

MEET THE MEMBERS OF

THE FISHBASE CONSORTIUM



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was created in the year 2000 with the goal of supporting the growth, sustainability and public accessibility of FishBase. Since 2005, it also oversees SeaLifeBase.

As of 2021, the FBC has 13 members who are tasked with identifying the research activities the FishBase and SeaLifeBase teams are to carry out throughout the year. A Consortium Coordinator oversees the development of such activities while the running of the Consortium itself is led by a Chair and a Vice-Chair, who rotate on an annual basis.

The members of the FBC are:

- GEOMAR - Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research for Ocean Research, Kiel, Germany
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece
- Chinese Academy of Fishery Science, Beijing, China
- Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
- Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome, Italy
- Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France
- Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium
- Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm, Sweden
- WorldFish, Penang, Malaysia
- Universidade Federal de Sergipe, São Cristóvão - SE, Brazil
- University of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia
- Swire Institute of Marine Science, Shek O, Hong Kong
- Quantitative Aquatics, Incorporated, Laguna, Philippines

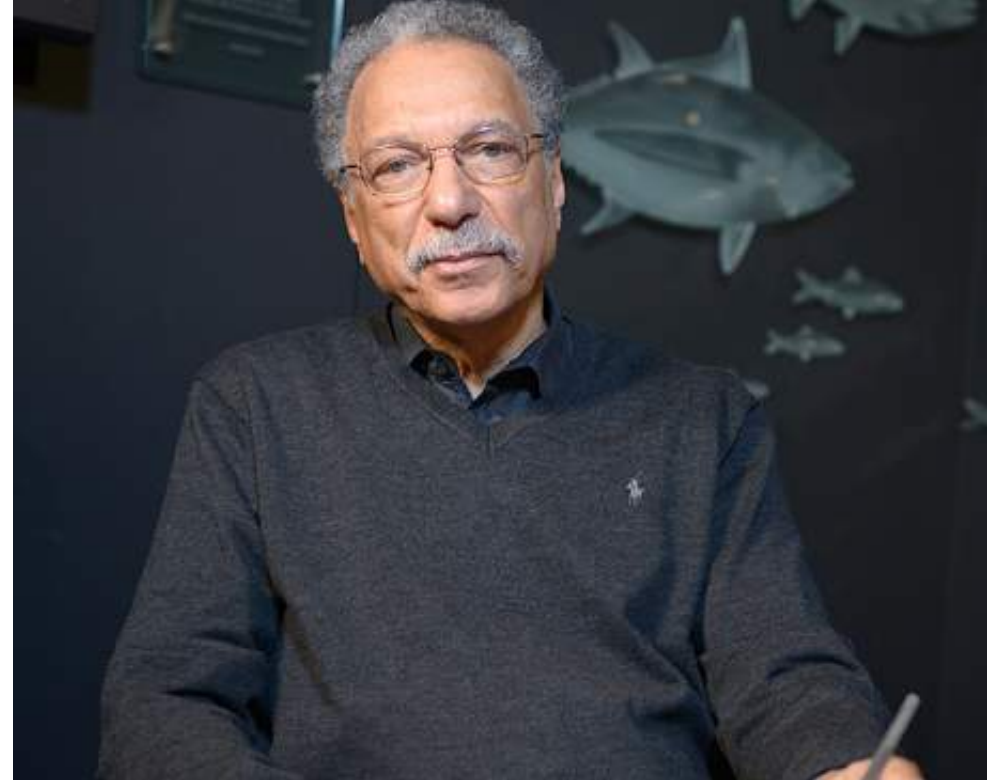
DANIEL PAULY

Principal Investigator of the *Sea Around Us* at the University of British Columbia and FishBase co-creator - Canada

After gathering information on 600 notecards to inform his dissertation on the growth of fish, Daniel Pauly realized how useful a standardized database would be for the study of marine life.

In the 1980s, he recruited Rainer Froese to help him develop this idea. He didn't realize how quickly it would evolve from covering a few commercially exploited species to all known fish species in the world.

Making this information available to all at no cost, particularly to researchers in developing countries, then became an important mission of FishBase.



"This could only work as a completely benevolent operation because people collaborated with us, sent us datasets, reprints and books we could use. In fact, even if people needed to register, FishBase would not be as widely used as it is today."

Daniel recognizes that although the 'product' is free, maintaining and updating it requires dedicated staff and resources. Thus, having a group of institutions and individuals within the FishBase Consortium who are committed to ensuring the continuity of both FishBase and SeaLifeBase has been crucial to continue offering these resources to scientists across the world.

RAINER FROESE

**Senior Scientist at GEOMAR Helmholtz
Centre for Ocean Research and FishBase
co-creator - Germany**

When he agreed to co-develop FishBase in the late 1980s, Rainer thought that the plan was to code information on 200 species of tropical fish.

Little did he know that 30 years later, FishBase would cover ample biological information on over 30,000 fish species and that it would be used and fed by thousands of people, including top ichthyologists such as Jack Randall and Bill Eschmeyer.



