

1 Running head: Groundwater faunal distributions

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3 REGIONAL SCALE DRIVERS OF GROUNDWATER FAUNAL DISTRIBUTIONS

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23 *ABSTRACT*

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Freshwater aquifers are a major source of drinking water; they also possess unique assemblages of organisms. However, little is known about the distributional drivers of obligate groundwater organisms at the regional scale. We examine the distribution and composition of stygobiont assemblages in a complex geological setting and explore the relationship between groundwater fauna, hydrogeology and water chemistry. In the study area we grouped similar geologies into five hydrogeological formations (hydro-units) within which habitats for groundwater fauna were broadly similar. We found that the occurrence of stygobionts differed significantly between hydro-units. Stygobionts were significantly less likely to be recorded in mudstone/siltstone and sandstone aquifers compared with carbonate rocks or with igneous/metamorphic rocks. Variance partitioning indicated that the hydro-units explained a greater proportion of the variance (7.52%) in the groundwater community than water chemistry (5.02%). However, much of the variation remained unexplained. The macrofaunal stygobiont species in our study area formed three groups: (1) *Niphargus glenniei* was recorded in a range of hydro-units but only in the west of the study area. (2) *Niphargus kochianus*, *Niphargus fontanus*, *Proasellus cavaticus* and *Crangonyx subterraneus* were predominately recorded in carbonate aquifers in the east of the study area. (3) *Niphargus aquilex* and *Microniphargus leruthi*, were found throughout the study area and in a range of hydro-units. We hypothesise that physical barriers exist that prevent some stygobiont taxa from colonizing apparently suitable geologies; the low permeability deposits dividing the western and eastern parts of the study area may partly explain the observed distributions.

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51 *KEYWORDS*

52 Hydrogeology, Geology, British Isles, Devon, Dorset, Stygobionts, Stygophiles,

53 *Niphargus*, Water chemistry, groundwater.

54

## INTRODUCTION

55 Freshwater aquifers represent approximately 65% of drinking water sources in the  
56 EU (Scheidleder and Visser, 2012), and thus their hydrogeology and chemistry are  
57 generally well known. In addition to their value as a resource, groundwaters possess  
58 unique assemblages of organisms and globally harbour a large reservoir of  
59 biodiversity with a high proportion of endemic and rare species compared with  
60 surface water habitats (Sket 2004, Gibert et al. 2009). In response to the energy  
61 poor nature of subterranean environments, groundwater invertebrates typically have  
62 low population densities and extended life histories with delayed maturity, greater  
63 longevity, smaller egg-clutch size, larger eggs and lower percentages of mature  
64 ovigerous females than related surface-dwelling (epigean) species (Gibert et al.  
65 1994). The low population numbers and slow reproduction of groundwater organisms  
66 may result in an increased vulnerability to anthropogenic impacts compared to  
67 epigean taxa. This vulnerability may be compounded by their slow dispersal rates  
68 (Culver et al. 2009).

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70 Although research centred on surface-groundwater interactions is burgeoning and  
71 has moved from descriptive studies to a more experimental approach (introduction to  
72 this special issue, Larned 2012), research into deeper groundwaters is less  
73 developed, perhaps because of the difficulties in accessing this environment.  
74 Despite numerous studies describing the occurrence and distribution of groundwater  
75 fauna (e.g. Botosaneanu 1986, Proudlove et al. 2003, Robertson et al 2009, Gibert  
76 et al. 2009), relatively little is known about the environmental and/or historical drivers  
77 of their distribution patterns. The relative importance of a given driver is likely to vary  
78 across spatial and temporal scales. At the continental scale, stygobiont distribution

79 patterns have been shaped by events in deep geological time, for example the  
80 movement of continental plates (e.g. Schminke 1974), orogenic and eustatic events  
81 (Stock 1980, Boutin and Coineau 1990, Notenboom 1991), and the alternation of  
82 marine transgressions and regressions (e.g. Jaume and Humphreys 2001). Long  
83 term climate change has also shaped the distribution of groundwater taxa. In the  
84 northern hemisphere the Pleistocene glaciations appear to have had a catastrophic  
85 effect on groundwater communities, leaving Northern Europe with a depauperate  
86 groundwater fauna compared to the rest of Europe. For example, only eight species  
87 of obligate groundwater macro Crustacea have been recorded from mainland Britain,  
88 including four species of *Niphargus*, the most speciose groundwater genus  
89 (Proudlove et al. 2003, Robertson et al. 2009, Knight and Gledhill 2010). This  
90 contrasts with 134 species of *Niphargus* recorded in the Balkans biogeographical  
91 area (McInerney et al. 2014). In Northern Europe, contemporary distributions reflect  
92 patterns of past glacial activity (e.g. Strayer 1994, Robertson et al. 2009). However,  
93 there are some species present in formerly deglaciated areas, and those species  
94 that remain in Northern Europe must have survived the impacts of glacial and  
95 periglacial conditions (Holsinger 1988, Proudlove et al. 2003, Kristjansson and  
96 Svavarsson 2007, Lefebure et al. 2007, McInerney et al. 2014). Indeed, recent  
97 research has shown that the small number of *Niphargus* species that are present in  
98 the UK are ancient endemics that have survived millions of years of extreme climate  
99 changes (McInerney et al. 2014). At smaller scales, stygobiont distribution patterns  
100 are influenced by the availability of suitable habitat and aquifer connectivity as well  
101 as the ecological tolerances, competitive interactions and dispersal abilities of  
102 species (Gibert et al. 1994, Castellarini et al. 2007, Hahn and Fuchs 2009).

104 Regional investigations that have gathered large datasets on stygobiont presence  
105 and environmental conditions are relatively rare (Mauclaire and Gibert 2001, Galassi  
106 et al. 2009, Martin et al. 2009, Dole-Olivier et al. 2009b, Hahn and Fuchs 2009). In  
107 these studies, geology appears to be an important determinant of stygobiont  
108 distributions because it controls the availability of suitable habitats (Datry et al. 2005,  
109 Dole-Olivier et al. 2009b, Botosaneanu 1986, Hahn and Fuchs 2009). Most  
110 stygobionts are dependent on well-developed void spaces with wide pore throats or  
111 fracture apertures. These features commonly occur in karstic, porous and fractured  
112 aquifers and this is where obligate groundwater communities are most diverse and  
113 abundant (e.g. Gibert and Deharveng 2002, Dole-Olivier et al. 2009b). In addition to  
114 providing physical habitat, the degree to which void spaces are developed and  
115 connected also influences the exchange of oxygen, nutrients and organic matter with  
116 the surface, and thus the availability of food for the groundwater community.

117 Observed distribution patterns may also relate to the opportunities for dispersal. In  
118 groundwaters the habitat is very fragmented, limiting the dispersal of groundwater  
119 fauna (Lefebure et al. 2007). Stygobiont assemblages are therefore characterised  
120 by endemic species with limited geographical ranges. Even species which are  
121 apparently widely distributed have emerged as cryptic lineages (Lefebure et al. 2007,  
122 Trontelj et al. 2009, McInerney et al. 2014). Habitat fragmentation in groundwaters  
123 has been most frequently discussed in relation to karst habitats (Trontelj et al. 2009,  
124 Modovan et al. 2012), however it may also occur as a result of the juxtaposition of  
125 different geologies. The presence of mudstones with low permeability and restricted  
126 void spaces may form a physical barrier to stygobiont dispersal (Hahn and Fuchs  
127 2009). Some stygobiont taxa, however, may be able to exploit superficial deposits or  
128 the hyporheic zones of rivers as a means of dispersal (e.g. Ward and Palmer 1994,

129 Castellarini et al. 2007). The water chemistry of an aquifer, e.g. concentrations of  
130 dissolved organic carbon and nitrates, may also correlate with the distribution of  
131 groundwater taxa (Martin et al. 2009).

132

133 In this study we address the limited understanding of the drivers of groundwater  
134 faunal distributions at the regional scale by carrying out an extensive sampling  
135 programme within the complex geological setting of the south-west of the UK. Our  
136 aims were to determine the detailed spatial distributions of the UK stygobiont species  
137 in the study area and investigate whether the distribution and composition of  
138 stygobiont assemblages varies with hydrogeology and water chemistry. We build on  
139 the design of the PASCALIS project on European groundwater biodiversity which  
140 adopted a hierarchical sampling strategy and included two types of aquifer (porous  
141 and karstic) (Dole-Olivier et al. 2009a). Our approach was to group the different  
142 hydrogeological formations present in the study area into five 'hydro-units' where the  
143 different geologies within a given hydro-unit provide broadly similar habitats for  
144 groundwater fauna. We sampled groundwater assemblages within the different  
145 hydro-units to determine whether species were restricted to particular hydro-units,  
146 and sampled water chemistry to determine whether faunal distributions reflect local  
147 variation in water chemistry.

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## METHODS

### *Study area and hydrogeological units*

151 The study area in south west England is an area of contrasting topography and  
152 geology dominated by lowland (max. elevation 279 m) sedimentary rocks in the east  
153 and higher elevation (max. 621 m) metamorphic and igneous rocks in the west (Fig.

154 1). The region's annual average rainfall is approximately 900-1000 mm  
155 (<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/sw/>).

156

157 Within the study area 271 different geological formations have been mapped at the  
158 1:50,000 scale (Reproduced from the British Geological Survey Map data at the  
159 original scale of 1:50 000 Licence 2011/057 British Geological Survey. ©NERC. All  
160 rights reserved). To assess the general hydrogeological controls on species  
161 distributions, these geologies were grouped into categories termed "hydro-units".  
162 The hydro-units are based on broad differences in geology and groundwater flow  
163 characteristics which result in different groundwater habitats for fauna. There are  
164 two main types of groundwater flow: intergranular and flow through fractures (Price  
165 1996). Unconsolidated granular deposits in which all groundwater movement is  
166 intergranular were grouped together as hydro-unit 1 because these deposits form a  
167 habitat in which fauna can only live within the pore spaces between the sediment  
168 grains. Fractured rocks may be igneous, metamorphic or sedimentary in origin.  
169 Igneous and metamorphic rocks (which are of volcanic origin) were grouped together  
170 (hydro-unit 2) because there were insufficient data to determine differences in habitat  
171 type between them. They were grouped separately from other strata because  
172 groundwater flow is only through fractures, and due to of their volcanic origin, they  
173 have a bedrock geochemistry that is different to other consolidated rocks.  
174 Sedimentary rocks may be non-carbonate or carbonate. Non-carbonate  
175 sedimentary rocks often have varying degrees of consolidation and, therefore, form  
176 aquifers in which flow may be both inter-granular in the less consolidated areas and  
177 through fractures in consolidated rock. They are classified according to grain size as  
178 mudstones, siltstones and sandstones (Price 1996). Sandstones form aquifers with



179 much higher permeability than siltstones and mudstones which often form aquitards  
180 or aquicludes (Price 1996, Allen et al. 1997). The difference in permeability is likely  
181 to result in both a different groundwater chemistry and a different physical habitat for  
182 fauna. They were therefore separated into a mudstone/siltstone hydro-unit (3) and a  
183 sandstone hydro-unit (4). Hydro-unit 5 includes all carbonate geologies. In these  
184 rocks, fractures are enlarged by dissolution to form fissures and caves providing  
185 substantially larger and more inter-connected void spaces than any other rock type,  
186 which can serve as habitats for fauna. In the study area carbonate rocks range from  
187 the weakly karstified Cretaceous Chalk (Maurice et al, 2006) to the highly karstified  
188 limestones of Devonian and Carboniferous. Where the Chalk overlies the Upper  
189 Greensand Formation these strata are commonly in hydraulic continuity (Allen et al.  
190 1997). This means that it is likely that fauna may be living in both the Chalk and the  
191 Upper Greensand, and that it is not possible to distinguish the two habitats. The  
192 Upper Greensand Formation is a non-karstic aquifer comprising sandstones and  
193 sands, but where it is in hydraulic continuity with the Chalk it was included in the  
194 carbonate hydro-unit (5). Elsewhere, outcrops of the Upper Greensand Formation  
195 are isolated from the Chalk and, were therefore grouped with the other sandstones in  
196 the sandstone hydro-unit (4). The properties of the five hydro-units are summarized  
197 in Table 1.

