

# 1      Associations between depth and

## 2      micro-diversity within marine viral

### 3      communities revealed through

#### 4      metagenomics

5  
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12  
13     **Abstract**

14        Viruses are extremely abundant and diverse biological entities that contribute to the  
15        functioning of marine ecosystems. Despite their recognized importance no studies have addressed  
16        trends of micro-diversity in marine viral communities across depth gradients. To fill this gap we  
17        obtained metagenomes from both the cellular and viral fractions of Mediterranean seawater samples  
18        spanning the epipelagic to the bathypelagic zone at 15, 45, 60 and 2000 meters deep. The majority  
19        of viral genomic sequences obtained were derived from bacteriophages of the order *Caudovirales*,  
20        and putative host assignments suggested that they infect some of the most abundant bacteria in  
21        marine ecosystems such as *Pelagibacter*, *Puniceispirillum* and *Prochlorococcus*. We evaluated  
22        micro-diversity patterns by measuring the accumulation of synonymous and non-synonymous  
23        mutations in viral genes. Our results demonstrated that the degree of micro-diversity differs among  
24        genes encoding metabolic, structural, and replication proteins and that the degree of micro-diversity

25 increased with depth. These trends of micro-diversity were linked to the changes in environmental  
26 conditions observed throughout the depth gradient, such as energy availability, host densities and  
27 proportion of actively replicating viruses. These observations allowed us to generate hypotheses  
28 regarding the selective pressures acting upon marine viruses from the epipelagic to the bathypelagic  
29 zones.

30

31 **Running title:** Viral micro-diversity at different depths

32

### 33 **Introduction**

34 Viruses are increasingly recognized as important players in the functioning of marine  
35 ecosystems[1, 2]. In recent years many efforts were undertaken to describe associations between  
36 viral biodiversity and spatial[3], temporal[4], and ecological[5] gradients. The taxonomic  
37 composition and functioning of host communities respond to such changes in environmental  
38 parameters across such gradients[6, 7]. In response, viruses adapt to those changes to guarantee  
39 their survival. The depth gradient of stratified water masses displays marked changes in  
40 environmental conditions mainly driven by light availability and temperature[8]. Thus it is an ideal  
41 habitat to study associations between environmental parameters, viruses, and their hosts.

42 In stratified waters, temperature decreases with depth while the concentration of inorganic  
43 nutrients increases. The micro-habitat at the thermocline provides photosynthetic microorganisms  
44 with ideal conditions of temperature, nutrient availability and light irradiation. The intense  
45 proliferation of photosynthetic microbes there leads to a peak of chlorophyll concentration and  
46 microbial cell density, known as the deep chlorophyll maximum (DCM). In the stratified water  
47 column, the DCM often exhibits the highest densities of prokaryotic cells and viral particles[9, 10].  
48 Moving towards the aphotic zone, the concentrations of inorganic nitrogen and phosphorus  
49 increase, but the gradual decrease of light hampers productivity, thus leading to much lower cell

50 densities than observed in the surface or the DCM. Below the DCM both viral and bacterial  
51 abundances decrease, and deeper waters of the bathypelagic zone often display the lowest densities  
52 of both bacteria and viruses [9, 11].

53 Previous studies have used metagenomics to assess changes in the taxonomic and  
54 functional composition of viral communities throughout depth gradients[4, 12]. Nevertheless,  
55 studies addressing patterns of micro-diversity, i.e. accumulation of mutations within genomes,  
56 through the stratified water column are lacking. Investigating patterns of micro-diversity can help to  
57 elucidate the selective pressures acting upon viral genomes. For example, in co-evolution  
58 experiments in which bacteriophages and hosts are cultured together over multiple generations,  
59 viruses tend to preferentially accumulate mutations in genes that affect their host range and the  
60 productivity of viral particles[13, 14]. These discoveries provided insightful information regarding  
61 the processes by which viruses adapt to more efficiently infect their hosts in cultures. Yet no studies  
62 have addressed this topic in free-living marine viral communities through culturing-independent  
63 approaches. These are necessary because the selective pressures acting on viral genomes in cultures  
64 and environmental communities might be drastically distinct.

65 Here we sought to investigate micro-diversity patterns in the environment to generate  
66 hypotheses about the selective pressures acting on marine viral communities throughout the depth  
67 gradient. We selected a site at the Mediterranean sea off the coast of Spain during a period of water  
68 stratification (October 2015). Seawater samples were retrieved from multiple depths ranging from  
69 the epipelagic at 15, 45 (DCM), 60 (DCM) to the bathypelagic at 2000 meters deep, and used for  
70 preparing both cellular and viral metagenomes (viromes). Viromes were assembled to obtain  
71 complete or partial viral genomes and cellular metagenomes were assembled and binned to obtain  
72 metagenome assembled genomes (MAGs). Next, reads from both the viral and cellular fractions  
73 were mapped against the assembled viral scaffolds to calculate the level of micro-diversity for each  
74 viral protein. Our rationale was that the changes taking place in microbial communities at surface,

75 DCM and aphotic habitats would subject the associated viral communities to different constraints,  
76 which would be reflected in the micro-diversity patterns within viral genomes.

77

78 **Results**

79

80 *Assembled viral genomes and predicted hosts*

81 Assembly of viral metagenomes yielded 10,263 genomic sequences of length equal or  
82 greater than 5 kbp, within which 133,352 protein encoding genes were identified (Table 1). A total  
83 of 7,164 (69.8%) scaffolds were classified as *bona fide* viral sequences based on the annotation of  
84 their protein encoding genes (see methods). Among these, 21 scaffolds with length equal or above  
85 10 Kbp (average length = 44 Kbp) and with overlapping ends were identified, which likely  
86 represent complete viral genomes. Computational host predictions were obtained for the *bona fide*  
87 viral sequences by scanning viral and prokaryote genomes for three signals of virus-host  
88 association: homology matches (i.e. long genomic segments sharing high nucleotide identity),  
89 shared tRNA genes, and matches between CRISPR spacers and viral sequences. These approaches  
90 have previously been benchmarked and shown to provide accurate host predictions, specially at  
91 higher taxonomic ranks such as phylum and class[15, 16]. In addition, we manually curated host-  
92 predictions by investigating the gene content of viral genomic sequences. Host predictions were  
93 obtained for 171 of the *bona fide* viral sequences (Table S1 and Figure 1A). Among those, the  
94 majority were predicted to infect *Proteobacteria* (99 sequences), particularly *Alphaproteobacteria*  
95 of the genera *Pelagibacter* (52 sequences) and *Puniceispirillum* (38), followed by *Cyanobacteria*  
96 (58) of the genera *Prochlorococcus* and *Synechococcus*.

97 Taxonomic classification of the assembled scaffolds identified most of them as tailed  
98 bacteriophages from the order *Caudovirales* (Figure 1B), specifically as members of the families  
99 *Myoviridae*, *Podoviridae* and *Siphoviridae*. Some of the scaffolds from the epipelagic samples were

100 classified as *Phycodnaviridae*, viruses that infect Eukaryotic algae. Scaffolds annotated as  
101 *Microviridae* bacteriophages were exclusively retrieved from the bathypelagic sample.

102

103 *Viral community composition*

104 Grouping viral abundances according to predicted host revealed differences among samples  
105 of the depth gradient (Figure 2A). Scaffolds predicted to infect *Proteobacteria* were among the  
106 most abundant in all depths with abundances ranging from 0.5% to 2.4% of mapped reads.  
107 Scaffolds predicted to infect *Cyanobacteria* and *Euryarchaeota* displayed their highest abundances  
108 at the 15m and 45m samples while those predicted to infect *Bacteroidetes* were abundant only at the  
109 45m sample. The 2000m displayed a unique profile with abundant scaffolds predicted to infect  
110 *Firmicutes* and *Actinobacteria*.

111 Previous investigation of the metagenomes from the cellular fraction revealed shifts in  
112 taxonomic composition of prokaryotic communities throughout the depth gradient[8]. These were  
113 dominated, at all depths, by *Proteobacteria*, mostly from the classes *Alphaproteobacteria* and  
114 *Gammaproteobacteria*. The taxonomic composition of viral communities also displayed shifts  
115 according to depth (Figure 2B). The families of tailed bacteriophages *Myoviridae*, *Podoviridae* and  
116 *Siphoviridae* within the order *Caudovirales* were dominant in all samples, and together accounted  
117 for 15% to 45% of the annotated reads. Bacteriophages from the family *Microviridae* were  
118 abundant in the bathypelagic sample only, while eukaryotic viruses from the family  
119 *Phycodnaviridae* were detectable only at the epipelagic samples, although at lower abundances.

120

121 *Mediterranean viruses actively replicating in the cellular fraction*

122 Read mapping revealed that many of the viral scaffolds assembled from viromes could also  
123 be detected in the cellular metagenomes (Figure 3A). We assumed that the viral sequences that were  
124 abundant in the cellular metagenomes are derived from actively replicating viruses undertaking lytic

125 infections, which lead to high copy numbers of their genomes inside host cells. Alternatively, viral  
126 sequences in the cellular fraction could be the result of lysogenic infections. Yet those are not  
127 expected to produce the high copy numbers of viral genomes inside host cells that could lead to the  
128 observed abundance patterns.

129 Abundances of viral sequences in the cellular fraction differed between samples. The  
130 average ratios of cellular/viral abundances were highest for the 45 and 60m samples, followed by  
131 15m and lastly the 2000m sample (Figure 3B). Likewise, the abundance of raw reads annotated as  
132 viral in the cellular fraction metagenomes followed the same trend. Thus, there were more viruses  
133 actively replicating at the DCM samples than at any other depth, followed by the 15m sample and  
134 lastly the 2000m sample, which displayed the lowest proportion of actively replicating viruses. In  
135 addition, the DCM samples displayed the lowest values for the Shannon diversity index (5.55 and  
136 5.61), while these values were higher for the 15m (7.21) and 2000m (7.26) samples. The high  
137 proportion of actively replicating viruses, and the low Shannon diversity observed at the DCM  
138 suggest that the intense viral replication taking place at these depths lead to a highly clonal  
139 community, with many nearly-identical viral genomes co-existing at high densities.

