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PII: S0967-0637(15)30142-4  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr.2016.05.013>  
Reference: DSRI2641

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

Received date: 9 October 2015  
Revised date: 24 May 2016  
Accepted date: 27 May 2016

Cite this article as: A. Ayma, J. Aguzzi, M. Canals, G. Lastras, N. Bahamon, A. Mecho and J.B. Company, Comparison between ROV video and Agassiz trawl methods for sampling deep water fauna of submarine canyons in the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea with observations on behavioural reactions of target species, *Deep-Sea Research Part I* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dsr.2016.05.013>

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**Comparison between ROV video and Agassiz trawl methods for sampling deep water fauna of submarine canyons in the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea with observations on behavioural reactions of target species.**

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**Abstract**

In this paper we present a comparison between Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) and Agassiz trawling methods for sampling deep-water fauna in three submarine canyons of the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea and describe the behavioural reactions of fishes and crustacean decapods to ROV approach. 10 ROV dives, where 3583 individuals were observed and identified to species level, and 8 Agassiz trawls were carried out in a depth range of 750 to 1500 meters. As noticed in previous studies, abundances of fishes and decapod crustaceans were much higher in the ROV videos than in Agassiz trawl samples, as the latter are designed for the retrieval of benthic, less motile species in permanent contact with the bottom. In our observations fish abundance was one order of magnitude higher with ROV (4110.22 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) than with Agassiz trawl (350.88 ind/km<sup>2</sup>), whereas decapod crustaceans were six times more abundant in ROV videos (6362.40 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) than in Agassiz samples (1364.52 ind/km<sup>2</sup>).

The behaviour of highly motile fishes was analysed in terms of stationary positioning over the seafloor and avoidance or attraction to ROV approach. The most frequently occurring fish species *Coelorinchus mediterraneus*, *Nezumia aequalis*, *Bathypterois dubius*, *Lepidion lepidion*, *Trachyrincuss scabrus* and *Polyacanthonotus rissoanus* did not react to the presence of the ROV in most cases (>50%). Only *B. dubius* (11%), *L. lepidion* (14.8%), *P. rissoanus* (41%) and *T. scabrus* (14.3%) reacted to ROV approach. More than 60% of less motile species, such as crustacean decapods, did not respond to ROV presence either. Only 33.3% of *Geryon longipes*, 36.2% of *Munida* spp. and 29.79% of *Pagurus* spp. were observed avoiding or defensively reacting to the ROV.

The comparison of results obtained with ROV and trawl sampling is of ecological relevance since ROV can report observations in areas where trawling is technically unfeasible. The lack of reaction by most fish and crustacean decapod specimens further confirms that ROV surveying is an efficient technique to assess abundance and species composition in deep-sea waters for these motile species and questions trawl-based estimations.

Keywords: Animal behaviour, submarine canyon, deep-sea, Northwestern Mediterranean Sea, ROV observations, Agassiz trawl

## 1. Introduction

Our perception of the composition, distribution and overall biodiversity of marine communities should carefully consider the spatio-temporal modulation of species behaviour (Aguzzi *et al.*, 2012). Knowledge of reaction behaviour is highly relevant to evaluate species vulnerability to commercial trawling (Lorance and Trenkel, 2006), which is of great relevance for the management of fisheries (Aguzzi *et al.*, 2014; Bahamon *et al.*, 2009). However, the behaviour of deep-sea fauna is still poorly understood (Lorance and Trenkel, 2006) and is a potential source of bias in stock assessments.

The use of different sampling systems, such as Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) observations and trawling, may lead to variations in species composition. Small scientific bottom beam trawls, such as Agassiz trawls, are designed for the retrieval of

benthic, less motile species in permanent contact with the bottom (Tecchio *et al.*, 2011), while video surveys with underwater vehicles have been used to assess densities of demersal fish populations both in trawlable and non-trawlable areas (Stoner *et al.*, 2008). Sampling variability also is tightly related to the behavior of deep-sea fauna (Lorance and Trenkel, 2006) and to the size and speed of sampling devices. Bottom trawls have higher chances to catch motile species the larger their opening and speed over the ground (Glass and Wardle, 1989; Gordon and Duncan, 1985; Merrett *et al.*, 1991; Gordon and Bergstad, 1992). Quantitative statistical comparisons between trawling and ROV-based video surveys have shown that distance off ground, body size and spatial dispersion had strong relationships with relative trawl availability, which is the ratio of population density estimates from a scientific bottom-trawl survey to those derived from ROV visual strip transects. The way different species react to an ROV is not correlated to relative trawl availability according to Trenkel *et al.* (2004a). Laboratory and field experiments using ROVs and also cabled observatories have been carried out to understand how animal behaviour influences sampling variability (Mauchline and Gordon, 1984; Uiblein *et al.*, 1998; Aguzzi *et al.*, 2012; Sarda and Aguzzi, 2012; Doya *et al.*, 2013).

### *1.1 Behavioural analyses from ROV observations*

ROV video surveys have been increasingly used in areas where trawl hauling is technically unfeasible (Collins *et al.*, 1999; Lorance *et al.*, 2000; Priede and Bagley, 2000). ROV video records have provided valuable qualitative data on behaviour of deep-sea fauna (Lorance *et al.*, 2002; Uiblein *et al.*, 2002; Trenkel *et al.*, 2004a). They have also shown how presence and abundance of deep-sea fishes are associated to complex temporal and spatial variations in oceanographic conditions (Collins *et al.*, 1999; Lorance *et al.*, 2000; Priede and Bagley, 2000; Ryer *et al.*, 2009; d'Onghia *et al.*, 2011; Capezzuto *et al.*, 2012). Disturbance reactions rather than attraction to an approaching ROV have been reported (Uiblein *et al.*, 2002, 2003; Trenkel *et al.*, 2004b; Lorance and Trenkel, 2006). Variations in fish detection were associated to the ROV technology itself, with fishes being attracted or scared by the vehicle approaching, possibly due to artificial lighting, engine noise, electrical fields and motion-induced water pressure changes (Cailliet *et al.*, 1999; Lauth *et al.*, 2004; Trenkel *et al.*, 2004b; Stoner *et al.*, 2008).

The composition, abundance and diversity of deep-sea demersal fish and crustacean assemblages in the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea, and the biology of individual species, have been studied by several authors (e.g. Cartes and Sarda, 1992; Stefanescu *et al.*, 1993; Carrasson, 1994; Cartes *et al.*, 1994). In contrast, behavioural analyses of demersal fauna derived from ROV observations in the Mediterranean Sea are restricted to the study of the small-scale feeding behaviour of some fish species in submarine canyons of the Central Mediterranean Sea (d'Onghia *et al.*, 2015) and of conservative life strategies adapted to great depths in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea (Gates *et al.*, 2012). For crustacean decapods, ROV video behavioural data are currently scant in the deep-sea in general (Poupin *et al.*, 2012), with few examples from the Mediterranean Sea (e.g. the carrying behaviour of *Paromola cuvieri* (Risso, 1816); Capezzuto *et al.*, 2012).

### 1.2 The North Catalan continental margin

Three major submarine canyons dissect the North Catalan continental margin, which from north to south are the 95 km long Cap de Creus canyon, the 105 km long La Fonera canyon (also known as Palamós canyon) and the 180 km long Blanes canyon (Amblas *et al.*, 2006; Lastras *et al.*, 2011). The heads and upper courses of these canyons are deeply indented into the continental shelf (Fig. 1). The dominant bottom type is muddy, although rocky outcrops are common in the canyon heads and upper courses. The detailed characteristics of these canyons are summarized in Canals *et al.* (2013).

The three canyons are able to capture dense waters that form seasonally and descend from the continental shelf carrying sediment, food and pollutants to the deep (Canals *et al.*, 2006, 2013; Ulses *et al.*, 2008; Salvado *et al.*, 2012), as well as sediment-laden flows resulting from severe coastal storms (Palanques *et al.*, 2005; Martin *et al.*, 2006; Sanchez-Vidal *et al.*, 2012). The proximity of their heads to the shoreline, which is less than 1 km for La Fonera canyon, enhances the trapping ability of coastal and shelf flows by these canyons and strongly influences their overall dynamics (Canals *et al.*, 2013).

The oceanography of the study area is characterised by the Northern Current, a steady mesoscale current flowing south-westward over the shelf and slope incised by the submarine canyons (Milot, 1999). The Northern Current has a baroclinic component from surface to approximately 400 m depth (i.e. within the depth range of

our study) and is associated to a shelf-slope density front that separates colder, fresher waters over the continental shelf from saltier, warmer waters over the outer continental margin and basin (Font *et al.*, 1988).

Here, we aim at extending current knowledge on the behaviour of deep-sea demersal fishes and invertebrates by ROV video observations performed in the above-mentioned three large submarine canyons of the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea, namely Cap de Creus, Blanes and la Fonera canyons. Estimates of species abundances from video images are compared with data from Agassiz trawls, in order to evaluate the biasing effects of species behaviour in terms of motility and reaction to these sampling tools.

