

MARINE FAUNA BENTHIC

COMMUNITY

The benthic community of the Comau Fjord has a relatively high diversity that is stratified according to depth. The amount of different species and the depth are positively correlated, which is visibly evidenced by the increase in faunal diversity below 10 meters. In the upper 10 meters, the community is dominated by mussels (*Mytilus edulis chilensis* and *Aulacomya atra*), barnacles (*Cirripedia*) and a 2-3 meter kelp forest (*Macrocystis porifera*). Below ten meters, the community members change to:

- Cold water corals (Scleractinia)
- Sea whips (Gorgonacea)
- Sea anemones (Actiniaria)
- Other anthozoids (Zoanthidea, Corallimorpharia, Alcyonacea, Pennatulacea)
- Brachiopods
- Bryozoans
- Gastropods
- Ascidians
- Tube worms (Polychaeta)
- Sponges (Porifera)

Starfish (*Asteroidea*), crabs (*Decapoda*) and urchins (*Echinoidea*) are abundant throughout both of these areas. While the greatest diversity of animals is found below 15 meters, the greatest diversity of algae species is observed in the upper 15 meters.

PELAGIC COMMUNITY

- Smaller Animals (Zooplankton)
Plankton assemblages of the Comau Fjord have been extensively sampled by different oceanography groups that have visited Huinay. The most-frequently studied species of these samples include krill (*Euphausiacea*), isopods, amphipods, hydrozoa medusa, and phytoplankton species. Please see our list of published papers to learn more about the results of these studies.
- Larger Animals (Nekton)

FISH

Fish associated with the steep walls of the fjord can be spotted, such as rockfish (*Sebastes capensis*), rollizos (*Mugiloides chilensis*), chanchitos (*Congiopodus peruvianus*), conger eels (*Genypterus chilensis* and *G. maculatus*), and trambollitos (*Helcogrammoides cunninghami*). Schools of sardines (*Sprattus fueguensis* and *Strangomera bentincki*) are sporadically seen darting along the surface. Catfish (*Schroederichthys canescens*) are normal components of the by-catch of local fishermen.








MARINE MAMMALS

There are at least three consistent haul out sites for southern sea lions (*Otaria flavescens*), which are located at the island of Liliguapi in the mouth of the Comau Fjord, the mouth of the Cahuelmo Fjord (a neighboring fjord), and close to the mouth of the Tambor River. The

Southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*) have also been observed multiple times from the Scientific Station. Females have occasionally hauled out quite close to our dock, such as in December of 2005. Dolphins (*Cephalorhynchus eutropia* and *Lagenorhynchus australis*) are seen fairly frequently feeding in the bay of Huinay and will sometimes follow in the wake of our boats. Orcas (*Orcinus orca*) are rare visitors, as well as humpback whales (*Megaptera novaenglie*), right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*), and blue whales (*Balsenoptera musculus*).

BIRDS

Many species use the fjord as a feeding ground and nesting site. Petrels (*Procelariidae*) and seagulls (*Laridae*) are frequently spotted. Black-necked swans (*Cygnus melanocorypha*) are seen fairly often feeding at the mouth of the Llonchochaigua/Huinay River. We very rarely get visits from migrating flamingos (spp.) in this area. There are two main types of cormorants (Neotropic cormorants – *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*, and the Imperial shag– *Phalacrocorax atripes*) which are normally spotted diving for fish in front of the research station. A large breeding site is located on the island of Lliguapi where the imperial shag and the Red-legged cormorants (*Phalacrocorax gaimardi*) make their nests on the sides of the cliff. Magellanic penguins (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) and brown pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) are often seen close to the mouth of the fjord as well. A local kingfisher (*Ceryle torquata*) and a group of Black-crowned night herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) can be found perched on our dock almost every morning.

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