140

141 *Levels of micro-diversity shift throughout the depth gradient and across functional categories*

142 We evaluated micro-diversity patterns by measuring the pN/pS ratios of protein encoding  
143 genes identified in the *bona fide* viral scaffolds. The pN/pS ratio is a measure analogous to dN/dS  
144 that does not require specific haplotypes to be identified, and therefore can be applied to  
145 metagenomic datasets to provide a population level measure of micro-diversity[17–19]. Briefly,  
146 reads from the metagenomes were mapped to the assembled scaffolds to detected mutations,  
147 specifically single nucleotide polymorphisms. Next, pN and pS were calculated by respectively  
148 dividing the observed counts of non-synonymous and synonymous mutations by the expected  
149 frequencies of these mutations under a neutral model.

150 The majority of proteins displayed pN/pS values below 1, regardless of sample, meaning  
151 that the frequencies of non-synonymous mutations was below that which was expected by chance.  
152 Thus purifying selection was a major driving force regulating frequencies on mutations among viral  
153 genes. Nevertheless, 117 proteins displayed pN/pS above 1 in the cellular fraction metagenomes,  
154 and 1,092 in the viral fraction metagenomes. Most of these proteins were retrieved from the 15m  
155 sample (755), followed by 2000m (239), 45m (148) and 60m (67) samples. Although the majority  
156 of these genes had no assigned functions, some were identified as: recombinase/nuclease proteins  
157 (21), oxygenases (17), lysins (16), methylases (13), and tail fibers (11).

158 We observed a negative association between depth and the median pN/pS ratio of each  
159 sample (Figure 4A). The highest median of pN/pS values was observed for the 2000m sample,  
160 followed by 60m, 45m and lastly the 15m sample. These trends of pN/pS and depth were observed  
161 for viral sequences detected in the metagenomes from both the viral and cellular fractions. Because  
162 the coverage of proteins in the viral fraction metagenomes was much higher and spanned many  
163 more of the viral proteins, we focused subsequent analysis of pN/pS using viral fraction  
164 metagenomes only.

165 Due to the many unknown proteins present in marine viral genomes, our capacity to  
166 annotate these genes and predict their function is limited[20]. Nevertheless, we observed marked  
167 differences of median pN/pS ratios among proteins according to functional categories (Figures 4B  
168 and 4C). Genes involved in genome replication (e.g. DNA polymerase, DNA primase and genes of  
169 the nucleotide metabolism) displayed the lowest median pN/pS values compared to other  
170 categories. Structural viral proteins (e.g. capsid, neck and tail) showed intermediate median pN/pS  
171 values. Finally, proteins associated with altering host metabolism (e.g. ferrochelatases, thioredoxins  
172 and oxygenases) displayed the highest median pN/pS values. A positive association between pN/pS  
173 and depth was also observed when grouping proteins according to broad functional categories  
174 (Figure 4B). A notable exception was the median pN/pS ratio of structural proteins, which was

175 highest for the DCM samples.

176 These differences of pN/pS among functional categories are associated with their roles  
177 during the viral infection cycle. Genes involved in genome replication must operate at high fidelity  
178 and efficiency, thus deleterious non-synonymous mutations in these proteins are readily removed  
179 from the population by purifying selection. Meanwhile, structural proteins are fundamental for  
180 adequate particle assembly, encapsulation of the viral genome, and host recognition. Deleterious  
181 mutations in structural genes can also compromise viral infections, but not as much as errors during  
182 genome replication. Finally, metabolic genes are responsible for re-directing host metabolism  
183 towards pathways that favour viral particle production[21, 22]. Thus, lower efficiency of metabolic  
184 genes due to deleterious mutations is likely to reduce viral productivity but not to compromise it as  
185 much as deleterious mutations in the genome replication or structural modules.

186

187 *The DCM is a micro-diversity hot-spot for viral receptor binding proteins*

188 The DCM samples displayed the highest median pN/pS values for structural proteins (Figure  
189 4B). Specifically, structural proteins that encoded baseplate, capsid, tail, and tail fiber genes  
190 displayed pN/pS values higher than their counterparts in the remaining samples (Figure 4C).  
191 Interestingly all of these proteins either are or interact directly with receptor binding proteins that  
192 mediate host recognition, a fundamental step for successful viral infection[23, 24]. The enhanced  
193 pN/pS observed for these genes at the DCM provides evidence that this habitat is a micro-diversity  
194 hot-spot for viral receptor binding proteins.

195 Adaptation to sub-optimal hosts is a major driver of genomic diversification for viruses,  
196 which is associated with the quick accumulation of non-synonymous mutations in tail fiber  
197 proteins[14]. A single nucleotide polymorphism in tail fiber gene can be sufficient to alter viral host  
198 range[13, 25]. Consistent with those findings, we observed multiple cases of tail proteins in which  
199 non-synonymous mutations were concentrated in small segments of these gene (Figure 5). These

200 sites that accumulate non-synonymous mutations at higher frequencies than the other codons are  
201 likely those that confer a selective advantage to the virus at their specific habitat according to the  
202 availability of hosts. These trends are consistent with a scenario where, on the one hand, positive  
203 selection acts on tail fiber proteins to expand host range, while on the other hand, purifying  
204 selection removes mutations from other sites where they cause loss of function or restrict the host  
205 range instead of expanding it[14, 26].

206

207 **Discussion**

208 *Different selective pressures determine levels of micro-diversity throughout the depth gradient*

209 Major changes take place among prokaryotic and viral communities throughout the depth  
210 gradient, affecting their taxonomic composition and virus-host interactions [4, 8, 9, 27, 28]. These  
211 differences in cell densities and frequency of replication events impact micro-diversity because the  
212 rate at which viral genomes accumulate mutations is density dependent, meaning that they adapt  
213 faster in conditions with higher host density, in which more infection events take place[30]. Our  
214 results demonstrated that the DCM viral communities had the highest proportions of actively  
215 replicating viruses but were the least diverse. We propose that this scenario leads to intense intra-  
216 species competition between viruses for suitable hosts, creating a selective pressure that favours  
217 viruses with mutations in receptor binding proteins which provide them with a different host-range,  
218 allowing them to exploit a distinct niche (Figure 6). The high micro-diversity observed among  
219 receptor binding proteins and the clonal populations observed within DCM samples suggests that  
220 many strains of viruses with distinct host ranges co-exist at this habitat. It follows that host strains  
221 with different patterns of viral-susceptibility are also co-existing in these sites. This is in agreement  
222 with the constant diversity theory[29], which postulates that the trade-offs between ecological  
223 fitness and viral susceptibility are responsible for avoiding that a single bacterial clone dominates  
224 the community through clonal sweeps, thus preserving the taxonomic and functional diversity of

225 these communities[13, 26].

226 Meanwhile, a different pattern was observed for the bathypelagic sample. In this habitat  
227 both viral and cell densities are much lower than in the DCM or the surface[9, 11]. Due to the lower  
228 availability of hosts at 2000 meters, chance encounters between viruses and hosts are expected to  
229 occur less often. Thus, less infection events take place at 2000m compared to shallower depths with  
230 higher host densities, as evidenced by the differences in abundances of viruses actively replicating  
231 in the cellular fraction. Interestingly, the bathypelagic sample displayed the highest Shannon  
232 diversity but lowest proportion of actively replicating viruses. This finding suggests that in the  
233 energy-limited bathypelagic zone, intra-species competition for hosts is expected to be less relevant  
234 than it is at the DCM, where a highly clonal population with high density was observed. Instead, the  
235 major constraint faced by viruses at this depth could be the efficient production of viral progeny,  
236 since in this scenario a lower reproductive fitness is more likely to lead to local extinction than in  
237 the highly productive conditions of the euphotic zone. Consistent with that, we observed the highest  
238 pN/pS values of proteins encoding metabolic functions (e.g. oxygenases and thioredoxin) and  
239 transcriptional regulators in the 2000m sample. We postulate that the higher micro-diversity  
240 observed among these genes in the bathypelagic sample is evidence of positive selection acting on  
241 proteins that increase the capacity of viruses to generate progeny by using a diverse array of  
242 auxiliary metabolic genes and transcriptional regulators to fine-tune host metabolism to enhance the  
243 production of viral particles under conditions of low energy availability and productivity (Figure  
244 6).

245

246 *Micro-diversity patterns differ between pure cultures and environmental samples*

247 In laboratory experiments of phage-bacteria co-evolution, mutations usually accumulate in  
248 genes involved in host specificity such as tail proteins[14, 31]. In contrast, we observed a broader  
249 distribution of mutations that spanned all functional categories within viral genomes. We attribute

250 this to the differences between the selective pressures imposed over viruses in co-evolution  
251 experiments versus in the environment. In the former, the only selective pressure is to effectively  
252 infect one single host derived from a clonal population. In the latter, viruses have a multitude of  
253 hosts available, each with their specific viral receptors and resistance mechanisms (e.g. CRISPR  
254 and restriction modification systems). In cultures, once resistance mutations appear their prevalence  
255 quickly rises within bacterial populations[14]. In the environment, the frequency of resistance  
256 mutations is simultaneously regulated by a trade-off of viral resistance and the fitness cost brought  
257 by these resistance mutations[26]. These differences in selective pressures faced by viruses in  
258 environmental communities is likely to lead to the accumulation of mutations throughout the  
259 entirety of viral genomes, and not just at the sites associated with host recognition and infection.