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1 ROV video sampling

The investigated submarine canyons (Fig. 1) were explored in summer 2011 on board *R/V Sarmiento de Gamboa* with the “Liropus 2000”, a Super-Mohawk ROV rated to 2000 m depth. The ROV was equipped with four video cameras, including a frontal full HD Kongsberg OE14-502A camera (1920 x 1080 of resolution and 10X-optical zoom), a frontal colour Kongsberg OE14-366 camera used for quantitative analyses and two movable auxiliary Kongsberg OE14-502A mini-cameras mounted on the ROV arm or, alternatively, on the tether management system (TMS). Two parallel laser beams with 15 cm separation within the field of view of the camera provided a reference scale for size measurements. Underwater positioning while in operation was performed by using a high-precision HiPAP 350P Simrad USBL acoustic system with a position accuracy of 0.3% of the range and a range of detection accuracy of less than 20 cm linked to the Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) of the vessel.

A total of 10 dives were conducted close to the bottom (50-100 cm above seabed), with a constant speed of 1.2 knots in the upslope direction. The area inspected during each ROV transect was calculated following Tubau *et al.* (2015). The length of each transect was multiplied by the field of view width (3 m in average) of the frontal colour Kongsberg OE14-366 ROV reference camera. In total, 19 hours of video filming were recorded, resulting in a total swept area of  $\sim 35,367$  m<sup>2</sup>. Most dives were

performed along the relatively flat floor of the three canyon axes at depths between 750 m and 1570 m (Table 1 and Fig. 1). The only exception was a dive conducted over the northern wall of La Fonera canyon from 985 m to 570 m depth, which traversed a steep rocky slope but no modification of the ROV operating procedure was required.

The taxonomical identification and counting of individuals was carried out for each dive by analysing the videos in a time-lapse mode (i.e. at 50% of travelling speed). All detected animals were classified to the lowest possible taxonomic level according to current faunal guides (Zariquiey, 1968; Mercader *et al.*, 2001) and validated Internet resources (e.g. [www.marinespecies.org](http://www.marinespecies.org), [www.marbef.org/](http://www.marbef.org/)). All video frames for any given transect had a stamped time code to ensure that each detected faunal entry could be linked to a precise geographic positioning, dive timing and water depth.

## 2.2 Agassiz trawl sampling

In comparison to larger otter trawls, the Agassiz dredge allows better manoeuvrability in complex geomorphological environments such as submarine canyons (Holme and McIntyre, 1971). Agassiz trawling was therefore conducted in order to ground-truth ROV video observations, and to provide a comparison between the two methods. Five trawls were carried out 24 hours after ROV dives and following the previous ROV tracks along the axes of Cap de Creus, La Fonera and Blanes canyons in a depth range from 750 to 1569 m (Table 1 and Fig. 1). The trawl mouth was 2.5 m wide and had 1.2 m of vertical opening, and the net mesh was 12 mm. Hauls were carried out in a down-canyon direction, resulting in a total swept area of ~128,250 m<sup>2</sup>. The area for each haul was estimated according to Tecchio *et al.* (2013) by multiplying the horizontal mouth opening of the net by the haul track length. Cable tension, presumed scope and sinking speed were used to estimate times of arrival and departure from the bottom. The vessel's navigation was used to calculate the length of each transect, using the ArcGis 10.2.1 software.

All specimens were sorted on board, cleaned, counted and weighed. Animals were split into three groups for subsequent treatment: some were fixed in 10% formalin, others were placed in absolute ethanol (for molecular analyses, not included in this study), and the last were dried. They were subsequently stored in the Biological Reference Collection of the Institute of Marine Sciences (ICM-CSIC), in Barcelona.

## 2.3 Behavioural analyses

Behavioural analyses were conducted for fishes, which are epibenthic swimmers, and crustacean decapods, which are both swimmers and walkers with mixed epibenthic and endobenthic behaviour (Aguzzi and Company, 2010). Notes were also made on other abundant crawling invertebrates of ecological relevance in the area, such as irregular sea urchins (Mecho *et al.*, 2014).

Fish behaviour and reaction to ROV approach was divided into two categories according to Uiblein *et al.* (2002, 2003), Lorance and Trenkel (2006), Stoner *et al.* (2008), and Ryer *et al.* (2009): undisturbed and disturbed. The *undisturbed category* was divided into two sub-categories: *station-holding*, for individuals displaying slow movements in order to preserve their seabed position, and *passive drifters*, for animals that were transported by water motion since fully immobile. The *disturbed category* was also divided in two subcategories: *avoidance*, for animals quickly swimming out of the field of view, and *attraction*, for animals approaching the ROV.

Behavioural observations of crustacean decapods were annotated following the same classification used for fishes, although motionless and very low rate of movement specimens were excluded from this analysis. For crustaceans additional notes were made of species reactions in relation to aggressive territoriality, burying, shelter and the relationship with litter. Percentages of individuals observed per species and category of reaction were calculated.

A Chi-square test by means of contingency tables was performed with *Statgraphics Centurion XVII* ([www.statgraphics.com/centurion-xvii](http://www.statgraphics.com/centurion-xvii)) in order to test the hypothesis that different species have different reactions to the ROV approach. This analysis was carried out only for the most abundant species of fishes and crustaceans to ensure the robustness of the results.

#### 2.4 Comparison between ROV and Agassiz trawl sampling

Data obtained with ROV video imaging and Agassiz trawls were grouped at family level and compared in order to quantify potential sampling biases at different depths and locations. The aim was to assess if species behaviour could be an important factor influencing sampling with indirect (video) and direct (haul) methods. To do so numbers of video-detected and trawl caught individuals were standardized to units of transect surface ( $\text{km}^2$ ) per each family. Species densities were calculated as the ratio between the number of individuals and the inspected area during each dive or haul.



Differences in family composition and abundances due to the sampling method were screened with non-parametric statistics. In order to remove the potential effect of bathymetry and location we considered the comparison of paired-samples collected in ROV dives (D) and Agassiz hauls (A) in the same location and depth (Table 1): D8-A1, D9-A2, D31-A5, D32-A6 and D33-A7. This paired-samples comparison is justified by the assumption that animal behavioural reactions to the perturbing presence of the ROV are constant over depth and independent of location within the canyon. Therefore, these two variables were not taken into account in our analyses, with all species derived from these transects being grouped and compared considering the sampling method only. Levels of similarity among taxa composition and abundance were ordered in a two-dimensional plane through distance matrices and visualised using Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) scatterplots. The “meta-MDS” function in the “vegan” library in R (R Project for Statistical Computing, <http://www.r-project.org/>) was used to perform the analyses of data collected using the two sampling methods. The function standardizes the scaling in the result for easier interpretation of taxa ordination. Furthermore, permutation tests were performed by the function “envfit” in “vegan”, allowing investigating for potential significant effects of sampling methods (factor variables) on taxa ordination. The test uses  $r^2$  (squared correlation coefficient) as a goodness-of-fit statistic.

### 3. Results

A total of 3583 individuals were observed by ROV surveying, belonging to seven different Phyla and one Subphylum (see Supplementary Material, Table S1). Agassiz trawl sampling provided 557 individuals, which were classified in seven Phyla and one Subphylum (see Supplementary Material, Table S2).

#### 3.1 ROV behavioural analyses for fishes

Several species of deep-sea demersal fishes were commonly observed, such as *Coelorinchus mediterraneus* (Iwamoto and Ungaro, 2002), *Nezumia aequalis* (Günther, 1878), *Bathypterois dubius* (Vaillant, 1888), *Lepidion lepidion* (Risso, 1810), *Trachyrincus scabrurus* (Rafinesque, 1810) and *Polyacanthonotus rissoanus* (De Filippi and Verany, 1857) (Fig. 2A-E). The behavioural reactions of these species to ROV

approach are presented in Table 2. The chi-square test showed the relationship between type of reaction and species. The majority of the species were not disturbed by the ROV presence (Table 2), being the “stationary” and “drifting” behavioral reactions dominant in most of the analyzed species (i.e. accounting together for more than 50% in all cases). All undisturbed species remained horizontal with respect to the seabed, with two exceptions: *N. aequalis* maintained a nose-down body position inclined towards the bottom and *B. dubius* remained motionless resting directly on the seabed standing on the elongated rays of the caudal and pelvic fins in the classic “tripod” posture. Different avoidance reactions were observed in fishes. *Polyacanthopus rissoanus* escaped by increasing their swimming activity with sudden zig-zag changes of direction. *Trachyrincus scabrus* and *L. lepidion* had a more complex behavioural reaction, generating mud puffs in front of the ROV, likely to confound the displacement trajectory (see Supplementary Material, Fig. S1A-B). In a single case, an individual of *L. lepidion* was found stationary, coiled on the seabed. *Bathypterois dubius* specimens also generated mud puffs while escaping, which seemed to result from irregular, awkward movements, in agreement with previous observations (Davis and Chakrabarty, 2011).

