1	Higher daily temperature range at depth is linked with higher thermotolerance in Antipatharians
2	from the Canary Islands
3	Mathilde Godefroid ¹ , Adriana Gouveia ^{2,3} , Francisco Otero-Ferrer ² , Fernando Espino ² , Fernando Tuya ² ,
4	Philippe Dubois ¹
5	
6	¹ Marine Biology Laboratory, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Av. F.D. Roosevelt, CP 160/15, 1050
7	Bruxelles, Belgium
8	² BIOCON, IU-ECOAQUA, Parque Científico Tecnológico Marino de Taliarte, Universidad de las Palmas
9	de Gran Canaria, 35214, Gran Canaria, Spain
10	³ Department of Biology, University of Aveiro, 3810-193, Aveiro, Portugal
11	
12	Corresponding author: Mathilde Godefroid
13	godefroid.mathilde1@gmail.com
14	Av. F.D. Roosevelt, 50 CP160/15, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
15	
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17 Abstract

18 Sensitivity to ocean warming is generally expected to be lower in populations from more 19 heterogeneous thermal environments, owing to greater phenotypic plasticity and/or genotype 20 selection. While resilience of benthic populations from thermally fluctuating environments has been 21 investigated at a variety of spatial scales, this has received limited attention across depths and has 22 remained unresolved for Antipatharian corals, key habitat-forming species across a wide bathymetric 23 range in all of the world oceans. In this study, we aimed at addressing the thermal sensitivity of 24 Antipatharian corals across depths characterized by different levels of temperature fluctuations. We 25 used an acute ramping experimental approach to compare the thermal sensitivity of colonies of (1) 26 the branched Antipatharian Antipathella wollastoni (Gray, 1857) from two distinct depths (25 and 40 27 m) in Gran Canaria (Canary Islands, Spain); and of (2) unbranched mesophotic (80 m) Stichopathes 28 species, from Lanzarote (Canary Islands, Spain; S. gracilis (Gray, 1857)), and Stichopathes sp. clade C 29 from Mo'orea, French Polynesia. Results showed that the daily temperature range in Gran Canaria was 30 larger at mesophotic depths (3.9°C vs. 2.8°C at 40 and 25 m, respectively) and this coincided with lower 31 thermal sensitivity in mesophotic colonies of A. wollastoni. Second, S. gracilis from Lanzarote showed 32 a lower thermal sensitivity than the previously studied Stichopathes sp. clade C from Mo'orea (French 33 Polynesia) inhabiting a less variable habitat. These results are in line with the climate variability 34 hypothesis, which states that populations under more variable thermal conditions have a lower 35 sensitivity to warming than those from more stable environments, as they have adapted/acclimated 36 to these higher levels of temperature fluctuations.

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38 Keywords

Black corals, Thermotolerance, Marine Animal Forests, Acute ramping, Stichopathes gracilis,
Antipathella wollastoni

42 **1.** Introduction

43 In the last IPCC report, scientists stated that increases in greenhouse gas concentrations from 1750 have been unequivocally caused by human activities (Cooley et al., 2022). The increase and 44 45 accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have led to increasing global temperatures, 46 including in the ocean. Since the 1980s, the surface of the ocean has, on average, increased by 0.6°C 47 (95% CI [0.44-0.74°C]) and marine heatwaves (i.e., prolonged anomalously warm water events; Hobday et al., 2016) have approximately doubled in frequency (Cooley et al., 2022). Marine heatwaves are 48 49 predicted to increase in intensity, frequency and duration under all Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs; Cooley et al., 2022). Under the five SSPs that cover a wide range of plausible scenarios, sea 50 surface temperatures (SST), from 1995-2014 to 2081-2100, are projected to increase by +0.86°C (95% 51 52 CI [0.43-1.47°C], SSP1-2.6; best-case scenario) up to +2.89°C (95% CI [2.01-4.07°C], SSP5-8.5; worst-53 case scenario).

54 Ongoing ocean warming (OW) is predicted to affect marine ecosystems at all levels of biological 55 organization, from physiological effects on species to effects on the functioning of communities (Yao 56 & Somero, 2014). Temperature effects on marine organisms differ among species and life-stages 57 (Byrne et al., 2020; Putnam, 2021; Putnam et al., 2013). Furthermore, thermal sensitivity (the level of 58 response to increased temperature) may differ between populations of a species when 59 adaptation/genetic selection or acclimatization (phenotypic plasticity) to local thermal environments 60 occurred (Johnson et al., 2021; Oliver & Palumbi, 2011; Putnam, 2021). Populations whose individuals are more responsive (sensitive) are expected to suffer more from heat stress than those that show a 61 62 lower response. Depending on this sensitivity, responses of populations to OW may result in shifts in 63 the biogeographic ranges, leading to global tropicalization and meridionalization of marine faunas 64 (Perry et al., 2005; Sunday et al., 2012; Vergés et al., 2014; Yapici, 2016). Vertical redistribution of 65 marine organisms to reach colder mean temperatures can occur, with limits imposed by factors such 66 as seafloor depth and type of substrate, food availability, connectivity across depths and photic layer

depth that constraints photosynthetic organisms within the photic zone (Garcia-Molinos et al., 2016;
Jorda et al., 2020; Pinsky et al., 2020).

69 Local adaptation or acclimatization, which contributes to different physiological sensitivities (i.e. levels 70 of response of a physiological variable) to thermal stress across populations, could be modulated by 71 thermal history, in particular by temperature variability. Studies showed that thermal performances of 72 scleractinians can vary across latitudes (Astrangia poculata, Aichelman et al., 2019; Orbicella franksi, 73 Silbiger et al., 2019; Stylophora pistillata, Acropora muricata, Porites lobata, Seriatopora hystrix, and 74 Pocillopora verrucosa; Banc-Prandi et al., 2022) and seasons (Porites cylindrical and Acropora 75 valenciennesi; Jurriaans et al., 2019), due to thermal adaptation/acclimatization. Studies that have 76 compared thermal sensitivities of scleractinians across depths either found no differences in thermal 77 sensitivity (instantaneous acute heat stress, 5-10 vs. 30-35m; Gould et al., 2021), higher sensitivity 78 (ramping of 1°C/day; 20 vs. 43m; Frates et al., 2021) or lower sensitivity (ramping of 1°C/hour; 25 vs. 79 85m; Godefroid et al., 2023) in mesophotic colonies. Lower sensitivity is linked to a large thermal 80 window for the considered variable, characteristic of so-called thermal generalists.

