

Reporting Summary

Nature Portfolio wishes to improve the reproducibility of the work that we publish. This form provides structure for consistency and transparency in reporting. For further information on Nature Portfolio policies, see our [Editorial Policies](#) and the [Editorial Policy Checklist](#).

Statistics

For all statistical analyses, confirm that the following items are present in the figure legend, table legend, main text, or Methods section.

n/a Confirmed

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The exact sample size (n) for each experimental group/condition, given as a discrete number and unit of measurement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A statement on whether measurements were taken from distinct samples or whether the same sample was measured repeatedly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The statistical test(s) used AND whether they are one- or two-sided
<i>Only common tests should be described solely by name; describe more complex techniques in the Methods section.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A description of all covariates tested |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A description of any assumptions or corrections, such as tests of normality and adjustment for multiple comparisons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A full description of the statistical parameters including central tendency (e.g. means) or other basic estimates (e.g. regression coefficient) AND variation (e.g. standard deviation) or associated estimates of uncertainty (e.g. confidence intervals) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | For null hypothesis testing, the test statistic (e.g. F , t , r) with confidence intervals, effect sizes, degrees of freedom and P value noted
<i>Give P values as exact values whenever suitable.</i> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | For Bayesian analysis, information on the choice of priors and Markov chain Monte Carlo settings |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | For hierarchical and complex designs, identification of the appropriate level for tests and full reporting of outcomes |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Estimates of effect sizes (e.g. Cohen's d , Pearson's r), indicating how they were calculated |

Our web collection on [statistics for biologists](#) contains articles on many of the points above.

Software and code

Policy information about [availability of computer code](#)

Data collection Provide a description of all commercial, open source and custom code used to collect the data in this study, specifying the version used OR state that no software was used.

Data analysis Fiji software (<https://imagej.net/Fiji>), Dragonfly (www.theobjects.com/dragonfly). Computation and metric geometry for 3D reconstructions were realized using Dragonfly with scripts provided at gitlab.com/clariaddy/stl_statistics and gitlab.com/clariaddy/mindist for the cryo-fixed cells. This information is provided in the text.

For manuscripts utilizing custom algorithms or software that are central to the research but not yet described in published literature, software must be made available to editors and reviewers. We strongly encourage code deposition in a community repository (e.g. GitHub). See the Nature Portfolio [guidelines for submitting code & software](#) for further information.

Data

Policy information about [availability of data](#)

All manuscripts must include a [data availability statement](#). This statement should provide the following information, where applicable:

- Accession codes, unique identifiers, or web links for publicly available datasets
- A description of any restrictions on data availability
- For clinical datasets or third party data, please ensure that the statement adheres to our [policy](#)

Source data are provided with this paper. Electron microscopy images can be accessed Electron Microscopy Public Image Archive (<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/empiar/>) with the following reference, EMPIAR-11694. Computation and metric geometry for 3D reconstructions were realized using Dragonfly with scripts provided at

Research involving human participants, their data, or biological material

Policy information about studies with [human participants or human data](#). See also policy information about [sex, gender \(identity/presentation\), and sexual orientation](#) and [race, ethnicity and racism](#).

Reporting on sex and gender

Use the terms *sex* (biological attribute) and *gender* (shaped by social and cultural circumstances) carefully in order to avoid confusing both terms. Indicate if findings apply to only one sex or gender; describe whether sex and gender were considered in study design; whether sex and/or gender was determined based on self-reporting or assigned and methods used. Provide in the source data disaggregated sex and gender data, where this information has been collected, and if consent has been obtained for sharing of individual-level data; provide overall numbers in this Reporting Summary. Please state if this information has not been collected. Report sex- and gender-based analyses where performed, justify reasons for lack of sex- and gender-based analysis.

Reporting on race, ethnicity, or other socially relevant groupings

Please specify the socially constructed or socially relevant categorization variable(s) used in your manuscript and explain why they were used. Please note that such variables should not be used as proxies for other socially constructed/relevant variables (for example, race or ethnicity should not be used as a proxy for socioeconomic status). Provide clear definitions of the relevant terms used, how they were provided (by the participants/respondents, the researchers, or third parties), and the method(s) used to classify people into the different categories (e.g. self-report, census or administrative data, social media data, etc.) Please provide details about how you controlled for confounding variables in your analyses.

Population characteristics

Describe the covariate-relevant population characteristics of the human research participants (e.g. age, genotypic information, past and current diagnosis and treatment categories). If you filled out the behavioural & social sciences study design questions and have nothing to add here, write "See above."

Recruitment

Describe how participants were recruited. Outline any potential self-selection bias or other biases that may be present and how these are likely to impact results.

Ethics oversight

Identify the organization(s) that approved the study protocol.

Note that full information on the approval of the study protocol must also be provided in the manuscript.

Field-specific reporting

Please select the one below that is the best fit for your research. If you are not sure, read the appropriate sections before making your selection.

Life sciences Behavioural & social sciences Ecological, evolutionary & environmental sciences

For a reference copy of the document with all sections, see nature.com/documents/nr-reporting-summary-flat.pdf

Ecological, evolutionary & environmental sciences study design

All studies must disclose on these points even when the disclosure is negative.

Study description	Study of the cell architecture of snow microalgae of the <i>Sanguina nivaloides</i> species
Research sample	All samples correspond to red snow blooms collected above 2,000 m a.s.l. in France and Greece. Dates are indicated in the text and GPS locations are indicated below.
Sampling strategy	Explore melting snow areas in late spring, identify snow patches with a red color and collect the red snow. Store samples at 4°C or -80°C until analysis
Data collection	Samples have been collected by Jade Ezzedine and Eric Maréchal. They were then transferred to the Laboratoire de Physiologie Cellulaire et Végétale, in Grenoble, France.
Timing and spatial scale	One sampling per site and per annum as indicated in the text, in the May-July period.
Data exclusions	No data was excluded.
Reproducibility	Sampling correspond to <i>Sanguina nivaloides</i> cells, which cannot be cultured in laboratory conditions. Results from independent samples have been provided, whenever feasible.
Randomization	This does not apply. The study does not correspond to a population or genetic study. It is based on cell imaging.
Blinding	White snow samples were used as control.

Did the study involve field work? Yes No

Field work, collection and transport

Field conditions	Samples were collected on melting snowpack, under a clear weather.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bloom 1, 45°02'55.4"N 6°23'40.8"E - bloom 2, 45°05'07.4"N 6°28'15.6"E - bloom 3, 45°03'11.1"N 6°23'17.7"E - bloom 4, 45°03'11.0"N 6°25'41.5"E - bloom 5, 45°56'20.509"N 6°50'51.523"E - bloom 6, 40°04'34.278"N 22°21'42.24"E
Access & import/export	All samples were collected after walking to sampling areas. Samples were collected with appropriate authorizations, complying with the convention on biological diversity.
Disturbance	Sampled areas were in hiking places, and did not introduce any additional disturbance.

Reporting for specific materials, systems and methods

We require information from authors about some types of materials, experimental systems and methods used in many studies. Here, indicate whether each material, system or method listed is relevant to your study. If you are not sure if a list item applies to your research, read the appropriate section before selecting a response.

Materials & experimental systems

n/a	Involvement in the study
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Antibodies
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Eukaryotic cell lines
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Palaeontology and archaeology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals and other organisms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Clinical data
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Dual use research of concern
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Plants

Methods

n/a	Involvement in the study
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ChIP-seq
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Flow cytometry
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> MRI-based neuroimaging