

Benthic fauna from Kenyan marine sediments: a review

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Marine benthos are organisms found associated with marine sediments and vary in size from microscopic to sizes visible with the naked eye. In Kenya marine benthic studies have mainly focussed on soft sediment substrate in the mangrove forest floor. Gazi Bay has received the most attention with 80% of all benthic studies being carried out in the different mangrove species and very few in the adjacent seagrass. Another area that has received attention is Mida Creek where there are several studies looking at crabs and crabs behaviour. Other topics of interest identified in the Kenyan benthic studies were trophic interactions between endobenthos and epibenthos. Also studies relating to mangrove ecosystem recovery and function where benthic fauna were used as bio-indicators were common.

It is noted however, that there are few studies that relate to the impacts of human activity such as organic pollution, seed collection for mariculture, bait collection to benthic biodiversity and how these impacts are likely to affect the whole ecosystem. There is also paucity of information relating to status of other habitats such as seagrass beds, sandy beaches, mudflats, continental shelf and slope. With the development of gas and oil being so imminent, it is prudent to make inventories of benthic biodiversity both at the intertidal and deep sea areas that will serve as baseline for future monitoring work.