81 Mesophotic depths (ca. 30 to 150m; Lesser et al., 2018) may be protected from, or less impacted by, 82 major disturbances such as temperature anomalies and storm events (reviewed in Bongaerts et al., 83 2010). However, evidence revealed that they may show large variations in temperatures, even more 84 than shallow waters, due to physical processes such as internal waves and tides (Leichter et al., 2012; 85 Wall et al., 2015). Internal waves are waves generated between different water masses within the 86 ocean, either by wind-driven disturbance of the surface layer, or by the interaction of internal currents 87 on seafloor topography (Wall et al., 2015). These generate high-frequency temperature fluctuations 88 (several degrees) between water masses, which were showed to reduce the risk of scleractinian 89 bleaching (in particular, large daily temperature range; Safaie et al., 2018; Nash et al., 2012). In the 90 Andaman Sea, internal waves create sudden (within minutes), large (up to 10°C), short (15-30 min 91 duration) and intermittent (several per cycle) temperature drops, which rarely extend to the sea 92 surface. These were showed to mitigate heat accumulation, coral bleaching and mortality, in contrast with waters sheltered from these internal waves (Reid et al., 2019; Wall et al., 2015; Wyatt et al., 2020).
Yet, this concept is now disputed as internal waves proved, in some instances, to be insufficient to
prevent bleaching at mesophotic depths (Frade et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2016). By providing cold
nutrient-rich waters, they also reduce coral growth rate and increase turbidity (Wall et al., 2015). So,
the benefit of internal wave exposure likely depends on a combination of factors, such as their
duration, intensity and the taxa investigated.

99 Ectotherms may be particularly sensitive to OW, as temperature is likely the most important 100 environmental variable affecting their performances (Angilletta et al., 2002). Their sensitivity to OW 101 will thus depend, in the first instance, on their physiological ability to tolerate warmer temperatures. 102 Physiological plasticity is essential when the rates of environmental change (here, warming) exceed 103 the pace of natural adaptation (Logan et al., 2014). It is particularly important for sessile ectotherms 104 that are unable to move into colder waters when facing heat stress events (Solan & Whiteley, 2016). 105 This is the case of epi-zoobenthic taxa that make 'Marine Animal Forests' (MAFs sensu Rossi et al., 106 2017), such as Antipatharian corals. Antipatharians, also known as black corals, are colonial 107 Hexacorallia, which are widely distributed across oceans and depths (Wagner et al., 2012). Their 108 skeleton differs from the calcareous scleractinian corals by being made of chitin and proteins. 109 Moreover, they exclusively feed heterotrophically and do not rely on Symbiodiniaceae for energy 110 acquisition (Gress et al., 2021; Wagner et al., 2011, 2012). Under favourable conditions, antipatharians 111 form dense and extensive MAFs that create a diversity of microhabitats and favour a high biodiversity 112 of associated fauna. They are therefore considered as 'engineer' species (Bo et al., 2014, 2019; De 113 Clippele et al., 2019; Tazioli et al., 2007; Terrana et al., 2019).

The effects of temperature increase on Antipatharian corals are known through only three studies. Godefroid et al. (2022a, 2023) showed that the mesophotic *Stichopathes* sp. clade C in the tropics (80 m, Mo'orea, French Polynesia, 16-days experiment and ramping 1°C/hour) had a narrow thermal window of performance (4.4°C [2.0-6.5] 95% Cl) and lived close to its tipping point temperature ("thermal optima", in thermal biology, 28.8°C, [27.6-31.5] 95% Cl). The experiment was performed at

119 the end of the cold season, yet Stichopathes sp. lived at performances below the tipping point 120 ("suboptimal"), suggesting that this species has a low acclimatization capacity. An increase in seawater 121 temperature of 1°C exceeded its tipping point temperature with significant resulting effects (tissue 122 necrosis, impairment of healing capacities, mucus and antioxidant production; Godefroid et al., 2022a). 123 Another 15-days experiment performed on the Mediterranean Antipatharian Antipathella subpinnata 124 (70 m, Bordighera, Italy) revealed a wide thermal performance window (6.1°C) and no significant 125 effects at any temperature, up to +4.5°C above the annual mean thermal conditions, suggesting very 126 low sensitivity of this species (Godefroid et al., 2022b). So far, the paucity of studies on Antipatharians 127 prevents drawing a global picture of the sensitivity of antipatharians to increased temperatures.

128 In subtropical regions such as the Canary Islands (Eastern Atlantic), mesophotic rocky communities 129 harbour antipatharians, among which the arborescent Antipathella wollastoni occurs from 25 m to 130 more than 1000 m, creating extensive MAFs throughout the Macaronesia (Bianchi et al., 2000; Ocaña 131 & Brito, 2004; Molodtsova, 2006; Czechowska et al., 2020). The whip shaped Stichopathes gracilis also 132 occurs in this archipelago at depths from 30 to 150 m, creating dense populations around the island of 133 Lanzarote (Ocaña & Brito, 2004). Ocean temperatures are increasing rapidly in the Canary Islands, so 134 it is of particular interest to study the resilience of black coral communities in this region. Indeed, it 135 was shown that SSTs in the Canary upwelling system have the highest warming rate of all four Eastern 136 Boundary Upwelling systems (Arístegui et al., 2009). SST trends vary from +0.16°C (Siemer et al., 2021) 137 to +0.5°C per decade (Demarcq, 2009), according to the period and data source (Table 1). Increasing 138 temperatures across the archipelago has already resulted in biogeographical shifts, with the arrival of 139 tropical species and the expansion of thermophilic endemic species around several islands (Brito et al., 140 2014, 2017; Espino et al., 2019).