198

199 The distribution and extent of the different hydro-units varied across the study area  
200 (Fig. 1). In particular there was a pronounced difference between the hydro-units in  
201 the east and west of the study area. Mudstones/siltstones (hydro-unit 3), covered the  
202 largest surface area in the study region and were most common in the west.  
203 Sandstones (hydro-unit 4), were the next most common, and occurred across the

204 region, with the largest outcrops in the west and north-west. Carbonate aquifers  
205 (hydro-unit 5), were predominately located in the east, where there were extensive  
206 Cretaceous chalk downlands. In the west carbonate rocks were limited to much  
207 smaller isolated outcrops of older limestones, separated by mudstones and  
208 sandstones. Granular material (hydro-unit 1) was restricted to the far south eastern  
209 edge of the study area, whereas igneous and metamorphic rocks (hydro-unit 2),  
210 were only present in the west and south west.

211

### 212 *Sampling*

213 In total, 221 sites were sampled. The number of samples taken within each hydro-  
214 unit was approximately proportionate to the surface area it occupied (Table 1). Within  
215 each unit, sites were selected to maximize spatial coverage. Boreholes free from fine  
216 mesh well screens and in-situ equipment were preferentially selected. Borehole and  
217 well sampling sites ranged from 0.36 to 130 m deep and 0.05 to 2 m in diameter.  
218 Where there were insufficient boreholes or wells, springs were sampled. Each site  
219 was sampled on a single occasion. Most samples (197) were collected between  
220 September 2009 and May 2010, and water chemistry measurements were made at  
221 the time of sampling. A further 24 samples were collected in November 2011; no  
222 water chemistry data were obtained for these samples.

223

224 Fauna were collected from boreholes and wells using a weighted plankton net (63µm  
225 mesh, diameter varied from 35 – 300mm dependent on borehole aperture). The net  
226 was lowered to the base of the borehole/well and moved up and down vigorously to  
227 disturb the sediment before retrieval. For springs, a net was swept through the  
228 sediment of the spring chamber or at the spring head source. The samples were

229 preserved in >90% ethanol and all equipment thoroughly cleaned between sites. In  
230 the laboratory animals were separated from debris, stygobionts were identified to  
231 species level using Gledhill et al. (1993) and Knight and Gledhill (2010); Ostracoda  
232 (identified to class), Hydracarina (identified to clade) and Copepoda and Oligochaeta  
233 (identified to sub-class) were probably predominantly stygophiles and stygoxenes.  
234 Freshwater epigeal taxa and terrestrial taxa were noted.  
235 Electrical conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen and temperature were recorded using a  
236 multi-parameter probe (YSI 600QS) lowered to the base of each borehole/well. The  
237 probe was calibrated prior to each sampling trip. Water samples for laboratory  
238 analysis were taken using a bailer. At springs, field chemistry and water samples  
239 were taken directly from the spring head or catchpit. Water samples were filtered and  
240 refrigerated before dispatch to analytical laboratories within 48 hours. Analysis for  
241 major anions ( $\text{Cl}^-$ ,  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ,  $\text{NO}_3^-$ ) and cations ( $\text{Mg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Na}^+$ ,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ ) was performed  
242 using high pressure liquid chromatography using a Dionex ED40 electrochemical  
243 detector (min. reporting value;  $1.0\text{mg l}^{-1}$ ). Ammoniacal nitrogen was analyzed by  
244 colourimetric analysis using a Konelab discrete analyser (min. reporting value;  $0.03$   
245  $\text{mg l}^{-1}$ ). Dissolved organic carbon (DOC) was analyzed by a Skalar San Plus 1050 air  
246 segmented flow analyser (min. reporting value  $0.2\text{ mg l}^{-1}$ ).

247

#### 248 *Data analysis*

249 Chemical data were tested for normality (Q-Q plots) and homogeneity of variance  
250 (Fligner-Killeen test), and a non-parametric ANOVA was used to investigate  
251 differences in water chemistry between the five different hydro-units (selected as  
252 factors). A generalized linear model with a binomial error structure was then used to  
253 examine the relationships between presence/absence of stygobiont taxa, hydro-units

254 and water chemistry. Statistical analyses were performed using R version 3.0.2  
255 (2013), using standard packages plus the package for analysis of over dispersed  
256 data (Lesnoff et al, 2012). The initial model selected hydro-unit as a factor. The  
257 model was then run with all stygobiont presence/absence data, using the carbonate  
258 hydro-unit (5) as the point of comparison because it: i) comprised the most sites, ii)  
259 was the strata in which stygobionts were most common, and iii) also yielded a broad  
260 range of water quality data. Models were then run for each set of water quality data  
261 (i.e. each chemical determinand with associated presence/absence and hydro-unit  
262 data), the odds ratios were calculated and predicted probabilities of stygobiont  
263 presence were determined from the mean value for each determinand. Different  
264 permutations of the model were run to explore whether the inclusion of sample type  
265 (borehole, well or spring) and/or water quality data improved the model, and to  
266 identify any interactions between factors. Outputs were checked to verify the data  
267 were not over dispersed and models were then compared, using a one-way ANOVA,  
268 to identify any significant differences between models. Where there was no  
269 difference, the simplest model was selected and the odds ratios calculated to  
270 describe the relative likelihood of recording stygobionts in each hydro-unit.

271

272 The association between the faunal community and environmental variables was  
273 investigated using Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA) within Canoco for  
274 Windows Ver.4.51 (Ter Braak and Smilauer 1998). Only those sites with concurrent  
275 chemistry analysis (190 samples) were used in this analysis and sites where there  
276 was uncertainty over the geological unit from which the sample was obtained (7  
277 samples) were excluded.

278 A series of ordinations were undertaken including groundwater faunal abundance,  
279 hydro-units and water chemistry data. Both stygobiont and stygophile taxa were  
280 included in the analysis to reflect the diversity and distribution of the community  
281 recorded from each sample location where fauna were recorded, although the  
282 results and discussion are focused on the stygobiont taxa. To determine how  
283 individual variables might explain patterns in the faunal data (stygobionts and  
284 stygophiles), we applied the forward selection procedure ( $P \leq 0.05$  after Bonferonni  
285 correction). Only those variables having a significant association with the faunal  
286 community distribution were included in the final analysis and presented in the output  
287 diagrams. The stygobiont *Antrobathynella stammeri* (Jakobi, 1954), which was  
288 recorded only once, was fitted passively to the ordination. To determine the  
289 proportion of variance in the faunal data explained by the hydro-units and water  
290 chemistry data, a variance partitioning approach was used (Borcard 1992). This  
291 constrained the species ordination for each of these co-variable groups in turn, while  
292 partialling out the other variables from the ordination.

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294

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## RESULTS

296 As expected water chemistry varied significantly between the five hydro-units,  
297 reflecting differences in bedrock geochemistry and permeability. With the exception  
298 of potassium, significant differences were recorded between each chemical  
299 determinand and the five hydro-units (Table 2).

300

301 Stygobionts and/or stygophiles were recorded from 70% of the study sites (Table 3)  
302 and all hydro-units (Fig.1). The remaining 30% of sites contained no groundwater

303 taxa although epigean taxa were recorded at some sites. Stygophiles were more  
304 abundant and recorded more frequently than stygobionts (59% compared to 34% of  
305 sites). All of the stygobiont macro-Crustacea known to occur in the UK were  
306 recorded, although their presence and community composition varied considerably  
307 across the study region. Boreholes in the carbonate hydro-unit (unit 5) supported the  
308 most diverse stygobiont communities, with up to four taxa recorded in a single  
309 borehole, compared to a maximum of two taxa from other hydro-units (Fig. 2).

310

311 *Niphargus aquilex* (Schiödte, 1855), was recorded throughout the study region and  
312 from all hydro-units (Fig. 2). In contrast, *Niphargus glenniei* (Spooner, 1952) was  
313 only recorded in the west of the study area despite being recorded in most hydro-  
314 units. *Niphargus kochianus* (Bate, 1859), *Niphargus fontanus* (Bate, 1859) and  
315 *Proasellus cavaticus* (Leydig, 1871) were primarily recorded in the carbonate hydro-  
316 unit (5) in the east of the region (Fig. 2), but were absent from this hydro-unit and all  
317 other hydro-units in the west of the study area. *Crangonyx subterraneus* (Bate,  
318 1859) and *Microniphargus leruthi* (Schellenberg 1934) were rare, and were primarily  
319 recorded in the east (Fig. 2). *Antrobathynella stammeri* (Jakobi, 1954) was recorded  
320 once.

321

322 The occurrence of stygobionts differed significantly between hydro-units [ $\chi^2=33.8$ ,  
323  $df=5$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Table 4]. From the odds ratio (OR), stygobionts were 88% less likely  
324 to be recorded in mudstone/siltstones (hydro-unit 3) [OR=0.12, 97.5%CI 0.034-  
325 0.030,  $p<0.001$ ] than in carbonates (hydro-unit 5) and about 80% less likely to be  
326 recorded in sandstones (hydro-unit 4) [OR=0.20, 97.5%CI 0.08-0.50,  $p<0.001$ ], than  
327 carbonates (hydro-unit 5). Stygobionts were also less likely to be recorded in

328 mudstones/siltstones (hydro-unit 3) and sandstones (hydro-unit 4) than in  
329 igneous/metamorphic sites (hydro-unit 2) and granular sites (hydro-unit 1). All  
330 differences were significant except for sandstone sites relative to granular sites.  
331 The generalized linear model generally improved (based on the AIC scores and level  
332 of significance) with the addition of either sample type or a water chemistry  
333 determinand as a value. Mudstones/siltstones and sandstones (hydro-units 3 and 4)  
334 were significantly different from carbonate rocks (hydro-unit 5) throughout the  
335 iterations. No significant interactions between factors (e.g. hydro-unit combined with  
336 sample type) were identified. By including water chemistry determinands with  
337 presence/absence in the model, improved models were obtained with calcium,  
338 chloride and pH , indicating a potential association of these variables with stygobiont  
339 presence. The predicted probability of stygobiont presence in any hydro-unit was  
340 higher with increasing calcium concentrations. In contrast, the predicted probability  
341 of stygobiont presence in any hydro-unit declined as chloride concentrations  
342 increased. There was no clear relationship between pH and the presence of  
343 stygobionts.

344

345 The inclusion of sample type significantly improved the models that included  
346 electrical conductivity, magnesium, potassium, sodium, sulphate and dissolved  
347 organic carbon. For the model with potassium, the igneous/metamorphic aquifers  
348 (hydro-unit 2) were identified as significantly different when sample type was  
349 included. The odds ratio of recording stygobionts in this unit was also lower  
350 compared with the simplest model where no additional factors were included. Overall  
351 there was a greater likelihood of recording stygobionts in springs (sample type 3)  
352 than boreholes (sample type 1: Table 4). However, presence or absence of

353 stygobionts across the hydro-units was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) irrespective of the  
354 inclusion of sample type in the model.  
355  
356 Canonical correspondence analysis indicated a separation of the sample centroids  
357 for the five hydro-units based on the faunal community data (Fig. 3), the first two  
358 canonical axes explained 20.0% and 13.6% of the total variance in faunal  
359 abundance respectively (Fig. 3). These two axes combined explained 78.4% of the  
360 variance in the species-environment relationship (46.7% and 31.7% respectively).  
361 Water temperature ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), magnesium (mg/l) and potassium (mg/l) were significantly  
362 correlated with the distribution of the groundwater fauna (all  $p < 0.01$ ). The stygobionts  
363 *Niphargus kochianus*, *Microniphargus leruthi*, *Crangonyx subterraneus* and  
364 *Proasellus cavaticus* were associated with the centroids for the sandstone and  
365 carbonate hydro-units (hydro-unit 4 and 5). In contrast, some taxa were not strongly  
366 associated with the centroids of any single hydro-unit but were associated with  
367 higher concentrations of potassium (*N. fontanus* and *N. aquilex*) and higher water  
368 temperature (*N. glenniei*). Variance partitioning indicated that 7.5% of the variance in  
369 faunal abundance could be explained by the hydro-units and 5.0% by water  
370 chemistry (Table 5), whilst 3.6% of the variance was shared by hydro-units and water  
371 chemistry together.

372

373

## DISCUSSION

374 Stygobionts and stygophiles were found throughout the region and were present in  
375 all hydro-units. However, stygobionts were absent from 70% of sites. Eberhard et al.  
376 (2009) and Hancock and Boulton (2009) found that repeated sampling over time at  
377 groundwater sites increased the number of species recorded, thus we cannot



378 exclude the possibility that the low frequency of stygobiont occurrence in our study  
379 may be an artifact of low sampling effort, as we sampled each site on only one  
380 occasion.

381 We found that stygobiont occurrence and community composition differed between  
382 hydro-units. Stygobionts were significantly more likely to be recorded in the  
383 carbonate and igneous/metamorphic hydro-units, than in the mudstone/siltstone or  
384 sandstone units. Several stygobiont species (*Niphargus kochianus*, *Microniphargus*  
385 *leruthi*, *Crangonyx subterraneus* and *Proasellus cavaticus*) were predominantly  
386 associated with the carbonate hydro-unit. Other stygobionts (*Niphargus aquilex* and  
387 *Niphargus glenniei*) were found across a range of hydro-units.

