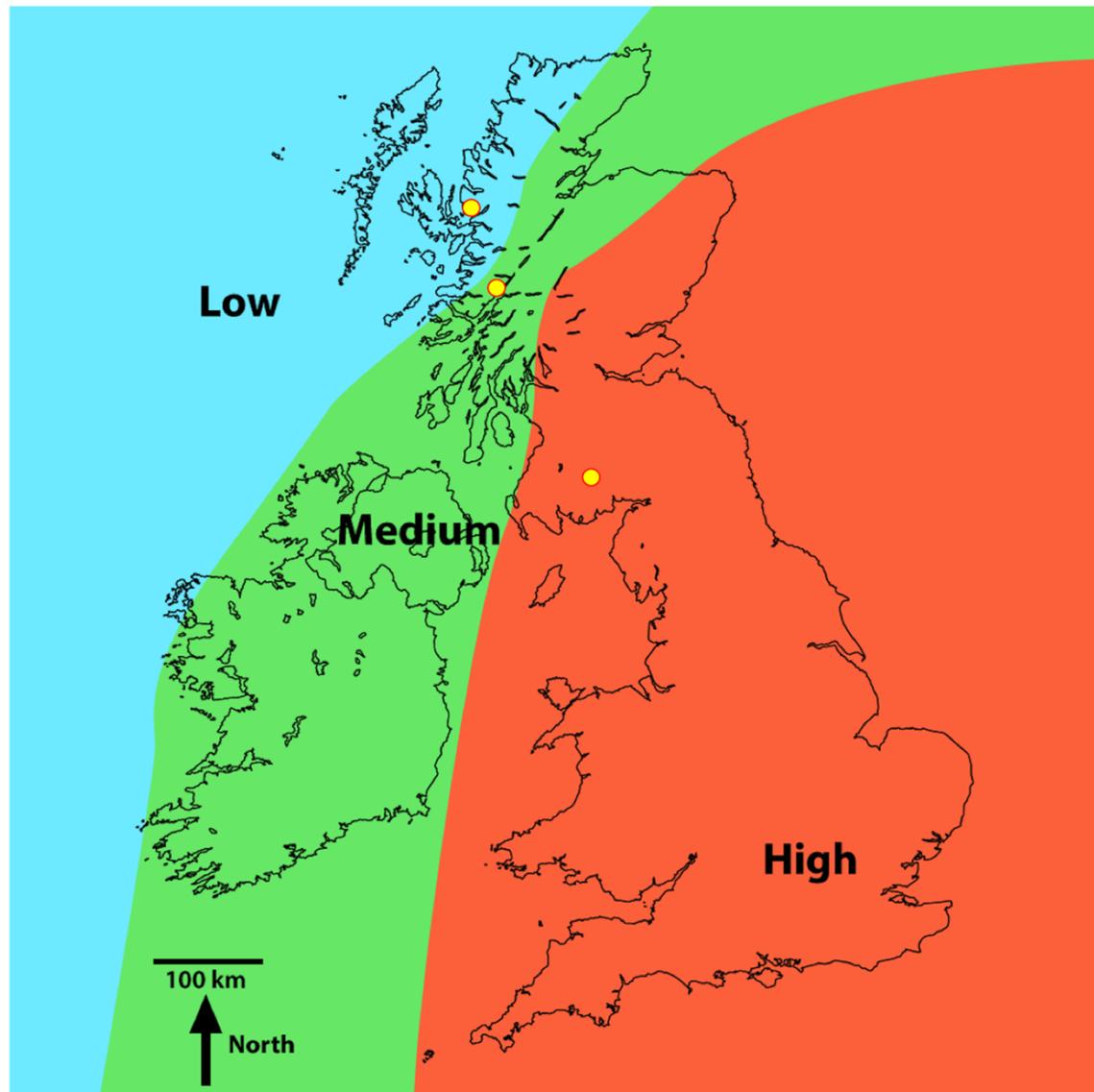
104 In the following site descriptions, lake surface area, perimeter, altitude, grid reference,
105 catchment area, maximum basin relief, and distance from the sea and to the nearest village were
106 calculated and/or obtained using the OS Landranger® Memory-Map™ V5 edition (2006) for
107 northern and southern Scotland (Licence number PU 100034184). The maximum lake depths
108 were based on collected field data, while catchment geology, vegetation and soil type were
109 derived from Patrick et al. (1991, 1995).

110 Loch Coire nan Arr has a surface area of 13.21 ha, a maximum lake depth of 11 m and a
111 catchment area of 8.45 km² (Table 1). It is the most northerly of the three sites and lies in the
112 region of low metal contamination from the atmosphere (Figure 1). Permission for sampling the
113 site was obtained from The Applecross Trust, a conservation charity responsible for the
114 management of the lake (contact: admin@applecross.org.uk).

115 Loch Doilet has a surface are of 51.55 ha, a maximum lake depth of 16 m and a
116 catchment area of 33.51 km² (Table 1). The lake, lying northwest of the Ben Nevis Mountain
117 range, is the largest of the three lakes and has received moderate metal contamination from the

118 atmosphere (Figure 1). The catchment rises from the lake to a peak of approximately 720 m.
119 Permission for sampling the site was obtained from the Forestry Commission Scotland, a UK
120 non-ministerial government department responsible for the management of the lake (contact:
121 lochaber@forestry.gsi.gov.uk).

122 Loch Urr has a surface area of 47 ha with a maximum lake depth of 13 m (Table 1). It
123 lies in the Dumfries and Galloway region of south-west Scotland, an area that has received high
124 metal contamination from the atmosphere (Figure 1). The lake drains the smallest of the three
125 catchments with an area of 7.73 km². Permission for sampling the site was obtained from the Urr
126 District Salmon Fisheries Board (contact: mail@gallowayfisheriestrust.org).



127

128 **Figure 1.** Regions of high, medium and low Pb contamination of lake sediment due to
129 atmospheric deposition (from Rippey and Douglas, 2004). The yellow circles in in the low,
130 medium and high regions of contamination indicate the locations of Loch Coire nan Arr, Loch
131 Doilet and Loch Urr, respectively (Gormley-Gallagher et al., 2015).

132

133 **Table 1.** Summary of the site characteristics of Loch Coire nan Arr in northwestern Scotland,
134 Loch Doilet in western Scotland and Loch Urr in southern Scotland (Gormley-Gallagher, 2015).

	Loch Coire nan Arr	Loch Doilet	Loch Urr
Grid Reference	NG 808422	NM807677	NX759864
Surface area	13.21 ha	51.55 ha	47.0 ha
Perimeter	1.86 km	5.49 km	4.2 km
Maximum lake depth	11 m	16 m	13.2 m
Lake volume	$5.6 \times 10^5 \text{ m}^3$	$4.1 \times 10^6 \text{ m}^3$	$2.35 \times 10^6 \text{ m}^3$
Distance upstream from sea	2.03 km	6.2 km	22.7 km
Aerial distance from nearest village	8.91 km (Lochcarron)	8.84 km (Strontian)	6.6 km (Monaive)
Elevation/altitude	125 m	8 m	193 m
Catchment area	8.45 km ²	33.51 km ²	7.73 km ²
Catchment geology	Torridonian Sandstone	Schists and gneiss	Granite / gneiss
Catchment vegetation	Conifers < 1 %	Conifers – 50 %, moorland – 50 %	Moorland – 100 %
Catchment soils	Peat	Peats	Podsol, peaty gley blanket peat

135

136 **Sampling**

137 Sampling campaigns were conducted on ten occasions: early June, late June, July, August
138 and September 2006, and again in March, May, June, July and September 2007 at each of the
139 three lakes. Before fieldwork, all sample containers were prepared to reduce metal contamination
140 and prevent adsorption losses to the container walls (Yu et al., 2003).

141 During fieldwork, three lake water samples were collected from each lake. The first
142 sample was for the analysis of chlorophyll-*a*, total phosphorus (TP) and pH. The second was for
143 analysis of total metal concentrations. The third was for phytoplankton identification and
144 calculations of biomass. The water was taken from a central location (6 m) near the deepest point
145 of the lake using a Perspex Ruttner sampler, as recommended by Sykes et al. (1999).

146 Phytoplankton samples were also collected from the lakes on each of the sampling
147 occasions using the net haul method (Vollenweider, 1974). A 20 μm mesh net (30 cm wide) was
148 used (EB Nets, UK) to take 10 to 18 hauls (varying with lake productivity) to concentrate
149 phytoplankton. An adjustment was made to the standard nets to separate the zooplankton during
150 each haul using the approach set out by Ho et al. (2007). Two filters, one of 20 μm and one of

151 250 μm were stacked on top of each other with a 35 mm spacer such that water flowed first
152 through the 250 μm and then the 20 μm filter. The upper filter of mesh 250 μm was a sufficient
153 size to trap the zooplankton but allow the smaller phytoplankton to be trapped in the smaller 20
154 μm mesh. This method potentially introduces sources of error. Firstly, by excluding
155 bacterioplankton (free floating bacterial component of the plankton) and phytoplankton $<20 \mu\text{m}$
156 from the metals estimate, the relationships of phytoplankton metal concentrations and TP could
157 be affected. Secondly, possible clogging in the larger size fraction could lead to the selection of
158 smaller phytoplankton in the sample. However, when the two size fractions were microscopically
159 analysed, the zooplankton were not incorporated into the phytoplankton samples and
160 phytoplankton smaller than 250 μm were not observed in the larger fraction. This may be
161 attributed to the fact that zooplankton production and the concentration of suspended particulate
162 matter are generally low in the lakes (Monteith et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2014; Gormley-
163 Gallagher et al., 2015). The success of this method has also been demonstrated by Donald (2004)
164 and in the larger study from which this investigation stems (Gormley, 2008). Furthermore, given
165 the sampling difficulty in collecting sufficient uncontaminated biomass for metal analysis,
166 abating sample handling by separating the plankton assemblages in this manner in-situ was
167 deemed critical to minimise the possibility of metal contamination (Ho et al., 2007).