For species with less than three detected individuals no behavioural quantitative analysis was attempted: *Cyclothone braueri* (Jespersen and Tåning, 1926), *Hoplostethus mediterraneus* (Cuvier, 1829) and *Lepidorhombus boscii* (Risso, 1810) were found drifting, while *Lampanyctus crocodilus* (Risso, 1810), *Nettastoma melanurum* (Rafinesque, 1810), *Notacanthus bonaparte* (Risso, 1840) and *Chimaera monstrosa* (Linnaeus, 1758) were observed stationary. Only *Alepocephalus rostratus* (Risso, 1820) was disturbed by ROV approach, escaping without generating mud puffs.

### 3.2 ROV behavioural analyses for crustacean decapods and other invertebrates

Eight different species of decapods were observed and identified although only three were commonly found in all three canyons: *Geryon longipes* (A. Milne-Edwards, 1882), *Pagurus* spp. and *Munida* spp. (Fig. 2F-H). Undisturbed reactions to the presence of the ROV (Table 3) were generally observed in these species. The analysis showed that 117 individuals out of 156 remained stationary as the ROV passed by (66.67% of *G. longipes*, 82.98% of *Munida* spp. and 61.70% of *Pagurus* spp). Those individuals reacting to the presence of the ROV performed a wide range of responses (Table 3). *Pagurus* spp. were observed running away, leaving undulated tracks on the

muddy seabed (see Supplementary Material, Fig. S1C). Some deep-sea *G. longipes* crabs displayed burrowing and burying behaviour, with the latter directly observed as digging activity until complete body coverage (see Supplementary Material, Fig. S1D). While doing this, these crabs triggered mud puffs that concealed their presence. In the case of *Munida* spp. some individuals (10.64%) performed a defensive behaviour, projecting their claws forwards at the entrance of their tunnels or shelters, either natural or made of marine litter (see Supplementary Material, Fig. S1E).

Specimens of the red shrimp *Aristeus antennatus* (Risso, 1816) were observed always as isolated individuals and not grouped in schools. They were always disturbed by the ROV approach showing avoidance responses, with various evasion trajectories depending on their distance to the ROV. Distant individuals (i.e. 2.5 to 3.5 m) escaped by a mixture of crawling and swimming, whereas when ROV approached closer swimming speed abruptly increased and animals escaped upwards into the water column out of the field of view.

### 3.3 Aggregation behavior

The holothurian *Mesothuria intestinalis* (Östergren, 1896) and the irregular echinoid *Brissopsis lyrifera* (Forbes, 1841) were observed forming aggregations, either of exposed or buried individuals. Locally, herds of hundreds of *B. lyrifera* individuals left pervasive marks on the soft seafloor. The largest *Brissopsis* herds were found in La Fonera canyon, while carcasses of dead specimens were observed both in huge aggregations forming extensive thanatocenoses and as solitary corpses in La Fonera and Blanes canyons (see Supplementary Material, Fig. S2). In some dives we also identified the regular echinoid *Gracilechinus elegans* (Düben and Koren, 1844) among *Brissopsis* herds.

### 3.4 Comparison of assemblages sampled by ROV and Agassiz trawls

NMDS of equivalent ROV transects and Agassiz hauls showed significant differences between the sampling methods when factors like depth and location were removed ( $p = 0.01$ ,  $r^2 = 0.47$ ,  $p$ -value based on 999 permutations) (Fig. 3). The majority of taxonomic groups of fishes were most highly represented in ROV video surveys, but were rather scarce in Agassiz trawl samples. Species belonging to families Moridae, Macrouridae, Notacanthidae or Inopidae were sampled mostly by ROV and few were caught by the Agassiz trawl. Also, families belonging to crustacean decapod taxa, such

as Aristeidae, Munididae and Paguridae, were best represented in ROV observations. In contrast, Agassiz mainly retrieved strictly benthic individuals belonging to different families such as Caryophylliidae and Oculinidae (Phylum Cnidaria), Aporrhaidae and Naticidae (Phylum Mollusca), and Phronimidae and Acanthephyridae (Phylum Crustacea).

### 3.5 Taxonomic composition and abundance from different sampling methods

Low motile individuals in Agassiz trawls accounted for more than 80% of the total number of specimens sampled (Fig. 4A), with Crustacea and Mollusca as the dominant groups. Fish species (Chordata) represented only 12.16% of the total individuals caught by Agassiz trawls compared with over 30% of the observations by ROV. The Subphylum Crustacea was slightly higher by percentage in the ROV data than in the trawls.

Abundance values of motile species were much higher in ROV observations. Fish abundance was one order of magnitude higher with ROV (4110.22 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) than with Agassiz trawl (350.88 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) and decapod crustaceans were six times more abundant (6362.40 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) than in Agassiz trawls (1364.52 ind/km<sup>2</sup>). Regarding strictly benthic groups, the trawls yielded higher abundances for Annelida (15.59 ind/km<sup>2</sup>), Sipuncula (7.79 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) and Mollusca (467.84 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) than ROV observations, which detected zero Annelida and Sipuncula, and 112.61 ind/km<sup>2</sup> Mollusca.

Comparison between the two methods (Fig. 4B) showed that abundances for fish families such as Moridae (1970.65 ind/km<sup>2</sup>), Macrouridae (844.57 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) and Inopidae (506.74 ind/km<sup>2</sup>) were one order of magnitude higher in ROV observations than within Agassiz trawl samples (163.74 ind/km<sup>2</sup> for Moridae, 31.19 ind/km<sup>2</sup> for Macrouridae and 15.60 ind/km<sup>2</sup> for Inopidae, respectively). Crustacean families Geryondidae, Munididae and Paguridae were also found in larger abundances in ROV video imagery than in trawl samples (Fig. 4B).

## 4. Discussion

The observed behaviour patterns illustrate the occurrence of different reactions to ROV presence in motile megafauna individuals, spanning from avoidance to

indifference. Comparisons between ROV and Agassiz trawl sampling methods revealed that motile fauna was better sampled when using ROV than Agassiz trawl. Our results bring information on the role of behaviour as a modulator of the perceived composition of deep-sea faunal assemblages and species relative abundances, subsequently affecting biodiversity indexes calculated after one methodology or the other.

#### 4.1 The behaviour of undisturbed fishes

ROV white artificial illumination represents a major source of photic interference, which is absolutely non-familiar to benthic and suprabenthic megafauna inhabiting the deep reaches of the investigated submarine canyons. Despite the majority of detected species of fishes and crustacean decapods possess large developed eyes and a distribution limit encompassing disphotic depth strata, most of them seemed to ignore the ROV. This indicates that artificial stimulation is somehow unperceived or, at least, not perceived as a threat. While monochromatic blue and green bioluminescence has been proven to be of ecological and evolutionary importance in regulating reproduction and predation in deep-sea species, high intensity white ROV lights do not seem to constitute a meaningful ecological signal (Widder, 2010), as suggested by Wilson and Smith (1984) for Macrouridae.

We observed several species showing either a passive drift by seabed currents or being engaged in active station holding while gently swimming to keep position. Other species were instead observed as performing a mixture of station holding and passive drifting. These behaviours should be analysed in relation to the energy budgets required by feeding, including prey spotting, in energetically impoverished deep-sea ecosystems (Childress, 1995).

Strict station holding was performed by *N. aequalis*, *C. mediterraneus* and *B. dubius*. *Nezumia aequalis* and *C. mediterraneus* feed on epi- and endobenthic organisms, usually hovering or actively searching into the sediment (Macpherson, 1979; Mauchline and Gordon, 1984; Carrasson, 1994). This feeding strategy may explain why *N. aequalis* has been found bending towards the bottom without touching it. When foraging, *Coelorinchus* sp. and related genera such as *Nezumia*, adopt a posture with the snout to the substrate and the tail elevated at a steep angle and the mouth protruding directly towards the substrate (Gartner *et al.*, 1997). However, we did not observe *C. mediterraneus* inclined towards the seabed, but horizontally set above it. This might be result of depth-dependent feeding strategies, as described for other *Coelorinchus* species

(Carrasson, 1994). *Coelorinchus mediterraneus* diet at great depths is based on benthopelagic and nektobenthic organisms (*sensu* Aguzzi and Company, 2010), which are not strictly associated to the sediment like epi- and endobenthic fauna. Most macrourid species use olfaction to locate baits (Gartner *et al.*, 1997). This hovering behaviour has been reported in Northeastern Atlantic canyons, where most *N. aequalis* and *Coelorinchus* sp. specimens were observed actively searching into the sediment (Baker *et al.*, 2012).