In his view, having a mechanism (such as the FBC) that ensures the sustainability of FishBase and SeaLifeBase is crucial because these two global biodiversity information systems are very important for the advancement of humanity's understanding of fish.

"We have about 800 citations in the primary literature every year and I'm aware of many papers that could have not been written without FishBase."

CORNELIA NAUEN

**President of Mundus maris, Chair of
Board of Trustees of Q-quatics**

Convinced of the value of FishBase to increase research capabilities in developing countries, Conny became its champion at the European Commission, where she worked when the project was being launched in the late 1980s.

After many explanatory meetings, she was able to convince EU member countries of what an important tool FishBase was, and an initial - positive - funding decision was made.

But when the EU-backed project was reaching its end, Conny, together with Daniel Pauly and Rainer Froese, started thinking about how to keep FishBase alive.



"We were concerned that it would experience the fate of many projects that strive during the funding period and then collapse. So we decided to meet with the heads of several institutions in Europe who would be interested in FishBase. It became very clear that in relation to the huge task, complementarity was strong because no single institution would be able to do it alone."

That is how the idea of a consortium was born. The mandate was to ensure the long-term life of FishBase and keeping it in the public domain.

In Conny's view, the FBC provides a diversity of competencies and perspectives, as well as scientific and geographical credibility and legitimacy.

NICOLAS BAILLY

**Fish Collection Manager at the Beaty
Biodiversity Museum, University of
British Columbia - Canada**

Nicolas has been part of the FishBase Consortium from the moment it was formed. He attended the preparatory meetings at the European Commission and the Swedish Royal Museum of Natural History, as well as the first official meeting with FAO in Rome, all of which took place in the year 2000.

He joined the FBC inspired by the promise to have a complete information system on all fishes that would last forever.



In his view, as much as individuals are needed to start and develop new ideas and as much as institutions are important in the long-term to ensure there will always be people maintaining and developing large information systems, having a consortium is key particularly during the periods where no obvious leaders stand up.

JOS SNOEKS

**Head of Vertebrates - Biology
Department at the Royal Museum for
Central Africa - Belgium**

Although the RMCA was one of the Consortium's founding members, Jos joined the team in 2003 after the passing of the former representative of his institution, Guy Teugels.

But he had been aware of the work of the FBC for a while, as he was an observer at the Steering Committee meeting that took place in Brussels in March 2000 and in which the idea of a consortium started to ripen.

When he was invited to become a member three years later, he didn't hesitate, as he already knew that the group's meetings were not filled with empty promises, rhetorical statements, and managerial talk.



"What makes us strong is the complementary expertise of the various partners and the fact that the people involved are not just representatives, but also individual scientists with great dedication to FishBase. If you consider the continuous updating of the huge amount of information that is consulted every day on FishBase and SeaLifeBase and the premise that the projects have no money, then it is difficult to see how this huge success can be continued without an extra-ordinary Consortium that, as much as possible, defeats the unwritten laws of administration and project management by putting science and service first."

DENG PALOMARES

Project Manager of the *Sea Around Us* initiative at the University of British Columbia - Canada

As the former software development and database scientist for the FishBase team, Maria 'Deng' Palomares has been part of the FishBase Consortium since the early days in the year 2000.

Inspired by the prospect of the continuity of FishBase and SeaLifeBase, Deng has been one of the driving forces that keep the different parts of the Consortium moving. Besides having chaired the FBC in 2006 and 2014, since 2017 she is the group's coordinator, responsible for tasks that range from organizing meetings to making sure members comply with their commitments.



"The FishBase Consortium is a group of heavy FishBase and SeaLifeBase users who provide insights into how we can develop and improve the databases for other users like us. This group is basically the scientific oversight for FishBase and SeaLifeBase and provides the added value of promoting its use and assuring its longevity. This is why it is so important that it exists."

PATRICE PRUVOST

**Scientific Manager of the Ichthyology
Collection at the National Museum of
Natural History - France**

Although he has been a FishBase collaborator since 1996, it was in 2004 when Patrice became involved with the FBC, four years after the National Museum of Natural History joined the group.

He was keen to participate in a project aimed at providing georeferenced data to FishBase from the MNHN fish collection database (GICIM). This, at a time when very few fish collections existed in digital format.



"The FishBase Consortium is key to give stability to the project in the long term and mobilize funding. It is also an important mechanism to develop collaborations between our institutes and to give FishBase and SeaLifeBase a well-founded scientific dynamic."

KATIA FREIRE

Associate Professor at the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Engineering of the Universidade Federal de Sergipe - Brazil

Katia started joining the FishBase Consortium meetings and symposia as an observer in 2006 but it was almost a decade later that her institution, the Federal University of Sergipe, officially applied to be part of the FBC and was accepted.

Her role as the representative of UFS in the Consortium was a natural development because Katia had become fond of introducing common names of Brazilian fishes into FishBase, as part of her Ph.D. thesis under the supervision of Daniel Pauly.



"The idea of incorporating all information produced in Brazil in one of the largest global databases, in a standard format and easily accessible to all, was my inspiration."

