

10700 BENTHIC MEIOFAUNA

At least 20 of the currently recognized 34 metazoan phyla are represented in the benthic meiofauna: Porifera, Placozoa, Cni-

daria, Ctenophora, Platyhelminthes, Orthonectida, Rhombozoa, Cycliophora, Acanthocephala, Nemertea, Nematomorpha, Gnathostomulida, Kinorhyncha, Loricifera, Nematoda, Rotifera, Gastrotricha, Entoprocta, Priapulida, Pogonophora, Echiura, Sipuncula, Annelida, Arthropoda, Tardigrada, Onychophora,

Joint Task Group: Byron J. Adams (chair).

Mollusca, Phoronida, Bryozoa, Brachiopoda, Echinodermata, Chaetognatha, Hemichordata, and Chordata. Most are marine, but 14 of these phyla have members found in freshwater systems: Porifera, Cnidaria, Platyhelminthes, Nemertea, Nematoda, Rotifera, Gastrotricha, Entoprocta, Annelida, Arthropoda (Copepoda, Halacaroidea, Ostracoda, Mystacocarida, Tantulocardia), Tardigrada, Mollusca, Bryozoa, Chordata. The contribution of these metazoans to nutrient cycling and other ecological processes is probably substantial, but the details of such interactions are still poorly understood. Benthic meiofauna have

an extreme range of morphological and life history diversity and have free-living, parasitic, and/or symbiotic trophic habits. Comprehensive information about these taxa is available.^{1,2}

References

1. HIGGINS, R. P. & H. THIEL. 1988. Introduction to the Study of Meiofauna. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.
2. GIÈRE, O. 1993. Meiobenthology: The Microscopic Fauna in Aquatic Sediments. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Germany and New York, N.Y.