168 The water samples collected for phytoplankton identification and biomass calculations
169 were transferred on site from LDPE bottles to acid washed scintillation vials (25 ml) that were
170 pre-prepared with glutaraldehyde (Electron Microscopy grade, EMS, Pennsylvania, U.S.A) to
171 produce a final concentration of 2 % (v/v).

172 The net haul material was transferred to a total of 36 polyethylene acid cleaned sampling
173 vials (32 ml) at each site (AGB Scientific Ltd., UK). The vials used to store the net haul material

174 were also pre-prepared to achieve 2 % glutaraldehyde in the sample, except in this case, the
175 glutaraldehyde was passed through a Dowex 50-W X8-200 cation exchange resin (50X4-400; H-
176 form) to remove trace metals (Twining et al., 2004).

177

178 **Sample Analysis**

179 TP concentrations were measured spectrometrically after digestions at 882 nm (Murphy
180 and Riley, 1962; Eisenreich et al., 1975). Chlorophyll-*a* was extracted from the filtered samples
181 into 90 % V/V methanol, and the detection was performed with a spectrophotometer set at an
182 emission wavelength of 665 nm (Riemann, 1978). A Shimadzu UV-Mini 1240
183 Spectrophotometer was used for this at the Ulster University.

184 A Nikon-5400 inverted light microscope at 40 x was used to examine the phytoplankton
185 samples and identify the species present. For this, 10 ml of the lake water sample preserved in
186 glutaraldehyde was allowed to sediment in a settling chamber for no less than 8 hours. Blue-
187 green and green algae organisms were identified following the interactive keys produced by
188 Whitton et al. (2002, 2003). For those organisms that proved difficult to distinguish, a more
189 detailed text was consulted, i.e. John et al. (2002). The guidelines presented by Kelly (2000)
190 were followed to identify any cells representative of the Phylum Bacillariophyta and the Phylum
191 Fragilariophyceae (Diatoms).

192 During identification, the species/genre/groups were also counted and measured for
193 volume and surface area calculations following the procedures described by Olrik et al. (1998).
194 At least 10 length and width measurements were recorded for each species (wall to wall), and
195 when fewer than 10 cells were present, those present were measured. Cell counts were converted
196 to counts per volume of lake water. Cell volumes and surface areas were calculated using the

197 geometric equations of Hillebrand et al. (1999). The volume of colonial and filamentous cells
198 was calculated from the volume of a single cell multiplied by the number of cells in each
199 colony/filament. The surface area of cells per volume of lake water was then calculated
200 following the guidelines of Olrik et al. (1998).

201 Acid digestions were prepared using methods found in Reynolds and Hamilton-Taylor
202 (1992). To achieve blank concentrations, 2 x 32 ml vials of 2 % glutaraldehyde were prepared
203 prior to each fieldwork session and brought on fieldwork to ensure they had the same sample
204 exposure. On return to the laboratory, a stream of Milli-Q water was used to fill the vial as it was
205 passed through the same plankton net filter used to collect the samples.

206 The phytoplankton samples were made soluble (digested) by treatment with hydrofluoric,
207 nitric and perchloric acid, following the acid digestion technique provided in Bock (1979). An
208 empty beaker (a reagent blank), and two samples of certified reference material (CRM) were
209 included with every batch (between 20-30 samples). The CRM used for this study was Chinese
210 stream sediment (GBW 07301) issued under the laboratory of the Government Chemist (LGC)
211 trademark (LGC Promochem, UK). The digested samples were stored in acid cleaned 25 ml
212 scintillation vials until further analysis with Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry
213 (ICP-MS).

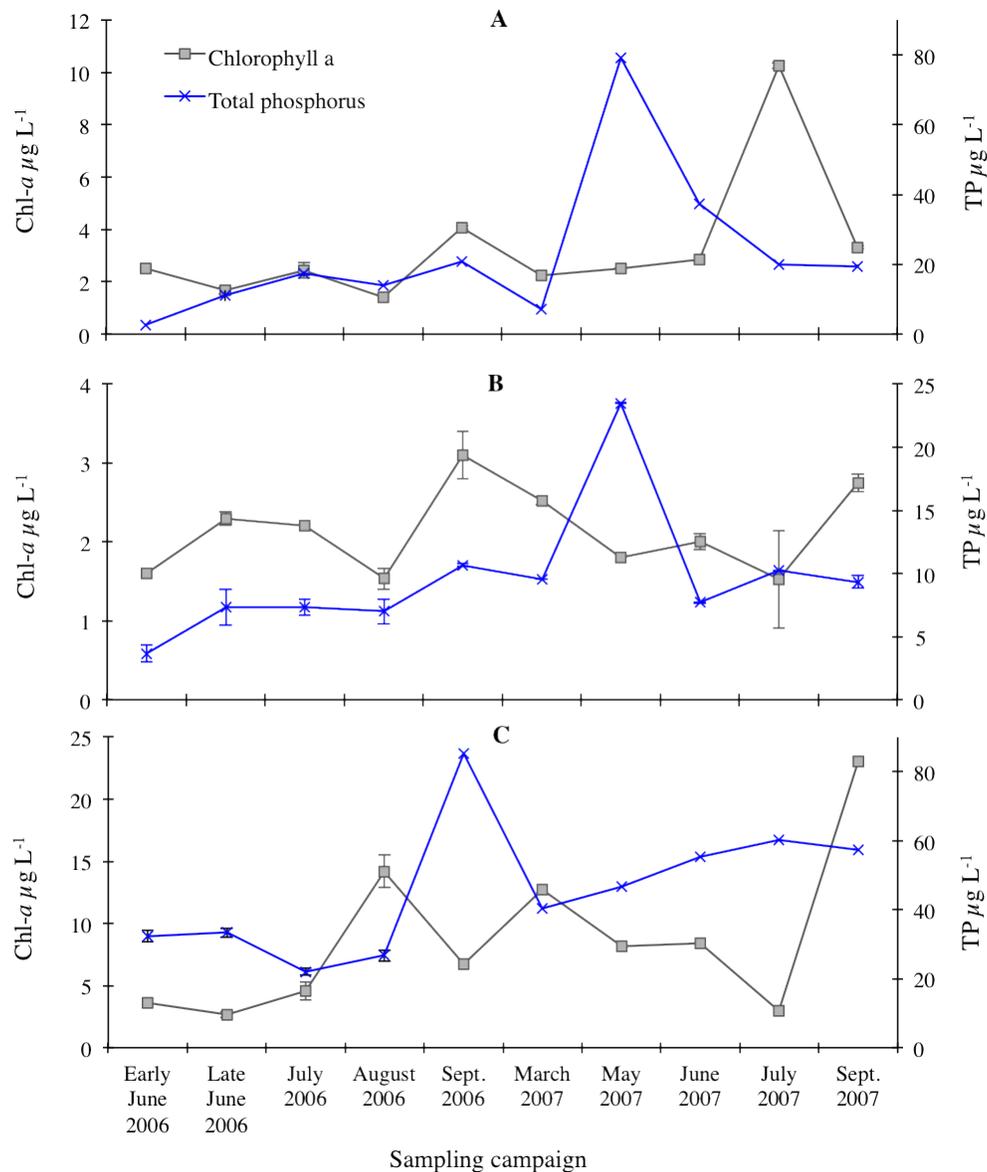
214 The XSeries¹ ICP-MS (ThermoFisher Scientific Cooperation) was used for the analysis of
215 metals and P in the samples (Table S1). All prepared standard solutions, samples and blanks
216 were acidified with 2 % (w/v) HNO₃ (BDH Aristar, AGB Scientific Ltd., UK). The precision of
217 every element was assessed from replicate and, when possible, triplicate analysis of reference
218 material and of samples collected in fieldwork. This was found to be 5% relative standard
219 deviation (RSD) or better, which is generally considered acceptable precision (Long et al., 1990).

220 Also, instrument stability was indicated in the RSD of triplicate ICP-MS measurements for all
221 analytes of less than 5% in all cases, and in many cases less than 2%.