388 The carbonate hydro-unit also supported the most diverse stygobiont communities,  
389 with up to four stygobiont species co-occurring in a single borehole. Carbonate  
390 aquifers are characterised by solutional fissures and conduits providing connected  
391 water-filled void spaces which are sufficiently large for groundwater organisms to  
392 inhabit (Humphreys 2009). Furthermore, their highly permeable nature may result in  
393 a greater supply of food from the surface, permitting the co-existence of more  
394 species than in less permeable hydro-units, where food shortages may be severe  
395 (Malard et al. 2009). Studies in continental Europe have demonstrated previously  
396 that karst aquifers support some of the most diverse stygobiont communities (Dole-  
397 Olivier et al., 2009b; Martin et al., 2009; Galassi et al., 2009; Hahn and Fuchs, 2009).

398 The sandstone hydro-unit was also anticipated to provide a suitable habitat for  
399 diverse stygobiont communities because this has been the case in other regions  
400 (Humphreys 2009). Therefore, the low numbers of individuals and low diversity  
401 recorded in our study was surprising. One explanation is that the Permo-Triassic

402 sandstones, which comprise part of this hydro-unit contain lower permeability  
403 mudstone beds in this area (Allen et al. 1997). This may result in a fragmented  
404 habitat with areas containing poorly developed fracture networks providing a poor  
405 habitat. The deposits are also affected by faulting which may result in further  
406 barriers to stygobiont movement. However, the sandstone (hydro-unit 4) is  
407 predominantly distributed in the west of the study area, which is outside the  
408 observed range of *Niphargus kochianus*, *Niphargus fontanus* and *Proasellus*  
409 *cavaticus* (Fig. 2), three of the most common stygobite species in the east of the  
410 study area. It is not clear whether the absence of these species in the west is  
411 because the sandstones do not form a suitable habitat for them, or because they  
412 have not dispersed to these areas.

413 The mudstone/siltstone hydro-unit had the lowest occurrence of stygobionts  
414 suggesting that it provides a less suitable habitat, perhaps as a result of the small  
415 and often weakly connected voids, and the low levels of oxygen and nutrients. Our  
416 findings are consistent with those of Hahn and Fuchs (2009), who also reported that  
417 mudstones were characterized by depauperate communities.

418

419 Our results demonstrate that the five hydro-units had different water chemistries.  
420 Therefore it was not possible to determine whether differences in groundwater fauna  
421 occurred due to water chemistry differences between the units, or differences  
422 between the physical voids present within the different units (Maurice and  
423 Bloomfield, 2012). However, in this study, groundwater taxa occurred in all units and  
424 the proportion of the variance in the abundance of the groundwater community  
425 explained by water chemistry was smaller than that of the hydro-units. The  
426 mudstone/siltstone and sandstone units remained significantly different from the

427 carbonate unit in the general linear model, irrespective of the addition of water  
428 chemistry parameters. However, the igneous/ metamorphic unit only became  
429 significantly separated from the other hydro units when potassium (together with  
430 sample type) was included in the model. The higher potassium concentrations  
431 reported from the igneous/ metamorphic hydro-unit relative to the carbonate hydro-  
432 unit reflects the contrasting water chemistry of these different geologies. These  
433 findings provide evidence that suggests that, across our study sites, water chemistry  
434 had less influence over the distribution of groundwater taxa than physical  
435 hydrogeological characteristics. Other studies have also found little relation between  
436 environmental variables, water chemistry and the distribution of groundwater taxa at  
437 a regional scale (e.g. Dumas and Lescher-Moutoue 2001, Paran et al. 2005, Dole-  
438 Olivier et al. 2009b, Galassi et al. 2009). Nevertheless, in all these studies there are  
439 considerable difficulties when trying to separate the influence of potentially  
440 confounding factors that occur over a range of geographical scales that may  
441 determine stygobiont distributions (Dole-Olivier et al., 2009b; Stoch and Galassi,  
442 2010; Maurice and Bloomfield, 2012).

443

444 The probability of finding stygobionts appeared to increase with an increase in  
445 calcium concentrations. This is probably because stygobionts were most often found  
446 in the carbonate hydro-unit where calcium concentrations are high. Although  
447 calcium is necessary for crustacean carapace development (Rukke, 2002), it does  
448 not appear to be limiting in our study area as high stygobiont frequencies were also  
449 recorded from the igneous/metamorphic hydro-unit, where the mean calcium  
450 concentration was the lowest of all the hydro-units sampled.

451

452 In contrast to Dole-Olivier et al. (2009b), we found no significant relationship  
453 between dissolved oxygen concentration and stygobiont occurrence. This is  
454 probably because all but 14 of our sites had oxygen concentrations  $>1 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$ , which  
455 is the threshold below which oxygen has been reported to be critical for groundwater  
456 taxa (Malard and Hervant 1999, Hahn 2006). In addition, stygobionts are widely  
457 acknowledged to be tolerant of low oxygen conditions in comparison to epigean  
458 species (Malard and Hervant 1999).

459 The greater likelihood of finding stygobionts in spring sites (sample type 3) than in  
460 borehole sites (sample type 1) may be because it is easier to capture fauna in  
461 springs than in boreholes, and also because springs form a distinct ecotone where  
462 there are higher nutrients and more diverse communities than in deeper  
463 groundwaters (Smith et al. 2003) However, the use of springs as an explanatory  
464 variable did not fundamentally modify or significantly influence the differences we  
465 identified between the hydro-units.

466

467 Most of the variation in the occurrence of groundwater fauna across the study region  
468 was not explained by either the hydro-units or water chemistry. One of our most  
469 striking findings was the differing distribution patterns of stygobiont species within the  
470 study area. Most stygobiont species had restricted, and different distributions. The  
471 exception was *Niphargus aquilex* which was recorded from all hydro-units and  
472 across the whole study area. This species is widely distributed in central and  
473 southern Europe also (Botosaneanu 1986), with an apparent range that spans  $>$   
474 2300 km east – west (Trontelj et al. 2009). In the British Isles it has been extensively  
475 recorded in riverine hyporheic zones and is particularly associated with shallow  
476 alluvial aquifers (Proudlove et al. 2003) and, thus, may have dispersed across the

477 area using this route (the hyporheic corridor concept of Stanford and Ward 1993).  
478 Nevertheless, recent research shows that the wide distribution of *Niphargus aquilex*  
479 is an artifact generated by cryptic diversity; the complex contains seven cryptic taxa,  
480 two of which are unique to the British Isles (McInerney et al. 2014). Other widely  
481 distributed *Niphargus* “species” have also been found to be species complexes (e.g.  
482 *N. virei*, Lefebure et al. 2006 and *N. rhenorhodanensis*, Lefebure et al 2007, see also  
483 Trontelj et al. 2009).

484

485 Although there would appear to be suitable habitats distributed across the study  
486 area, other stygobiont species exhibited distinct spatial segregation. The endemic  
487 *Niphargus glenniei* was only recorded in the west and *Niphargus kochianus*,  
488 *Niphargus fontanus*, and *Proasellus cavaticus* were only found in the east. One  
489 possible explanation for these observed distributions is that they result from biotic  
490 interactions between the species. *Niphargus glenniei* for example, did not co-occur  
491 with either *Niphargus fontanus* or *Niphargus kochianus*. *Niphargus fontanus* is much  
492 larger and may have a competitive or predatory advantage. However, stygobiont  
493 species can co-exist, and up to four species were found in a single borehole in the  
494 east of our study area. Although in our study *Niphargus glenniei* was mostly  
495 recorded alone or occasionally together with the smaller species *Microniphargus*  
496 *leruthi*, other studies have reported it with the larger species *Niphargus aquilex*  
497 (<http://hcrs.freshwaterlife.org/>). An alternative hypothesis is that geological barriers  
498 are present that constrain the dispersal of these organisms, as has been reported for  
499 other groundwater taxa (Gooch and Hetrick 1979; Goricki and Trontelj 2006).  
500 Trontelj et al. (2009) observed that many groundwater taxa appear to be able to  
501 disperse and yet are confined by boundaries beyond which dispersal is impossible

502 (although the nature of these boundaries is currently unclear). The  
503 mudstones/siltstones and other low permeability rocks across the centre of our study  
504 area may form a barrier between suitable stygobiont habitats in the east and west,  
505 and could explain the different species distributions. However, given the occurrence  
506 of all stygobiont species in spring habitats, it is surprising that groundwater species  
507 have not been able to utilize shallow superficial deposits (e.g. hyporheic zone  
508 corridors) to disperse between the east and west of the study area.

509 The life histories and restricted distributions of groundwater taxa mean that they are  
510 vulnerable to anthropogenic change (Gibert et al. 1994). *Niphargus glenniei*, which is  
511 endemic to two counties in southern England, has been designated a UK  
512 Biodiversity Action Plan species. However, other groundwater taxa have no such  
513 recognition, and European groundwater monitoring programmes do not consider  
514 groundwater ecology. Identifying the drivers of observed distribution patterns in  
515 groundwater taxa is important because this information may then be used to inform  
516 the development of management plans for the conservation of these unique  
517 assemblages.

518 .

## 519 CONCLUSIONS

520 In our regional scale study, there were significant differences in the groundwater  
521 assemblages present in geologies with different hydrogeological characteristics.  
522 Stygobionts occurred most frequently and were most diverse in the carbonate hydro-  
523 unit (5) which is characterized by karstic, solutionally enlarged voids providing an  
524 extensive physical habitat, and a good supply of nutrients and oxygen. They were  
525 also relatively abundant and diverse in the igneous and metamorphic hydro-unit (2)  
526 and granular aquifers (hydro-unit 1) but were relatively rare in the sandstone hydro-

527 unit (4). They occurred least frequently in the mudstone/ siltstone hydro-unit (3)  
528 which has low permeability resulting in poor physical and water chemistry conditions  
529 for stygobionts. The hydro-units explained a greater proportion of the variation in  
530 stygobiont data than water chemistry, suggesting that physical hydrogeology may be  
531 more important than water chemistry in determining stygobiont distributions.  
532 However, a large proportion of the variation in stygobiont abundance was not related  
533 to either the hydro-units or water chemistry and we were intrigued to find that some  
534 stygobiont species were spatially segregated within our study area. It appears that  
535 barriers may exist that prevent some stygobiont taxa from colonizing apparently  
536 suitable geologies, and the low permeability deposits dividing the western and  
537 eastern parts of the study area may partly explain the observed distributions. The  
538 stygobiont species fell into three contrasting groups: (1) *Niphargus glenniei* was only  
539 found in the west of the study area, but was found in a range of hydro-units with  
540 varying void types and water chemistry. (2) *Niphargus kochianus*, *Niphargus*  
541 *fontanus*, *Crangonyx subterraneus* and *Proasellus cavaticus* were only found in the  
542 east of the study area and predominantly in carbonate aquifers. (3) *Niphargus*  
543 *aquilex* and *Microniphargus leruthi*, were found throughout the study area and in a  
544 range of hydro-units suggesting that they have good dispersal abilities and may be  
545 able to circumvent low permeability barriers, perhaps by utilizing superficial deposits  
546 or hyporheic zone corridors. Identifying the precise nature of the barriers to dispersal  
547 and the development of monitoring and conservation plans must be a priority for  
548 these restricted and vulnerable species.

549

550

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556

557

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711

712

713

714 FIGURE LEGENDS

715 Figure 1: Distribution of groundwater fauna sampling stations and hydro-units within  
716 the study region in the south-west of England.

717 Figure 2: Stygobitic species presence and community composition at sites within the  
718 study region in the south-west of England. The size of the circles reflects the  
719 number of species recorded.

720 Fig. 3: CCA ordination: Ordination by canonical correspondence analysis of  
721 stygobiont species and stygophile data with significant environmental variables  
722 (identified using the forward selection procedure) from boreholes, wells and springs  
723 in SW England (Sept 2009-Nov 2011).