141 If considering that current SST increase trends will continue in the upcoming decades, an overall 142 maximum warming of ca. +4°C can be expected by the end of the century (0.5 °C dec⁻¹ over 80 years; 143 Demarcq, 2009). On top of that overall temperature increase, internal waves were reported in the 144 southwest shelf-break of Gran Canaria Island (Sangrà et al., 2001). These uplifted waters induce upward transport of cold and nutrient-rich waters, which enhance biological production locally and
may benefit heterotrophic feeders, such as Antipatharians. They are responsible for vertical
oscillations of temperatures around the pycnocline that is centred around 80 m in Gran Canaria.
Isotherms show vertical oscillations with about 10 m amplitude in the thermocline and 50 m in the
mixed layer (Sangrà et al., 2001).

Table 1. Sea surface temperature (SST) trends for the Canary Islands related to the period and data sources.

Study	T° increase	Period	Data source				
Espino et al., 2019	0.21°C dec ⁻¹	33 years, 1985-2018	Marine Copernicus European system				
Vélez-Belchi et al., 2015	0.28°C dec ⁻¹	31 years, 1982-2013	AVHRR, ICOADS				
Belkin, 2009	0.22 dec ⁻¹	24 years, 1892-2006	UK Meteorological Office Hadley,				
			Centre SST climatology				
Siemer et al., 2021	0.16°C dec ⁻¹	37 years, 1982-2019	AVHRR, ICOADS				
Demarcq, 2009	0.35-0.44°C dec ⁻¹	9 years, 1998-2007	ICOADS, AVHRR Pathfinder v. 5.1				
Demarcq, 2009	0.5°C dec ⁻¹	22 years, 1985-2007	ICOADS, AVHRR Pathfinder v. 5.1				
Carson & Harrison, 2008	warming (0-300m)	48 years, 1955-2003	WOD05				
Pardo et al., 2011	0.21°C dec ⁻¹	39 years, 1970-2009	NCEP/NCAR				

152 Modified from Siemer et al. (2021). Dec refers to decades.

154	In light of the rapid warming expected in the Canary Islands upwelling system (Arístegui et al., 2009),
155	it appears particularly relevant to assess thermal sensitivities of 'engineer' species of this region,
156	including Antipatharians, which are particularly understudied from this point of view. This is also a
157	good case study to provide more insight into the effects of temperature variability on the thermal
158	sensitivity of Antipatharians from mesophotic depths and to test if higher temperature variability leads
159	to lower thermal sensitivity. Therefore, the aims of this study were (1) to assess the thermal
160	sensitivities of the Antipatharians A. wollastoni and S. gracilis and (2) to determine if high temperature
161	fluctuations at mesophotic depths increase thermal tolerance. For this purpose, we compared the
162	physiological tolerance of two populations of <i>A. wollastoni</i> from distinct depths (25 m vs. 40 m), under
163	different thermal regimes in Gran Canaria, using a short-term ramping method. Because internal wave

activity is higher at 40 m, we expected these colonies to be more tolerant to increasing temperatures than those from 25 m. Then, we assessed the thermal response of the lower mesophotic (80 m) Antipatharian *Stichopathes gracilis* from Lanzarote in order to compare its thermal sensitivity with a previously studied *Stichopathes* species from Mo'orea (French Polynesia) that inhabits a less variable habitat (Godefroid et al., 2023).

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170 **2.** Material and methods

171 2.1 *In situ* thermal environment

172 Temperature data loggers were attached to 50 cm-long metal stakes partially buried into the seabed 173 (Hobo data-logger Pendant Temp-Light, Onset Computer Corporation, USA), at 25 m and 40 m in Gando Bay (27°55'56.1"N 15°21'11.0"W; Fig. 2a), located on the Eastern coast of Gran Canaria (Canary 174 175 Islands, Spain) in sites where A. wollastoni fragments were collected. At 25 m, loggers were set up to 176 record measurements every 2 hours, from October 9th, 2019, to June 3rd, 2020 (one logger), and then every 15 minutes from June 3rd, 2020, to October 7th, 2021 (one logger). Loggers were also installed in 177 sites where S. gracillis fragments were collected at 80 m depth in Playa Chica (Lanzarote; 28°55'04.7"N 178 179 13°40'11.8"W; Fig. 2a), located on the Southeastern coast of Lanzarote (Canary Islands, Spain). These recorded temperature data every 4 hours, from January 10th to February 17th, 2021 (one logger), and 180 every 15 minutes from February 17th to October 19th, 2021 (one logger). The whole temperature 181 dataset was deposited in open-access in Zenodo (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7180090). Temperature time 182 series data in Gando Bay was also retrieved from Otero-Ferrer et al. (2020). Temperature data at both 183 depths was available for two periods: (1) from July 12th to August 25th, 2017 (45 days, 1 measure every 184 5 minutes) and (2) from September 20th to October 10th, 2018 (21 days, 1 measure per minute). 185

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187 2.2 Antipatharian collection

188 All coral fragments were collected between October 7th and November 11th, 2021. Sites were selected 189 on the basis of previous records of black coral species in the Canary Islands (Czechowska et al., 2020; 190 Ocaña & Brito, 2004). Two fragments, approximately 10 cm long, were cut from seven colonies. 191 Fragments of A. wollastoni (Fig. 1a) were collected at 25 and 40 m depth in Gando Bay. Seawater 192 temperature recorded at the time of collection was 23°C and 21°C, respectively. Fragments from 25 m 193 are, thereafter, referred as "the mid-depth fragments" and those from 40 m as "the mesophotic 194 fragments". Fragments of S. gracilis (Fig. 1b) were collected at 80 m depth in Playa Chica where 195 recorded seawater temperature at the time of collection was 19°C. After collection, all fragments were 196 transported in cool boxes with seawater from the collection sites to the Parque Científico Tecnológico 197 Marino de Taliarte (Telde, Gran Canaria). In the laboratory, fragments were attached to a support using 198 EPOXY resin (Holdfast, Aquarium Systems, France) and placed in an open-circuit system composed of 199 ten aquariums (30 L, salinity 36.8 ‰) under identical temperature relative to the sites of collection (19, 200 21 and 23°C). The open-circuit renewal rate was adjusted to be constant and to be able to maintain a 201 stable seawater temperature in the system. Total seawater volume was renewed every two days. 202 Seawater delivered to all aquariums was cooled at 19°C using a chiller (Johnson control A350; ± 0.5°C) 203 and was heated in individual aquariums (for 21 and 23°C) using two 100 W heating resistances 204 connected to a temperature controller (Inkbird ITC-308; ± 0.3°C). Fragments were left to recover 205 between six and ten days before starting the experiment. After this recovery period, no signs of stress 206 were visible (no mucus production, polyps open and feeding at night). Fragments were fed daily (at 207 dawn) with a mix composed of freshly hatched Artemia, copepods and phytoplankton. Seawater 208 parameters were checked daily using a handheld meter (WTW Multi 350i for temperature, pH and 209 conductivity) and colorimetric tests (for nitrates and nitrites), to ensure good seawater quality.

