

Who lives on the bottom of the ocean?

Coastal bays and fjords are full of life.

Some who live here are hidden.

Others are easy to spot.

Every part of this marine food web is important.

The tiniest food source is marine snow.

A shower of nutrients and plankton.

Narwhals and beluga are too big to eat it.

But benthos can.

Benthos are the animals that live on the bottom of the ocean.

Their hungry mouths catch the falling marine snow, and they can grow to be an important food source for other animals and people.

Mapping the connections

Benthos can transform marine snow into benefits for fisheries and local harvesters.

Benthos form different communities based on the habitat around them.

Their roles depend on who they are:

they can be food;

provide shelter for young fish;

filter water;

and create habitat for others to grow on.

Habitat maps are one way to make the story of benthos visible.

They can be used for making management decisions, to ensure these areas can continue to thrive.

When we map the seafloor, we can find areas where benthic communities are living. This gives us clues about the health of the ecosystem.

What benthos live near you?