Solitary specimens of *B. dubius* were found standing on their three fins on the seabed. This behaviour, also observed elsewhere (Trenkel *et al.*, 2002; Baker *et al.*, 2012; Gates *et al.*, 2012), has been hypothesized to be a sensory mechanism. *Bathypterois* sp. are sit-and-wait predators facing into the current while feeding on small nektonic prey (Gartner *et al.*, 1997). Their pectoral fins are held up in the enhanced current above the sea floor and possess well-developed sensory innervations, while the tripod formed by the caudal and pelvic fins allows them to stay in contact with the substrate (Sulak, 1977).

*Lepidion lepidion*, *T. scabrus*, and *P. rissoanus* displayed combined station holding and passive drifting. This alternative is the most common in demersal fishes such as macrourids, ophidiids, nothacanthids and morids (Gartner *et al.*, 1997). These predators are often found in loose aggregations continuously foraging while slowly moving along just above the substrate (Gartner *et al.*, 1997). Passive drift body stance seems to represent a save-energy mode for displacements over large seabed distances. Deep-sea eelpouts may use internal tidal water flows as corridors for low-energy budget displacements (Aguzzi *et al.*, 2010).

#### 4.2 Fish avoidance reactions

Avoidance reactions of deep-sea fishes to ROV approach have been attributed to illumination, motion related sound and pressure wave disturbances (Stoner *et al.*, 2008) and viewed as a predator avoidance strategy (Hobson and Chess, 2001). However, resolving reasons for avoidance is not feasible with our video observations.

Studies carried out in the Bay of Biscay showed that most deep-sea species were weakly or not disturbed by ROV (Trenkel *et al.*, 2002; Uiblein *et al.*, 2003; Lorange and Trenkel, 2006). Less than 30% of all detected deep-sea demersal fishes showed ROV avoidance behaviours. Lorange and Trenkel (2006) found that shark species belonging

to the order Squaliformes were the only ones clearly reacting to the ROV, but these species were missing from our observations.

Individuals for which avoidance reactions to our ROV were observed fast swam away with or without generation of mud puffs, the latter favoured by close proximity to the bottom along the escape trajectory. *Lepidion lepidion* and *T. scabrus* displayed zigzag escape trajectories when the ROV approached very close, likely as a means to confound predators. In the Atlantic Ocean, *Trachyrincus* spp. has been observed frantically swimming in fast short bursts as a reaction to ROV (Trenkel *et al.*, 2002). Often *L. lepidion* did not completely disappear from the camera field of view, settling back again at shorter distance within the mud-cloud. To our best knowledge this short-run avoidance strategy is described for the first time here. It probably results from the balancing of opposite needs as the generation of an effective evasion response and the need to preserve energy. Such behaviour may convey information about the type of predators these species could encounter: a predator not pursuing its preys over large distances, and likely relying on an ambushing strategy.

Conversely, *P. rissoanus* was highly disturbed by the presence of the ROV, but since it was always observed slightly more separated from the bottom, its escape did not generate mud puffs. Trenkel *et al.* (2002) also found that *Polyacanthonotus* sp. in the Atlantic Ocean had the highest sensitivity to ROV disturbance, always avoiding the vehicle with rapid movements of the caudal fin. *Bathypterois dubius* was caught by the camera escaping in one occasion, performing an awkward and irregular movement, as reported by Davis and Chakrabarty (2011). *Alepocephalus rostratus* and *L. crocodilus* were also observed reacting to ROV, but as only one individual of each was detected, no conclusions can be drawn.

#### 4.3 Decapod crustaceans

Decapod crustaceans are the most abundant invertebrates of the deep Catalan continental margin (Abello *et al.*, 1988; Company *et al.*, 2004). *Aristeus antennatus* was always observed as isolated individuals that exhibited fast swimming escape reactions to the ROV that matched with morphological adaptations recognized at rostral level (Aguzzi *et al.*, 2008a). A curved rostrum redirects the individuals upwards when the swimming speed increases and animals suddenly disappear into the water column. These observations point out the occurrence of a significant behavioural bias on ROV visual observations for this species. Some fishing methods, like otter trawling, allow the

commercial capture of large quantities of *A. antennatus*, suggesting aggregation in schools (Sarda *et al.*, 2003). We suggest that large schools of individuals detect the ROV from distance and avoid it by leaving behind only sparse, isolated individuals to the chance of detection.

For the first time, we directly observed a mixed burying and burrowing behaviour for the deep-sea crab *G. longipes*. Once, one individual was observed sheltered in a large burrow. Previous works have only suggested such behaviour for this species, indicating it as circumstantial (Boyer *et al.*, 1988; Attrill *et al.*, 1991; Gates and Jones, 2010). Our observations of the capability of burying as an apparent avoidance response based on within-sediment sudden camouflage fully confirm an endobenthic life style.

The diversity of observations regarding the behaviour of *Munida* spp. suggests an opportunistic endobenthic mixed burrowing and sheltering life style. Although larger individuals were found in self-made burrows or sheltering in natural infracts, there was a significant number of animals using large litter leftovers, which are nowadays abundant in the deep-sea areas (Galil *et al.*, 1995; Galgani *et al.*, 2010; Ramirez-Llodra *et al.*, 2011, 2013; Company *et al.*, 2012) and seem to concentrate in submarine canyons according to some recent studies (Pham *et al.*, 2014; Tubau *et al.*, 2015). We also observed door-keeping behaviour (i.e. *Munida* spp. waiting at the entrance of their tunnels) and other sympatric burrowing species (e.g. *Nephrops norvegicus*) (Aguzzi *et al.*, 2007, 2008b).

We also report for the first time avoidance responses in the Family Paguridae. Individuals were usually seen on the seafloor as running away of the ROV, leaving behind continuous rectilinear trails. Such trails are easily distinguishable from other faunal tracks (e.g. *Brissopsis* spp.; see further down), since they are markedly narrow and present lateral dot-like marks due to the animal-walking mode.

#### 4.4 Gregarious invertebrates.

We observed in our ROV imagery large quantities of grouped live and dead irregular echinoids *B. lyrifera*, with the largest abundances of both death and alive at about 1500 m depth (dive 16) in the floor of La Fonera canyon (Fig. 1, Table 1 and Supplementary Material, Table S1). Living specimens were observed only in La Fonera canyon, while high numbers of dead specimens were reported both in La Fonera and Blanes canyons building up large thanatocenoses. This species performs displacements



in large groups (Hollertz and Duchêne, 2001; Hollertz, 2002; Ramirez -Llodra *et al.*, 2008; Pawson and Pawson, 2013) and it is known to be highly abundant in submarine canyons (Mecho *et al.*, 2014). We also sampled living specimens by Agassiz trawling in all three investigated canyons.

The large amounts of *B. lyrifera* carcasses forming the observed thanatocenoses are probably the result of the transport of dead individuals from up-canyon, which is favoured by the oceanographic processes acting in these canyons and subsequent dynamics (cf. Section 1.2). Near-bottom currents in excess of  $50 \text{ cm s}^{-1}$  and occasionally  $100 \text{ cm s}^{-1}$  have been detected within the investigated canyons, being able to remobilise light sea urchin tests (Canals *et al.*, 2006; Puig *et al.*, 2008; Sanchez-Vidal *et al.*, 2012; Durrieu de Madron *et al.*, 2013). The very same processes transport down light litter that also concentrates in the axes and lower reaches of the investigated canyons as pointed out by Tubau *et al.* (2015).

We further noticed how the herds of this echinoid influenced the detection at small spatial scale of other sympatric invertebrate species. The few identified individuals of the regular echinoid *G. elegans* were always observed as associated with *B. lyrifera*. In contrast, aggregations of *M. intestinalis* were only detected in locations without *Brissopsis*, dead or alive. The absence of *M. intestinalis* nearby *B. lyrifera* might be related to the bioturbating capability of echinoids (Widdicombe and Austen, 1998), which shape the seafloor with its displacing marks. Such bioturbation could be detrimental for the settlement of *M. intestinalis* within the sediment.

#### 4.5 Assemblage ground-truthing by ROV observations and Agassiz trawl sampling

Bottom-trawl surveys have been used to obtain abundance indices for fisheries management. Visual census methods using underwater vehicles such as ROVs and manned submersibles are increasingly applied to achieve the same goal (Trenkel *et al.*, 2004b). In submarine canyons, ROVs have been used to examine the occurrence, behavior, habitat specificity and patterns of deep-sea fauna (Baker *et al.*, 2012; Ross *et al.*, 2015). A wide range of factors can affect density estimations with both methods. In the case of trawling, these factors are related to gear configuration and fishing efficiency, and to species ecology and biology (Wardle, 1993; Engås, 1994). On the other hand, artificial illumination, motion sound and pressure wave disturbances can affect population assessments made with underwater vehicles (Stoner *et al.*, 2008). The behaviour of individuals is also an important aspect determining the species sampling

efficiency (Mcintyre *et al.*, 2014). Some studies have demonstrated how the behaviour of deep-water fishes influences counts along transects (Trenkel *et al.*, 2004b). Biasing effects derived from animal's behaviour on ROV and Agassiz sampling outcomes should be higher for motile swimming species.