724

725 Table 1: Classification and description of the 5 hydro-units in the study area

<b>Hydro-unit</b> (no.of sites)	<b>Geology</b>	<b>Main geologies</b>	<b>% Area coverage</b>	<b>Flow</b>	<b>Permeability (relative)</b>
<b>1</b> (10)	Granular	Quaternary & Palaeogene unconsolidated material	6.3	intergranular	Low-high
<b>2</b> (37)	Igneous & metamorphic	Granite, basalt, spillite & gneiss & mica schists	8.6	Fracture	Low-mid
<b>3</b> (57)	Mudstones & siltstones	Carboniferous, Triassic & Jurassic mudstones	51.6	Fracture and intergranular	Very low
<b>4</b> (55)	Sandstones	Permo-Triassic, Jurassic & Devonian sandstones	17.2	Fracture and intergranular	Mid-high
<b>5</b> (63)	Carbonate rocks	Chalk, Carboniferous & Devonian limestones	16.4	Karstic (solutional fissures and conduits)	Low-high

726

727



728 Table 2: Means and standard deviations of water chemistry parameters for each hydro-  
 729 unit. Kruskal-wallis results indicate where determinands were significantly different  
 730 between hydro-units.

731

Hydro-Unit	Statistic	EC μScm <sup>-1</sup>	DO mg/l	Temp °C	pH	DOC mg/l	NH <sub>4</sub> mg/l	Cl mg/l	NO <sub>3</sub> mg/l	SO <sub>4</sub> mg/l	Ca mg/l	Mg mg/l	K mg/l	Na mg/l
1	n	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Mean	370.25	3.65	13.71	7.04	3.63	0.52	9.59	7.46	10.29	47.51	3.53	3.76	16.00
	Std Dev.	199.84	3.58	0.55	0.73	1.19	0.74	3.90	4.67	10.43	26.88	3.12	3.51	5.57
2	n	37	14	23	36	32	13	37	30	32	32	32	27	33
	Mean	276.14	8.91	9.65	6.35	1.41	0.02	8.86	4.66	4.42	25.07	12.33	4.95	20.46
	Std Dev.	193.32	3.41	1.36	0.76	1.72	0.01	7.18	4.85	3.36	12.37	13.98	6.11	14.47
3	n	47	29	29	45	47	29	46	41	47	46	46	45	45
	Mean	349.70	5.53	10.38	6.56	3.65	0.07	11.33	4.10	8.69	30.13	13.68	5.14	23.43
	Std Dev.	198.71	4.32	1.54	0.51	9.38	0.18	6.01	5.99	8.52	16.80	9.93	6.49	13.73
4	n	37	24	26	37	39	6	40	26	37	38	38	34	38
	Mean	423.89	5.90	10.60	6.81	11.52	0.82	12.14	9.07	11.04	37.68	7.40	5.92	18.22
	Std Dev.	245.74	3.89	1.44	0.75	15.48	1.63	6.77	8.30	12.87	27.10	5.21	7.63	9.23
5	n	54	25	39	54	54	17	55	53	52	53	52	43	53
	Mean	582.96	5.69	11.50	7.09	12.37	0.10	11.81	9.35	6.76	55.64	4.51	4.08	15.79
	Std Dev.	133.64	3.14	0.82	0.43	31.16	0.11	6.02	5.52	4.49	21.89	4.25	3.21	8.82
Kruskal Wallis Test	H Df p	48.54 4 <0.001	11.36 4 <0.001	22.37 4 <0.001	30.49 4 <0.001	53.51 4 <0.001	N/A	14.25 4 <0.01	38.66 4 <0.001	18.56 4 <0.01	44.73 4 <0.001	36.24 4 <0.001	5.51 4 0.239	13.44 4 <0.01

732 N/A – insufficient data (majority of values below detection limit).

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734

735 Table 3: Abundance and composition of groundwater taxa (stygbionts and  
 736 stygophiles) in boreholes (BH), wells and springs from the five hydro-units.  
 737

Attributes of sample sites	Total	Sites sampled (no.)		
		BHs	Wells	Springs
No. of sites sampled:	221	124	56	41
<u>No. of sites in each hydro-unit (Hu)</u>				
Granular (Hu1)	10	9	1	0
Igneous/metamorphic (Hu2)	37	12	12	13
Mudstone/siltstone (Hu3)	56	28	19	9
Sandstone (Hu4)	55	34	11	10
Carbonate (Hu5)	63	41	13	9
No. of sites with GW fauna	155	70	51	34
Sites with no GW fauna* <sup>1</sup>	66	54	5	7
No. of sites with stygbionts	75	34	23	18

Taxa groups & species	Total Abundance	Percentage occurrence from all sites				Hydro-units present
<b>Stygbionts</b>	465	33.8	27.4	40.4	43.9	All
<u>Crustacea, Malacostraca, Eumalacostraca</u>						
<u>Peracarida</u>						
<u>Amphipoda</u>						
<u>Niphargidae</u>						
<i>Niphargus kochianus</i>	181	10.8	12.9	12.3	2.5	3, 5
<i>Niphargus fontanus</i>	28	5.4	4.8	7.0	4.9	1, 5
<i>Niphargus aquilex</i>	96	10.4	8.1	12.3	14.6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<i>Niphargus glenniei</i>	79	8.6	2.4	12.3	22.0	2, 3, 4, 5
<i>Microniphargus leruthi</i>	10	2.7	2.4	3.5	2.5	3, 4, 5
<u>Crangonyctidae</u>						
<i>Crangonyx subterraneus</i>	60	5.9	6.5	3.5	7.3	4, 5
<u>Isopoda</u>						
<u>Asellidae</u>						
<i>Proasellus cavaticus</i>	10	2.3	4.0	0	0	5
<u>Syncarida</u>						
<u>Bathynellacea</u>						
<u>Bathynellidae</u>						

<i>Antrobathynella stammeri</i>	1	0.5	0.8	0	0	4
<b>Stygophiles</b>	5318	63.5	44.4	86.0	90.2	All
<u>Crustacea, Maxillopoda</u>						
Copepoda	4181	47.3	26.6	70.2	78.0	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<u>Crustacea, Ostracoda</u>	745	23.4	8.1	38.6	48.8	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<u>Arthropoda, Arachnida, Acari, Trombidiformes</u>						
Hydrachnidae	182	16.2	10.5	21.1	26.8	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<u>Annelida, Clitellata</u>						
Oligochaeta* <sup>2</sup>	210	10.4	12.9	12.3	-	2, 3, 4, 5

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738 \*<sup>1</sup> Other freshwater (epigean) or terrestrial taxa may have been recorded at these sites

739 \*<sup>2</sup> Not included where recovered from spring sources, due to presence of epigean species

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741 Table 4: Summary of odds ratios from generalized linear models selected to describe  
742 relationships between presence/absence data, hydro-units (Hu) and water chemistry.  
743 (The level of significance reported in each model is represented by: \* 0.05, \*\* 0.01,  
744 \*\*\*0.001).

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**Odds ratios calculated relative to:**

Hydro-unit 5 (carbonate)

Sample type 1  
(Boreholes)

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<b>Generalized linear model</b> (simplest model selected based on comparison of all model permutations)	<b>Determinand</b> (value)	<b>Granular material (Hu1)</b>	<b>Igneous / metamorphic (Hu2)</b>	<b>Mudstone / siltstone (Hu3)</b>	<b>Sandstone (Hu4)</b>	<b>Sample type 2 (wells)</b>	<b>Sample type 3 (springs)</b>
<b>Pres/Abs~Hydro-unit</b>	all data	0.84	0.80	0.12***	0.21***		
$\chi^2 = 33.8, df=5, p<0.001$							
	dissolved oxygen	2.00	1.00	0.16**	0.26*		
	nitrate	N/A	0.67	0.12***	0.28*		
	temperature	2.38	1.48	0.15**	0.23*		
<b>Pres/Abs~Hydro-unit + value</b>	calcium	0.97	0.98	0.18**	0.27**		
	chloride	0.93	0.63	0.11**	0.20**		
	pH	0.96	0.56	0.08***	0.16***		
<b>Pres/Abs~Hydro-unit + sample type</b>	Dissolved organic carbon	1.12	0.65	0.10***	0.21***	2.34*	3.01*
	elec. conductivity	1.09	0.59	0.10***	0.22**	2.19	3.07*
	magnesium	0.94	0.43	0.10**	0.19***	1.83	3.22*
	potassium	0.91	0.30*	0.07***	0.14***	1.77	4.52*
	sodium	1.00	0.49	0.12***	0.21**	1.92	3.20*
	sulphate	1.89	0.49	0.09***	0.19**	1.86	3.51*

746 N/A – excluded from analysis because insufficient reliable nitrate data available

747 Level of significance in model \* 0.05, \*\* 0.01, \*\*\*0.001

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756 Table 5: Partialled CCA results showing percentage of variation in species data explained  
757 by environmental variables; hydro-units & groundwater chemistry, together and in isolation.

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CCA	Constraint on Species data	Variable partialled out (covariable)	Sum of all canonical eigen-values (Ev)	Percentage variation (Ev x 100/4.998)	Fraction of variation explained by
<b>CCA1</b>	Chemistry	none	0.429	8.58%	-
<b>CCA2</b>	Hydro-units	none	0.628	12.57%	-
<b>CCA3</b>	Hydro-units	Chemistry	0.251	5.02%	Chemistry
<b>CCA4</b>	Chemistry	Hydro-units	0.376	7.52%	Hydro-units

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Sum of all eigenvalues in a species only CA	4.998	
Overall amount of variation due to environmental variables	16.11%	CCA1 + CC4
Variation due to hydro-units & water chemistry together	3.56%	CCA1 –CCA3
Variation unexplained by hydro-units &/or water chemistry	83.89%	100 – (CCA1 + CCA4)

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Figure 1: Groundwater faunal records and distribution of hydro-units within the study region in the south-west of England.