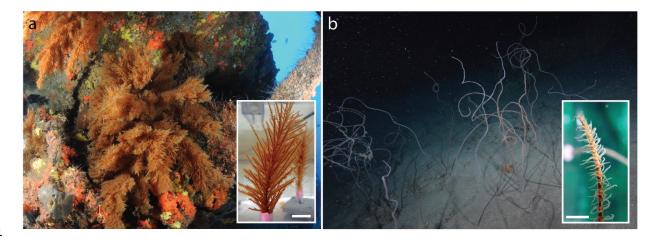




Figure 1. In situ photographs of (a) Antipathella wollastoni from 25 m in Gran Canaria (Gando Bay) and (b) Stichopathes
 gracilis from 80 m in Lanzarote (Playa Chica). Insets: fragments of the two species. Scale bars: 2 cm.

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215 2.3 Heat stress experiment

216 Thermal sensitivity was quantified by measuring the oxygen consumption rate of the fragments over 217 a range of temperatures. Based on the oxygen and capacity-limited thermal tolerance hypothesis, 218 oxygen represents the energy available for an organism to perform essential functions (Pörtner, 2010; 219 Schulte, 2015). An increase in oxygen consumption is therefore indicative of an increase in energy cost 220 and hence, in the thermal sensitivity of the fragments. Oxygen consumption rate of the fragments was 221 measured using a ramping methodology that was proven efficient with antipatharian corals (Godefroid 222 et al., 2023). The ramping method represents a trade-off between the range of possible methodologies (chronic exposure, acute thermal stress), as it gives some time for acclimation at each temperature 223 224 steps (much less than under chronic exposure but more than under acute thermal stress). The ramping 225 method has proved to be useful when the practical extent of a study cannot match the process of 226 interest, such as climate change (Blois et al., 2013; Pickett, 1989; Silbiger et al., 2019), and allows 227 comparing the relative sensitivities of populations or species.

229 The ramping system was made of an open-circuit buffer tank (300 L) connected to a chiller (Johnson 230 control A350) and, through a pump, to an experimental tank (80 L) where the respirometry chambers 231 were installed. The experimental tank was overflowing into the buffer tank and excess seawater in the 232 buffer tank was removed from the system by overflow. The experimental tank was equipped with a 233 circulation pump and a bubbling system to ensure complete temperature homogenisation and 234 aeration of the seawater. Two 100 W heating resistance, connected to a temperature controller 235 (Inkbird ITC-308; ±0.3°C), were also installed to allow increasing the temperature quickly between 236 experimental stages.

237 Ramp experiments were performed with coral fragments from the three populations (A. wollastoni 238 from 25 m and 40 m and S. gracilis from 80 m). Each ramp was divided in two legs, respectively called 239 'hot ramp' and 'cold ramp', both starting at the acclimation temperature. Here, we define 'ramp 240 experiment', as the progressive increase/decrease (hot/cold ramp) by gradual steps of temperature. 241 The minimum temperature tested corresponded to the lower seasonal temperature experienced by 242 the organism in its environment. The maximum temperature tested was the highest seasonal 243 temperature experienced by the organism in its environment +3°C. Therefore, temperatures tested at 244 each step differed among populations, but the number of steps in the hot ramp was identical for the 245 three populations (Table 2). This avoids potential bias from different times of exposure among 246 populations. Each time, one fragment of a colony was used for the hot ramp and the second fragment, 247 from the same colony, was used for the cold ramp. This allowed every fragment to be used only in a 248 single ramp (and not reused), as well as to have paired replicates (fragments from the same colony) 249 between hot and cold ramps.

Each ramp proceeded identically for specimens from the three populations. Seven fragments from different colonies were moved from their acclimation tank to one of the eight respirometry chambers held in the experimental tank. They were first left to acclimate for 1 hour in darkness and then the chambers were closed, and oxygen consumption was measured for 40 min in darkness, starting at the

254 acclimation temperature. After this period of stable temperature, the chambers were opened in the 255 experimental tank (allowing water exchange between the water in the chambers and in the 256 experimental tank) and temperature was increased/decreased for 30 min to the next step of 257 temperature. Once reached, the fragments were left 30 more min in their open chambers to acclimate 258 to the new temperature, before starting a new 40 min measurement period (with closed chambers). 259 Oxygen saturation in the chambers was always above 80%. This procedure was repeated for each step 260 of temperature. At the end of the last respiration rate measurement, chambers were opened, 261 temperature was decreased back to the acclimation temperature and new measurements of 262 respiration rate were taken after 2.5 hours and 12 hours, to evaluate whether the fragments were able 263 to recover from the heat stress (recovery capacity; Table 2). The recovery capacity was only assessed 264 at the end of the hot ramp (not at the end of the cold ramp). During all ramps, one chamber was left 265 free from any fragment (blank/control chamber) to account for background respiration (i.e., part of 266 the respiration attributed to seawater microbes and/or instrument drift).

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Table 2. Temperature steps tested during the hot and cold ramps, for Antipathella wollastoni fragments from 25 and 40 m depth and Stichopathes gracilis fragments from 80 m depth. Colour code: Gray, temperatures of acclimation, which are the same temperatures than for the recovery; blue gradient, temperatures colder than the acclimation temperatures (cold ramp); yellow-orange-red colours, temperatures warmer than the acclimation temperatures (hot ramp). Orange-red colours are temperatures above the highest temperature experienced by the organism in the environment, including short-term temperature variability related to internal waves. Red colour are temperatures 3°C higher than the maximum temperature recorded at the corresponding site.