Agassiz trawl is not the best method for sampling fish. Otter trawl is usually considered a better method, but studies on fishes in the Atlantic Ocean have shown that video observations still provide superior density estimates in deep-sea environments (Uzmann *et al.* 1977; Adams *et al.*, 1995; Krieger and Siegler, 1996). Our results confirm this view, with higher numbers of motile species in ROV videos than in Agassiz hauls, which sampled more sessile organisms. Also, they indicate that ROV misses part of the sessile organisms either because they are poorly visible or not visible at all (e.g. when buried mostly or totally). Although species are different, recent studies on demersal fish distribution and associations in a number of habitats of the eastern Atlantic Ocean, including submarine canyons, have obtained abundance estimates that are somehow comparable to ours (Baker *et al.*, 2012; Quattrini *et al.*, 2015; Ross *et al.*, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion

Our study provides new insights on the life-style of demersal species inhabiting deep submarine canyons. Behavioural observations indicate that only some fish individuals performed ROV avoidance reactions by swimming frantically, while some decapods displayed burying or aggressive behaviour. By contrast, most fish and decapod crustaceans seem to be mainly unaffected by ROV presence, with fishes remaining stationary or drifting in front of the vehicle. Agassiz trawling and ROV video imaging reported different composition and abundance values regarding these highly motile species. ROV performance is significantly better than Agassiz trawl to obtain abundance indices for fishes and some motile crustaceans.

These findings have significant implications as behaviour diversity directly affects population assessments. The lack of reaction by most specimens evidences that ROV surveying is a useful technique to assess abundance and species composition of motile species in deep-sea environments. Our results further question trawl-based estimations on such species groups.

## Acknowledgements

The present study has been carried out within the framework of the PROMARES - OASIS DEL MAR research grant funded to M.C. by Obra Social “la Caixa”, DOS MARES (ref. CTM2010-21810-C03-01), NUREIEV (ref. CTM2013-44598-R) and PERSEUS (grant agreement 287600) research projects funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain, the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain, and the European Commission, respectively. The authors acknowledge the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) for providing the ROV, and the onboard cruise party of researchers and technicians, jointly with the crew of R/V "Sarmiento de Gamboa", for their assistance while at sea. Special thanks go to J. Rivera (IEO) and S. Quesada for putting their invaluable ROV experience and skills at the service of the research cruise

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**Table 1.** Metadata of ROV dives (D) and Agassiz trawls (A) including identification codes, locations, depth range (m), length of dive or trawl (m) and swept area of dive or trawl (m<sup>2</sup>). ROV depth ranges go from deeper to shallower as dives were performed up canyon axis and wall. Trawl depth ranges go from shallower to deeper as hauls were performed down canyon axis. CCC: Cap de Creus canyon; LFC: La Fonera canyon; BC: Blanes canyon.

| Sampling transect code | Location          | Geographic coordinates |                | Depth range (m) | Length (L) (m) | Swept area (A) (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
|                        |                   | Latitude (°N)          | Longitude (°E) |                 |                |                                  |
| D8                     | CCC axis          | 42.2227                | 3.8298         | 1570-1490       | 2152.1         | 6456.3                           |
| D9                     | CCC axis          | 42.2847                | 3.6399         | 1215-1200       | 1929.7         | 5789.1                           |
| D16                    | LFC axis          | 41.8545                | 3.4062         | 1570-1510       | 1378.5         | 4135.5                           |
| D18                    | LFC axis          | 41.8660                | 3.3348         | 1215-1155       | 1161.8         | 3485.4                           |
| D19                    | LFC axis          | 41.8761                | 3.2788         | 985-860         | 822.2          | 2466.6                           |
| D20                    | LFC northern wall | 41.8620                | 3.3988         | 1500-980        | 1860.8         | 5582.4                           |
| D21                    | LFC northern wall | 41.8747                | 3.3990         | 985-750         | 687.6          | 2062.8                           |
| D31                    | BC axis           | 41.4589                | 2.8797         | 1520-1500       | 623.4          | 1870.2                           |
| D32                    | BC axis           | 41.5227                | 2.8456         | 1225-1200       | 630.8          | 1892.4                           |
| D33                    | BC axis           | 41.5730                | 2.8474         | 910-900         | 584.2          | 1752.6                           |
| <b>ROV Total</b>       |                   |                        |                | <b>750-1570</b> | <b>11831.1</b> | <b>35493.3</b>                   |
| A1                     | CCC axis          | 42.3255                | 3.5057         | 1408-1554       | 5660           | 10090                            |
| A2                     | CCC axis          | 42.2942                | 3.6224         | 1018-1236       | 4780           | 13680                            |
| A5                     | BC axis           | 41.4417                | 2.8836         | 1477-1570       | 2480           | 5840                             |
| A6                     | BC axis           | 41.5004                | 2.8544         | 1204-1424       | 4620           | 6270                             |
| A7                     | BC axis           | 41.5927                | 2.8508         | 752-864         | 2150           | 92370                            |
| <b>Agassiz Total</b>   |                   |                        | -              | <b>752-1570</b> | <b>43495.3</b> | <b>128250</b>                    |

|                                   | Attraction | Avoidance | Drifting | Stationary | N     |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|
| <i>Bathypterois dubius</i>        | 0          | 1         | 0        | 8          | 9     |
| %                                 | 0          | 11.11     | 0        | 88.89      | 3.85  |
| <i>Coelorinchus mediterraneus</i> | 0          | 0         | 0        | 9          | 9     |
| %                                 | 0          | 0         | 0        | 100        | 3.85  |
| <i>Lepidion lepidion</i>          | 2          | 16        | 14       | 89         | 121   |
| %                                 | 1.65       | 13.22     | 11.57    | 73.55      | 51.71 |
| <i>Nezumia aequalis</i>           | 0          | 0         | 3        | 17         | 20    |
| %                                 | 0          | 0.00      | 15.00    | 85.00      | 8.58  |
| <i>Polyacanthonotus rissoanus</i> | 1          | 15        | 10       | 13         | 39    |
| %                                 | 2.56       | 38.46     | 25.64    | 33.33      | 16.67 |
| <i>Trachyrincus scabrus</i>       | 0          | 5         | 16       | 14         | 35    |
| %                                 | 0          | 14.29     | 45.7     | 40.00      | 14.96 |
| <b>Total fish response</b>        | 3          | 37        | 43       | 150        | 233   |
| %                                 | 1.28       | 15.89     | 18.45    | 64.38      | 100   |

**Table 2.** Observed reaction behavior to the approaching ROV of selected fish species.

The first number in each cell of the table is the count or frequency and the second number shows the percentage. N: number of individuals.

**Table 3.** Observed behavior to the approaching ROV of selected crustacean decapod species. The first number in each cell of the table is the count or frequency and the second number shows the percentage. N: number of individuals.

|                                  | Avoidance | Defensive | Drifting | Stationary | N      |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|--------|
| <i>Geryon longipes</i>           | 5         | 0         | 0        | 10         | 15     |
| %                                | 33.33     | 0         | 0        | 66.67      | 9.62   |
| <i>Munida</i> spp.               | 6         | 10        | 0        | 78         | 94     |
| %                                | 6.38      | 10.64     | 0        | 82.98      | 60.26  |
| <i>Pagurus</i> spp.              | 14        | 0         | 4        | 29         | 47     |
| %                                | 29.79     | 0         | 8.51     | 61.70      | 30.13  |
| <b>Total crustacean response</b> | 25        | 10        | 4        | 117        | 156    |
| %                                | 16.03     | 6.41      | 2.56     | 75.00      | 100.00 |