222

223 **Results**

224 The measured concentrations of chlorophyll-*a* and TP and modelled chlorophyll-*a*
225 concentrations based on OEDC (1982) and Prairie et al. (1989) models for predicting
226 chlorophyll-*a* based on TP concentrations are presented in Figure 2. The peak of TP
227 concentrations was recorded in mid-May 2007 for Loch Doilet (23.5 $\mu\text{g/l}$) and Coire nan Arr
228 (79.3 $\mu\text{g/l}$), whereas the peak in Loch Urr (85.3 $\mu\text{g/l}$) occurred in late September 2006. The
229 chlorophyll-*a* trends in Figure 2 show a peak during August/September 2006 for Loch Doilet
230 (3.10 $\mu\text{g/l}$) and September 2007 for Loch Urr (23.0 $\mu\text{g/l}$), whereas the peak in Loch Coire nan
231 Arr was during the month of July 2007 (10.25 $\mu\text{g/l}$). The lowest chlorophyll-*a* concentrations
232 were 1.4, 1.5 and 2.7 $\mu\text{g/l}$ respectively for Loch Coire nan Arr, Loch Doilet and Loch Urr. In
233 many cases, Figure 2 shows that an increase in TP is followed by a rise in chlorophyll-*a* on the
234 subsequent sampling occasion, particularly in Loch Coire nan Arr and Loch Urr. Also, the
235 patterns of chlorophyll-*a* generally show similar timing in their fluctuations to that of the
236 predictions of chlorophyll-*a* concentrations, notably in Loch Doilet.



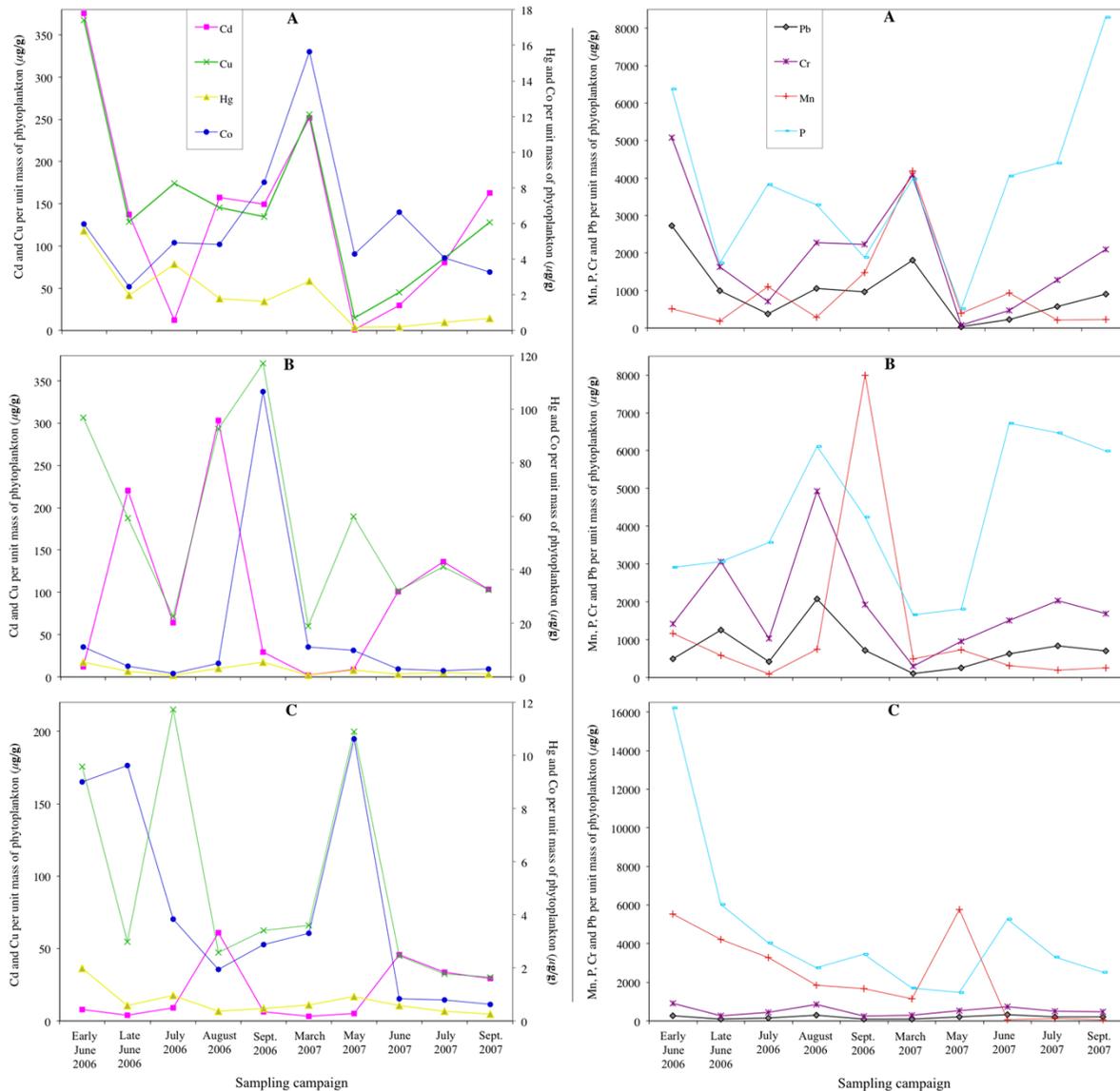
237

238 **Figure 2.** Chlorophyll-*a* (Chl-*a*) and total phosphorus (TP) concentrations measured in Loch
 239 Coire nan Arr (A), Loch Doilet (B), and Loch Urr (C). The series keys located in the top left of
 240 the diagram applies to each of the trend lines. Error bars are the standard error between the
 241 triplicate measurements of each result ($n=3$).

242

243 Figure 3 shows the concentrations of Pb, Hg, Cd, Cu, Cr, Co, Mn and P determined per
 244 unit mass of the phytoplankton cells in Loch Coire nan Arr (A), Loch Doilet (B) and Loch Urr

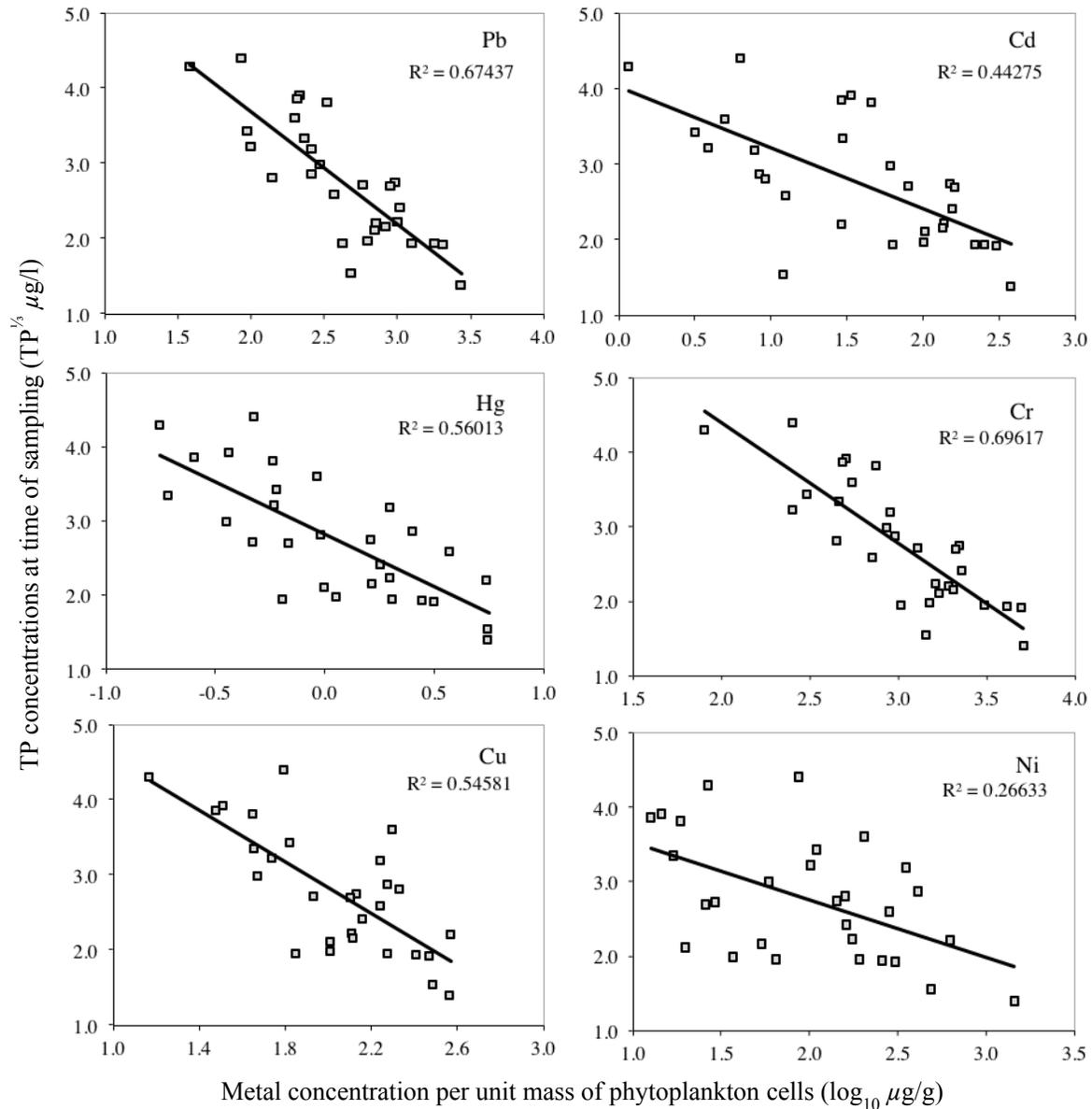
245 (C). The trend lines show high fluctuation across the sampling dates from early June 2006 to
 246 September 2007. In the majority of cases the phytoplankton of Loch Urr held the lowest
 247 concentrations of metals, but the highest concentration of P in the cells.