Species Depth (m)	Cold ramp (°C)				Hot ramp (°C)					Recovery 2.5 h	Recovery 12 h		
<i>A. wollastoni</i> 25 m	19	20	21	22	23	23	24	25	26	27	28	23	23
<i>A. wollastoni</i> 40 m		18	19	20	21	21	22	23.5	25	26.5	28	21	21
<i>S. gracilis</i> 80 m			17	18	19	19	20.5	22	23.5	25	26.5	19	19

276 Oxygen consumption of the fragments, expressed in oxygen saturation, was measured for the eight 277 respirometry chambers simultaneously, through time. One measure was recorded every 5 s on each 278 chamber using fibre-optic oxygen sensors connected to two 4-channel Fibre Optic Oxygen Transmitter 279 (OXY-4 SMA G2 and OXY-4 SMA G3, Pre-Sens Precision Sensing GmbH, Germany). The volume and 280 shape of the chambers changed based on the morphology of the species: fragments of A. wollastoni 281 (bushy) were placed in 400 mL cylindrical plastic chambers and fragments of S. gracilis (unbranched, 282 long and thin corallum) in 50 mL Falcon tubes. A new oxygen sensor spot (PreSens SP-PSt3-NAU-D5-283 YOP-SA) was glued in every chamber and calibrated according to the supplier's manual. A magnetic stir 284 bar, separated from the fragment by a mesh, allowed to maintain constant homogenization of the 285 dissolved gas in the chambers. Respiration rate of the control chamber was subtracted from respiration 286 rate of the chambers containing a coral fragment. After the ramp and recovery period, each fragment 287 was weighed (wet weight) and measured (length and diameter) to allow normalizing the respiration 288 rate measurements. Length and diameter measurements were used to calculate the surface area of 289 the S. gracilis fragments using the formula of a cylinder. Due to the complex morphology of A. 290 wollastoni, surface area could not be calculated for this species. Instead, the total length of all 291 ramifications was measured by taking a photo with a scale (resolution 1 mm) of all cut branches laid 292 out in two dimensions. Subsequent photographs were analysed using the software ImageJ (Schneider 293 et al., 2012). These normalization methods allowed comparison with previous results (A. subpinnata 294 in Godefroid et al., 2022b; Stichopathes sp. in Godefroid et al., 2022a). Respiration rate was calculated 295 using the slope of the linear regression of seawater oxygen concentration against time, after 296 accounting for the seawater volume (based on the seawater density calculations from Millero & Huang, 297 2009; Millero & Poisson, 1981) and normalized by the surface area/length and by the wet weight of the fragment. Rates of respiration were expressed in μ mol of O₂ h⁻¹ and cm⁻² for *S. gracilis*, in μ mol of 298 $O_2 h^{-1}$ and cm for *A. wollastoni* and in µmol of $O_2 h^{-1} g^{-1}$ when normalized by the wet weight. Row data 299 300 for respiration were deposited in open-access in Zenodo (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7684112).

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302 2.4 Data analysis

To compare daily temperature fluctuations at 25 and 40 m depths in Gando Bay (Gran Canaria), data from Otero-Ferrer et al. (2020) were used. First, daily temperature ranges were calculated (daily maximum temperature – daily minimum temperature). Then, daily temperature ranges across depths were compared using one-factor repeated measures model, with depth as a fixed factor, time as a repeated measure (random factor) and daily temperature range as a dependant variable.

Total annual temperature ranges across depths were not compared statistically because temperature time series were not of equal length (sometimes being less than one year) and did not cover the same period.

Respiration rates were analysed using linear least square regression models with temperature as a predictor variable, for the three populations and the two normalization methods (by length or surface and by wet weight). Linearity assumptions were checked by analysis of residuals. Comparison of slopes between regressions for *A. wollastoni* from 25 and 40 m depth were performed using the R package *Ismeans* that performs two-way ANOVA (Russel, 2016). Non-linear models were also tested but did not converge.

Differences in respiration rates were tested for each population between the start of the ramping (i.e., at acclimation temperatures), the end of the ramping and after 2.5 and 12 h of post ramping recovery via a linear mixed-effect model and *a posteriori* pairwise comparison (Tukey's HSD). In the linear mixedeffect model, time was a fixed repeated effect (4 levels), colony was a random factor (7 levels) and the respiration rate was the dependent variable. Linearity assumptions were checked by analysis of residuals.

All analyses were performed using the software R, version R 4.2.1 (R Core Team, 2022).

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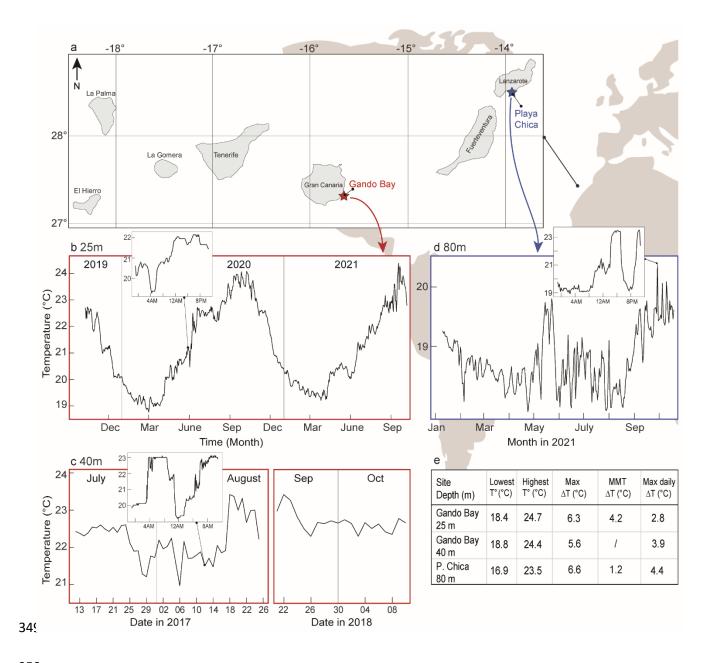
325 **3. Results**