**Supplementary information**

| Dive code                          | CCC    |        |           | LFC     |         |        |        | BC       |        |          |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|-----------|---------|---------|--------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
|                                    | 8      | 9      | 16        | 18      | 19      | 20     | 21     | 31       | 32     | 33       |
| Species                            |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <b>Cnidaria</b>                    |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| Unidentified anemona               | 154.9  | 1036.4 |           | 1434.6  | 2432.5  | 2507.9 | 13089  |          | 2113.7 | 1711.7   |
| <b>Ctenophora</b>                  |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| Unidentified Ctenophora            | 309,8  | 1036,4 | 1209,0    |         |         | 716,5  | 484,8  |          |        |          |
| <b>Annelida</b>                    |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Bonellia viridis</i>            |        |        |           |         |         | 895.7  |        |          |        |          |
| <b>Mollusca</b>                    |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Aporrhais serresianus</i>       |        |        |           | 286.9   |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Euspira fusca</i>               |        |        |           |         |         |        | 484.8  |          |        |          |
| <i>Bathypolypus sponsalis</i>      |        | 345.5  |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <b>Crustacea</b>                   |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Meganitctyphanes</i> spp.       |        |        |           |         |         |        | 484.8  |          |        |          |
| <i>Sergestes arcticus</i>          |        |        |           |         |         |        | 484.8  |          |        |          |
| <i>Aristeus antennatus</i>         |        | 172.7  |           |         |         | 358.3  | 1454.3 | 1604.1   | 528.4  |          |
| <i>Plesionika</i> spp.             |        |        |           |         |         | 179.1  | 1454.3 |          | 528.4  |          |
| <i>Bathynectes longispina</i>      |        |        |           |         |         | 358.3  |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Geryon longipes</i>             | 619.5  | 691.0  |           |         |         | 895.7  | 969.6  |          |        |          |
| <i>Munida</i> spp.                 | 2942.9 | 6391.3 | 2659.9    | 286.9   |         | 2866.2 | 0.0    | 4277.6   | 1056.9 |          |
| <i>Pagurus</i> spp.                |        | 691.0  | 1450.9    | 2295.3  | 3243.3  |        | 1939.1 | 1604.1   | 5812.7 | 2852.9   |
| Unidentified decapoda              | 154.9  |        | 241.8     | 286.9   |         | 537.4  | 484.8  | 3208.2   |        | 1711.7   |
| <b>Echinodermata</b>               |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Brissopsis lyrifera</i> (alive) |        | 172.7  | 666424.9  | 20370.7 | 48244.5 | 9494.1 |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Brissopsis lyrifera</i> (dead)  |        | 1727.4 | 1332849.7 | 67711.0 | 66488.3 | 3224.4 | 5332.6 | 267885.8 |        | 276731.7 |
| <i>Ceramaster grenadensis</i>      | 154.9  |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Gracilechinus elegans</i>       |        |        | 1209.0    |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Mesothuria intestinalis</i>     | 929.3  |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| Unidentified holothurian           | 154.9  |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <b>Chordata</b>                    |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <b>Ascideacea</b>                  |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Dicopia antirrhinum</i>         |        |        |           |         |         | 895.7  |        |          |        |          |
| <b>Actinopterygii</b>              |        |        |           |         |         |        |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Notacanthus bonaparte</i>       |        |        |           | 573.8   | 405.4   | 179.1  |        |          |        |          |
| <i>Polyacanthonotus rissoanus</i>  | 154.9  | 1209.2 | 1692.7    | 2295.3  | 405.4   | 2507.9 |        |          |        | 570.6    |
| <i>Nettastoma melanurum</i>        |        |        |           |         |         | 179.1  |        |          |        |          |

|                                   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <i>Alepocephalus rostratus</i>    | 154.9  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <i>Cyclothone braueri</i>         |        | 172.7  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <i>Bathypterois dubius</i>        | 1084.2 | 345.5  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <i>Lampanyctus crocodilus</i>     |        | 172.7  |        |        |        |        | 484.8  |        |        |        |
| <i>Coelorinchus mediterraneus</i> | 154.9  |        | 1450.9 |        | 179.1  |        |        | 534.7  |        |        |
| <i>Nezumia aequalis</i>           |        | 1381.9 |        | 573.8  | 1621.7 | 716.5  | 969.6  |        |        |        |
| <i>Trachyrincus scabrus</i>       |        | 691.0  | 241.8  | 2582.2 | 2432.5 | 1612.2 | 2423.9 |        | 528.4  |        |
| <i>Lepidion lepidion</i>          | 929.3  | 2245.6 | 5319.8 | 2869.1 | 2837.9 | 7344.5 | 2908.7 | 3742.9 | 2113.7 | 2852.9 |
| <i>Hoplostethus mediterraneus</i> |        |        |        |        | 405.4  |        |        |        |        |        |
| <i>Lepidorhombus boscii</i>       |        |        |        | 286.9  |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <i>Epigonus telescopus</i>        |        |        |        |        | 405.4  |        |        |        |        |        |
| Unidentified fishes               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <b>Chimaeriformes</b>             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| <i>Chimaera monstrosa</i>         | 172.7  |        | 573.8  | 810.8  | 1612.2 | 484.8  |        | 528.4  |        |        |

Table S1

| Trawl code                       | CCC    |        |       | BC     |       |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
|                                  | 1      | 2      | 5     | 6      | 7     |
| Species                          |        |        |       |        |       |
| <b>Cnidaria</b>                  |        |        |       |        |       |
| Unidentified anemona             | 396.4  | 146.2  |       |        | 43.3  |
| <i>Desmophyllum dianthus</i>     |        |        |       | *      | *     |
| <i>Madrepora oculata</i>         |        |        |       | *      |       |
| <i>Lophelia pertusa</i>          |        |        |       |        | *     |
| <b>Annelida</b>                  |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Bonellidae</i> spp.           |        | 146.2  |       |        |       |
| <b>Sipuncula</b>                 |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Aspidosiphon muelleri</i>     |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Golfingia vulgaris</i>        |        |        |       |        |       |
| <b>Mollusca</b>                  |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Antalis entalis</i>           |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Aporrhais serresianus</i>     | 1090.2 |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Euspira fusca</i>             |        |        |       | 319.0  | 443.9 |
| <i>Bathypolypus sponsalis</i>    |        | 73.1   |       |        |       |
| <i>Galiteuthis armata</i>        |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Abra longicallus</i>          |        | 73.1   |       |        | 43.3  |
| <b>Crustacea</b>                 |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Phronima</i> spp.             |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>AcanthePHYra eximia</i>       | 198.2  | 292.4  | 684.9 | 478.5  |       |
| <i>AcanthePHYra pelagica</i>     | 198.2  |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Pontocaris lacazei</i>        |        |        |       | 159.5  | 10.8  |
| <i>Aristeus antennatus</i>       |        | 950.3  |       | 1275.9 | 86.6  |
| <i>Bathynectes maravigna</i>     | 198.2  |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Calocaris macandreae</i>      |        |        |       |        | 21.7  |
| <i>Gennadas elegans</i>          |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Geryon longipes</i>           |        | 511.7  |       |        |       |
| <i>Macropodia</i> spp.           |        |        |       | 159.5  |       |
| <i>Monodaeus couchii</i>         |        | 73.1   |       |        | 86.6  |
| <i>Munida intermedia</i>         |        |        |       |        | 43.3  |
| <i>Munida tenuimana</i>          | 991.1  | 1388.9 |       |        | 21.7  |
| <i>Munidopsis serricornis</i>    |        |        |       |        | 97.4  |
| <i>Pagurus alatus</i>            |        | 731.0  |       | 478.5  | 303.1 |
| <i>Pagurus</i> spp.              |        |        |       |        | 10.8  |
| <i>Pasiphaea multidentata</i>    |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Pasiphaea sivado</i>          |        |        |       |        |       |
| <i>Plesionika martia</i>         |        |        |       |        | 21.7  |
| <i>Polycheles typhlops</i>       |        | 219.3  |       |        |       |
| <i>Pontophilus norvegicus</i>    | 99.1   | 73.1   |       |        |       |
| <i>Sergia robusta</i>            |        |        | 171.2 |        |       |
| <i>Stereomastis sculpta</i>      | 99.1   | 146.2  |       |        |       |
| <i>Meganyctiphanes norvegica</i> |        |        |       |        |       |

|                                   |        |        |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| <i>Natatolana borealis</i>        |        |        |        |
| Unidentified Decapoda             | 99.1   |        |        |
| <b>Echinodermata</b>              |        |        |        |
| <i>Mesothuria intestinalis</i>    | 99.1   |        |        |
| <i>Ypsilothuria bitentaculata</i> |        |        |        |
| <i>Hedingia mediterranea</i>      |        |        | 638.0  |
| <i>Molpadia musculus</i>          |        |        |        |
| <i>Brissopsis lyrifera</i>        |        | 2739.7 | 32.5   |
| <i>Ceramaster grenadensis</i>     | 99.1   |        |        |
| <b>Chordata</b>                   |        |        |        |
| <i>Bathypterois dubius</i>        | 198.2  |        |        |
| <i>Galeus melastomus</i>          |        |        | 159.5  |
| <i>Lepidion lepidion</i>          | 99.1   | 657.9  | 1594.9 |
| <i>Mora moro</i>                  |        | 73.1   |        |
| <i>Nezumia aequalis</i>           |        | 73.1   | 10.8   |
| <i>Trachyrincus scabrus</i>       |        |        | 319.0  |
| <i>Lampanyctus crocodilus</i>     |        | 365.5  | 10.8   |
| <i>Symbolophorus barnardi</i>     |        | 513.7  |        |
| <i>Notacanthus bonaparte</i>      |        | 73.1   | 159.5  |
| <i>Cataetyx alleni</i>            |        |        |        |
| <i>Alepocephalus rostratus</i>    |        | 219.3  |        |
| <i>Melanostigma atlanticum</i>    |        | 146.2  |        |
| <i>Argyropelecus hemigymnus</i>   |        |        |        |
| <i>Chauliodus sloani</i>          |        | 73.1   |        |
| <b>Other</b>                      |        |        |        |
| Bivalvia spp.                     |        |        | 10.8   |
| <i>Gryphus vitreus</i>            |        |        | 10.8   |
| Myctophidae spp.                  |        |        | 10.8   |
| <i>Radiella sarsi</i>             | 4261.6 |        | 638.0  |

Table S2

**Figure 1.** (A) Location map of the studied submarine canyons. (B, C, D) Bathymetric maps of Cap de Creus, Blanes and La Fonera canyons. ROV dives are indicated with white lines and letter “D” and Agassiz trawls by yellow lines and letter “A”. ROV dives were performed at 50-100 cm above the seafloor.