248
 249 **Figure 3.** Concentrations of Pb, Hg, Cd, Cu, Cr, Co, Mn and P determined per unit mass of the
 250 phytoplankton cells collected in Loch Coire nan Arr (A), Loch Doilet (B), and Loch Urr (C). All
 251 values are in μg of metal per g of phytoplankton. The series keys located in the A diagrams
 252 applies to A, B and C.

253

254 The concentration of Pb, Cd, Hg, Cr, Cu and Ni per unit mass of phytoplankton cells is
255 plotted against the TP concentrations of the three lakes on all sampling occasions in Figure 4
256 (n=29). The scatterplots show a linear relationship with negative slope between each of the two
257 sets of variables. This indicates that the lower the lake TP concentration, the higher the
258 concentration of metals per unit mass of phytoplankton. Before completing the regression
259 analysis in Figure 4, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk's tests on the normality of the
260 (raw) data showed the TP concentrations and the mass-specific metal concentration in the
261 phytoplankton to not be normally distributed ($p < 0.05$). However, using the log-transformed
262 metal concentrations and the cubic root of TP concentrations, the data showed normal
263 distribution ($p > 0.05$) in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk's tests.



264
265

266 **Figure 4.** Correlation between Pb, Cd, Hg, Cr, Cu and Ni concentrations per unit mass of
267 phytoplankton and TP concentrations. The data was collected from the samples of all three lakes
268 during each sampling occasion (n=29).

269

270

271

A bivariate correlation and regression analysis was carried out on the data in Figure 4
using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The correlation coefficient and *p*-values

272 of the tests confirms the patterns in the scatterplot that a significant negative relationship exists
 273 between TP and Pb ($r = -0.823, p = 0.00$), Hg ($r = -0.741, p = 0.01$), Cu ($r = -0.748, p = 0.00$), Cd
 274 ($r = -0.662, p = 0.00$), Cr ($r = -0.837, p = 0.00$) and Ni ($r = -0.532, p = 0.02$) per unit mass of
 275 phytoplankton in the lakes.

276 In contrast to Pb, Cd, Hg, Cu, Cr and Ni, Co, Mn and P per unit mass of phytoplankton
 277 cells showed no clear relationship against the TP concentrations of the three lakes on all
 278 sampling occasions. Examination of the bivariate correlation between the variables indicated no
 279 significant relationship exists. Due to the extensive number of outliers and the lack of significant
 280 correlation between the two sets of variables, a regression analysis was not suitable for the data.

281 Table 2 summarises the results of the multiple regressions carried out using a
 282 combination of chlorophyll-*a* and TP (as the independent variables) against metal (Pb, Cd, Cr,
 283 Hg, Cu, Mn, Co) to P ratios per unit mass of phytoplankton cells (the dependant variable). An
 284 examination of the *t*-values in Table 2 indicates that TP is a significant predictor of the variations
 285 in Pb:P, Cd:P and Cr:P ratios in cells at the 5% level, but chlorophyll *a* alone is not. For the Hg:P
 286 ratio in cells, TP is a significant predictor at the 10 % level, but chlorophyll-*a* alone is not a
 287 significant predictor.

288

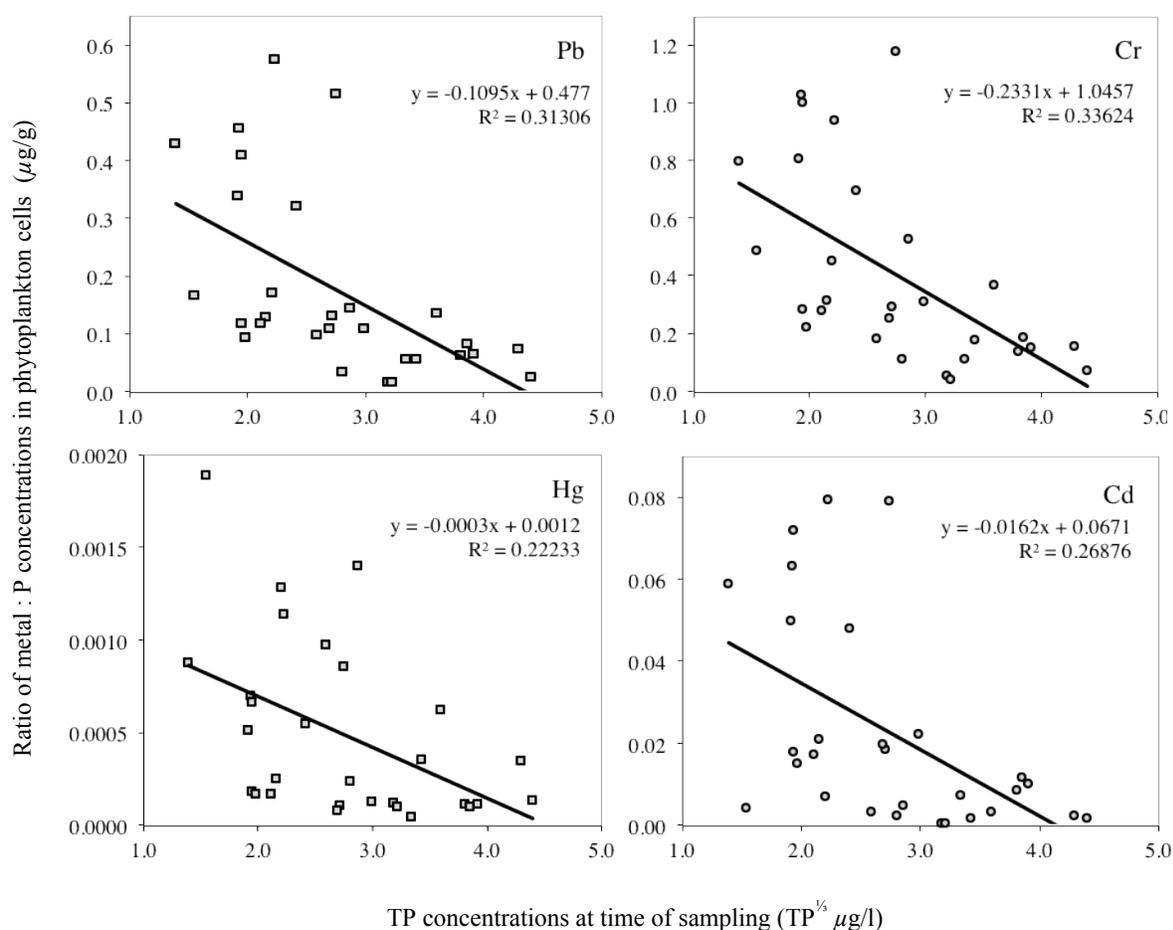
289 **Table 2.** Summary of the simultaneous multiple regression performed using chlorophyll-*a* and
 290 total phosphorus (TP) as independent variables and the metal (Pb, Cd, Cr, Hg, Cu, Mn, Co) to P
 291 ratios in phytoplankton cells from the three lakes as the dependant variable. Where $p < 0.05$, the
 292 relationship was significant at the 5 % level, and where $p < 0.10$, the relationship is significant at
 293 the 10 % level.

Metal	Metal : P ratio with	
	Chlorophyll <i>a</i>	Total phosphorus

	t	Sig.	t	Sig.
Pb	-0.474	0.640	-2.541	0.017
Cd	-0.179	0.859	-2.457	0.021
Cr	-0.384	0.704	-2.781	0.010
Hg	-1.018	0.318	-1.710	0.099
Cu	-0.507	0.616	-1.189	0.245
Mn	0.167	0.896	0.683	0.501
Co	-0.635	0.531	0.187	0.853

294

295 The relationships in Table 2 are illustrated in Figure 5. This shows the strongest

296 correlation to exist between the Cr:P ratio in cells and TP ($r^2 = 0.3362$).

