**Report to the International Seabed Authority – Marina Fernandez**

Since I started studying deep-sea hydroids for my PhD, back in 2013, and started learning about the wonders of the deep sea, with its fascinating animals and environments, one my greatest wishes was to be able to attend the Deep-Sea Biology Symposium to meet other people with the shared amazement by this habitat. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the meeting in Aveiro in 2015, and since then I was hoping to go to the next Symposium. The time arrived, but traveling from Brazil was very expensive and I couldn’t afford it. Thankfully, I was selected to receive the generous ISA travel award that covered all my expenses, giving me the opportunity to attend the DSBS 2018 and present my research.

The meeting was very productive. Going by myself, with no colleagues from Brazil, was not a problem, since from the first day at the meeting I started meeting very kind people, those amazing researchers of whom I had been reading the nice work and others that I was just starting to learn about. Also it was very gratifying to realize that they were quite interested in my research. I learned how warming and collaborative was the deep-sea biology community, and started feeling part of it.

I’m sure that all the activities during those days in Monterey will have a big impact in my career as a deep-sea researcher. Attending the DOSI Day gave me the opportunity to realize what is currently being done, how people are joining efforts to make a positive difference in the future of our oceans, and that I could be part of this initiative as well. I was very much impressed by the high quality of the research presented in the talks during the symposium and their amazing findings in such a difficult environment to access, which demands cutting-edge technology, infrastructure, and abundant resources to be explored. I was also very pleased to give a talk about my research on the distribution patterns of hydroids in the deep Atlantic Ocean, which helped to disseminate my work and get feedback from my peers. The Lightning talks were amazing and I had a lot of fun watching people sell their research in such an effective way. This series of short presentations gave a good perspective on a large array of research and helped a lot in choosing posters to visit later. The poster session itself was a great opportunity to learn about details and the various research methods currently being used, plus it was the perfect moment to meet the people doing it. Also, I had a great experience judging the students posters.

Besides the formal research presentations, the many occasions for social gatherings, such as the opening reception, coffee breaks, the student barbecue at Hopkins Marine Station and the banquet at the Aquarium, were great opportunities for networking.

I feel extremely grateful for the ISA assistance, which was crucial for me attending the 15th Deep-Sea Biology Symposium in Monterey and presenting my research. I feel now very much inspired, with new ideas and different perspectives for my career, and further involved with the community.





