

Scripps Oceanography Biologists Awarded Prestigious Honors

Four scientists lauded with national and international honors

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Four scientists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego have been honored by organizations for their work in exploring the biological aspects of the oceans.

Postdoctoral researcher **Octavio Aburto-Oropeza** in Scripps' Marine Biology Research Division (MBRD) and Center for Marine Biodiversity and Conservation (CMBC) was selected to receive a Kathryn Fuller Fellowship by the World Wildlife Fund. He was selected as the sole winner in a worldwide, merit-based competition of nearly 100 applicants.

The fellowship will support Aburto-Oropeza's research in the Gulf of California concentrating on issues related to the ecological and economic importance of marine reserves. The World Wildlife Fund established the fellowships "to support postdoctoral researchers working on issues of exceptional importance and relevance to conservation in a WWF-US priority place."

Recent Scripps Ph.D. graduate **Francesca Malfatti**, now a postdoctoral researcher at Scripps MBRD, has been selected to receive the International Recognition of Professional Excellence (IRPE) Prize by the International Ecology Institute. The prize honors a young ecologist under the age of 40 who has published "uniquely independent, original and/or challenging research representing an important scientific breakthrough, and/or who must work under particularly difficult conditions."

Malfatti will receive 3,000 euros (approximately \$3,880) and receive the award at a prize ceremony this month in Oldendorf, Germany.

Brian Palenik, a Scripps MBRD professor of marine biology, has been awarded the 2010 Darbaker Prize by the Botanical Society of America. The Darbaker Prize is awarded for meritorious work in the study of microscopic algae.

Palenik studies how the genomes of photosynthetic microorganisms such as diatoms and cyanobacteria are organized and used to respond to changes in their environment from stresses such as toxic copper levels and nutrient depletion.

Originally established in 1955, previous Darbaker Prize winners from Scripps have included Richard Eppley (1971) and Ralph Lewin (1957).

President Barack Obama appointed **Michael Tillman**, a research associate in Scripps CMBC, as a member of the Marine Mammal Commission. The three-member commission is charged with the protection and conservation of marine mammals and the maintenance of the health and stability of the ecosystems upon which they depend.

Tillman is working on marine wildlife conservation issues at CMBC. He is a former career senior executive with the National Marine Fisheries Service, having served as the agency's first chief scientist, and as director of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla. His previous duties included appointment by President Clinton as deputy U.S. Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission and as U.S. Commissioner to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.

"I am greatly honored to have been selected by President Obama and confirmed by the Senate," said Tillman. "This appointment provides a wonderful opportunity to apply my past professional experience to the conservation of marine mammals and to continue my public service to this great nation."

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