297

298 **Figure 5.** The relationship between TP and metal (Pb, Hg, Cd, Cr) to P ratios per unit mass of

299 phytoplankton cells in the three lakes. As a single variable in the multiple regression between the

300 metal:P ratios against chlorophyll-*a* and TP, TP is a significant predictor of Pb, Cd and Cr: P

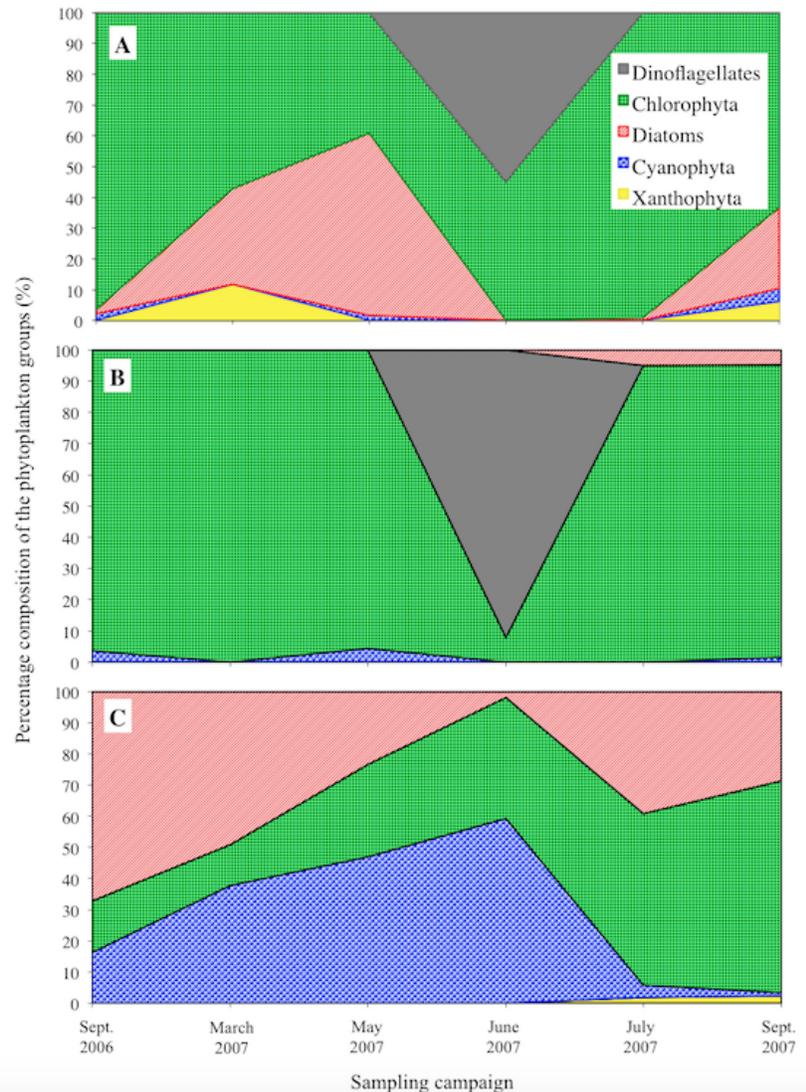
301 ratios at the 5 % level, and of Hg: P at the 10 % level (Table 2).

302

303 Figure 6 shows the dominant groups of phytoplankton (as a percentage of the total
304 volume), illustrating the shifts in species association of the phytoplankton over the sampling
305 period. Among these, the dominant groups in Loch Coire nan Arr (Figure 6A) were the
306 Chlorophytes (particularly *Cosmarium* sp.) and the Dinoflagellates (particularly *Peridinium*
307 *willei*). In Loch Doilet (Figure 6B), the Chlorophytes were also a dominant group, particularly
308 the filament *Oedogonium* sp. In contrast, Loch Urr (Figure 6C) had a greater abundance of the
309 blue-green algae, such as the genus *Oscillatoria* sp., which is from the prokaryotic group the
310 Cyanophytes. There was also a higher dominance of the Diatoms in Loch Urr in comparison to
311 the other lakes.

312

313



314

315 **Figure 6.** The dominant groups of phytoplankton (as a percentage of the total volume) in the
 316 three lakes. The percentage composition is presented for Loch Coire nan Arr (A), Loch Doilet
 317 (B) and Loch Urr (C). The series key located in diagram A applies to A, B and C.

318

319 The biomass, surface area and cell count calculated for Loch Coire nan Arr, Loch Doilet,
 320 and Loch Urr are detailed in Table 3. Based on these data, the correlation between cells count

321 and TP at the time of sampling was significant at the 5 % level (Figure 7), however the
 322 correlations between TP and cell surface area as well as biomass were not significant at the 5 %
 323 level.

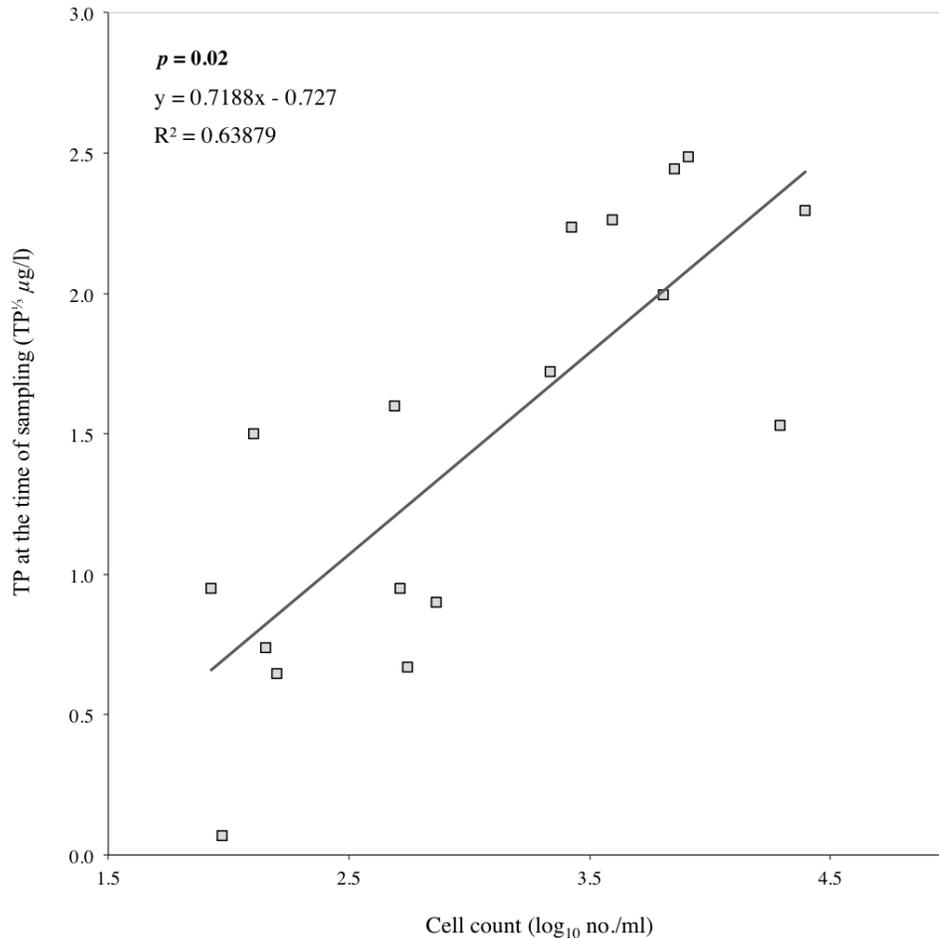
324

325 **Table 3.** Biomass, surface area and cell count determined for the three lakes on each of the
 326 sampling occasions.

327

Lake	Date	Biomass ($\mu\text{g/l}$)	Surface area (mm^2/l)	Cell count (no./ml)
Loch Coire nan Arr	22.09.06	4.4	3.1	4.7
	23.03.07	7.1	7.1	8.9
	22.05.07	12.9	9.6	33.9
	21.06.07	77.5	23.1	52.5
	25.07.07	1.4	1.7	8.9
	01.09.07	10.1	14.8	39.8
Loch Doilet	22.09.06	2.9	3.7	4.4
	23.03.07	0.5	1.4	12.4
	22.05.07	3.8	2.3	8.0
	21.06.07	17.5	3.8	1.2
	24.07.07	1.8	1.4	5.5
	31.08.07	35.7	34.6	31.7
Loch Urr	21.09.06	63.6	3564.3	197.6
	23.03.07	169.8	9278.3	172.3
	23.05.07	178.2	138.9	183.3
	22.06.07	69.3	48.6	99.2
	26.07.07	115.0	1804.8	307.5
	02.09.07	445.6	263.9	278.0

337



338

339 **Figure 7.** Correlation between cell count and TP concentrations from early June 2006 to late
340 September 2007 in all three lakes. The significance (p) value was computed with SPSS on the
341 significance of the regression line.

342

343 The regression models obtained for TP and cell count (Figure 7), and those generated for
344 cell count and the concentration of metals per gram of cells (Eq. 1-8) were used to calculate the
345 best-fit values that describe the effect of changes in cell density on metal uptake by the
346 phytoplankton under different trophic states.

347 This was completed by firstly using the regression equation for TP and cell count (Figure
348 7) to estimate the number of cells per ml under a range of TP concentrations. These data were

349 then incorporated into the following regression equations obtained from the analysis of the
 350 metals and P per unit mass of phytoplankton and the corresponding cell count.

$$351 \quad \text{Pb} = ((-1.888 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 9.973)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 1}$$

$$352 \quad \text{Hg} = ((-0.268 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 1.354)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 2}$$

$$353 \quad \text{Cu} = ((-0.874 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 5.813)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 3}$$

$$354 \quad \text{Cd} = ((-1.006 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 4.864)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 4}$$

$$355 \quad \text{Cr} = ((-2.530 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 13.412)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 5}$$

$$356 \quad \text{Co} = ((-0.538 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 2.572)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 6}$$

$$357 \quad \text{Mn} = ((-0.967 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 10.609)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 7}$$

$$358 \quad \text{P} = ((-1.114 \times \log_{10}(\text{cell count})) + 16.551)^3 \quad \text{Eq. 8}$$

359 This generated best-fit values for each metal per gram of cells. For example, the Hg per gram of
 360 phytoplankton in water with a TP concentration of 30 $\mu\text{g/l}$ was calculated as follows:

361 **▪ Phytoplankton cells per ml:**

$$362 \quad = 10^{((0.7188 \times 30^{1/3}) - 0.727)}$$

$$363 \quad = 31.9 \text{ cells}$$

364 **▪ Hg per gram of phytoplankton:**

$$365 \quad = ((-0.268 \times \log(31.9)) + 1.354)^3$$

$$366 \quad = 0.86 \mu\text{g/g}$$

367 Table 4 provides details on how the predicted Hg concentrations change per gram of cells with a
 368 range of TP concentrations.

