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Autun Purser, **Covadonga Orejas**, Andrea Gori, Ruiju Tong, Vikram Unnithan, Laurenz Thomsen, (2013). **Local variation in the distribution of benthic megafauna species associated with cold-water coral reefs on the Norwegian margin** . Continental Shelf Research. Volume 54, 15 February 2013, Pages 37–51.

Abstract: The spatial variability in the mix of species making up Cold-water coral reef communities is not well known. In this study abundances of a selection of megafauna ( *Lophelia pertusa* , *Madrepora oculata* , *Paragorgia arborea* , *Primnoa resedaeformis* , *Mycale lingua* , *Geodia baretti* , *Acesta excavata* and fish) were quantified through out 9 manned submersible video transects from 3 reef complexes (Røst Reef, Sotbakken Reef and Traena Reef) on the Norwegian margin. Substrate type (coral structure, rubble, exposed hard ground or soft sediment) was also recorded. Variations in the densities of these fauna (with respect to both reef complex and substrate type) were investigated, with spatial covariance between species assessed. For the majority of fauna investigated, densities varied by both reef and substrate. Spatial covariance indicated that some species may be utilising similar habitat niches, but that minor environmental differences may favour colonisation by one or other at a particular reef. Fish densities were generally higher in regions with biogenic substrate (coral structure and coral rubble substrates) than in areas of soft or hard ground substrate. Further, fish were more abundant at the northerly Sotbakken Reef at time of study than elsewhere. Community structure varied by reef, and therefore management plans aimed at maintaining the biodiversity of reef ecosystems on the Norwegian margin should take this lack of homogeneity into account.

Keywords: Cold-water corals, *Lophelia pertusa*, Norway, Species distribution