

# Discover Arctic Sea Floor Fauna

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If you were asked to guess some kinds of fauna living on the Arctic ice shelf – you'd probably think of polar bears, the Atlantic puffin, Greenland sharks, Arctic charrs, Iceland gulls, Arctic foxes, and other such kinds of animals. But, did you know that the ocean beneath the ice shelf is also teeming with life? Found on the sea floor below the Arctic shelf, at a depth of 50 metres, are diverse species of brittle stars, feather stars, sea cucumbers, clams, bristle worms, snails and the occasional crab!

One of the reasons for this rich diversity is the lifecycle of marine zooplanktons! In winter, these microscopic animals enter their resting stage (diapause). The food that would otherwise be consumed by them falls to the bottom of the sea floor, allowing a rich benthic community to survive and flourish on it. These benthic communities are not averse to feeding on any organic matter coming to the sea floor, even if it's not fresh – from faecal pellets to decaying animal parts! And they are perfectly adapted to living at low temperatures permanently. For example, their metabolic functions, like respiration and reproduction, are much slower than those of animals living at warmer temperatures. As a result, they grow very slowly, but live for decades!



**Benthic fauna from the Arctic shelf.**

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**A brittle star making its way across the Arctic deep-sea plain at a depth of 3,000 meters below sea-level.**

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**An arrow worm (zooplankton) from the Arctic.**

Credits: Copyright of Russ Hopcroft, University of Alaska Fairbanks, USA.



**Encased in the same suite of armour used by insects, this copepod is among the best known zooplankton groups in the Arctic.**

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**A pycnogonid or a sea spider is not a true spider.**

Credits: Bernard Picton, Wikimedia Commons. URL: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nymphon-leptocheles.jpg>. License: CC-BY-SA.



**An unknown Arctic species, called Pumpkin.**

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***Beroe abyssicola* is a species of comb jelly found on the Arctic sea-floor.**

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***Clione*, a gastropod zooplankton.**

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**A microscopic view of ice algae from the Arctic.**

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