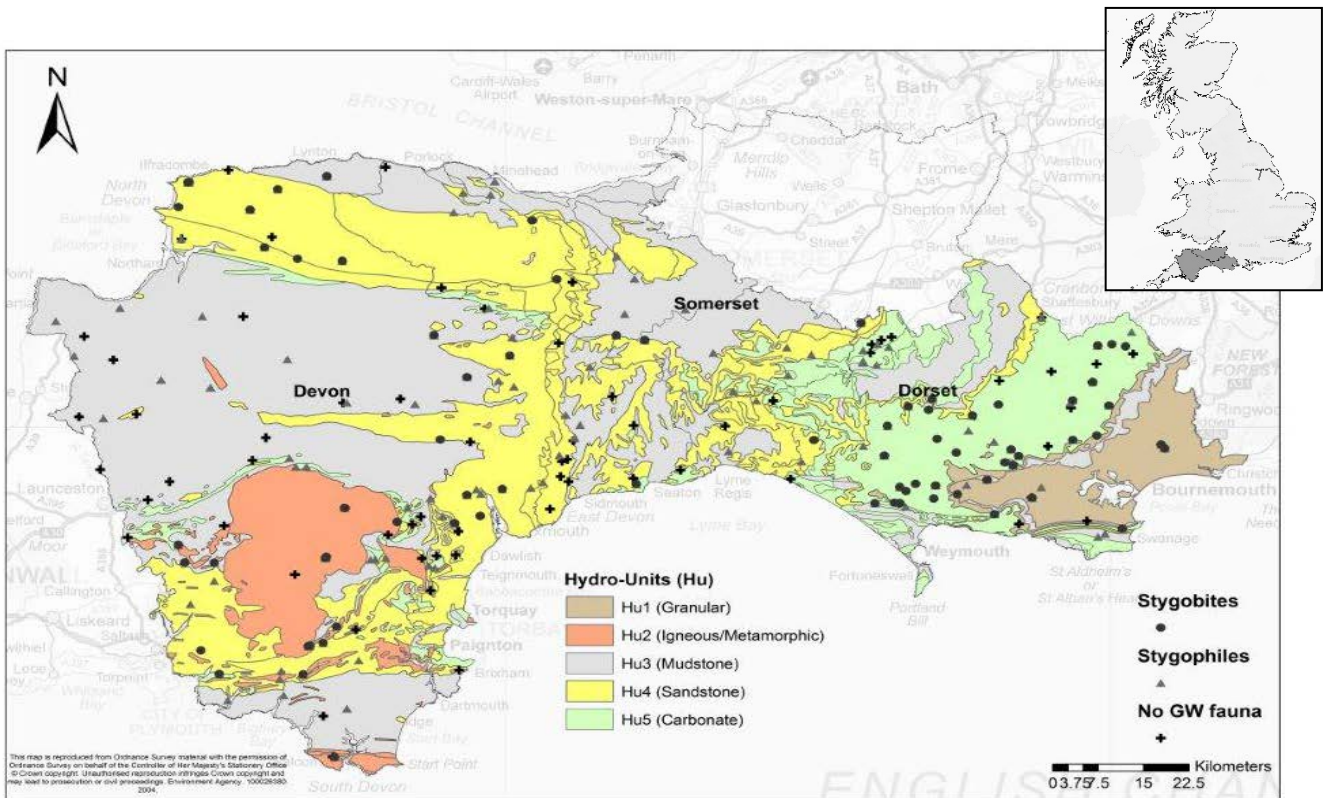
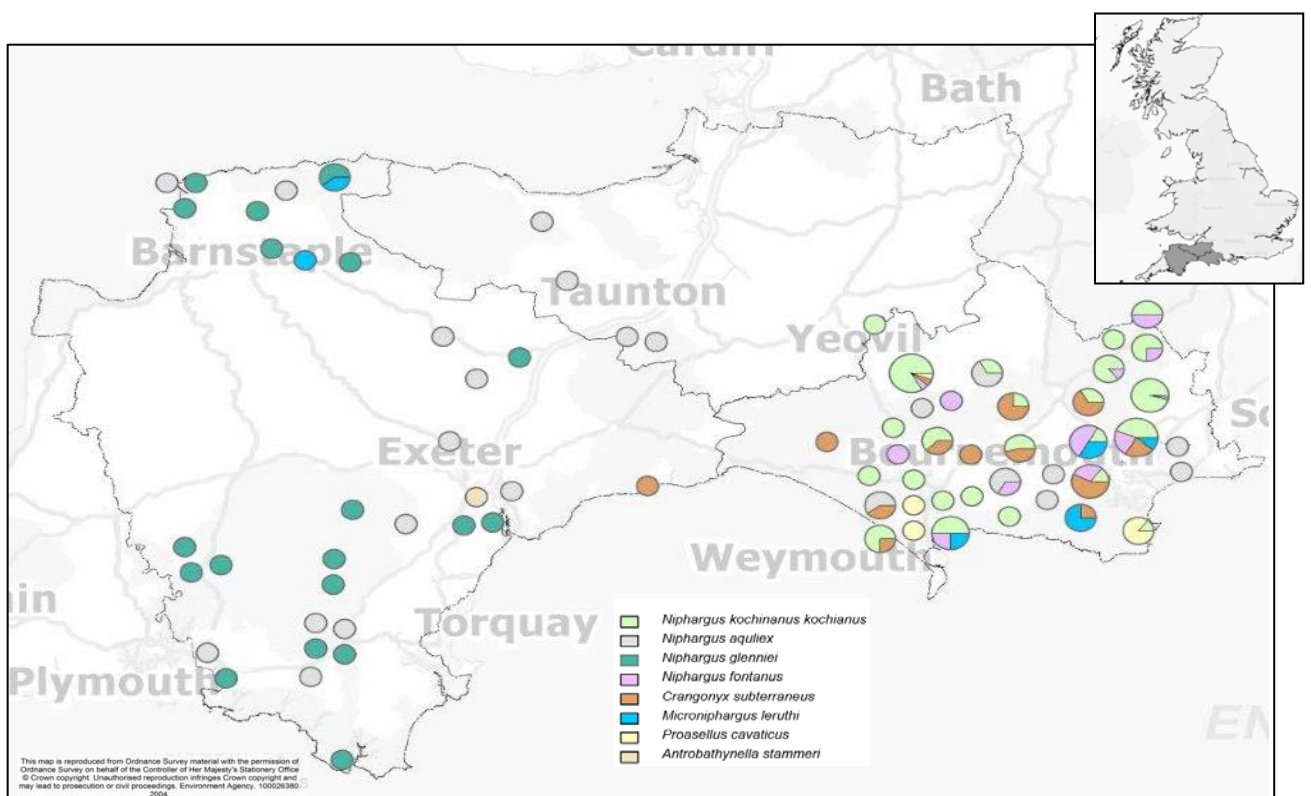


Figure 2: Stygobitic species presence and community composition at sites within the study region in the south-west of England. The size of the circles reflects the number of species recorded.



1 Running head: Groundwater faunal distributions

2

3 REGIONAL SCALE DRIVERS OF GROUNDWATER FAUNAL DISTRIBUTIONS

4

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23 *ABSTRACT*

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Freshwater aquifers are a major source of drinking water; they also possess unique assemblages of organisms. However, little is known about the distributional drivers of obligate groundwater organisms at the regional scale. We examine the distribution and composition of stygobiont assemblages in a complex geological setting and explore the relationship between groundwater fauna, hydrogeology and water chemistry. In the study area we grouped similar geologies into five hydrogeological formations (hydro-units) within which habitats for groundwater fauna were broadly similar. We found that the occurrence of stygobionts differed significantly between hydro-units. Stygobionts were significantly less likely to be recorded in mudstone/siltstone and sandstone aquifers compared with carbonate rocks or with igneous/metamorphic rocks. Variance partitioning indicated that the hydro-units explained a greater proportion of the variance (7.52%) in the groundwater community than water chemistry (5.02%). However, much of the variation remained unexplained. The macrofaunal stygobiont species in our study area formed three groups: (1) *Niphargus glenniei* was recorded in a range of hydro-units but only in the west of the study area. (2) *Niphargus kochianus*, *Niphargus fontanus*, *Proasellus cavaticus* and *Crangonyx subterraneus* were predominately recorded in carbonate aquifers in the east of the study area. (3) *Niphargus aquilex* and *Microniphargus leruthi*, were found throughout the study area and in a range of hydro-units. We hypothesise that physical barriers exist that prevent some stygobiont taxa from colonizing apparently suitable geologies; the low permeability deposits dividing the western and eastern parts of the study area may partly explain the observed distributions.

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51 *KEYWORDS*

52 Hydrogeology, Geology, British Isles, Devon, Dorset, Stygobionts, Stygophiles,

53 *Niphargus*, Water chemistry, groundwater.

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## INTRODUCTION

Freshwater aquifers represent approximately 65% of drinking water sources in the EU (Scheidleder and Visser, 2012), and thus their hydrogeology and chemistry are generally well known. In addition to their value as a resource, groundwaters possess unique assemblages of organisms and globally harbour a large reservoir of biodiversity with a high proportion of endemic and rare species compared with surface water habitats (Sket 2004, Gibert et al. 2009). In response to the energy poor nature of subterranean environments, groundwater invertebrates typically have low population densities and extended life histories with delayed maturity, greater longevity, smaller egg-clutch size, larger eggs and lower percentages of mature ovigerous females than related surface-dwelling (epigean) species (Gibert et al. 1994). The low population numbers and slow reproduction of groundwater organisms may result in an increased vulnerability to anthropogenic impacts compared to epigean taxa. This vulnerability may be compounded by their slow dispersal rates (Culver et al. 2009).

Although research centred on surface-groundwater interactions is burgeoning and has moved from descriptive studies to a more experimental approach (introduction to this special issue, Larned 2012), research into deeper groundwaters is less developed, perhaps because of the difficulties in accessing this environment. Despite numerous studies describing the occurrence and distribution of groundwater fauna (e.g. Botosaneanu 1986, Proudlove et al. 2003, Robertson et al 2009, Gibert et al. 2009), relatively little is known about the environmental and/or historical drivers of their distribution patterns. The relative importance of a given driver is likely to vary across spatial and temporal scales. At the continental scale, stygobiont distribution

79 patterns have been shaped by events in deep geological time, for example the  
80 movement of continental plates (e.g. Schminke 1974), orogenic and eustatic events  
81 (Stock 1980, Boutin and Coineau 1990, Notenboom 1991), and the alternation of  
82 marine transgressions and regressions (e.g. Jaume and Humphreys 2001). Long  
83 term climate change has also shaped the distribution of groundwater taxa. In the  
84 northern hemisphere the Pleistocene glaciations appear to have had a catastrophic  
85 effect on groundwater communities, leaving Northern Europe with a depauperate  
86 groundwater fauna compared to the rest of Europe. For example, only eight species  
87 of obligate groundwater macro Crustacea have been recorded from mainland Britain,  
88 including four species of *Niphargus*, the most speciose groundwater genus  
89 (Proudlove et al. 2003, Robertson et al. 2009, Knight and Gledhill 2010). This  
90 contrasts with 134 species of *Niphargus* recorded in the Balkans biogeographical  
91 area (McInerney et al. 2014). In Northern Europe, contemporary distributions reflect  
92 patterns of past glacial activity (e.g. Strayer 1994, Robertson et al. 2009). However,  
93 there are some species present in formerly deglaciated areas, and those species  
94 that remain in Northern Europe must have survived the impacts of glacial and  
95 periglacial conditions (Holsinger 1988, Proudlove et al. 2003, Kristjansson and  
96 Svavarsson 2007, Lefebure et al. 2007, McInerney et al. 2014). Indeed, recent  
97 research has shown that the small number of *Niphargus* species that are present in  
98 the UK are ancient endemics that have survived millions of years of extreme climate  
99 changes (McInerney et al. 2014). At smaller scales, stygobiont distribution patterns  
100 are influenced by the availability of suitable habitat and aquifer connectivity as well  
101 as the ecological tolerances, competitive interactions and dispersal abilities of  
102 species (Gibert et al. 1994, Castellarini et al. 2007, Hahn and Fuchs 2009).

104 Regional investigations that have gathered large datasets on stygobiont presence  
105 and environmental conditions are relatively rare (Mauclaire and Gibert 2001, Galassi  
106 et al. 2009, Martin et al. 2009, Dole-Olivier et al. 2009b, Hahn and Fuchs 2009). In  
107 these studies, geology appears to be an important determinant of stygobiont  
108 distributions because it controls the availability of suitable habitats (Datry et al. 2005,  
109 Dole-Olivier et al. 2009b, Botosaneanu 1986, Hahn and Fuchs 2009). Most  
110 stygobionts are dependent on well-developed void spaces with wide pore throats or  
111 fracture apertures. These features commonly occur in karstic, porous and fractured  
112 aquifers and this is where obligate groundwater communities are most diverse and  
113 abundant (e.g. Gibert and Deharveng 2002, Dole-Olivier et al. 2009b). In addition to  
114 providing physical habitat, the degree to which void spaces are developed and  
115 connected also influences the exchange of oxygen, nutrients and organic matter with  
116 the surface, and thus the availability of food for the groundwater community.

117 Observed distribution patterns may also relate to the opportunities for dispersal. In  
118 groundwaters the habitat is very fragmented, limiting the dispersal of groundwater  
119 fauna (Lefebure et al. 2007). Stygobiont assemblages are therefore characterised  
120 by endemic species with limited geographical ranges. Even species which are  
121 apparently widely distributed have emerged as cryptic lineages (Lefebure et al. 2007,  
122 Trontelj et al. 2009, McInerney et al. 2014). Habitat fragmentation in groundwaters  
123 has been most frequently discussed in relation to karst habitats (Trontelj et al. 2009,  
124 Modovan et al. 2012), however it may also occur as a result of the juxtaposition of  
125 different geologies. The presence of mudstones with low permeability and restricted  
126 void spaces may form a physical barrier to stygobiont dispersal (Hahn and Fuchs  
127 2009). Some stygobiont taxa, however, may be able to exploit superficial deposits or  
128 the hyporheic zones of rivers as a means of dispersal (e.g. Ward and Palmer 1994,

129 Castellarini et al. 2007). The water chemistry of an aquifer, e.g. concentrations of  
130 dissolved organic carbon and nitrates, may also correlate with the distribution of  
131 groundwater taxa (Martin et al. 2009).

132

133 In this study we address the limited understanding of the drivers of groundwater  
134 faunal distributions at the regional scale by carrying out an extensive sampling  
135 programme within the complex geological setting of the south-west of the UK. Our  
136 aims were to determine the detailed spatial distributions of the UK stygobiont species  
137 in the study area and investigate whether the distribution and composition of  
138 stygobiont assemblages varies with hydrogeology and water chemistry. We build on  
139 the design of the PASCALIS project on European groundwater biodiversity which  
140 adopted a hierarchical sampling strategy and included two types of aquifer (porous  
141 and karstic) (Dole-Olivier et al. 2009a). Our approach was to group the different  
142 hydrogeological formations present in the study area into five 'hydro-units' where the  
143 different geologies within a given hydro-unit provide broadly similar habitats for  
144 groundwater fauna. We sampled groundwater assemblages within the different  
145 hydro-units to determine whether species were restricted to particular hydro-units,  
146 and sampled water chemistry to determine whether faunal distributions reflect local  
147 variation in water chemistry.

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## METHODS

### *Study area and hydrogeological units*

151 The study area in south west England is an area of contrasting topography and  
152 geology dominated by lowland (max. elevation 279 m) sedimentary rocks in the east  
153 and higher elevation (max. 621 m) metamorphic and igneous rocks in the west (Fig.

154 1). The region's annual average rainfall is approximately 900-1000 mm  
155 (<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/sw/>).