369

370 **Table 4.** Best-fit values of the number of phytoplankton cells per ml under a range of trophic
 371 states and the concentration of Hg per unit mass of those cells. The cells per ml were predicted
 372 using the regression formula generated for TP and cell counts in this study (Figure 7).

373 Concentrations of Hg per μg of cells were estimated using the predicted cells per ml and the
 374 regression equation for Hg per unit mass of phytoplankton (Eq. 2).

375

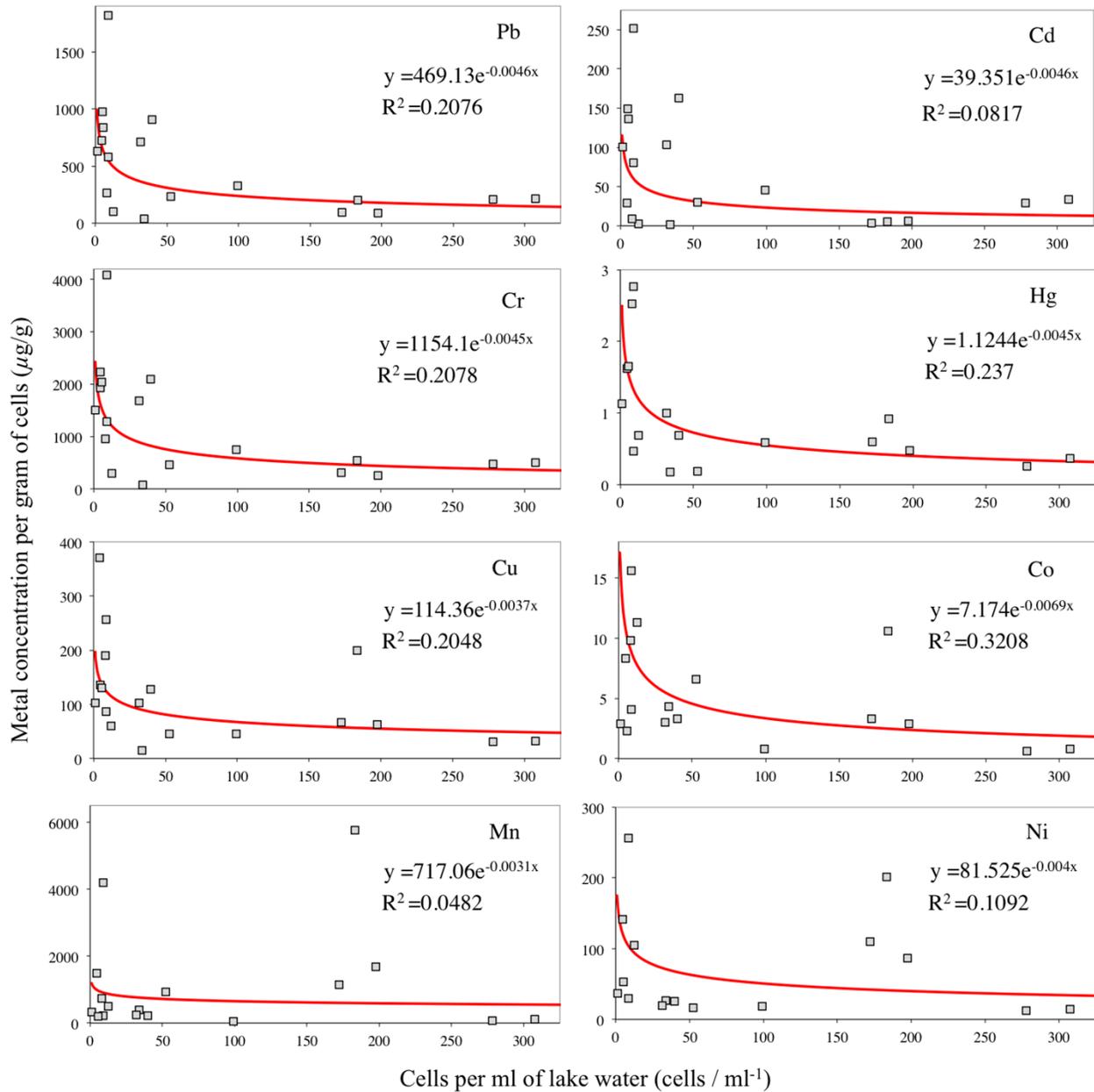
TP ($\mu\text{g/l}$)	Phytoplankton cells per ml	Hg per unit mass of cells ($\mu\text{g/g}$)
10	6.61	1.46
12	8.27	1.36
14	10.09	1.28
16	12.09	1.20
18	14.29	1.14
20	16.68	1.08
22	19.28	1.03
24	22.09	0.98
26	25.13	0.94
28	28.40	0.90
30	31.91	0.86

376

377 Figure 8 shows the best-fit lines for the relationship of cell counts and the concentration
 378 of Hg, Cd, Cr, Cu, Co, Mn, Ni and Pb per gram of cells. These were calculated in the same way
 379 as described in detail for Hg, with an extension of that data to include the range of TP values
 380 recorded in this study ($7\text{-}85 \mu\text{g/l}$). As the best-fit curves are without noise, and because they
 381 represent the correlations in the data obtained from this study, they can be used to examine the
 382 rate of metal uptake by phytoplankton cells in this study. The data points, i.e. the true
 383 measurements recorded, were used in an exponential regression to quantitatively describe the
 384 rate of uptake by the phytoplankton.

385 The best-fit lines in Figure 8 suggest that the uptake of Hg, Pb, Cd, Cu, Co, Ni and Cr by
 386 the phytoplankton is subject to exponential decay. This is characterised by an initially rapid
 387 decline in metal concentrations per μg of phytoplankton with increasing cells, until the
 388 concentration approaches zero, where the rate of the absolute decrease in the metals decelerates.
 389 The exponential regression equations for the data points in Figure 8 shows the decay constant,
 390 which defines the rate of metal decay in phytoplankton cells with an increasing number of cells.
 391 The larger the rate constant, the more rapid the decay of the dependant variable (y, metals in

392 phytoplankton). The rate of Pb, Cd, Cr, Hg, Cu, Co, Ni and Mn decay in phytoplankton cells
393 with an increasing number of cells is 0.0046, 0.0046, 0.0045, 0.0045, 0.0037, 0.0069, 0.004 and
394 0.0031 (mL/cell) respectively.

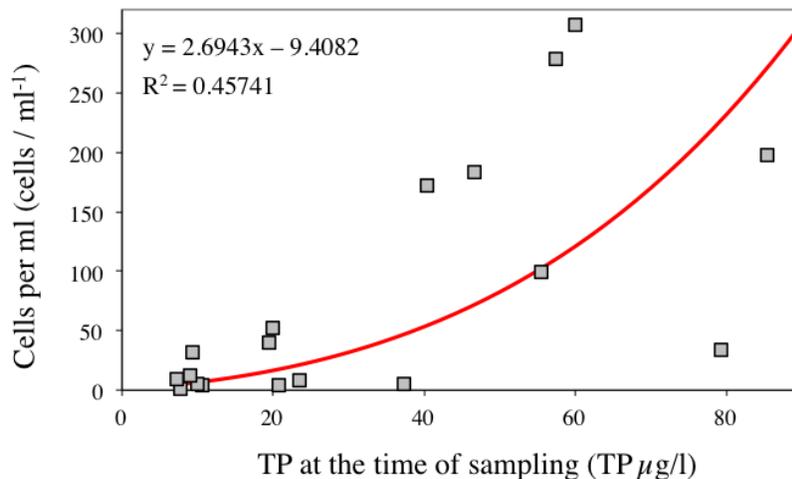


396
397

398 **Figure 8.** The relationship of phytoplankton cell counts with Pb, Cd, Co, Cu, Cr, Mn, Ni and Hg
 399 per gram of cells. The best-fit lines (in red) were calculated from the predicted cell counts
 400 (Figure 7) and the metal (and P) concentrations per unit mass of cells (Figure 3). The data points
 401 are the actual measurements recorded in this study and were used in the exponential regression
 402 of the formula displayed for each relationship.

403

404 As an additional observation, Figure 9 shows the line of best-fit for TP and
405 phytoplankton cell count. This was calculated with the regression models obtained for TP and
406 cell count (Figure 7). The data points are the actual measurements recorded, and were used for
407 the exponential regression analysis displayed to quantitatively describe the growth of cells in
408 response to rising TP conditions. Figure 9 suggests that cell production with increased TP
409 concentrations is subject to exponential growth. This is characterised by an initial gradual rise in
410 cell count with increasing TP, but as more TP is introduced, the rate of growth accelerates.



