Environmental range of the oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen Isotopes of the phosphatic brachiopod, Lingula and the importance of intertidal life for interpreting past ocean chemistry

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The spectacularly successful biomineralization by the inarticulate brachiopod, Lingula, to harden its shell with calcium phosphate has an unbroken history that dates back to the Cambrian. In the longstanding efforts to interpret past sea water temperatures, this animal has played a significant role in oxygen isotope studies. In this work, the oxygen isotopic composition of apatite phosphate, the included oxygen in associate carbonate, the d¹⁸O of bulk biomass from both shell chitin and lophophore tissue as well as the d¹⁸O of DNA are reported from three populations of living Lingula found in Japan, Hawaii, and Australia. Each location has a separate and unique isotopic niche that is offset by a similar magnitude and direction for each of the oxygen isotopic sources. The environmental impacts on the three populations of Lingula are further illustrated in the carbon and nitrogen isotopic compositions of several tissues and in the compound specific amino acids of the pedicle. Taken as a whole, the isotopic data from these living organisms indicate that the intertidal milieu of Lingula should be considered when interpreting fossil shell oxygen isotope data. These insights from modern organisms will be applied to fossil shell material from the Eau Claire Formation of Wisconsin.