156

157 Within the study area 271 different geological formations have been mapped at the  
158 1:50,000 scale (Reproduced from the British Geological Survey Map data at the  
159 original scale of 1:50 000 Licence 2011/057 British Geological Survey. ©NERC. All  
160 rights reserved). To assess the general hydrogeological controls on species  
161 distributions, these geologies were grouped into categories termed "hydro-units".  
162 The hydro-units are based on broad differences in geology and groundwater flow  
163 characteristics which result in different groundwater habitats for fauna. There are  
164 two main types of groundwater flow: intergranular and flow through fractures (Price  
165 1996). Unconsolidated granular deposits in which all groundwater movement is  
166 intergranular were grouped together as hydro-unit 1 because these deposits form a  
167 habitat in which fauna can only live within the pore spaces between the sediment  
168 grains. Fractured rocks may be igneous, metamorphic or sedimentary in origin.  
169 Igneous and metamorphic rocks (which are of volcanic origin) were grouped together  
170 (hydro-unit 2) because there were insufficient data to determine differences in habitat  
171 type between them. They were grouped separately from other strata because  
172 groundwater flow is only through fractures, and due to of their volcanic origin, they  
173 have a bedrock geochemistry that is different to other consolidated rocks.  
174 Sedimentary rocks may be non-carbonate or carbonate. Non-carbonate  
175 sedimentary rocks often have varying degrees of consolidation and, therefore, form  
176 aquifers in which flow may be both inter-granular in the less consolidated areas and  
177 through fractures in consolidated rock. They are classified according to grain size as  
178 mudstones, siltstones and sandstones (Price 1996). Sandstones form aquifers with

179 much higher permeability than siltstones and mudstones which often form aquitards  
180 or aquicludes (Price 1996, Allen et al. 1997). The difference in permeability is likely  
181 to result in both a different groundwater chemistry and a different physical habitat for  
182 fauna. They were therefore separated into a mudstone/siltstone hydro-unit (3) and a  
183 sandstone hydro-unit (4). Hydro-unit 5 includes all carbonate geologies. In these  
184 rocks, fractures are enlarged by dissolution to form fissures and caves providing  
185 substantially larger and more inter-connected void spaces than any other rock type,  
186 which can serve as habitats for fauna. In the study area carbonate rocks range from  
187 the weakly karstified Cretaceous Chalk (Maurice et al, 2006) to the highly karstified  
188 limestones of Devonian and Carboniferous. Where the Chalk overlies the Upper  
189 Greensand Formation these strata are commonly in hydraulic continuity (Allen et al.  
190 1997). This means that it is likely that fauna may be living in both the Chalk and the  
191 Upper Greensand, and that it is not possible to distinguish the two habitats. The  
192 Upper Greensand Formation is a non-karstic aquifer comprising sandstones and  
193 sands, but where it is in hydraulic continuity with the Chalk it was included in the  
194 carbonate hydro-unit (5). Elsewhere, outcrops of the Upper Greensand Formation  
195 are isolated from the Chalk and, were therefore grouped with the other sandstones in  
196 the sandstone hydro-unit (4). The properties of the five hydro-units are summarized  
197 in Table 1.

198

199 The distribution and extent of the different hydro-units varied across the study area  
200 (Fig. 1). In particular there was a pronounced difference between the hydro-units in  
201 the east and west of the study area. Mudstones/siltstones (hydro-unit 3), covered the  
202 largest surface area in the study region and were most common in the west.

203 Sandstones (hydro-unit 4), were the next most common, and occurred across the



204 region, with the largest outcrops in the west and north-west. Carbonate aquifers  
205 (hydro-unit 5), were predominately located in the east, where there were extensive  
206 Cretaceous chalk downlands. In the west carbonate rocks were limited to much  
207 smaller isolated outcrops of older limestones, separated by mudstones and  
208 sandstones. Granular material (hydro-unit 1) was restricted to the far south eastern  
209 edge of the study area, whereas igneous and metamorphic rocks (hydro-unit 2),  
210 were only present in the west and south west.

211

### 212 *Sampling*

213 In total, 221 sites were sampled. The number of samples taken within each hydro-  
214 unit was approximately proportionate to the surface area it occupied (Table 1). Within  
215 each unit, sites were selected to maximize spatial coverage. Boreholes free from fine  
216 mesh well screens and in-situ equipment were preferentially selected. Borehole and  
217 well sampling sites ranged from 0.36 to 130 m deep and 0.05 to 2 m in diameter.  
218 Where there were insufficient boreholes or wells, springs were sampled. Each site  
219 was sampled on a single occasion. Most samples (197) were collected between  
220 September 2009 and May 2010, and water chemistry measurements were made at  
221 the time of sampling. A further 24 samples were collected in November 2011; no  
222 water chemistry data were obtained for these samples.

223

224 Fauna were collected from boreholes and wells using a weighted plankton net (63µm  
225 mesh, diameter varied from 35 – 300mm dependent on borehole aperture). The net  
226 was lowered to the base of the borehole/well and moved up and down vigorously to  
227 disturb the sediment before retrieval. For springs, a net was swept through the  
228 sediment of the spring chamber or at the spring head source. The samples were

229 preserved in >90% ethanol and all equipment thoroughly cleaned between sites. In  
230 the laboratory animals were separated from debris, stygobionts were identified to  
231 species level using Gledhill et al. (1993) and Knight and Gledhill (2010); Ostracoda  
232 (identified to class), Hydracarina (identified to clade) and Copepoda and Oligochaeta  
233 (identified to sub-class) were probably predominantly stygophiles and stygoxenes.  
234 Freshwater epigeal taxa and terrestrial taxa were noted.  
235 Electrical conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen and temperature were recorded using a  
236 multi-parameter probe (YSI 600QS) lowered to the base of each borehole/well. The  
237 probe was calibrated prior to each sampling trip. Water samples for laboratory  
238 analysis were taken using a bailer. At springs, field chemistry and water samples  
239 were taken directly from the spring head or catchpit. Water samples were filtered and  
240 refrigerated before dispatch to analytical laboratories within 48 hours. Analysis for  
241 major anions ( $\text{Cl}^-$ ,  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ,  $\text{NO}_3^-$ ) and cations ( $\text{Mg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Na}^+$ ,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ ) was performed  
242 using high pressure liquid chromatography using a Dionex ED40 electrochemical  
243 detector (min. reporting value;  $1.0\text{mg l}^{-1}$ ). Ammoniacal nitrogen was analyzed by  
244 colourimetric analysis using a Konelab discrete analyser (min. reporting value;  $0.03$   
245  $\text{mg l}^{-1}$ ). Dissolved organic carbon (DOC) was analyzed by a Skalar San Plus 1050 air  
246 segmented flow analyser (min. reporting value  $0.2\text{ mg l}^{-1}$ ).

247

#### 248 *Data analysis*

249 Chemical data were tested for normality (Q-Q plots) and homogeneity of variance  
250 (Fligner-Killeen test), and a non-parametric ANOVA was used to investigate  
251 differences in water chemistry between the five different hydro-units (selected as  
252 factors). A generalized linear model with a binomial error structure was then used to  
253 examine the relationships between presence/absence of stygobiont taxa, hydro-units

254 and water chemistry. Statistical analyses were performed using R version 3.0.2  
255 (2013), using standard packages plus the package for analysis of over dispersed  
256 data (Lesnoff et al, 2012). The initial model selected hydro-unit as a factor. The  
257 model was then run with all stygobiont presence/absence data, using the carbonate  
258 hydro-unit (5) as the point of comparison because it: i) comprised the most sites, ii)  
259 was the strata in which stygobionts were most common, and iii) also yielded a broad  
260 range of water quality data. Models were then run for each set of water quality data  
261 (i.e. each chemical determinand with associated presence/absence and hydro-unit  
262 data), the odds ratios were calculated and predicted probabilities of stygobiont  
263 presence were determined from the mean value for each determinand. Different  
264 permutations of the model were run to explore whether the inclusion of sample type  
265 (borehole, well or spring) and/or water quality data improved the model, and to  
266 identify any interactions between factors. Outputs were checked to verify the data  
267 were not over dispersed and models were then compared, using a one-way ANOVA,  
268 to identify any significant differences between models. Where there was no  
269 difference, the simplest model was selected and the odds ratios calculated to  
270 describe the relative likelihood of recording stygobionts in each hydro-unit.

271

272 The association between the faunal community and environmental variables was  
273 investigated using Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA) within Canoco for  
274 Windows Ver.4.51 (Ter Braak and Smilauer 1998). Only those sites with concurrent  
275 chemistry analysis (190 samples) were used in this analysis and sites where there  
276 was uncertainty over the geological unit from which the sample was obtained (7  
277 samples) were excluded.

278 A series of ordinations were undertaken including groundwater faunal abundance,  
279 hydro-units and water chemistry data. Both stygobiont and stygophile taxa were  
280 included in the analysis to reflect the diversity and distribution of the community  
281 recorded from each sample location where fauna were recorded, although the  
282 results and discussion are focused on the stygobiont taxa. To determine how  
283 individual variables might explain patterns in the faunal data (stygobionts and  
284 stygophiles), we applied the forward selection procedure ( $P \leq 0.05$  after Bonferonni  
285 correction). Only those variables having a significant association with the faunal  
286 community distribution were included in the final analysis and presented in the output  
287 diagrams. The stygobiont *Antrobathynella stammeri* (Jakobi, 1954), which was  
288 recorded only once, was fitted passively to the ordination. To determine the  
289 proportion of variance in the faunal data explained by the hydro-units and water  
290 chemistry data, a variance partitioning approach was used (Borcard 1992). This  
291 constrained the species ordination for each of these co-variable groups in turn, while  
292 partialling out the other variables from the ordination.

293

294

295

## RESULTS

296 As expected water chemistry varied significantly between the five hydro-units,  
297 reflecting differences in bedrock geochemistry and permeability. With the exception  
298 of potassium, significant differences were recorded between each chemical  
299 determinand and the five hydro-units (Table 2).

300

301 Stygobionts and/or stygophiles were recorded from 70% of the study sites (Table 3)  
302 and all hydro-units (Fig.1). The remaining 30% of sites contained no groundwater

303 taxa although epigean taxa were recorded at some sites. Stygophiles were more  
304 abundant and recorded more frequently than stygobionts (59% compared to 34% of  
305 sites). All of the stygobiont macro-Crustacea known to occur in the UK were  
306 recorded, although their presence and community composition varied considerably  
307 across the study region. Boreholes in the carbonate hydro-unit (unit 5) supported the  
308 most diverse stygobiont communities, with up to four taxa recorded in a single  
309 borehole, compared to a maximum of two taxa from other hydro-units (Fig. 2).

310

311 *Niphargus aquilex* (Schiödte, 1855), was recorded throughout the study region and  
312 from all hydro-units (Fig. 2). In contrast, *Niphargus glenniei* (Spooner, 1952) was  
313 only recorded in the west of the study area despite being recorded in most hydro-  
314 units. *Niphargus kochianus* (Bate, 1859), *Niphargus fontanus* (Bate, 1859) and  
315 *Proasellus cavaticus* (Leydig, 1871) were primarily recorded in the carbonate hydro-  
316 unit (5) in the east of the region (Fig. 2), but were absent from this hydro-unit and all  
317 other hydro-units in the west of the study area. *Crangonyx subterraneus* (Bate,  
318 1859) and *Microniphargus leruthi* (Schellenberg 1934) were rare, and were primarily  
319 recorded in the east (Fig. 2). *Antrobathynella stammeri* (Jakobi, 1954) was recorded  
320 once.

321

322 The occurrence of stygobionts differed significantly between hydro-units [ $\chi^2=33.8$ ,  
323  $df=5$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Table 4]. From the odds ratio (OR), stygobionts were 88% less likely  
324 to be recorded in mudstone/siltstones (hydro-unit 3) [OR=0.12, 97.5%CI 0.034-  
325 0.030,  $p<0.001$ ] than in carbonates (hydro-unit 5) and about 80% less likely to be  
326 recorded in sandstones (hydro-unit 4) [OR=0.20, 97.5%CI 0.08-0.50,  $p<0.001$ ], than  
327 carbonates (hydro-unit 5). Stygobionts were also less likely to be recorded in

328 mudstones/siltstones (hydro-unit 3) and sandstones (hydro-unit 4) than in  
329 igneous/metamorphic sites (hydro-unit 2) and granular sites (hydro-unit 1). All  
330 differences were significant except for sandstone sites relative to granular sites.  
331 The generalized linear model generally improved (based on the AIC scores and level  
332 of significance) with the addition of either sample type or a water chemistry  
333 determinand as a value. Mudstones/siltstones and sandstones (hydro-units 3 and 4)  
334 were significantly different from carbonate rocks (hydro-unit 5) throughout the  
335 iterations. No significant interactions between factors (e.g. hydro-unit combined with  
336 sample type) were identified. By including water chemistry determinands with  
337 presence/absence in the model, improved models were obtained with calcium,  
338 chloride and pH , indicating a potential association of these variables with stygobiont  
339 presence. The predicted probability of stygobiont presence in any hydro-unit was  
340 higher with increasing calcium concentrations. In contrast, the predicted probability  
341 of stygobiont presence in any hydro-unit declined as chloride concentrations  
342 increased. There was no clear relationship between pH and the presence of  
343 stygobionts.