411

412 **Figure 9.** The relationship of phytoplankton cell counts with TP concentrations. The best-fit line
413 was calculated from the regression analysis of TP and cell counts (Figure 7). The data points are
414 the actual measurements recorded in this study and were used in the exponential regression of
415 the formula displayed.

416

417 The metal concentrations in one cell of phytoplankton were calculated by firstly
418 calculating the weight of an individual cell. For example, in Loch Doilet on the 22/05/2007 the

419 phytoplankton cell count was 7.95 cells/ml and the mean phytoplankton biomass was 3.77 $\mu\text{g/l}$
420 (Table 3). Therefore the weight of one cell is calculated as follows.

421 ▪ **Phytoplankton cell biomass ($\mu\text{g/l}$) \div number of cells per litre (cells/l)**

422 = 3.77 $\mu\text{g/l}$ \div 7950 cells/l

423 = 4.74 $\times 10^{-4}$ μg (mean weight of one cell in Loch Doilet)

424 Secondly, the concentration of metals was calculated for one cell. This was carried out by using
425 the weight of one cell and the concentration of metal per unit weight of cells. The above cell
426 weight for Loch Doilet on the 22/03/2007 and the concentration of Cd per gram of cells will be
427 used as an example here.

428 ▪ **Weight of individual cell (g/cell) \times Cd per gram of cells ($\mu\text{g/g}$)**

429 = 4.74 $\times 10^{-10}$ (g/cell) \times 8.5 ($\mu\text{g/g}$)

430 = 4.03 $\times 10^{-15}$ g of Cd per cell

431 Table 5 shows the calculated concentrations for Hg, Pb, Cd, Cu, Cr, Co, P, Mn and Ni in the
432 phytoplankton cells of each of the lakes on all sampling occasions.

433 **Table 5.** Content of Pb, Cd, Hg, Cr, Co, Ni, Mn, P and Cu per phytoplankton cell in the three lakes on all sampling occasions. The
 434 values were calculated from the average weight of one cell, and the metal (and P) concentrations per gram of cell on the same date.
 435

Lake	Date	Metal content per phytoplankton cell								
		Pb (g x 10 ⁻¹⁵)	Cd (g x 10 ⁻¹⁵)	Hg (g x 10 ⁻¹⁵)	Cr (g x 10 ⁻¹⁴)	Co (g x 10 ⁻¹⁶)	Ni (g x 10 ⁻¹⁴)	Mn (g x 10 ⁻¹⁴)	P (g x 10 ⁻¹²)	Cu (g x 10 ⁻¹⁴)
Loch Coire nan Arr	22.09.06	906.6	139.0	1.5	207.5	77.3	13.2	138.2	1.8	12.6
	23.03.07	1444.3	200.1	2.2	325.3	124.1	20.4	333.6	3.2	20.4
	22.05.07	14.5	0.4	0.1	3.0	16.4	1.0	14.8	0.2	0.6
	21.06.07	343.7	44.4	0.3	68.2	97.5	2.5	137.9	6.0	6.7
	25.07.07	90.2	12.5	0.1	20.0	6.4	0.5	3.3	0.7	1.3
	01.09.07	229.8	41.4	0.2	53.3	8.4	0.7	5.9	2.1	3.3
Loch Doilet	22.09.06	471.3	19.1	3.6	125.9	693.9	40.7	520.8	2.8	24.1
	23.03.07	4.3	0.1	0.0	1.2	4.7	0.4	2.1	0.1	0.3
	22.05.07	124.1	4.0	1.2	45.4	46.5	19.4	34.7	0.9	9.0
	21.06.07	9461.8	1509.8	16.9	2255.6	434.5	54.6	479.5	100.7	152.5
	24.07.07	273.6	44.6	0.5	66.6	7.5	1.7	6.6	2.1	4.3
	31.08.07	797.7	116.5	1.1	189.6	33.8	2.2	27.9	6.8	11.6
Loch Urr	21.09.06	27.5	2.0	0.2	8.0	9.3	2.8	54.1	1.1	2.0
	23.03.07	92.4	3.2	0.6	29.9	32.5	10.8	113.1	1.7	6.5
	23.05.07	195.7	4.9	0.9	52.8	103.0	19.6	559.3	1.4	19.4
	22.06.07	230.4	31.9	0.4	52.1	5.6	1.3	4.1	3.7	3.1
	26.07.07	80.7	12.5	0.1	19.0	3.0	0.5	4.0	1.2	1.2
	02.09.07	333.6	46.9	0.4	76.7	9.6	2.0	11.9	4.0	4.9

436

437

438 **Discussion**

439 As P is a limiting nutrient for phytoplankton growth, TP is a good measure of a lakes
440 trophic status (Brooks et al., 2001). From the range (maximum to minimum) of TP
441 concentrations recorded for each lake (Figure 2), the associated trophic status of the lakes ranges
442 from oligio- mesotrophic for Loch Doilet ($3.7\text{-}23.5 \mu\text{g TP l}^{-1}$), oligio- eutrophic for Loch Coire
443 nan Arr ($2.7\text{-}79.3 \mu\text{g TP l}^{-1}$), and meso- eutrophic for Loch Urr ($22.0\text{-}85.3 \mu\text{g TP l}^{-1}$). However,
444 the trophic state of a lake is often judged in terms of mean TP concentrations (Carlson, 1977;
445 Knowlton and Jones, 1997; O’Gorman et al., 2004). If the mean TP concentrations over the
446 sampling period are used to assign a trophic status to the lakes in this study, that yields a status of
447 mesotrophic for Loch Coire nan Arr with a mean TP of $22.9 \mu\text{g/l}$, oligotrophic for Loch Doilet
448 ($9.6 \mu\text{g TP l}^{-1}$), and eutrophic for Loch Urr ($45.9 \mu\text{g TP l}^{-1}$). The variation in the mean trophic
449 state between the three lakes may be partially attributed to several differences in lake and
450 catchment morphometry. For example, Loch Doilet has the lowest mean TP concentration at 9.6
451 $\mu\text{g TP l}^{-1}$ but has a lake volume ($4.2 \times 10^6 \text{ m}^3$) that greatly exceeds that of the other two lakes
452 ($5.0 \times 10^5 \text{ m}^3$ in Loch Coire nan Arr, $2.4 \times 10^6 \text{ m}^3$ in Loch Urr). It also has a relatively higher
453 maximum lake depth recorded at approximately 16 m in comparison to a maximum depth of 12
454 m recorded in the other two lakes (Table 1). A larger lake volume and maximum depth tends to
455 result in lower nutrient concentrations (Chow-Fraser, 1991). This is because firstly, a high
456 volume of lake water can dilute the TP, and secondly, at greater lake depths there is less
457 possibility of mixing and therefore P can be more readily removed from the water column by the
458 sediment to the lake bed (Jeppesen et al., 2003).

459 The correlation between TP and the number of cells per ml at the time of sampling was
460 significant at the 5 % level (Figure 7), however the correlations between TP and cell surface area

461 as well as biomass were not. Insignificance in the correlation of TP and surface area has been
462 previously noted by Thomann (1977) who suggests that the relationship is a combination of
463 biomass, TP, retention time, and sinking rates. It is possible that the measurements of
464 phytoplankton cell count, surface area and biomass in this study responded to TP at different
465 rates. For example, count can remain constant even if volume increases, but if the volume per
466 cell declines then the opposite applies, i.e. cell total volume remains constant but the number of
467 cells increases. Surface area can vary with either, for example a small spherical cell can have a
468 greater surface area to volume ratio than a larger spherical cell. Equally, the variations in the
469 correlations may also be because the method for the determination of cell count is open to less
470 error than that of cell surface area and/or biomass. The latter are an extension of the
471 determination of cell count and their final values include measurements of cell dimensions that
472 fit into an assigned geometric formula. Additionally, Gleskes and Kraay (1983) and Reynolds
473 (1984) shed doubt on the accuracy of the 'classical method' for the quantification of
474 phytoplankton growth. This is because it is based on spot samples that do not account for lateral
475 and vertical fluctuations in lake temperature, nutrients and light availability, as these strongly
476 influence the species composition and abundance of phytoplankton. Phycologists have also
477 recognised that phytoplankton biomass can never be accurately quantified due to diurnal
478 variations (Brian Whitton, personal communication, 2006). Furthermore, the abundance of
479 bacterioplankton and phytoplankton $<20\ \mu\text{m}$ are not accounted for in this investigation. As the
480 bacterioplankton and phytoplankton $<20\ \mu\text{m}$ can compete with algae for P in the water column
481 (Currie, 1990), a rise in TP concentrations in the samples analysed may not be accompanied by a
482 rise in phytoplankton growth indicators in another sample from that same environment.
483 Considering the significant relationship between TP and cell count, and that the use of cell count

484 introduces the least error to the final result, it is perhaps more accurate to base interpretations of
485 phytoplankton growth and metal interactions on cell count as opposed to biomass or surface area.