260

261 *Concluding remarks*

262 Light, depth and temperature are main factors structuring the taxonomic and functional  
263 composition of marine viral communities[5, 32]. These variables are major determinants of the  
264 energy available across the ecosystem, and they shift drastically throughout the depth gradient from  
265 which our samples were retrieved[8]. Our data shows that these parameters not only shape the  
266 taxonomic composition of viral communities but also influence how the genomes of these viruses  
267 accumulate mutations and evolve. To our knowledge this is the first study assessing patterns of  
268 micro-diversity within marine viromes. The obtained results allowed us to postulate hypotheses  
269 about the selective pressures acting upon marine viruses from the community to the amino acid  
270 level. Furthermore, we demonstrated that the frequencies of non-synonymous mutations differed  
271 among functional categories and depth. Finally, free-living viruses displayed patterns of mutation  
272 accumulation different from those observed in laboratory conditions, which has important  
273 implications for how the latter should be interpreted. Here we set a stepping stone for investigating  
274 patterns of micro-diversity among environmental viral communities. Further research will be

275 necessary to determine if the patterns presented here are also present in other marine habitats as  
276 well as different ecosystems (such as host-associated, freshwater and soils), and to determine the  
277 driving forces behind them.

278

## 279 **Materials and Methods**

### 280 *Sampling and sample processing*

281 Four samples from different depths, 15, 45, 60 and 2000 meters were collected on October  
282 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 from aboard the research vessel “Garcia del Cid” [8]. The sampling site was located at  
283 approximately 60 nautical miles off the coast of Alicante, Spain, at 37.35361° N - 0.286194° W. Sea  
284 water samples were filtered for Eukaryote and Prokaryote fractions through 20 µm, 5 µm and 0.22  
285 µm pore size polycarbonate filters (Millipore). Two technical replicates (50 L for each depth) were  
286 ultra-filtered on board through a Millipore Prep/Scale-TFF-6 filter, yielding 250 ml of viral  
287 concentrate stocks. Each stock was purified through Sterivex 0.22 filters (Millipore), stored at 4°C  
288 and subsequently reduced to 1,5 mL using Ultra-15 Centrifugal Filter Units (Amicon).

289 To minimize the carry-over of free-residual nucleic acids, stocks were treated with 2,5 U of  
290 DNase-I at 37°C for 1h, followed by inactivation with EDTA (0,5 mM). Total viral DNA was  
291 extracted with PowerViral Environmental RNA/DNA Isolation Kit (MoBio). Quality and quantity  
292 of extracted DNA were determined using the ND-1000 Spectrophotometer (NanoDrop, Wilmington,  
293 USA) and Qubit Fluorometer (Thermofisher). The absence of prokaryotic DNA was tested through  
294 PCR using 16S universal primers on aliquots from each sample. Multiple Displacement  
295 Amplification (MDA) was performed using Illustra GenomiPhi V2 DNA Amplification Kit (GE  
296 Healthcare, Life Sciences).

297

### 298 *Sequencing, Assembly and Binning*

299 Metaviromes were sequenced using Illumina Hiseq-4000 (150 bp, paired-end reads) by  
300 Macrogen (Republic of Korea). Reads from metaviromes were pre-processed using

301 Trimmomatic[33] in order to remove low-quality bases (Phred-quality score of 20 in 4-base sliding  
302 windows) and reads shorter than 30 bases. Each metagenome was individually assembled through  
303 SPAdes[34] using default parameters for the metagenomic mode. Sequences shorter than 5 Kbp  
304 were discarded. Both raw reads and assembled scaffolds were deposited at ENA under project  
305 ERP113162. Taxonomic and functional annotation of proteins were performed by querying PEGs  
306 against the NCBI-nr database using Diamond[35], and against the pVOGs[36] database using  
307 hmmer[37].

308 Scaffolds from the cellular fraction of the 2000m sample were binned with MetaBat[38] to  
309 obtain Metagenome Assembled Genomes (MAGs) of Bacteria and Archaea. Quality of MAGs was  
310 assessed through CheckM[39]. MAGs were manually curated to improve completeness and reduce  
311 potential contamination. Protein encoding genes were identified using the metagenomic mode of  
312 Prodigal[40].

313

314 *Computational host prediction*

315 Putative hosts were assigned to viral scaffolds through homology matches, CRISPR spacers  
316 and shared tRNAs as previously described[41]. These were performed using two datasets: The  
317 NCBI RefSeq genomes of Bacteria and Archaea (June 2017 release), and the MAGs obtained from  
318 the binning of scaffolds from the cellular fraction metagenomes obtained from the same samples  
319 from which the viromes were derived[8]. Putative hosts were manually assigned for sequences that  
320 displayed high similarity to RefSeq bacteriophage genomes as measured by proportion of shared  
321 genes and synteny between genomes. Ambiguous host predictions, i.e., derived from viral  
322 sequences predicted to infect more than a single taxa were removed from further analyses.

323

324 *Abundance profiles and Micro-diversity analysis*

325 Sequencing reads from the cellular and viral metagenomes were mapped to assembled viral

326 scaffolds using Bowtie2 in sensitive-local mode[42]. The number of reads mapped was used to  
327 estimate the relative abundances of the viral sequences in both fractions. To estimate mutational  
328 frequencies on viral genomes, raw reads were mapped to assembled scaffolds using the sensitive-  
329 mode of Bowtie2. Next, the generated bam files were analysed through Diversitools  
330 (<http://josephhughes.github.io/DiversiTools/>) to obtain counts of synonymous and non-synonymous  
331 mutations in each protein. Codon mutations were only considered valid if they were detected at  
332 least 4 times, in at least 1% of the mapped reads, and if the codon coverage was equal or above 5x.  
333 Only the mutations that passed the aforementioned filters were considered to estimate the  
334 percentage pN/pS ratios, which were calculated as described in [19].

335

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341

342 **Competing interests:** The authors declare they have no competing interests.

343

344 **Figure Legends:**

345 **Figure 1:** Taxonomic affiliation and predicted hosts of at the *bona fide* viral scaffolds. A) Bubble  
346 plot depicting computational host predictions obtained for viral scaffolds. B) Bubble plot depicting  
347 taxonomic assignments of the scaffolds based on percentage of matched proteins and average amino  
348 acid identity to protein sequences from viral families in the NCBI-nr database.

349

350 **Figure 2:** Viral community composition profile across the depth gradient. Bar plots depicting  
351 abundances in viromes based on raw read annotation against the database of assembled viral  
352 scaffolds. A) Scaffold abundances were grouped according to the phylum level putative hosts of

353 viral scaffolds. B) Scaffold abundances were grouped according to the family level taxonomic  
354 affiliation of viral scaffolds. Only taxa that displayed relative abundances equal or above 0.1% are  
355 shown.

356

357 **Figure 3:** Viral scaffold abundances in viral and cellular metagenomes from the depth gradient. A)  
358 Scatter-plots depicting the relative abundances of viral sequences in the viral (Y axis) and cellular  
359 (X axis) metagenomes. B) Boxplots depicting the ratio between abundances in the cellular and viral  
360 fractions for each sample. Boxes depict the median, the first and third quartiles. Whiskers extend to  
361 1.5 of the interquartile ranges. Outliers are represented as dots above or below whiskers.

362

363 **Figure 4:** pN/pS values of viral genes differ among functional categories.. A) Barplots depict the  
364 median pN/pS values of the functional categories of each sample for the cellular and viral fractions  
365 B) Median pN/pS values of proteins grouped by sampling site and broad functional category for the  
366 viral fraction only. C) Median pN/pS values of proteins grouped by sampling site and specific  
367 functional category for the viral fraction only. Only proteins derived from the set of *bona fide* viral  
368 sequences were included in these analyses. When calculating medians only proteins that displayed  
369 pN and pS values above 0 were included. Also, only proteins with a total number of polymorphic  
370 sites equal or above 1 and percentage of polymorphic sites equal or above 1% were included, so to  
371 avoid estimating pN/pS values based only on a small fraction of protein length. Median values  
372 obtained from less than three proteins were omitted.

373

374 **Figure 5:** Micro-diversity patterns within a group of homologous tail proteins. X axis depicts the  
375 amino acid position along proteins. Y axis depicts the frequency of the reference amino acid among  
376 the viral population from each sample. Valleys in the plot represent areas that concentrate non-  
377 synonymous mutations, possibly driven by positive selection favouring mutations that modify or

378 expand host-range.

379

380 **Figure 6:** Conceptual model summarizing the observed patterns of micro-diversity in marine viral  
381 genomes across the depth gradient. Different capsid colours represent different viral species.  
382 Different colours for receptor binding proteins, auxiliary metabolic genes and replication proteins  
383 represent different isoforms of the same protein created by non-synonymous mutations. Surface  
384 samples have intermediate densities of viral particles and intermediate species diversity, this sample  
385 displayed the lowest degree of micro-diversity for all functional categories. DCM samples have the  
386 highest density of viral particles but the lowest species diversity. These samples displayed the  
387 highest degree of micro-diversity among receptor binding proteins. Deep samples have the lowest  
388 density of viral particles but highest species diversity. This sample displayed the highest degree of  
389 micro-diversity among metabolic and replication proteins.

