

**Product title:** Predicted patterns of seabed biodiversity in the North West Marine Region (NWMR).

### **Relevance of product to marine planning and management**

This product provides planners and managers with biologically informed predictions about the patterns in species abundance, species richness and species evenness of seabed fishes on the outer shelf and slope in the NWMR

. It can be used as follows:

1. To provide scientific analysis and input to planners and managers with the responsibility to conserve and managed marine biodiversity in the NWMR;
2. As a biological data input to models, where appropriate, of the marine environment in the NWMR (e.g. Marxan);
3. To compare predictions in patterns of seabed biodiversity in the NWMR with the findings of future biological surveys; and
4. To produce maps of predicted spatial patterns of species abundance, species richness and species evenness for seabed fishes in depths from 50 to 1500 metres;

It will be of value in planning and managing the conservation of marine biological diversity in the NWMR, particularly in relation to predicting areas of high biodiversity when there is very little or no biological data.

### **Product description**

This product (i.e. Access data base) contains data (longitudes, latitude and biodiversity attribute variables) that describes the predicted spatial patterns of biodiversity categories based on species richness and evenness of demersal fish in the NWMR. This product provides predictions for total species abundance, species richness and species evenness and estimates of uncertainty for demersal fish. The predicted patterns are represent as point data arranged on a 0.1 degree grid (~ 1.2 km<sup>2</sup>) covering depths 50-1500 metres in the NWMR

### **Interpretation of product**

This product represents the predicted spatial patterns of species abundance, species richness and species evenness of demersal fish communities in the NWMR. It provides a description of the structure rather than the composition (i.e. specific species) of these assemblages. Structure equates to total species abundance (the total number of individuals), species richness (the total number of species) and species evenness (relative proportions of species). The product can also be used to identify areas in the NWMR that are predicted to have unique combinations of species richness and evenness. This allows managers to identify areas that are predicted to have common or rare types of community structure.

Data and information on the levels of uncertainty associated with predictions have been produced. For more information please phone or email the contact.

### **Brief description of methods/data used develop output**

The following provides a basic description of the methods and data used to produce this product:

1. Existing biological data (i.e. demersal fish) and physical data (i.e. dissolved oxygen, temperature, mud content of sediments, etc.) for the NWMR was collated from the following sources; CSIRO Atlas of Regional Seas (CARS) and range of biological surveys within the NWMR (e.g. Torres Strait Surveys);
2. Biological data was used to identify biodiversity values (i.e. for total species abundance, species richness and species evenness) for all known biological sample sites in the NWMR;
3. Analyses were conducted to determine which physical variables/combinations of physical variables best explain the spatial patterns in biodiversity values identified in step 1 (i.e looking for covariate physical variables that can be reliably used to predict benthic biodiversity);
4. The most reliable/meaningful covariate physical variables were identified and subsequently used as the basis to make a database of predictions of biological diversity values for all points on a 1 km<sup>2</sup> grid for the NWMR between 50-1500 metres depths; and
5. Categories representing unique combinations of species richness and evenness were created by assigning the values of richness one of five ranks and values of evenness one of five ranks. Combining the two sets of ranks gave 25 different possible categories
6. A database was developed to capture latitude, longitude and biodiversity values. This was used to produce maps displaying patterns in benthic biodiversity and map biodiversity categories.

Please phone or email the contact for a more detailed and technical explanation of the methods or data used to develop this product.

### **Advantages/improvements over existing products**

The product provides the only available means to robustly predict patterns of benthic biodiversity at a range of spatial scales in the NWMR. The product uses the most recently available data on the physical environment and biology (demersal fish) in the NWMR.

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### Conditions of use

The product does not contain any confidential information. Data sets provided can be used by planners and managers, but contact the author if intending to use data in publications.