486 The significant correlations between the mass-specific Pb, Cd, Hg, Cr, Cu and Ni in the
487 phytoplankton and TP concentrations (Figure 4) suggest that algae bloom density dilution
488 occurred in the lakes investigated. This evidence supports the findings of Pickhardt et al. (2002)
489 for algae bloom dilution of Hg. It also relates to studies that have reported algae bloom dilution
490 of As (Chen and Folt, 2000), and polychlorinated biphenyls (Larsson et al., 1992).

491 Two mechanisms may explain these findings. Firstly is surface availability (Chen and
492 Folt, 2005). This means the phytoplankton share a finite pool of metals and have a constant
493 uptake. Thus enhanced lake productivity reduced the mass-specific metal concentrations. Yet it
494 is difficult to accept that surface availability controlled metal uptake by the phytoplankton alone
495 because the mass-specific concentrations of Mn showed no correlation with TP ($r^2 = 0.0004$),
496 while Co (and P) showed no significant decline with increasing TP concentrations. Secondly,
497 because the trace element to macronutrient (i.e. phosphorus or carbon) ratios is a balance of net
498 steady-state uptake and growth rates (Sunda and Huntsman, 1997, 2004). As nutrients become
499 more available, growth rates increase, which eventually results in a decline in element to
500 phosphorus ratios in the cells. The significant correlations ($p < 0.05$) between the mass-specific
501 metal (Pb, Cd, Cr, Hg) to P ratios in phytoplankton and TP (Figure 5), and their negative
502 correlation against chlorophyll-*a* appear to be in agreement with this biodilution hypothesis. This
503 also may explain why Mn showed no correlation with TP. Mn is an essential element for
504 phytoplankton growth (Morel et al., 1991), and so new cells may assimilate the available Mn.

505 Figure 9 indicates that the relationship of increasing TP and cell count is subject to
506 exponential growth (Serruya and Berman, 1975). Figure 8 suggests the relationship of increasing

507 cell numbers and their Hg, Pb, Cd, Cu, Co, Ni and Cr concentrations follows the pattern of
508 exponential decay. The association between Figure 8 and 9 provides potential insight into the
509 rate at which algae bloom dilution occurs. That is, as TP increases, phytoplankton cell growth
510 accelerates gently, and the concentration of metals in cells rapidly decline until it approaches
511 zero, where the rate of the absolute decrease in the metals reduces. This deceleration in algae
512 bloom dilution may eventually be paralleled by a lack of P to sustain the growth of more
513 phytoplankton or insufficient growth space.

514 The exponential relationships in Figure 8 also suggest that the selective uptake of metals
515 by the phytoplankton occurred (Santana-Casiano et al., 1995). If the decay constants in Figure 8
516 are examined, it is evident that the rate of Pb decay in phytoplankton with increasing cell number
517 is more rapid than Cu with respective decay constants of 0.0046 and 0.0037. It is also evident
518 that algae bloom dilution is least effective on the most essential metal Mn with a decay constant
519 of 0.0031. The differences in the rate constants of the algae bloom dilution suggest the
520 involvement of two intracellular mechanisms in the selective uptake of metals. One is metabolic,
521 which attempts to sustain the essential metals (e.g. Mn) concentrations (Sunda and Huntsman,
522 1998). The other is a detoxification process that stores excess P as intracellular polyphosphate,
523 which protects the cells by binding with metals in a detoxified form (Walsh and Hunter, 1995). If
524 the correlation between the ratios of metals to P in cells with TP in this study (Figure 5) is
525 consulted again, it is notable that the only metals that showed a significant decrease in their ratio
526 to P were Pb, Cd, Hg and Cr. It is also notable that these four metals had a strikingly similar
527 decay constant with their relationship in phytoplankton to increasing cells. That is, 0.0046 for
528 both Pb and Cd, and 0.0045 for Cr and Hg (Figure 8). Additionally, of the metals tested in this
529 study, these four metals are considered the most toxic to phytoplankton (Xue and Sigg, 1993).

530 Therefore, it is possible that when nutrients became more available, growth rates and cellular P
531 increased, forming intracellular polyphosphate bodies that selected less toxic metals more
532 rapidly.

533 Table 6 presents the metal to P stoichiometries (mol:mol) of the freshwater
534 phytoplankton collected in this study. The calculations were based on the mean concentrations of
535 the metals per cell in each of the three lakes (Table 5). These were converted to molar
536 concentrations and divided by the sum of all components, which included the C and N molar
537 concentrations based on the standard Redfield (1958) ratio of $C_{106}:P_1:N_{16}$. Table 6 shows the
538 ratios of the metals between the lakes are in the same order of magnitude. The mean metal to P
539 stoichiometry from this investigation is
540 $(C_{106}P_1N_{16})_{1000}Pb_{0.019}Hg_{0.00004}Cu_{0.013}Cd_{0.005}Cr_{0.2}Co_{0.0008}Mn_{0.2}Ni_{0.012}$. This is similar to the
541 phytoplankton cell stoichiometry presented by Twining et al. (2004) who found, for instance,
542 0.26 mol of Mn for every 1 mol of P, whereas this study found 0.21 mol of Mn for every 1 mol
543 of P. The slightly higher ratio offered by Twining et al. may be expected as their study was on
544 marine phytoplankton. This is because P is generally more concentrated in the phytoplankton of
545 freshwater lakes, and thus lowering the metal to P ratio.

546

547 **Table 6.** Metal to P stoichiometries (mol:mol) of the freshwater phytoplankton collected in Loch
548 Coire nan Arr, Loch Doilet and Loch Urr for this study. Calculations were based on the mean
549 concentrations of the metals per cell in the three lakes (Table 5). These were then converted to
550 molar concentrations, and divided by the sum of all components, which included C and N molar
551 concentrations that were calculated based on the standard Redfield (1958) ratio of $C_{106}:P_1:N_{16}$.

552 The averages of the ratios across the lakes yields a mean metal to P stoichiometry of

553 $(C_{106}P_1N_{16})_{1000}Pb_{0.019}Hg_{0.00004}Cu_{0.013}Cd_{0.005}Cr_{0.2}Co_{0.0008}Mn_{0.2}Ni_{0.012}$.

554

Element	Loch Coire nan Arr	Loch Doilet	Loch Urr	Mean
C	105860	106197	105989	106015
N	15979	16030	15998	16002
P	999	1002	1000	1000
Pb	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.019
Hg	0.00005	0.00003	0.00003	0.00004
Cu	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.013
Cd	0.009	0.004	0.002	0.005
Cr	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2
Co	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.0008
Mn	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2
Ni	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.012

555

556 The calculated stoichiometry may be used to estimate the concentration of metals per

557 phytoplankton cell in the lakes based on cell size. If the average biomass of one cell is 1.55×10^{-10}

558 g, and using the Cd: P ratio of 0.000005/1, the estimated Cd concentration bound to a cell is

559 7.76×10^{-16} mol (or 87.2×10^{-15} g). If the P concentration is raised by a factor of 4, the estimated

560 Cd is 3.11×10^{-18} mol (or 3.49×10^{-16} g). The risk of toxicity can then be predicted by

561 comparing the results to those of toxicity tests. For instance, Wang and Dei (2006) observed

562 toxicity at a Cd:P ratio of > 0.2 . While this may be useful, using the stoichiometry as a predictor

563 on a wider scale than the lakes investigated has large uncertainties because it would assume the

564 ratio is constant.

565

566 Conclusions

567 1. A higher TP concentration in the lakes resulted in significant algae growth dilution of

568 the mass-specific Pb, Cd, Hg, Cu, Ni and Cr in the phytoplankton. This was because the

569 available metals had to be shared among more and as P became more available, the mass specific

570 metal to P ratios in the phytoplankton declined. The same mechanisms were not effective on Mn
571 because it is assimilated during phytoplankton growth.

572 **2.** The relationship between the number of phytoplankton cells per millilitre of lake water
573 and the mass-specific metal concentrations in the phytoplankton provides an examination of the
574 rate of algae bloom dilution in the lakes. As TP increased, phytoplankton cell growth accelerated
575 gradually, and the concentration of metals in cells rapidly declined until it approached zero. The
576 decay constants indicate that Mn has the lengthiest rate of algae bloom dilution among the
577 metals. This suggests the involvement of two intracellular mechanisms in the active selection of
578 metals. The first is metabolic in that growing cells have preference for Mn and thus it is diluted
579 at a more gradual rate. The second is a detoxification process that stores excess P as intracellular
580 polyphosphate, which selects the less toxic metals more rapidly.

581 **3.** The simultaneous measurements of metals and P in phytoplankton cells, along with
582 quantification of changes in cell mass, generated a mean metal to P stoichiometry of
583 $(C_{106}P_1N_{16})_{1000}Pb_{0.019}Hg_{0.00004}Cu_{0.013}Cd_{0.005}Cr_{0.2}Co_{0.0008}Mn_{0.2}Ni_{0.012}$ based on the Redfield
584 average C, N and P stoichiometry of $(CH_2O)_{106}(NH_3)_{16}H_3PO_4$. This stoichiometry can be used to
585 estimate the concentration of metals in cells based on their P content and may be incorporated
586 into BLM if the concentration of cell surfaces were to be used as the biotic ligands.

587

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