390

391 **Table 1:** Characteristics of virome assemblies.

| 392 | Depth                     | 15m   | 45m   | 60m   | 2000m |
|-----|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 393 | Scaffolds                 | 6038  | 1801  | 1419  | 1005  |
| 394 | N50 (Kbp)                 | 10.7  | 9     | 9.1   | 9.4   |
| 395 | Max Scaffold Length (Kbp) | 110.8 | 121.6 | 54.4  | 56.2  |
|     | Assembly size (Mbp)       | 61.5  | 16.5  | 13    | 9.3   |
|     | PEGs                      | 80599 | 21749 | 18478 | 12526 |
|     | Mean Scaffold GC%         | 36.9  | 33.4  | 36.2  | 45.8  |

396

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398

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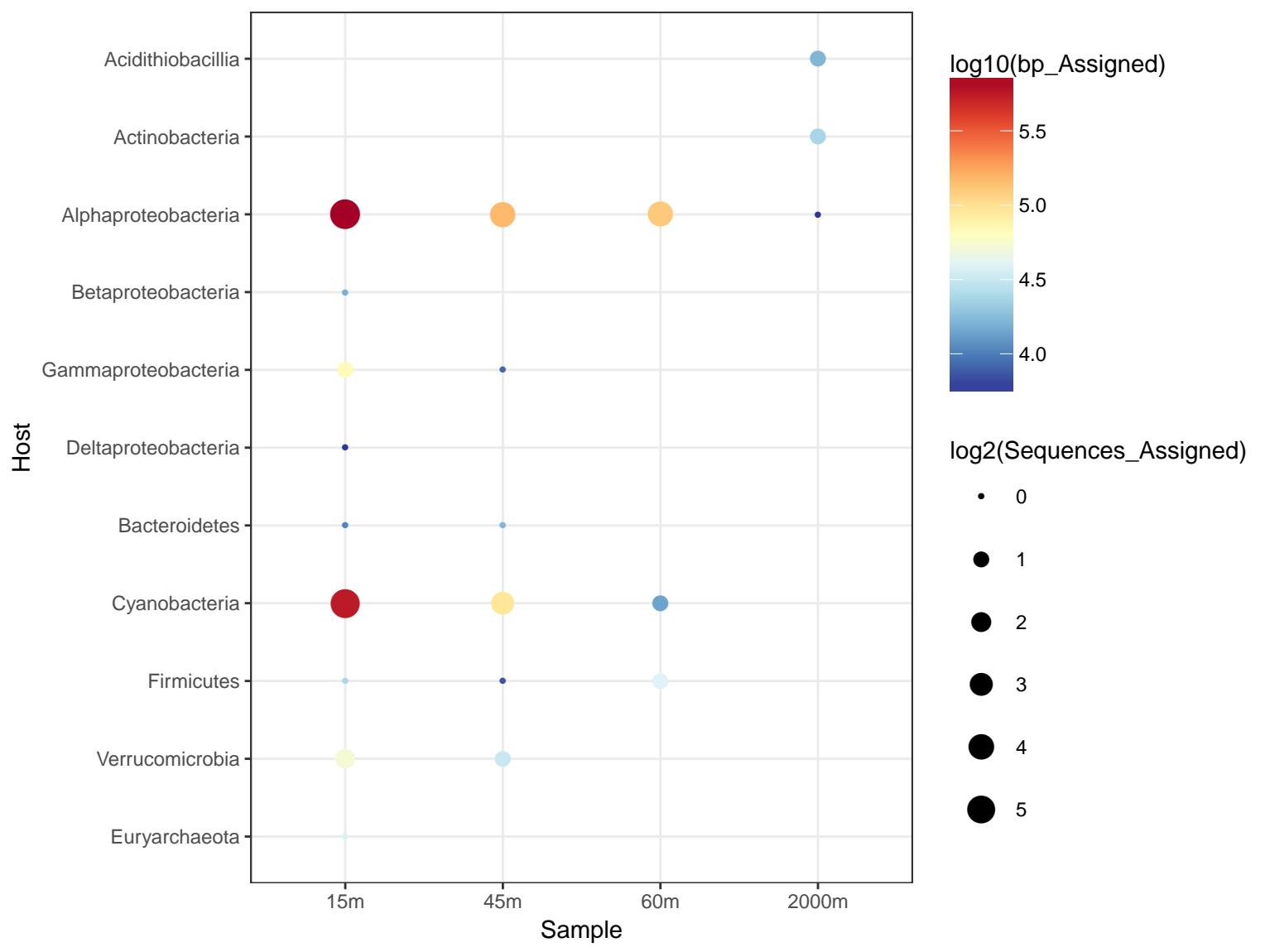
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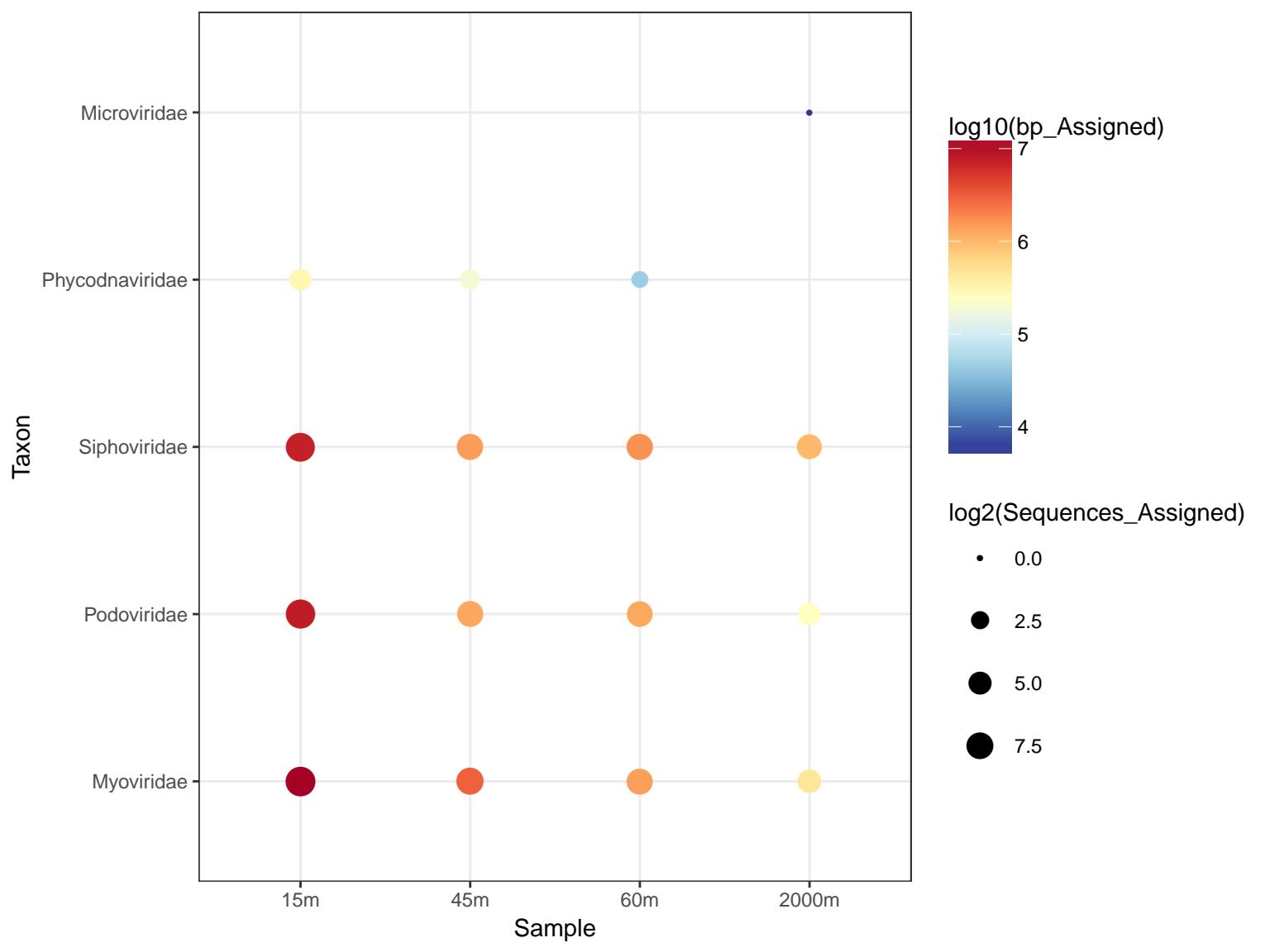
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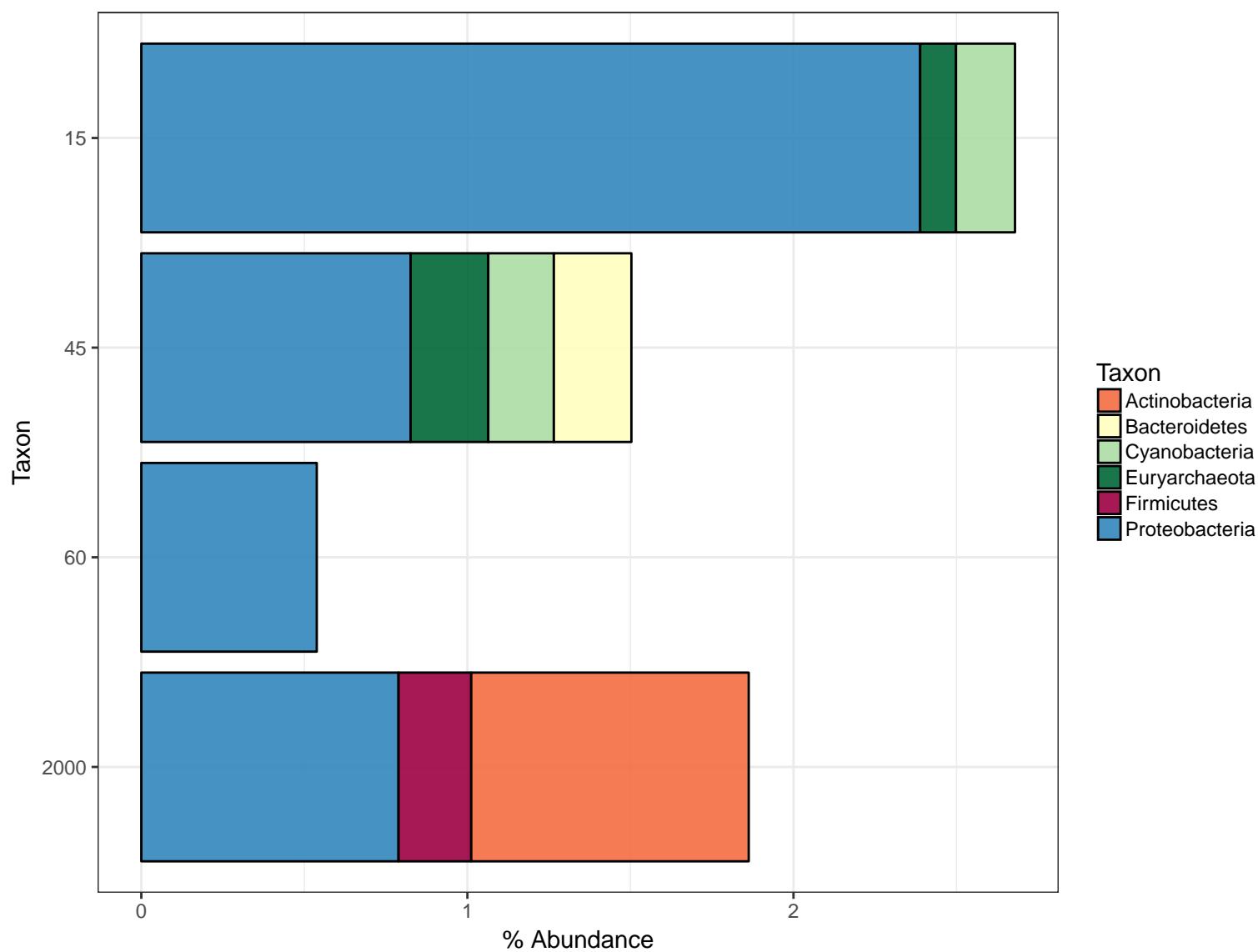
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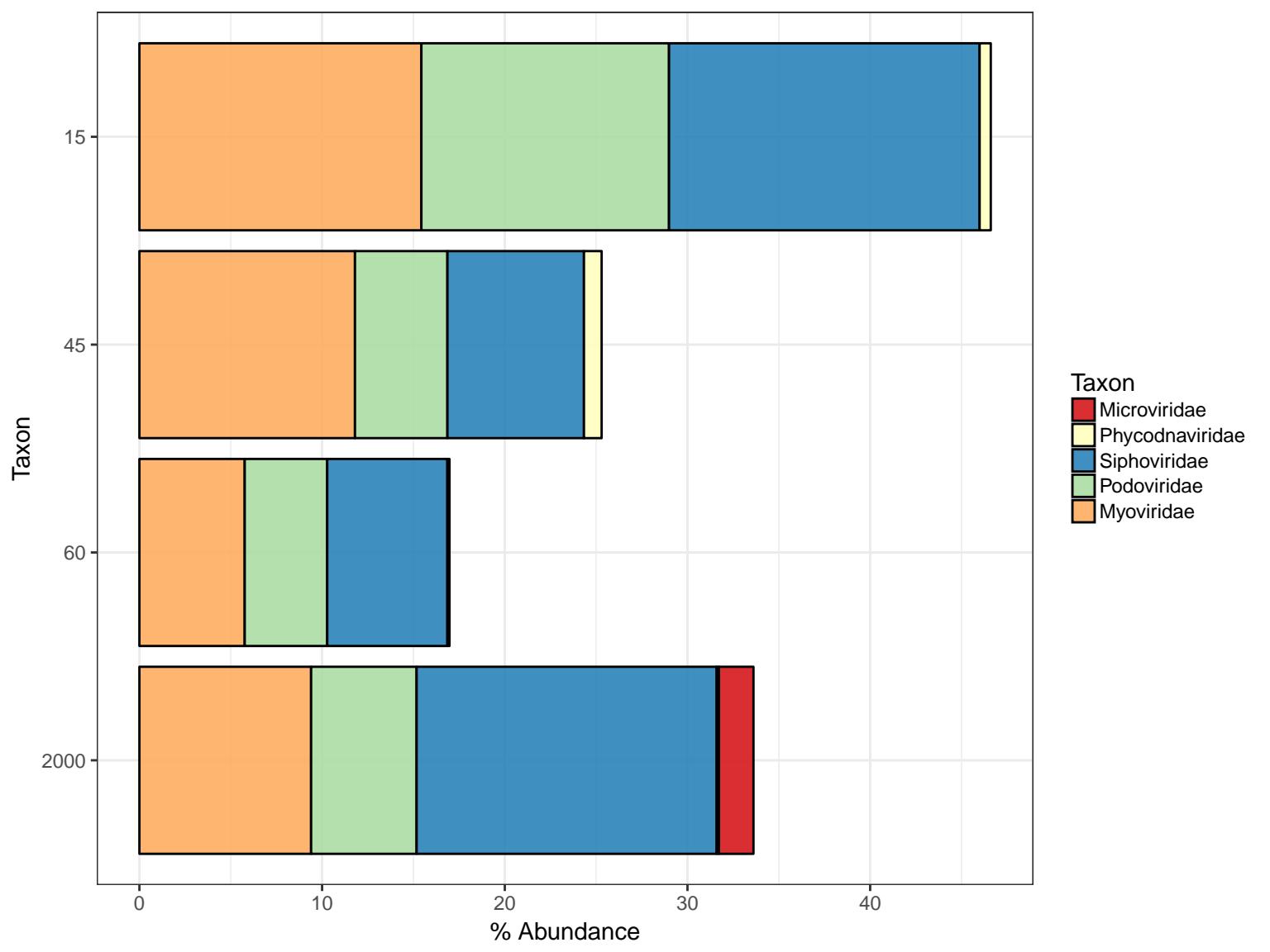
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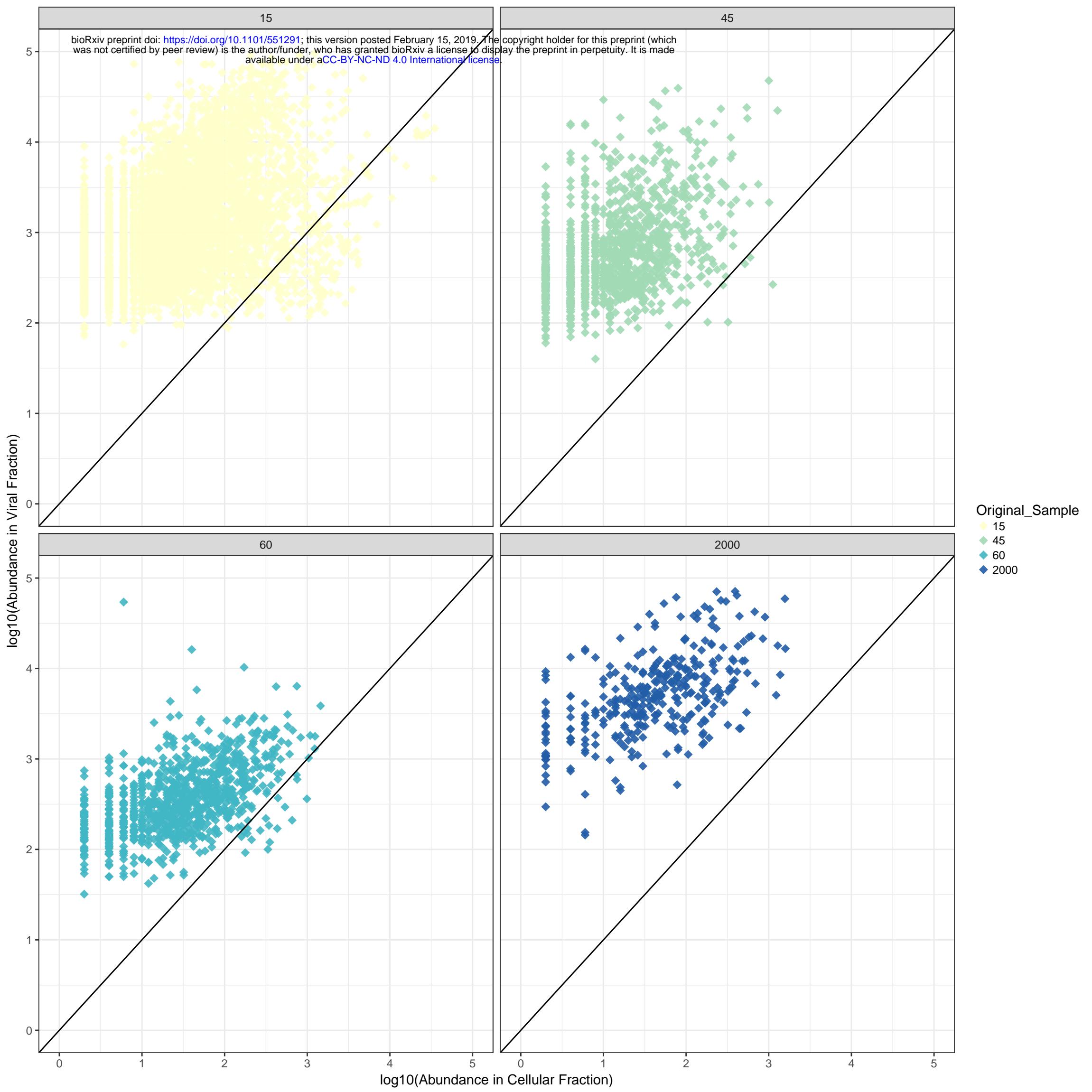
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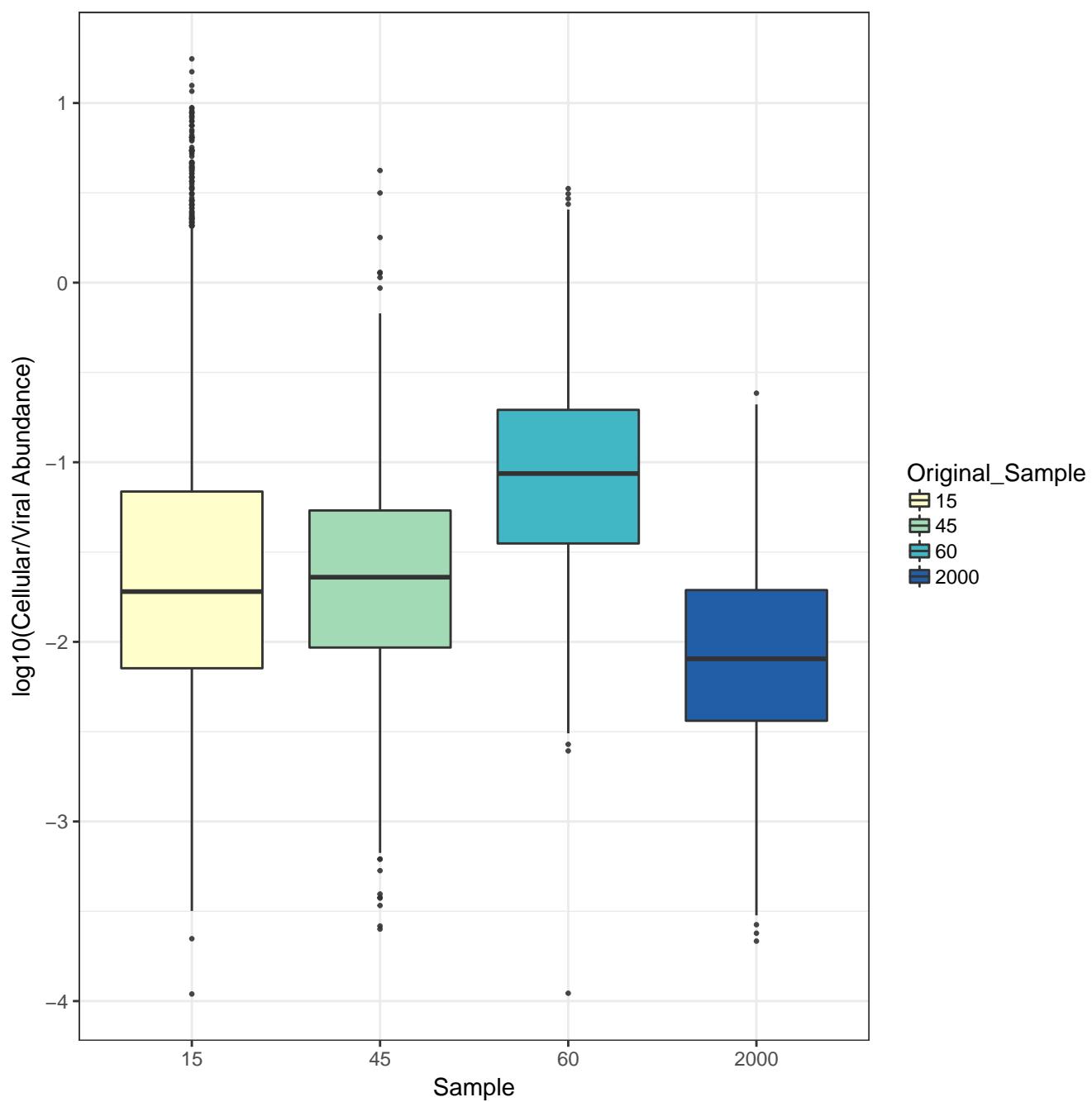


