

Working Together to Make a Difference

Voice from WESTPAC Young Scientists on the occasion of World Oceans Day 2014

Mr Ryota Nakajima, Japan
Postdoctoral Researcher, Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC)
Research Field: Marine Ecology

Ryota Nakajima is a postdoctoral researcher at JAMSTEC with major research interest in conservation and ecology of the deep sea and coral reef ecosystems. He is currently engaged in a scientific project on integrative observation and assessment of biodiversity loss in changing seas, evaluating the present status and future perspectives of marine biodiversity for various habitats around the Japanese archipelago and to identify priority areas for conservation.



"To effectively protect our precious deep-sea ecosystems from human activities, it is essential to fully use scientific knowledge in identifying ecologically and biologically significant areas", he said.

He expressed his wishes, "More people become aware and concerned about our deep-sea ecosystems, and continue improving our scientific knowledge through research collaborations so that we can establish effective measures to protect the future of the deep-sea ecosystems before it is too late"

Ms Intan Suci Nurhati, Indonesia
Paleoceanographer, Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology
Research Field: Paleoceanography

Intan Suci Nurhati is a young paleoceanographer from Indonesia. Her research utilizes reef-building corals as a natural archive to study past changes in our oceans and climate.



"Coral-derived oceanographic and climate data is crucial to understand natural and anthropogenic changes in our oceans considering the lack of long and continuous observational data". By studying geochemical signals along these annual banding, past sea-surface temperature, salinity, marine pollution could be reconstructed so that we can understand what happened to corals over the past centuries and what might be happening to corals in the future .

"Furthermore, coral-derived oceanographic and climate records extend the short available observational records, as well as improve climate models by providing historical ground truthing to better project the future", she said.

"This synergy between different fields of oceanography would help policymakers to assess our past activities and environmental regulations on our oceans to plan for a sustainable future for societies", she added.

Our interconnected oceans whose dynamical processes do not follow national boundaries teach us an important lesson that only through mutual development and cooperation among scientists and policymakers in the region that we can solve issues relating to our oceans today and in the future.

"As a young oceanographer, I wish to see and become involved in regional programs that do not only carry joint research activities but also provide sustainable capacity building and transfer of knowledge especially to developing nations"

Mr. Tan Toh Hii, Malaysia
PhD Student, Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation (IBEC), Malaysia
Research Field: Marine Biology

As one PhD student on benthic harmful dinoflagellates assemblages in the coral reefs of Malaysia, Tan Toh Hii is currently conducting field sampling at selected coral reefs in the south-western Malaysian Borneo to explore in depths concerning the distribution and abundance of benthic harmful dinoflagellates in the region, species with high potential to cause seafood poisonings.



On occasion of World Oceans Day, "Young scientist like myself would hope that mankind will understand the importance of ocean, and do everything we can to protect and conserve our resources", Tan Toh Hii said.

Marine science consists of vast research areas with limited personnel and experts to work on every aspect. "Firstly, capacity building in the region is critical for the continuation of current research and establishing of newer research fields", he expressed.

"Secondly, it is essential to have collaboration between scientists and laboratories to fill in the knowledge gaps and to complement each other's lacking" he said. Tan Toh Hii added that a platform for data sharing among countries could be established to provide updated and high resolution data for modeling and predictions. Hence, scientist laboring at local scale could get a larger picture of the importance of their respective research and seek to expand their capabilities.

"Finally, I hope all scientific research does not end on journal papers but outspread to the public through comprehensible languages and ways, especially to the communities at the coastline who spend their livelihood and entire life interacting with the coastal ecosystems and I sincerely hope that these are not meant for World Oceans Day alone, but to be implemented at all times", he said.

Mr Kazuya Takahashi, Japan
Ph.D. Student, Graduate School of Science and Engineering, Yamagata University, Japan
Research Field: Marine Ecology

Mr Kazuya Takahashi is a PhD student of Graduate School of Science and Engineering, Yamagata University, Japan. He is studying on taxonomy and phylogeny of dinoflagellates. He is investigating especially on woloszynskioids, marine and freshwater tiny planktonic dinoflagellates phylogenetically related to Symbiodinium well-known as an endosymbiotic alga living in various marine invertebrates including corals or sponges.



"My work will contribute for better understandings of the evolutionary history of symbiosis in the dinoflagellate lineage, and of taxonomy and identification of tiny dinoflagellates in marine and coastal ecosystems", he expressed his hope.

"The distribution of marine dinoflagellates I examined has not been understood, and my research revealed some parts of their distribution in the western Pacific region under the collaborative study with researchers in Southeast Asia", he said.

"I noticed the importance of regional researcher's cooperation for scientific studies, and hope we will keep and develop it stronger in the near future", he wishes on the occasion of the World Oceans Day 2014.

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