**Figure 2.** Fish and crustacean decapod species observed in ROV dives. (A) *Coelorinchus mediterraneus*. (B) *Nezumia aequalis*. (C) *Batypherois dubius*. (D) *Lepidion lepidion*. (E) *Trachyrincus scabrus* (F) *Munida* spp. (G) *Geryon longipes*. (H) *Pagurus* spp. Laser beams are spaced 15 cm.

**Figure 3.** NMDS analysis representing the spatial ordination of different taxonomic families related to sampling methodology (ROV and Agassiz trawl). Centroids and average dispersion of taxa clustered around each sampling method were used to draw the convex hulls.

**Figure 4.** (A) Percentage of total Phyla observed with ROV (left) and retrieved by Agassiz trawls (right). (B) Comparison of abundance (ind/km<sup>2</sup>) values of different families sampled by Agassiz trawl (grey bars) and video-imaged by ROV (black bars).

**Supplementary information: Table and Figure captions**

**Table S1.** Species list and abundance of individuals per dive (individuals/km<sup>2</sup>) in the studied submarine canyons. Location of dives is shown in Figure 1. CCC: Cap de Creus canyon; LFC: La Fonera canyon; BC: Blanes canyon.

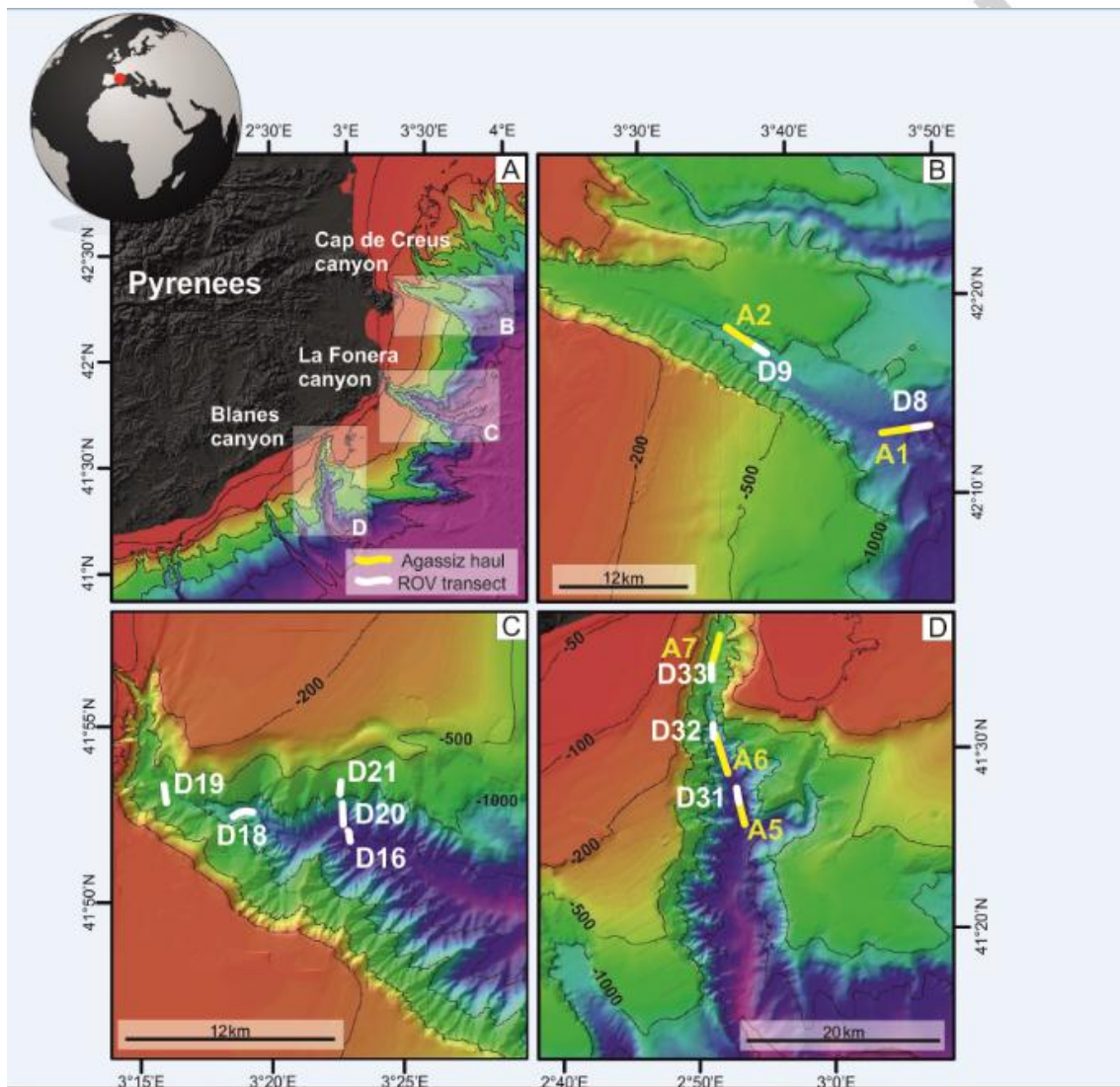
**Table S2.** Species list and abundance of individuals per Agassiz trawl (individuals/km<sup>2</sup>) in the studied submarine canyons. Location of trawls is shown in Figure 1. CCC: Cap de Creus canyon; BC: Blanes canyon. \*Number of individuals not available.

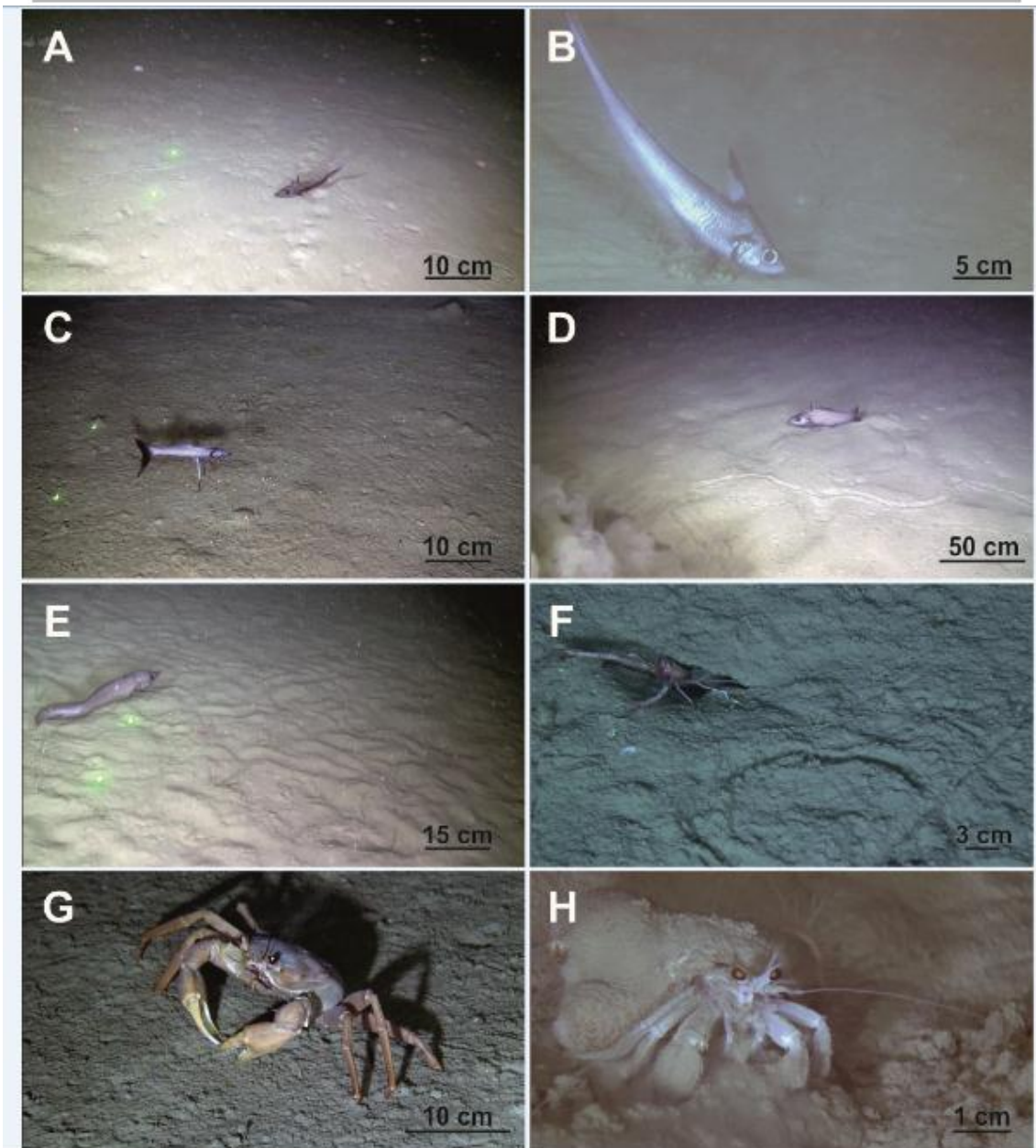
**Figure S1.** Sequences of different behaviours to ROV approach by demersal fishes and decapod crustaceans. Sequences are to be viewed from top down. (A) Disturbed avoidance behaviour showing a *T. scabrus* generating a mud puff at 1200 m depth (from top down). Laser beams are spaced 15 cm. (B) Disturbed behaviour showing a *L. lepidion* generating a mud puff at 1000 m depth. Another individual on the upper left corner displays a stationary behaviour. (C) Detail of an undisturbed individual and example of seabed marks left by *Pagurus* spp. at 1200 m depth in Blanes canyon. (D) *G. longipes* specimen performing an avoidance response to ROV approach by burying itself, at 1000 m depth. (E) Examples of individuals of *Munida* spp. performing aggressive responses by projecting their claws at the entrance of their shelter, either natural or artificial. Laser beams are spaced 15 cm.