344

345 The inclusion of sample type significantly improved the models that included  
346 electrical conductivity, magnesium, potassium, sodium, sulphate and dissolved  
347 organic carbon. For the model with potassium, the igneous/metamorphic aquifers  
348 (hydro-unit 2) were identified as significantly different when sample type was  
349 included. The odds ratio of recording stygobionts in this unit was also lower  
350 compared with the simplest model where no additional factors were included. Overall  
351 there was a greater likelihood of recording stygobionts in springs (sample type 3)  
352 than boreholes (sample type 1: Table 4). However, presence or absence of

353 stygobionts across the hydro-units was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) irrespective of the  
354 inclusion of sample type in the model.  
355  
356 Canonical correspondence analysis indicated a separation of the sample centroids  
357 for the five hydro-units based on the faunal community data (Fig. 3), the first two  
358 canonical axes explained 20.0% and 13.6% of the total variance in faunal  
359 abundance respectively (Fig. 3). These two axes combined explained 78.4% of the  
360 variance in the species-environment relationship (46.7% and 31.7% respectively).  
361 Water temperature ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), magnesium (mg/l) and potassium (mg/l) were significantly  
362 correlated with the distribution of the groundwater fauna (all  $p < 0.01$ ). The stygobionts  
363 *Niphargus kochianus*, *Microniphargus leruthi*, *Crangonyx subterraneus* and  
364 *Proasellus cavaticus* were associated with the centroids for the sandstone and  
365 carbonate hydro-units (hydro-unit 4 and 5). In contrast, some taxa were not strongly  
366 associated with the centroids of any single hydro-unit but were associated with  
367 higher concentrations of potassium (*N. fontanus* and *N. aquilex*) and higher water  
368 temperature (*N. glenniei*). Variance partitioning indicated that 7.5% of the variance in  
369 faunal abundance could be explained by the hydro-units and 5.0% by water  
370 chemistry (Table 5), whilst 3.6% of the variance was shared by hydro-units and water  
371 chemistry together.

372

373

## DISCUSSION

374 Stygobionts and stygophiles were found throughout the region and were present in  
375 all hydro-units. However, stygobionts were absent from 70% of sites. Eberhard et al.  
376 (2009) and Hancock and Boulton (2009) found that repeated sampling over time at  
377 groundwater sites increased the number of species recorded, thus we cannot

378 exclude the possibility that the low frequency of stygobiont occurrence in our study  
379 may be an artifact of low sampling effort, as we sampled each site on only one  
380 occasion.

381 We found that stygobiont occurrence and community composition differed between  
382 hydro-units. Stygobionts were significantly more likely to be recorded in the  
383 carbonate and igneous/metamorphic hydro-units, than in the mudstone/siltstone or  
384 sandstone units. Several stygobiont species (*Niphargus kochianus*, *Microniphargus*  
385 *leruthi*, *Crangonyx subterraneus* and *Proasellus cavaticus*) were predominantly  
386 associated with the carbonate hydro-unit. Other stygobionts (*Niphargus aquilex* and  
387 *Niphargus glenniei*) were found across a range of hydro-units.

388 The carbonate hydro-unit also supported the most diverse stygobiont communities,  
389 with up to four stygobiont species co-occurring in a single borehole. Carbonate  
390 aquifers are characterised by solutional fissures and conduits providing connected  
391 water-filled void spaces which are sufficiently large for groundwater organisms to  
392 inhabit (Humphreys 2009). Furthermore, their highly permeable nature may result in  
393 a greater supply of food from the surface, permitting the co-existence of more  
394 species than in less permeable hydro-units, where food shortages may be severe  
395 (Malard et al. 2009). Studies in continental Europe have demonstrated previously  
396 that karst aquifers support some of the most diverse stygobiont communities (Dole-  
397 Olivier et al., 2009b; Martin et al., 2009; Galassi et al., 2009; Hahn and Fuchs, 2009).

398 The sandstone hydro-unit was also anticipated to provide a suitable habitat for  
399 diverse stygobiont communities because this has been the case in other regions  
400 (Humphreys 2009). Therefore, the low numbers of individuals and low diversity  
401 recorded in our study was surprising. One explanation is that the Permo-Triassic



402 sandstones, which comprise part of this hydro-unit contain lower permeability  
403 mudstone beds in this area (Allen et al. 1997). This may result in a fragmented  
404 habitat with areas containing poorly developed fracture networks providing a poor  
405 habitat. The deposits are also affected by faulting which may result in further  
406 barriers to stygobiont movement. However, the sandstone (hydro-unit 4) is  
407 predominantly distributed in the west of the study area, which is outside the  
408 observed range of *Niphargus kochianus*, *Niphargus fontanus* and *Proasellus*  
409 *cavaticus* (Fig. 2), three of the most common stygobite species in the east of the  
410 study area. It is not clear whether the absence of these species in the west is  
411 because the sandstones do not form a suitable habitat for them, or because they  
412 have not dispersed to these areas.

413 The mudstone/siltstone hydro-unit had the lowest occurrence of stygobionts  
414 suggesting that it provides a less suitable habitat, perhaps as a result of the small  
415 and often weakly connected voids, and the low levels of oxygen and nutrients. Our  
416 findings are consistent with those of Hahn and Fuchs (2009), who also reported that  
417 mudstones were characterized by depauperate communities.

418

419 Our results demonstrate that the five hydro-units had different water chemistries.  
420 Therefore it was not possible to determine whether differences in groundwater fauna  
421 occurred due to water chemistry differences between the units, or differences  
422 between the physical voids present within the different units (Maurice and  
423 Bloomfield, 2012). However, in this study, groundwater taxa occurred in all units and  
424 the proportion of the variance in the abundance of the groundwater community  
425 explained by water chemistry was smaller than that of the hydro-units. The  
426 mudstone/siltstone and sandstone units remained significantly different from the

427 carbonate unit in the general linear model, irrespective of the addition of water  
428 chemistry parameters. However, the igneous/ metamorphic unit only became  
429 significantly separated from the other hydro units when potassium (together with  
430 sample type) was included in the model. The higher potassium concentrations  
431 reported from the igneous/ metamorphic hydro-unit relative to the carbonate hydro-  
432 unit reflects the contrasting water chemistry of these different geologies. These  
433 findings provide evidence that suggests that, across our study sites, water chemistry  
434 had less influence over the distribution of groundwater taxa than physical  
435 hydrogeological characteristics. Other studies have also found little relation between  
436 environmental variables, water chemistry and the distribution of groundwater taxa at  
437 a regional scale (e.g. Dumas and Lescher-Moutoue 2001, Paran et al. 2005, Dole-  
438 Olivier et al. 2009b, Galassi et al. 2009). Nevertheless, in all these studies there are  
439 considerable difficulties when trying to separate the influence of potentially  
440 confounding factors that occur over a range of geographical scales that may  
441 determine stygobiont distributions (Dole-Olivier et al., 2009b; Stoch and Galassi,  
442 2010; Maurice and Bloomfield, 2012).

443

444 The probability of finding stygobionts appeared to increase with an increase in  
445 calcium concentrations. This is probably because stygobionts were most often found  
446 in the carbonate hydro-unit where calcium concentrations are high. Although  
447 calcium is necessary for crustacean carapace development (Rukke, 2002), it does  
448 not appear to be limiting in our study area as high stygobiont frequencies were also  
449 recorded from the igneous/metamorphic hydro-unit, where the mean calcium  
450 concentration was the lowest of all the hydro-units sampled.

451

452 In contrast to Dole-Olivier et al. (2009b), we found no significant relationship  
453 between dissolved oxygen concentration and stygobiont occurrence. This is  
454 probably because all but 14 of our sites had oxygen concentrations  $>1 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$ , which  
455 is the threshold below which oxygen has been reported to be critical for groundwater  
456 taxa (Malard and Hervant 1999, Hahn 2006). In addition, stygobionts are widely  
457 acknowledged to be tolerant of low oxygen conditions in comparison to epigean  
458 species (Malard and Hervant 1999).

459 The greater likelihood of finding stygobionts in spring sites (sample type 3) than in  
460 borehole sites (sample type 1) may be because it is easier to capture fauna in  
461 springs than in boreholes, and also because springs form a distinct ecotone where  
462 there are higher nutrients and more diverse communities than in deeper  
463 groundwaters (Smith et al. 2003) However, the use of springs as an explanatory  
464 variable did not fundamentally modify or significantly influence the differences we  
465 identified between the hydro-units.

466

467 Most of the variation in the occurrence of groundwater fauna across the study region  
468 was not explained by either the hydro-units or water chemistry. One of our most  
469 striking findings was the differing distribution patterns of stygobiont species within the  
470 study area. Most stygobiont species had restricted, and different distributions. The  
471 exception was *Niphargus aquilex* which was recorded from all hydro-units and  
472 across the whole study area. This species is widely distributed in central and  
473 southern Europe also (Botosaneanu 1986), with an apparent range that spans  $>$   
474 2300 km east – west (Trontelj et al. 2009). In the British Isles it has been extensively  
475 recorded in riverine hyporheic zones and is particularly associated with shallow  
476 alluvial aquifers (Proudlove et al. 2003) and, thus, may have dispersed across the

477 area using this route (the hyporheic corridor concept of Stanford and Ward 1993).  
478 Nevertheless, recent research shows that the wide distribution of *Niphargus aquilex*  
479 is an artifact generated by cryptic diversity; the complex contains seven cryptic taxa,  
480 two of which are unique to the British Isles (McInerney et al. 2014). Other widely  
481 distributed *Niphargus* “species” have also been found to be species complexes (e.g.  
482 *N. virei*, Lefebure et al. 2006 and *N. rhenorhodanensis*, Lefebure et al 2007, see also  
483 Trontelj et al. 2009).

484

485 Although there would appear to be suitable habitats distributed across the study  
486 area, other stygobiont species exhibited distinct spatial segregation. The endemic  
487 *Niphargus glenniei* was only recorded in the west and *Niphargus kochianus*,  
488 *Niphargus fontanus*, and *Proasellus cavaticus* were only found in the east. One  
489 possible explanation for these observed distributions is that they result from biotic  
490 interactions between the species. *Niphargus glenniei* for example, did not co-occur  
491 with either *Niphargus fontanus* or *Niphargus kochianus*. *Niphargus fontanus* is much  
492 larger and may have a competitive or predatory advantage. However, stygobiont  
493 species can co-exist, and up to four species were found in a single borehole in the  
494 east of our study area. Although in our study *Niphargus glenniei* was mostly  
495 recorded alone or occasionally together with the smaller species *Microniphargus*  
496 *leruthi*, other studies have reported it with the larger species *Niphargus aquilex*  
497 (<http://hcrs.freshwaterlife.org/>). An alternative hypothesis is that geological barriers  
498 are present that constrain the dispersal of these organisms, as has been reported for  
499 other groundwater taxa (Gooch and Hetrick 1979; Goricki and Trontelj 2006).  
500 Trontelj et al. (2009) observed that many groundwater taxa appear to be able to  
501 disperse and yet are confined by boundaries beyond which dispersal is impossible

502 (although the nature of these boundaries is currently unclear). The  
503 mudstones/siltstones and other low permeability rocks across the centre of our study  
504 area may form a barrier between suitable stygobiont habitats in the east and west,  
505 and could explain the different species distributions. However, given the occurrence  
506 of all stygobiont species in spring habitats, it is surprising that groundwater species  
507 have not been able to utilize shallow superficial deposits (e.g. hyporheic zone  
508 corridors) to disperse between the east and west of the study area.

509 The life histories and restricted distributions of groundwater taxa mean that they are  
510 vulnerable to anthropogenic change (Gibert et al. 1994). *Niphargus glenniei*, which is  
511 endemic to two counties in southern England, has been designated a UK  
512 Biodiversity Action Plan species. However, other groundwater taxa have no such  
513 recognition, and European groundwater monitoring programmes do not consider  
514 groundwater ecology. Identifying the drivers of observed distribution patterns in  
515 groundwater taxa is important because this information may then be used to inform  
516 the development of management plans for the conservation of these unique  
517 assemblages.

