

THE PEOPLE BEHIND FISHBASE AND SEALIFEBASE

PATRICIA YAP: PASSIONATE ABOUT SEALIFEBASE

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has been with SeaLifeBase since its inception in 2005.

Before joining the initial three-people team, while she was doing her undergrad at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Pat worked at the WorldFish Center doing literature reviews for coastal management initiatives and training activities. FishBase was in the same building so she was able to connect with their team and become familiar with the work they do.

After graduating, she left and worked in the field for a year, then came back after one of her previous bosses told her about FishBase's new sister project, which would focus on non-fish marine life. She knew she had to join.

"Just the thought of reading about different marine animals every day, and being able to provide the data I read to a bigger audience was a wonderful opportunity," she said. "I believe there is a huge difference between seeing marine life (when you snorkel or dive), and knowing about marine life. It's like taking a peek into their life and the environment they live in and trying to tell their story. That's what I wanted to share with the world by being a part of SeaLifeBase."



As soon as she joined, Patricia was asked to choose the animal group that she loved the most. She chose marine mammals.

What followed was a training process that required adapting and changing the tables that are used in FishBase so that they would fit parameters relevant to non-fish marine organisms.

"My first encoding task was to completely exhaust all data from the FAO catalogue Marine Mammals of the World, which had distribution, ecology, length, common names, and synonym data. It was like an encoding practice while pumping up the data in SeaLifeBase," Pat recalled. "Later on, I was assigned to be in charge of all vertebrate groups in addition to tunicates and nudibranchs. Eventually, our roles evolved and concentrated on specific data encoding/tables."

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As her position evolved, Patricia's responsibilities grew. Just a few years after joining SeaLifeBase, she became the coordinator of all faunal projects, something she did while pursuing a master's degree in environmental science and management.

As expected, the hard work and major efforts to balance out her professional, student, and personal life paid off and in 2013, she was promoted to research analyst, a role that she maintains to date.

"I still handle all faunal work projects in Quantitative Aquatics, involving both FishBase and SeaLifeBase. I try my best to complete the marine biodiversity of specific island ecosystem projects, provide mapping data that feeds into AquaMaps, and complete mandatory information for marine species. All of this is possible because of the team I have by my side." she said.

For Patricia, the most rewarding part of working in SeaLifeBase is providing data to people, governments, agencies, and countries that need them to make informed decisions and protect their marine resources and environments.

Thinking about the future, she wishes that both SeaLifeBase and FishBase go on for eternity and that more people, including the academe, policymakers, scientists, and the wider audience, see the value of having these global databases available to them.



Pat and her team's version of fun is travelling together, scuba diving, and going on food trips.

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