**Figure S2.** ROV images of *B. lyrifera* individuals and aggregations either alive or dead. (A) Detail of a *B. lyrifera* individual during displacement, leaving a trail mark on the soft seabed. (B) Live *B. lyrifera* herd. (C) Field of displacement trails left by a herd of *B. lyrifera* with one visible live individual. (D) Tanathocenosis made of multiple carcasses of *Brissopsis* spp. A to C are from La Fonera canyon at 1200 m, while D is from Blanes canyon at 1100 m depth. Laser beams are spaced 15 cm.

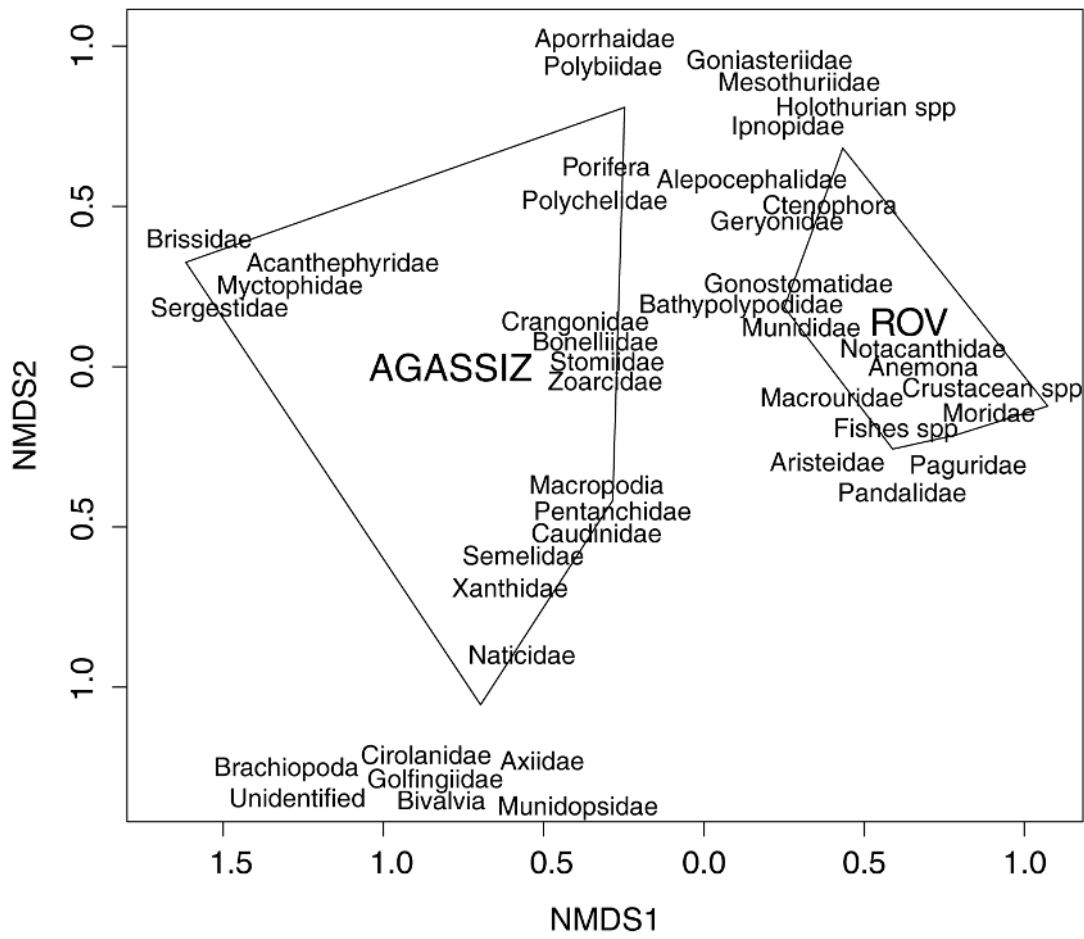
## HIGHLIGHTS

- A comparison between Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) and Agassiz trawling methods is presented.
- The behavior of deep-sea fishes and invertebrates of the Northwestern Mediterranean submarine canyons was studied by ROV imaging.
- The comparison between ROV sampling efficiency and Agassiz trawling highlighted that fish captures were 20 times higher with the ROV, with a lower efficiency for epibenthic invertebrates.
- Ethological observations for fishes showed minor response to the ROV presence and new insights on decapods behavior were obtained.
- ROV surveying is an efficient technique to assess abundance and species composition in deep-sea waters for these motile species and questions trawl-based estimations.



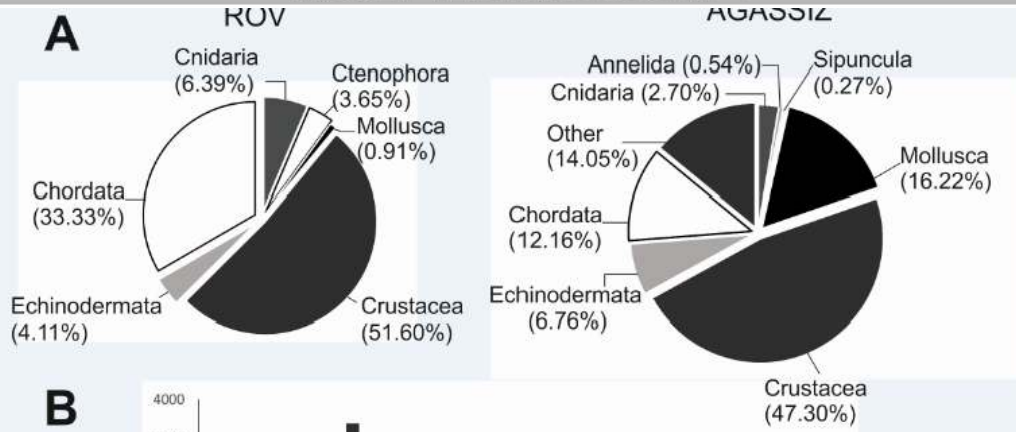




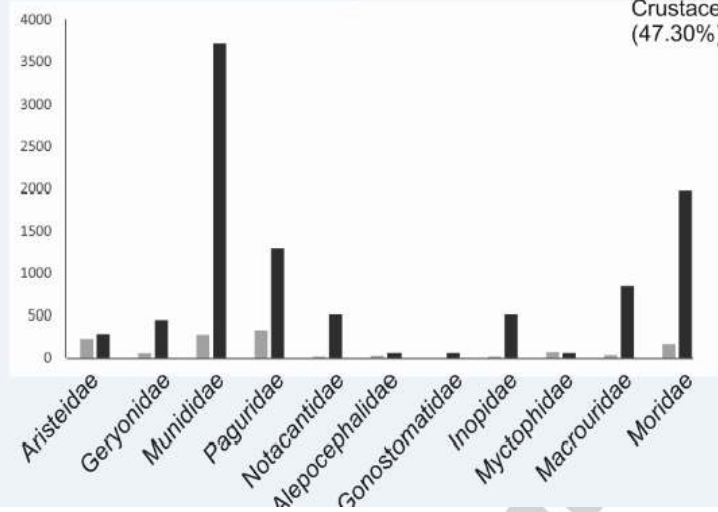


Accepted

**A**



**B**



Accepted manuscript