326 3.1 *In situ* thermal environments

327 Absolute annual temperature range at 25 m in Gando Bay (Gran Canaria Island) was 6.3°C, based on the two years of available temperature data (October 9th, 2019, to October 7th, 2021; Fig. 2b,e). 328 Average annual temperature range between the warmest (September, 23.6 \pm 0.6°C, mean \pm sd, 329 330 n=5,765) and coldest (March, 19.4 ± 0.2°C, mean ± sd, n=3,348) months of the dataset was 4.2°C (Fig. 331 2e; Table S1). Absolute temperatures range from available data at 40 m was 5.6°C, with 18.8°C being 332 the minimum recorded temperature and 24.4°C being the maximum recorded temperature (Fig. 2c,e; 333 Table S1). Absolute temperature range from data recorded at 80 m in Playa Chica (Lanzarote Island) was 6.6°C (January 10th to October 19th , 2021; Fig. 2d,e) and average temperature range was 1.2°C 334 between the warmest (October, 19.6 ± 0.7°C, mean ± sd, n=1,769) and coldest months (April, 18.4 ± 335 336 0.4, mean ± sd, n=2,880) (Fig. 2e; Table S1).

Short-term temperature fluctuations were evidenced, which amplitude increased with depth. Comparison of daily temperature ranges at 25 and 40 m based on temperature time series from Otero-Ferrer et al. (2020), showed that daily temperature ranges at 40 m (means: 2.24°C and 2.88°C for data in 2017 and 2018, respectively) were significantly higher than at 25 m (means: 1.06°C and 1.89°C for data in 2017 and 2018, respectively) (*p<0.001* for both time series; Tables S2).

Based on available temperature time series (Figure 2), maximum daily temperature ranges were 2.8°C at 25 m (June 6th 2020), 3.9°C at 40 m (August 12th 2017) and 4.4°C at 80 m (August 8th 2021) (Fig. 2e). Temperature fluctuations over the year showed a seasonal pattern. At 25 m, the lowest monthly temperature range (1.4°C) was observed from January to March (cold season) and the highest (3.0-4.1°C) from June to October (warm season) (Fig. 2b; Table S1). A similar pattern was observed at 80 m, with the lowest monthly temperature ranges (1.1-1.6°C) from January to March and the highest (4.8-5.7°C) from July to October (Fig. 2d; Table S1).



350 Figure 2. Thermal regimes at the three study sites. (a) Map of the study sites. (b) Temperature at 25 m in Gando Bay (Gran 351 Canaria) from October 9th, 2019, to June 3rd, 2020 (n=2,855; 2 h interval; mean per day) and from June 3rd, 2020, to October 352 7th, 2021 (n=47,131; 15 min interval; mean per day). (c) Temperature at 40 m in Gando Bay (Gran Canaria) from July 12th to 353 August 25th, 2017 (n=12,711; 5 min interval; mean per day) and from September 21st to October 10th, 2018 (n=28,130; 4h 354 interval; mean per day). (d) Temperature at 80 m in Playa Chica (Lanzarote) from January 10th to February 17th, 2021 (n=227; 355 4 h interval; mean per day) and from February 17th to October 19th, 2021 (n=23,421; 15 min interval; mean per day). (e) 356 Metrics of temperature in the three study sites. Lowest and highest temperatures (°C) are the lowest and highest 357 temperatures recorded in each study site during the considered periods; Max ΔT is the difference between the highest and 358 lowest temperatures ever recorded in each study site; Mean monthly temperature (MMT) ΔT is the annual temperature 359 range based on mean monthly temperatures (mean of the warmest month – mean of the coldest month); Max daily ΔT is

the highest difference between the maximum and minimum temperature recorded on a single day. Full details of the metricsare available in Table S1. Insets: zooms on a day with high thermal variability.

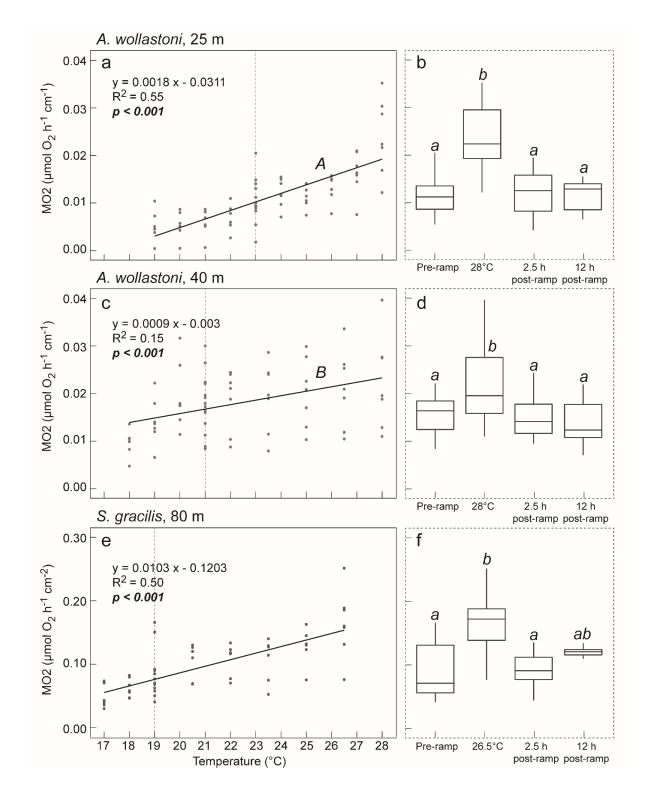
362

363 3.2 Metabolic responses with temperature

Respiration rates (normalized by length) increased linearly with temperature for *A. wollastoni* from 25 and 40 m, with respective slopes being 0.0018 and 0.0009 (Fig. 3a, c; p<0.001 for both populations, Table S3). Respiration rates increased significantly faster (i.e., steeper slope) with temperature in the mid-depth than in the mesophotic colonies (Comparison of slopes, p=0.01, Table S4). For *S. gracilis*, respiration rates (normalized by surface area) also increased linearly with temperature (Fig. 3e, p<0.001, Table S3).