Contact for further information

Piers Dunstan 03 6232 5382 [Piers.Dunstan@csiro.au](mailto:Piers.Dunstan@csiro.au)

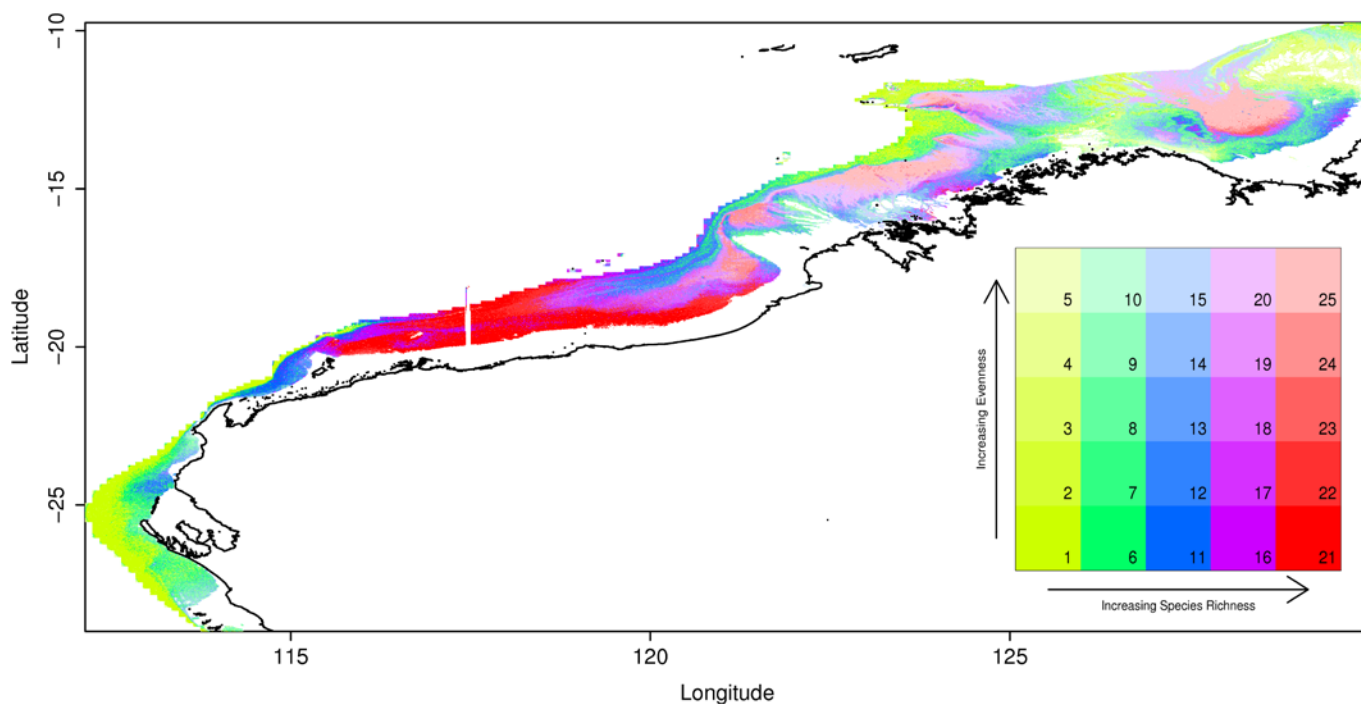
### Attachments

1. **Maps and proportions of unique combinations of species richness and evenness for demersal fish in the North West Marine Region.**
2. Metadata record for Predicted patterns of seabed biodiversity in North West Marine Region (to be provided).

### Attachment 1: Maps and proportions of unique combinations of species richness and evenness for demersal fish in the North West Marine Region.

The following maps and table have been included to provide additional interpretive information for stakeholders. The map and interpretive key (Figure 1) identifies areas in the North West Marine Region that are predicted to have unique combinations of species richness and evenness for demersal fish. The proportion of the total area in the North West Marine Region for each combination of species richness and evenness is provided in Table 1. This provides an indication of the commonality/rarity of each of the 25 combinations. Results show that the most common category is an uneven species rich assemblage (7.82 % of the North West Marine Region - category 21). Species rich, moderately uneven assemblages are the rarest category found in the North West Marine Region (0.06% of the North West Marine Region - category 23). Figure 2 identifies the spatial distribution of the 5 most common/rare combinations of species richness and evenness for demersal fish in the North West Marine Region.

**Figure 1:** Map and interpretive key showing distributions of 25 categories of unique combinations of species richness and evenness for demersal fish in the North West Marine Region.