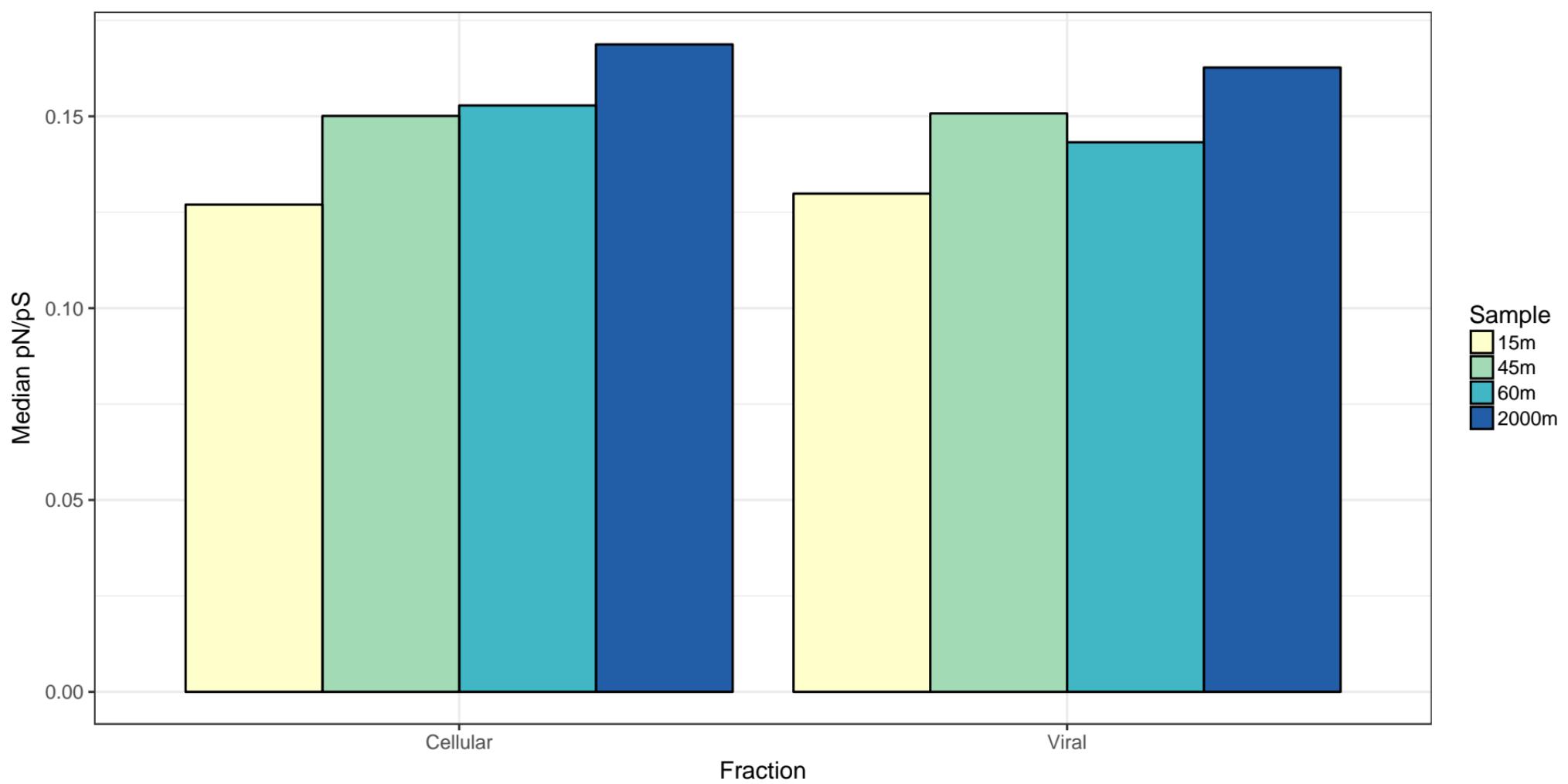


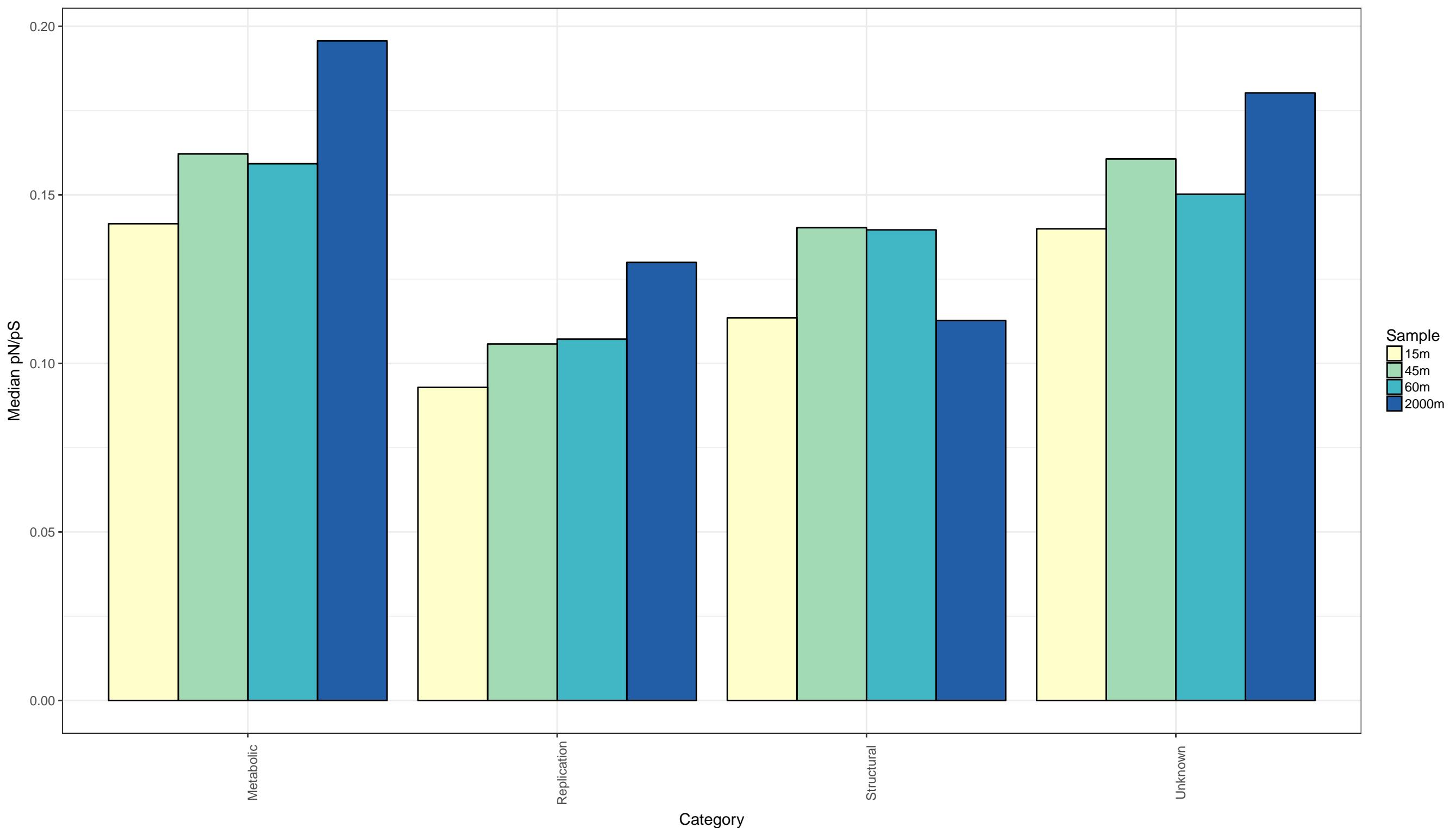


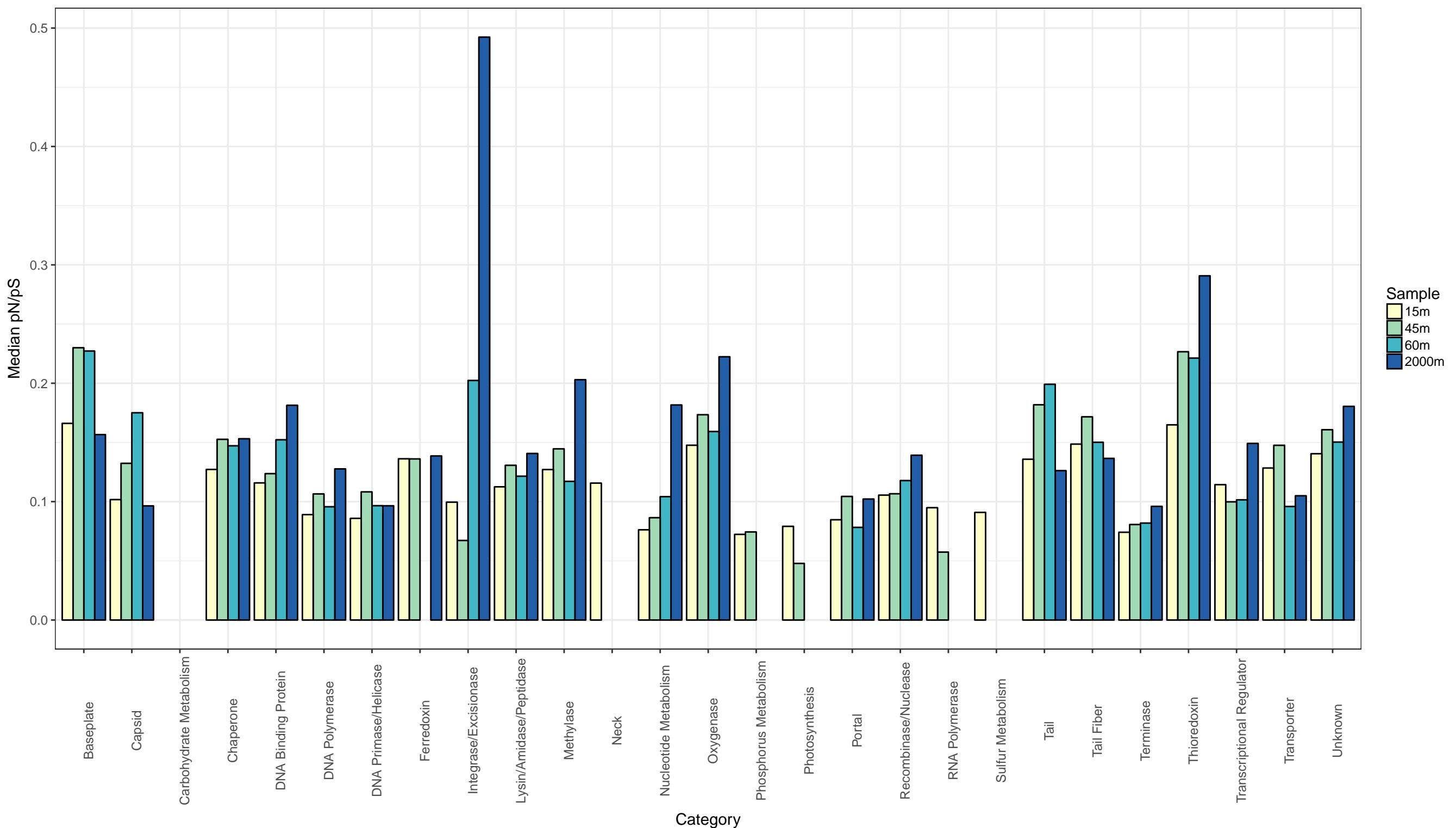