When respiration rates of the three populations were normalized by the weight of the fragments, linear regressions were also significant for all populations, although temperature only accounted for 4% of the variation in *A. wollastoni* from 40m (Figure 4, Table S6; *p<0.001* for *A. wollastoni* from 25 m and *S. gracilis* and *p<0.05* for *A. wollastoni* from 40 m). Mid-depth colonies of *A. wollastoni* were significantly more responsive to increasing seawater temperature than deeper colonies of *A. wollastoni* (Figure 4, Table S7; Comparison of slopes and Tukey's test).

For all populations, respiration rates were significantly lower at the start of the ramping (i.e., at acclimation pre-ramp temperatures) than at the highest tested temperature (Fig. 3b, d, f; Table S5; Linear Mixed Model and Tukey's tests). However, respiration rates did not differ significantly between the start of the ramping and after 2.5 and 12 h of post ramping recovery, for all populations (Fig. 3b, d, f; Table S5; Linear Mixed Model and Tukey's tests).



383

Figure 3. Respiration rate (MO2) normalized by the length/surface of the fragments according to temperature, for (a, c) Antipathella wollastoni from 25 and 40 m (Gran Canaria) and (e) Stichopathes gracilis from 80 m (Lanzarote). Modeliling using Linear Least Square Regression (black line). Vertical dotted lines are the acclimation temperatures. Different uppercase letters indicate slopes that differ significantly, for the two populations of *A. wollastoni*. (b, d, f) Comparison of the recovery capacity of the fragments before the ramp experiment (Pre-ramp), at the end of the ramp experiment (highest temperature) and 2.5 h and 12 h post-ramp, back to acclimation temperature, for the three studied populations. Boxes for the same population

- 390 sharing the same lowercase letters do not have significantly different means (Tukey's test). Boxplot median (horizontal line);
- box 25 to 75 percentiles ;upper and lower whiskers r maximum and minimum values, respectively.

392

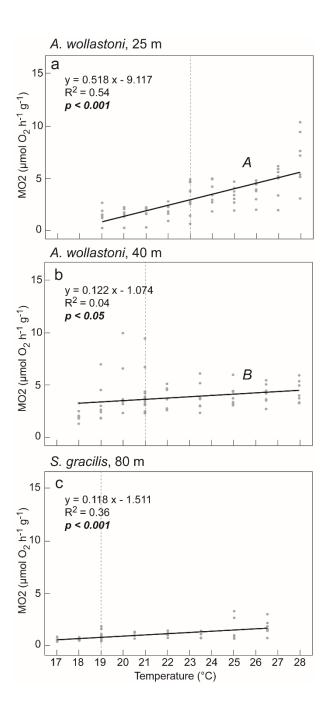


Figure 4. Respiration rate normalized by the wet weight of the fragments according to temperature, for (a) *A. wollastoni* from 25 m; (b) *A. wollastoni* from 40 m and (c) *S. gracilis* from 80 m. Different uppercase letters indicate slopes that differ significantly, for the two populations of *A. wollastoni*. These were not compared with the slope for *S.gracilis* because the species differs by many biological features.

398

4. Discussion

400 4.1 *In situ* thermal environment

401 Temperatures at the three collection sites differed depending on the time scale considered. Total 402 annual temperature ranges across depths could not be compared statistically, due to lack of 403 comparable temperature time series. Indeed, duration of recorded temperature also varied across 404 sites, with up to 3 years of temperature data at 25 m in Gando Bay, a few months at the same site at 405 40 m, and almost a year at 80 m in Playa Chica. These differences in temperature data sampling 406 between sites are due to the difficulty of accessing deeper sites, which requires more logistics than for 407 shallower sites and to the unavailability of remote sensing of bottom temperatures at depth. 408 Nevertheless, based on data available simultaneously at both depths from Otero-Ferrer et al. (2020), 409 it was possible to show that daily temperature ranges differed significantly between 25 and 40m 410 depths. In this dataset, temperature daily ranges were larger at 40 m than at 25 m (Fig. 2e; Table S1).

411

412 4.2 Thermal tolerance according to depth

413 The acute ramping experiments showed a steady increase in oxygen consumption rate with 414 temperature for populations of A. wollastoni from both depths. Both populations were also able to 415 recover a normal metabolic rate after the ramping, suggesting that the gradual, but fast, increase in 416 temperatures did not lead to severe consequences. Only one experiment has previously assessed the 417 effects of increasing temperatures on an Antipatharian within the same genus (Antipathella 418 subpinnata; Godefroid et al., 2022b). In this experiment, fragments were exposed to a range of 419 temperatures (14 to 19°C) over 15 days and results showed very low thermal sensitivity for this species, 420 with no significant effects even at +4.5°C above the mean annual temperature. Ramping experiments 421 may be less efficient in revealing thermal limitations for this specific species. However, in both species, 422 very low (A. subpinnata) or no limitation (A. wollastoni) in metabolism was induced by temperature in 423 the considered temperature ranges, suggesting that this genus is rather resistant to thermal stress.

424 The differences in thermal responses between depths for A. wollastoni (i.e. significant differences 425 between regression slopes) coincide with differences in daily temperature ranges, which were 426 significantly larger at 40 than at 25 m. Phenotypic plasticity, or genotype selection, was suggested as a 427 mechanism enhancing tolerance for populations under variable environmental stress (Rivest et al., 428 2017). In the present study, these processes could have driven a fast acclimation capacity, which 429 allowed mesophotic A. wollastoni to adjust their physiological performances faster (i.e., moderate 430 slope) than the mid-depth colonies (i.e., steeper slope) during the ramping. Such fast acclimation 431 capacity has been reported in scleractinians (e.g. Jurriaans and Hoogenboom, 2020).