518 .

## 519 CONCLUSIONS

520 In our regional scale study, there were significant differences in the groundwater  
521 assemblages present in geologies with different hydrogeological characteristics.  
522 Stygobionts occurred most frequently and were most diverse in the carbonate hydro-  
523 unit (5) which is characterized by karstic, solutionally enlarged voids providing an  
524 extensive physical habitat, and a good supply of nutrients and oxygen. They were  
525 also relatively abundant and diverse in the igneous and metamorphic hydro-unit (2)  
526 and granular aquifers (hydro-unit 1) but were relatively rare in the sandstone hydro-

527 unit (4). They occurred least frequently in the mudstone/ siltstone hydro-unit (3)  
528 which has low permeability resulting in poor physical and water chemistry conditions  
529 for stygobionts. The hydro-units explained a greater proportion of the variation in  
530 stygobiont data than water chemistry, suggesting that physical hydrogeology may be  
531 more important than water chemistry in determining stygobiont distributions.  
532 However, a large proportion of the variation in stygobiont abundance was not related  
533 to either the hydro-units or water chemistry and we were intrigued to find that some  
534 stygobiont species were spatially segregated within our study area. It appears that  
535 barriers may exist that prevent some stygobiont taxa from colonizing apparently  
536 suitable geologies, and the low permeability deposits dividing the western and  
537 eastern parts of the study area may partly explain the observed distributions. The  
538 stygobiont species fell into three contrasting groups: (1) *Niphargus glenniei* was only  
539 found in the west of the study area, but was found in a range of hydro-units with  
540 varying void types and water chemistry. (2) *Niphargus kochianus*, *Niphargus*  
541 *fontanus*, *Crangonyx subterraneus* and *Proasellus cavaticus* were only found in the  
542 east of the study area and predominantly in carbonate aquifers. (3) *Niphargus*  
543 *aquilex* and *Microniphargus leruthi*, were found throughout the study area and in a  
544 range of hydro-units suggesting that they have good dispersal abilities and may be  
545 able to circumvent low permeability barriers, perhaps by utilizing superficial deposits  
546 or hyporheic zone corridors. Identifying the precise nature of the barriers to dispersal  
547 and the development of monitoring and conservation plans must be a priority for  
548 these restricted and vulnerable species.

549

550

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556

557

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713

714 FIGURE LEGENDS

715 Figure 1: Distribution of groundwater fauna sampling stations and hydro-units within  
716 the study region in the south-west of England.

717 Figure 2: Stygobitic species presence and community composition at sites within the  
718 study region in the south-west of England. The size of the circles reflects the  
719 number of species recorded.

720 Fig. 3: CCA ordination: Ordination by canonical correspondence analysis of  
721 stygobiont species and stygophile data with significant environmental variables  
722 (identified using the forward selection procedure) from boreholes, wells and springs  
723 in SW England (Sept 2009-Nov 2011).

724

725 Table 1: Classification and description of the 5 hydro-units in the study area

<b>Hydro-unit</b> (no. of sites)	<b>Geology</b>	<b>Main geologies</b>	<b>% Area coverage</b>	<b>Flow</b>	<b>Permeability (relative)</b>
<b>1</b> (10)	Granular	Quaternary & Palaeogene unconsolidated material	6.3	intergranular	Low-high
<b>2</b> (37)	Igneous & metamorphic	Granite, basalt, spillite & gneiss & mica schists	8.6	Fracture	Low-mid
<b>3</b> (57)	Mudstones & siltstones	Carboniferous, Triassic & Jurassic mudstones	51.6	Fracture and intergranular	Very low
<b>4</b> (55)	Sandstones	Permo-Triassic, Jurassic & Devonian sandstones	17.2	Fracture and intergranular	Mid-high
<b>5</b> (63)	Carbonate rocks	Chalk, Carboniferous & Devonian limestones	16.4	Karstic (solutional fissures and conduits)	Low-high

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727

728 Table 2: Means and standard deviations of water chemistry parameters for each hydro-  
 729 unit. Kruskal-wallis results indicate where determinands were significantly different  
 730 between hydro-units.

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Hydro-Unit	Statistic	EC μScm <sup>-1</sup>	DO mg/l	Temp °C	pH	DOC mg/l	NH <sub>4</sub> mg/l	Cl mg/l	NO <sub>3</sub> mg/l	SO <sub>4</sub> mg/l	Ca mg/l	Mg mg/l	K mg/l	Na mg/l
1	n	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Mean	370.25	3.65	13.71	7.04	3.63	0.52	9.59	7.46	10.29	47.51	3.53	3.76	16.00
	Std Dev.	199.84	3.58	0.55	0.73	1.19	0.74	3.90	4.67	10.43	26.88	3.12	3.51	5.57
2	n	37	14	23	36	32	13	37	30	32	32	32	27	33
	Mean	276.14	8.91	9.65	6.35	1.41	0.02	8.86	4.66	4.42	25.07	12.33	4.95	20.46
	Std Dev.	193.32	3.41	1.36	0.76	1.72	0.01	7.18	4.85	3.36	12.37	13.98	6.11	14.47
3	n	47	29	29	45	47	29	46	41	47	46	46	45	45
	Mean	349.70	5.53	10.38	6.56	3.65	0.07	11.33	4.10	8.69	30.13	13.68	5.14	23.43
	Std Dev.	198.71	4.32	1.54	0.51	9.38	0.18	6.01	5.99	8.52	16.80	9.93	6.49	13.73
4	n	37	24	26	37	39	6	40	26	37	38	38	34	38
	Mean	423.89	5.90	10.60	6.81	11.52	0.82	12.14	9.07	11.04	37.68	7.40	5.92	18.22
	Std Dev.	245.74	3.89	1.44	0.75	15.48	1.63	6.77	8.30	12.87	27.10	5.21	7.63	9.23
5	n	54	25	39	54	54	17	55	53	52	53	52	43	53
	Mean	582.96	5.69	11.50	7.09	12.37	0.10	11.81	9.35	6.76	55.64	4.51	4.08	15.79
	Std Dev.	133.64	3.14	0.82	0.43	31.16	0.11	6.02	5.52	4.49	21.89	4.25	3.21	8.82
Kruskal Wallis Test	H Df p	48.54 4 <0.001	11.36 4 <0.001	22.37 4 <0.001	30.49 4 <0.001	53.51 4 <0.001	N/A	14.25 4 <0.01	38.66 4 <0.001	18.56 4 <0.01	44.73 4 <0.001	36.24 4 <0.001	5.51 4 0.239	13.44 4 <0.01

732 N/A – insufficient data (majority of values below detection limit).

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734



735 Table 3: Abundance and composition of groundwater taxa (stygbionts and  
 736 stygophiles) in boreholes (BH), wells and springs from the five hydro-units.  
 737

Attributes of sample sites	Total	Sites sampled (no.)		
		BHs	Wells	Springs
No. of sites sampled:	221	124	56	41
<u>No. of sites in each hydro-unit (Hu)</u>				
Granular (Hu1)	10	9	1	0
Igneous/metamorphic (Hu2)	37	12	12	13
Mudstone/siltstone (Hu3)	56	28	19	9
Sandstone (Hu4)	55	34	11	10
Carbonate (Hu5)	63	41	13	9
No. of sites with GW fauna	155	70	51	34
Sites with no GW fauna* <sup>1</sup>	66	54	5	7
No. of sites with stygbionts	75	34	23	18

Taxa groups & species	Total Abundance	Percentage occurrence from all sites				Hydro-units present
<b>Stygbionts</b>	465	33.8	27.4	40.4	43.9	All
<u>Crustacea, Malacostraca, Eumalacostraca</u>						
<u>Peracarida</u>						
<u>Amphipoda</u>						
<u>Niphargidae</u>						
<i>Niphargus kochianus</i>	181	10.8	12.9	12.3	2.5	3, 5
<i>Niphargus fontanus</i>	28	5.4	4.8	7.0	4.9	1, 5
<i>Niphargus aquilex</i>	96	10.4	8.1	12.3	14.6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<i>Niphargus glenniei</i>	79	8.6	2.4	12.3	22.0	2, 3, 4, 5
<i>Microniphargus leruthi</i>	10	2.7	2.4	3.5	2.5	3, 4, 5
<u>Crangonyctidae</u>						
<i>Crangonyx subterraneus</i>	60	5.9	6.5	3.5	7.3	4, 5
<u>Isopoda</u>						
<u>Asellidae</u>						
<i>Proasellus cavaticus</i>	10	2.3	4.0	0	0	5
<u>Syncarida</u>						
<u>Bathynellacea</u>						
<u>Bathynellidae</u>						

<i>Antrobathynella stammeri</i>	1	0.5	0.8	0	0	4
<b>Stygophiles</b>	5318	63.5	44.4	86.0	90.2	All
<u>Crustacea, Maxillopoda</u>						
Copepoda	4181	47.3	26.6	70.2	78.0	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<u>Crustacea, Ostracoda</u>	745	23.4	8.1	38.6	48.8	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<u>Arthropoda, Arachnida, Acari, Trombidiformes</u>						
Hydrachnidae	182	16.2	10.5	21.1	26.8	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<u>Annelida, Clitellata</u>						
Oligochaeta* <sup>2</sup>	210	10.4	12.9	12.3	-	2, 3, 4, 5

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738 \*<sup>1</sup> Other freshwater (epigean) or terrestrial taxa may have been recorded at these sites

739 \*<sup>2</sup> Not included where recovered from spring sources, due to presence of epigean species

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741 Table 4: Summary of odds ratios from generalized linear models selected to describe  
742 relationships between presence/absence data, hydro-units (Hu) and water chemistry.  
743 (The level of significance reported in each model is represented by: \* 0.05, \*\* 0.01,  
744 \*\*\*0.001).

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**Odds ratios calculated relative to:**

Hydro-unit 5 (carbonate)

Sample type 1  
(Boreholes)

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<b>Generalized linear model</b> (simplest model selected based on comparison of all model permutations)	<b>Determinand</b> (value)	<b>Granular material (Hu1)</b>	<b>Igneous / metamorphic (Hu2)</b>	<b>Mudstone / siltstone (Hu3)</b>	<b>Sandstone (Hu4)</b>	<b>Sample type 2 (wells)</b>	<b>Sample type 3 (springs)</b>
<b>Pres/Abs~Hydro-unit</b>	all data	0.84	0.80	0.12***	0.21***		
$\chi^2 = 33.8$ , df=5, $p < 0.001$							
	dissolved oxygen	2.00	1.00	0.16**	0.26*		
	nitrate	N/A	0.67	0.12***	0.28*		
	temperature	2.38	1.48	0.15**	0.23*		
<b>Pres/Abs~Hydro-unit + value</b>	calcium	0.97	0.98	0.18**	0.27**		
	chloride	0.93	0.63	0.11**	0.20**		
	pH	0.96	0.56	0.08***	0.16***		
<b>Pres/Abs~Hydro-unit + sample type</b>	Dissolved organic carbon	1.12	0.65	0.10***	0.21***	2.34*	3.01*
	elec. conductivity	1.09	0.59	0.10***	0.22**	2.19	3.07*
	magnesium	0.94	0.43	0.10**	0.19***	1.83	3.22*
	potassium	0.91	0.30*	0.07***	0.14***	1.77	4.52*
	sodium	1.00	0.49	0.12***	0.21**	1.92	3.20*
	sulphate	1.89	0.49	0.09***	0.19**	1.86	3.51*

746 N/A – excluded from analysis because insufficient reliable nitrate data available

747 Level of significance in model \* 0.05, \*\* 0.01, \*\*\*0.001

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756 Table 5: Partialled CCA results showing percentage of variation in species data explained  
757 by environmental variables; hydro-units & groundwater chemistry, together and in isolation.

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CCA	Constraint on Species data	Variable partialled out (covariable)	Sum of all canonical eigen-values (Ev)	Percentage variation (Ev x 100/4.998)	Fraction of variation explained by
<b>CCA1</b>	Chemistry	none	0.429	8.58%	-
<b>CCA2</b>	Hydro-units	none	0.628	12.57%	-
<b>CCA3</b>	Hydro-units	Chemistry	0.251	5.02%	Chemistry
<b>CCA4</b>	Chemistry	Hydro-units	0.376	7.52%	Hydro-units
Sum of all eigenvalues in a species only CA			4.998		
Overall amount of variation due to environmental variables				16.11%	CCA1 + CC4
Variation due to hydro-units & water chemistry together				3.56%	CCA1 –CCA3
Variation unexplained by hydro-units &/or water chemistry				83.89%	100 – (CCA1 + CCA4)

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