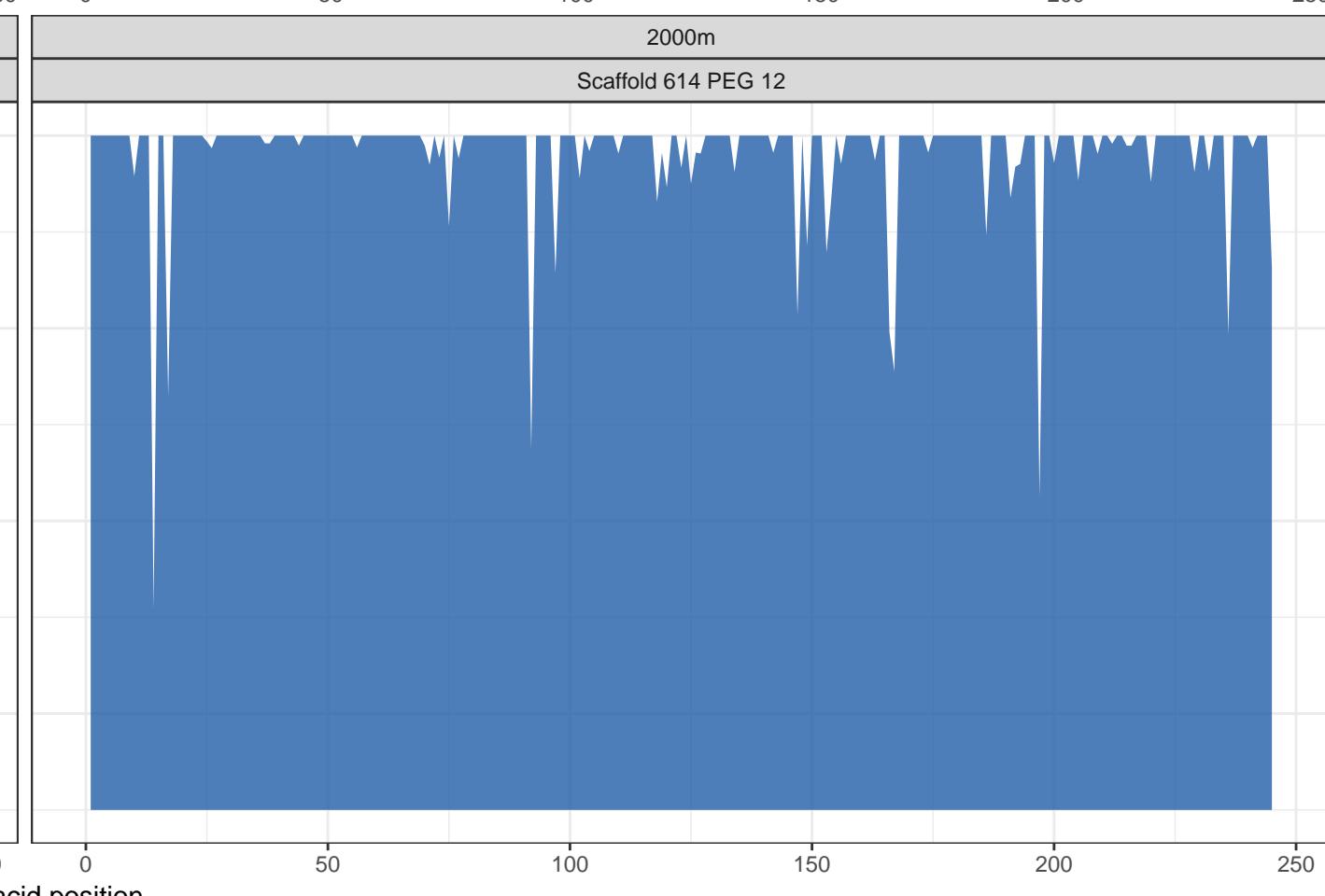
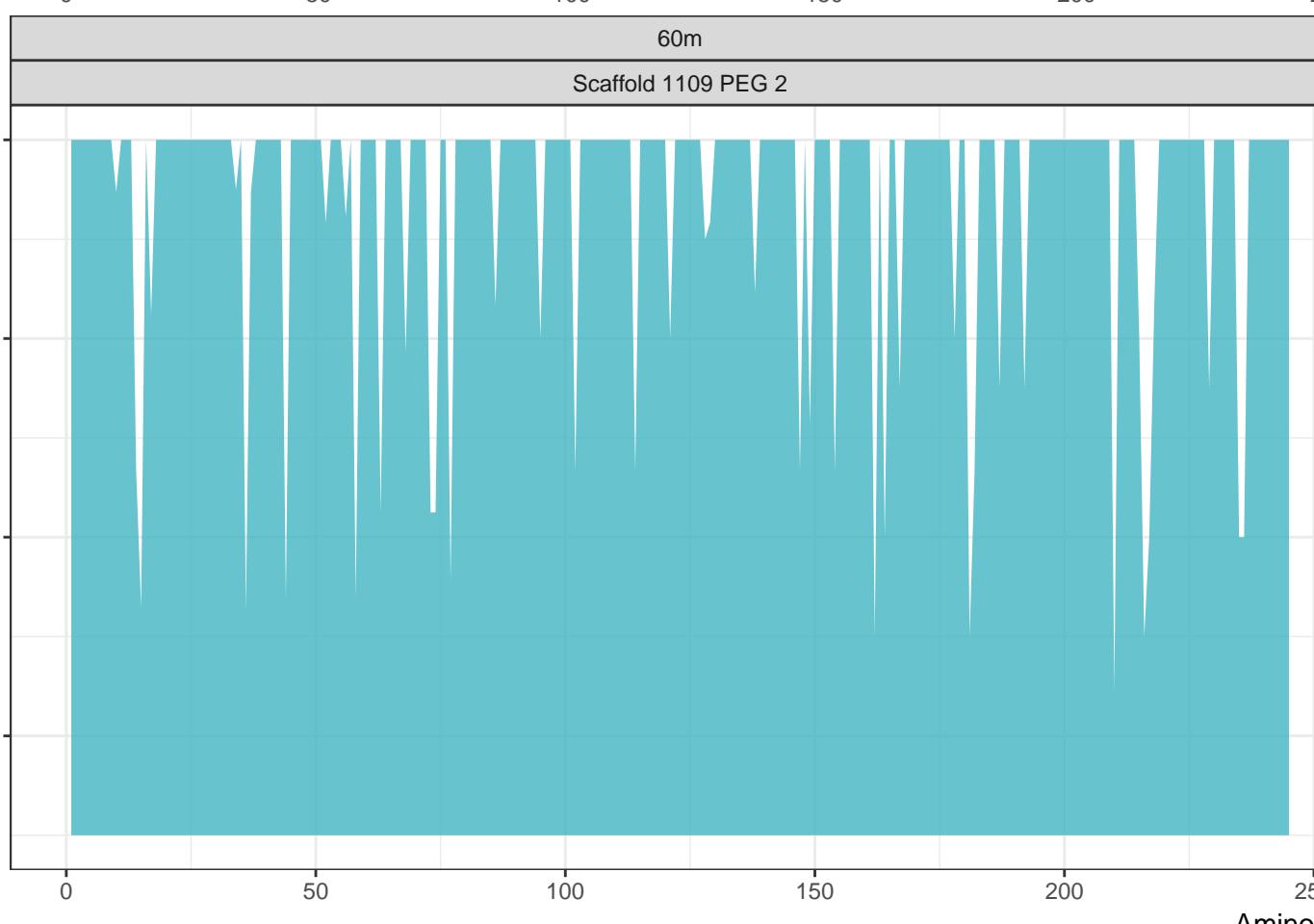
