

Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0967-0637(18)30028-1
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr.2018.06.005>
Reference: DSRI2922

To appear in: *Deep-Sea Research Part I*

Received date: 19 January 2018
Revised date: 7 May 2018
Accepted date: 8 June 2018

Cite this article as: Patricia Kaiser, Maya Bode, Astrid Cornils, Wilhelm Hagen, Pedro Martínez Arbizu, Holger Auel and Silke Laakmann, High-resolution community analysis of deep-sea copepods using MALDI-TOF protein fingerprinting, *Deep-Sea Research Part I*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr.2018.06.005>

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High-resolution community analysis of deep-sea copepods using MALDI-TOF protein fingerprinting

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Abstract

Knowledge of zooplankton community structure is essential to understand ecosystem functioning. Therefore, accurate species identification is a crucial step in plankton studies. Yet, with the current array of methodologies, species richness is still largely underestimated and high-resolution distribution patterns remain unknown. A novel, cost-effective and rapid alternative to morphological or genetic approaches is the identification of species by proteomic fingerprinting based on matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization time-of-flight mass spectrometry (MALDI-TOF MS). The present study aims to demonstrate the applicability of proteomic fingerprinting for large-scale identification and quantification of the pelagic copepod family Spinocalanidae. Therefore, MALDI-TOF MS was applied to discriminate, identify and quantify adult and juvenile planktonic copepods of the ecologically important deep-sea copepod family Spinocalanidae from stratified depth samples (0-

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