432 Our results are in line with the hypothesis that environmental variability could modify the responses 433 of organisms to ocean warming. Limited evidence from studies on scleractinian corals suggests that 434 environmental history (temperature variability) can influence their response to changes in 435 temperature. These studies compared the tolerance of corals from high- and low-variability sites, such 436 as lagoon vs. back-reef pools (Oliver & Palumbi, 2011; Palumbi et al., 2014), or intertidal vs. subtidal 437 sites (Schoepf et al., 2015). In contrast, information on the influence of temperature variability across 438 depths on the thermal tolerance of scleractinian corals is poor, or derives from *in situ* observational 439 studies (Pérez-Rosales et al., 2021; Wall et al., 2015; Wyatt et al., 2020). The present results suggest 440 that short-term environmental temperature fluctuations, differing according to depth, may induce a 441 reduced response to thermal stress in the antipatharian A. wollastoni, as observed in corals from highly 442 variable sites.

Protection against disturbances at depth can occur in different shapes and forms (Smith et al., 2017a).
It can relate to extrinsic protection, by avoiding disturbance, or to intrinsic protection, through high
level of resistance or resilience (through rapid recovery) to disturbances (Bongaerts & Smith, 2019).
Here, mesophotic depths will not escape current OW, nor the predicted increase in the frequency and
intensity of marine heatwaves (Arístegui et al., 2009; Cooley et al., 2022). Hence, they should not be
categorized as depth refuge/refugium. However, the lower response to thermal stress of the

449 mesophotic populations of Antipatharians suggests that these populations are more resistant due to 450 selection/adaptation to the higher levels of temperature fluctuations at these depths, compared to 451 shallower ones. We thus suggest that mesophotic depths in this region can be categorized as depth 452 resilience area, as proposed by Bongaerts et al. (2019). This is not because they are protected from 453 temperature anomalies affecting shallow waters, but due to the high-amplitude and short-term 454 temperature fluctuations at these depths that likely contributed to increasing the phenotypic plasticity 455 or genotype selection (i.e. decreasing the thermal sensitivity) of antipatharians from these depths, 456 compared to those exposed to lower levels of temperature fluctuations. Antipatharians, which are not 457 dependent on light, may also escape climate change effects by migrating vertically towards deeper 458 waters, providing they are able to acclimatize to these new environmental conditions (in terms of 459 current, temperature, food and substrate availability). This seems plausible regarding the wide 460 bathymetric range of A. wollastoni, spanning depths from 20 to 1425 m (Molodtsova, 2006).

461

462 4.3 Thermal tolerance across sites subjected to internal waves

463 Respiration rates of mesophotic (80 m) colonies of S. gracilis from Lanzarote increased linearly with 464 temperature (for both normalization methods used). No tipping point beyond which respiration rate 465 starts to decrease was reached (the so-called "thermal optimum" of thermal biology; Pörtner, 2010; 466 Angilletta, 2009), despite the ramping up to 7.5°C above the acclimation temperature (19°C) and 3°C 467 above the maximum annual temperature (23.5°C). This indicates that the organisms increased their 468 metabolism (and energy expenditures) but did not reach their physiological limits beyond which they 469 are unable to supply enough oxygen to the tissues (Pörtner, 2010). A similar experiment (acute 470 temperature increase by ramping; temperature range of 9°C; ~4-4.5°C above the maximum annual 471 temperature) was performed on another Stichopathes species belonging to clade C from 85 m in the 472 tropics (Mo'orea Island, French Polynesia) and a tipping point ("thermal optimum") for respiration 473 was reached after an increase by 2.6°C above the acclimation temperature (Fig. S1, Godefroid et al.,

474 2023). Another experiment on the latter species showed that metabolic depression with temperature 475 was associated with other signs of stress/declines in performances, such as reduced healing capacity, 476 increased mucus production, tissue necrosis and increased antioxidant response (Godefroid et al., 477 2022a). These results therefore suggested that the tropical Stichopathes would quickly become 478 impacted beyond thermal optimum. This comparison between two congenerics Stichopathes from 479 different ocean basins (Atlantic vs. Pacific), but at similar depths (80 - 85 m), suggests that S. gracilis 480 from Lanzarote (subtropical) are less sensitive to thermal stress than Stichopathes sp. from Mo'orea 481 (tropical latitudes). The difference in trends between the two populations (linear vs. Gaussian; Fig. S1) 482 precludes statistical comparison, but the exceedance of thermal optimum in one case, and not in the 483 other, supports a difference in thermal sensitivity. This difference could be linked to inherent species 484 differences and/or to the thermal environment to which the two populations are exposed. Corals at 485 80 m in Lanzarote are probably exposed to a wider range of annual (6.6°C) and daily (maximum 4.4°C) 486 temperatures than those at a similar depth in Mo'orea. Temperature data in the latter site is only 487 available over a 40 days period but during the high internal wave activity season, i.e. when short term 488 variability is maximum (Leichter, 2012; Godefroid et al., 2022a). In this record, the maximum daily 489 range was 3.4°C. This is consistent with the view that exposure to more variable temperatures provides 490 better tolerance to heat stress and that low latitude species have a narrower thermal tolerance 491 breadth (Sunday et al., 2010).

From an ecological perspective, the lack of a tipping point ("thermal optimum") for *S. gracilis* from Lanzarote, even when subjected to +3°C above the highest temperature recorded in the field, is encouraging for the future of this habitat-forming species, which is present throughout the Canary Islands and in high density all around the island of Lanzarote. Future investigations should consider evaluating the thermal performance of this species over longer-term, with other endpoints (growth rate, reproductive capacity, healing capacity, etc.), to better understand the effects of ongoing warming on the MAFs elaborated by this species. Finally, as *S. gracilis* is found deeper than 80 m, the

499 comparison of the present results with other colonies from another depth would also complete our500 current understanding.

501

502 Credit author statement

503 Mathilde Godefroid: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Visualization, 504 Writing – Original Draft, Review and Editing; Adriana Gouveia: Investigation, Writing: Review and 505 Editing ; Francisco Otero-Ferrer: Conceptualization, Investigation, Resources, Supervision, Writing: 506 Review and Editing; Fernando Espino: Resources, Writing: Review and Editing; Fernando Tuya: 507 Resources, Writing: Review and Editing; Philippe Dubois: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, 508 Supervision, Writing: Review and Editing.

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520

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525

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