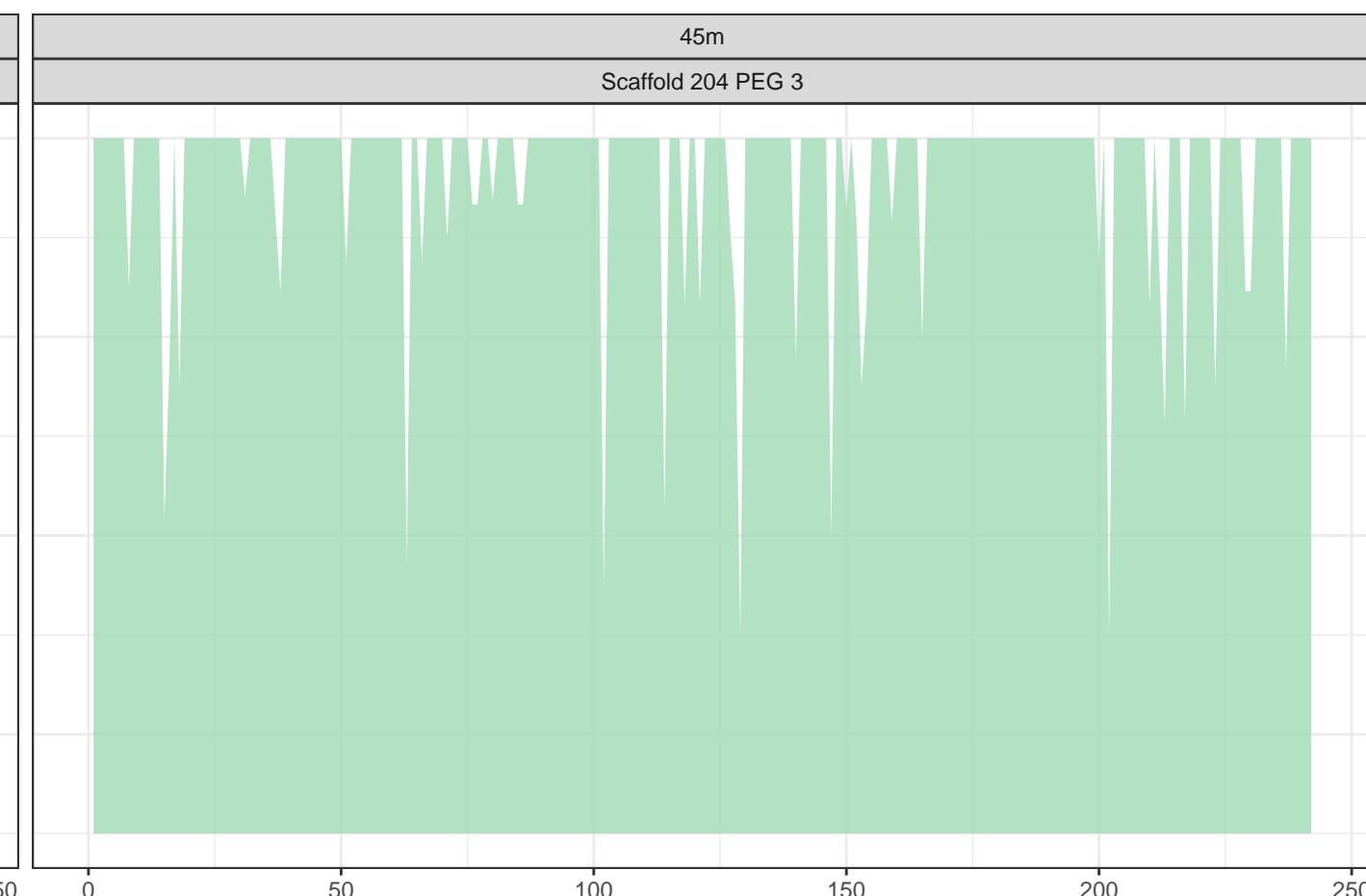
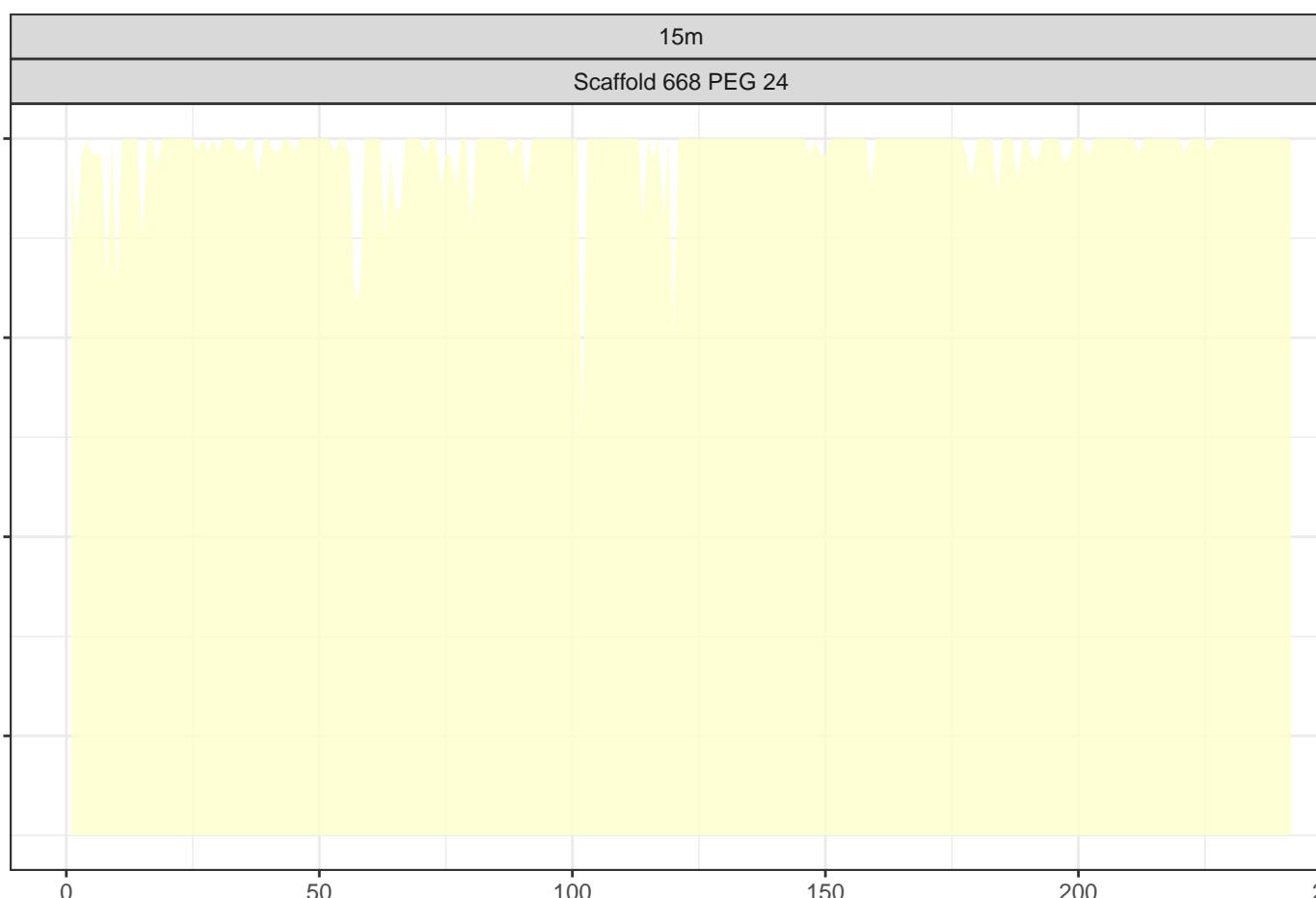












Amino acid position