As time has passed, Katia recognizes that the complexity of FishBase and SeaLifeBase has increased and, with it, the projects' financial demands. Thus, she believes the existence of the Consortium is today more crucial than ever.

"It is important to have a large but cohesive group that foresees future demands in a very complex world and looks for business models that work in the long term to maintain the FishBase team."

KOSTAS STERGIOU

**Professor at the School of Biology,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki -
Greece**

Kostas became the representative of the Aristotle University in the FishBase Consortium in 2004 but previous to this appointment, he acted as the National Coordinator of FishBase for Greece from 1998 to 2003.

He decided to join the FishBase community because he considered FishBase as one of the most important scientific achievements for marine ecology and fisheries and for the conservation and management of aquatic living resources and ecosystems.



"Fishbase has actually provided the framework and the opportunity to transform information primarily on fish and fisheries into knowledge, that is, patterns and propensities. Thus, it is a novel tool to answer high-level scientific questions on fish and aquatic ecosystems."

In Kostas' view, it is important to have a FishBase Consortium because it provides a thorough framework for the systematic and timely development of FishBase and SeaLifeBase so that they are able to respond to the constant scientific needs and challenges arising with the evolution of the fisheries and aquatic ecology branches of science.

JESSICA MEEUWIG

**Director of the Centre for Marine
Futures at the University of Western
Australia - Australia**

Jessica has been an avid FishBase user throughout her scientific career but it was in 2017 when she became the delegate for UWA in the FishBase Consortium.

Her desire to incorporate more Australian information into FishBase and SeaLifeBase, particularly taking into account the high number of endemic species the island-country hosts, was one of the reasons why she wanted to be part of the FBC.

Contributing to the success and sustainability of the projects was the other driver behind her decision to join.



"FishBase and SeaLifeBase provide an important public domain service and for scientists globally, create a more equitable research and management environment."

In her view, by bringing together ecologists and taxonomists from museums and universities from multiple countries and across continents, the Consortium is the key that strengthens FishBase and SeaLifeBase in terms of content and ensures that these biodiversity information systems remain living databases.

ALEX TILLEY

Senior Scientist at WorldFish - Malaysia

Alex joined the FishBase Consortium after attending its 2018 annual meeting in Kiel, Germany.

He was inspired to join the FBC not only because WorldFish (formerly International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management) was the founding institution of FishBase, but also because he constantly pulls information from FishBase and SeaLifeBase for his research on fisheries technology and digital transformation.



"FishBase and SealiveBase are crucial global knowledge systems that support a myriad of research, development and conservation applications, so it is imperative that they continue to innovate and adapt with advancing technologies, knowledge and modes of operation. The Consortium is important as the primary driver of this innovation."

HU JING

Computer Scientist at the Information Center at the Chinese Academy of Fishery Science - China

Hu Jing, also known as Kim, started using FishBase in 2009, as part of a work-related assignment. However, it was a meeting in Manila of the Fish Information Network that she attended in 2011, what really got her 'hooked' to FishBase.

"I got to meet all the people that work silently behind FishBase and SeaLifeBase. They love their work and are positive, serious and professional. Any questions I asked them were well-received and comprehensively answered."

Following this encounter, Kim started a more in-depth collaboration with the database. This led to an invitation to represent CAFS in the Consortium in 2016.



"During this first meeting, I saw how seriously the delegates take every mission of FishBase's annual plan, how they care about the development of all aspects of FishBase, and how they view every change in FishBase from the perspective of users and science. It reflects their love for FishBase, and their dedicated attitude is worthy of my admiration."

In her view, the operation of FishBase and SeaLifeBase is inseparable from the FBC, as any future development will likely need the guidance of creative scientists and a group of dedicated and enthusiastic staff.

MARY ANN BIMBAO

Executive Director of Q-quatics - the Philippines

As a FishBase and SeaLifeBase staff member, Mary Ann, aka Maan, first attended a FishBase Consortium meeting in 2009. Since then, she has been regularly attending the annual gatherings reporting on the administration and management of both projects.

When Quantitative Aquatics was formed in February 2017 and became a member of the FBC in December of the same year, Maan became the representative of the NGO in the Consortium.



In her view, since FishBase and SeaLifeBase are long-term, global projects that need continuous monitoring of scientific progress and information quality, an international team of experts is necessary to ensure that a wide range of information feeds into the databases.

"We have to remain relevant to evolving issues on climate change, biodiversity, environmental protection in addition to the earlier identified goals of sustainable development and fisheries management. We need cooperation among institutions to generate complementary resources and expertise which the consortium can certainly provide."

CELIA SCHUNTER

**Assistant Professor at the Swire
Institute of Marine Science at the
University of Hong Kong - Hong Kong**

After an initial two-year collaboration with FishBase, the Swire Institute of Marine Science joined the FishBase Consortium in 2021.

Aware of the global lack of information and studies on marine species around Hong Kong and the East Asian region, Celia and her team decided that it was important to contribute the body of research they were generating to FishBase and SeaLifeBase so that it was made available to the scientific community worldwide.



"FishBase is an internationally recognized important resource and efforts to add and improve it cannot only come from one part of the world but require global collaboration."