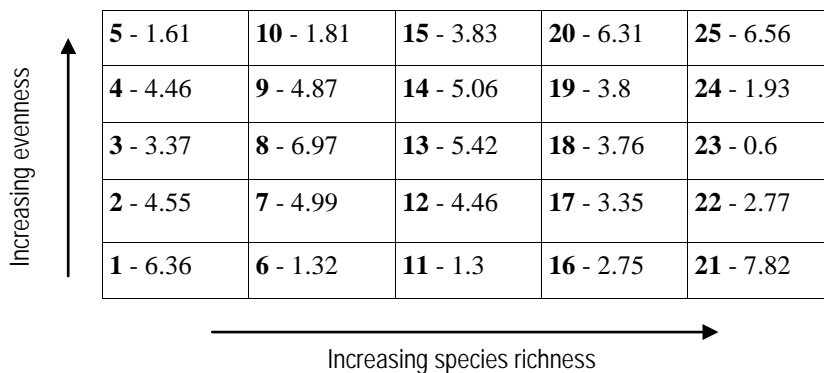


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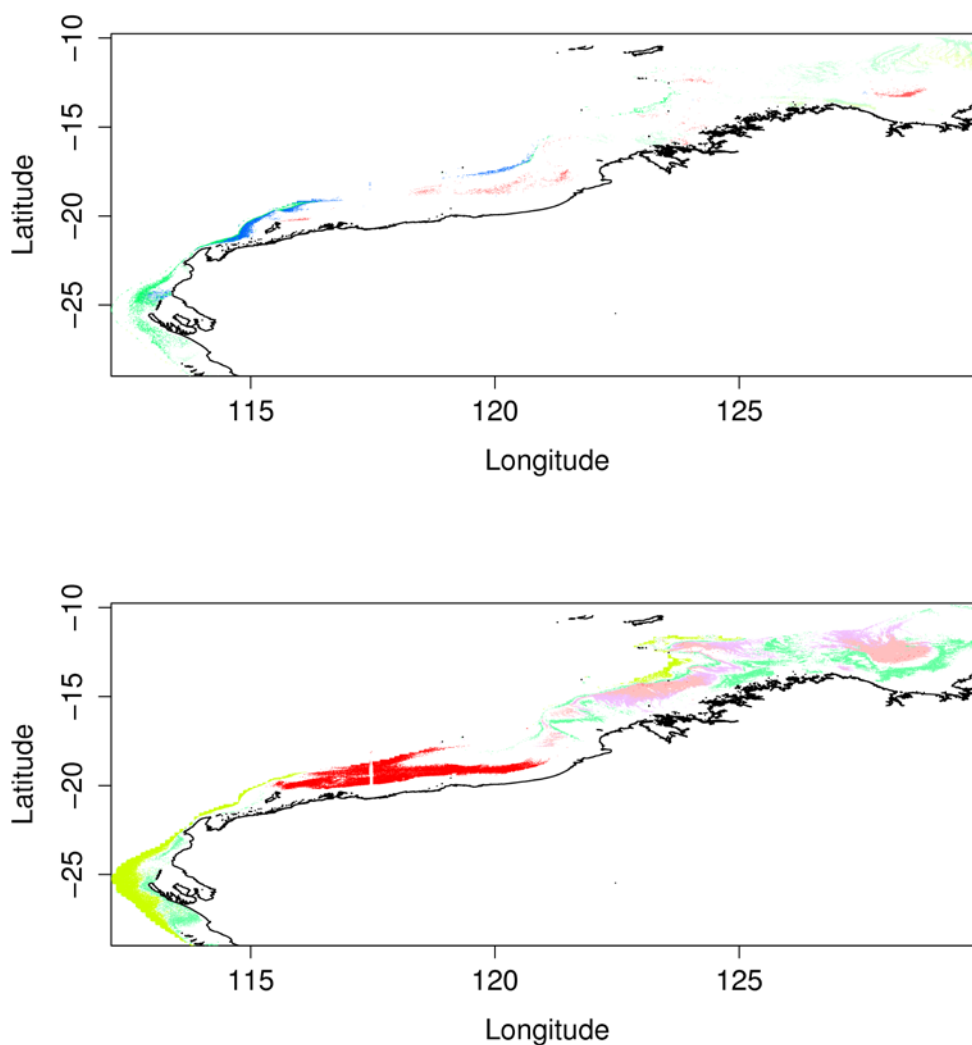
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**Table 1:** Proportions for 25 categories of unique combinations of species richness and evenness for demersal fish in the North West Marine Region.



**Figure 2:** Plots of the 5 least abundant categories (top panel) and the 5 most abundant categories (lower panel) for combinations of species richness and evenness for demersal fish in the North West Marine Region.



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**Attachment 2:** Metadata record for database of benthic biodiversity predictions in the North West Marine Region.

To be provided