



Verónica Fuentes (1975-2021)

The jellyfish community recently lost a great leader. Verónica Fuentes passed away on 25 November 2021. I have known her since 2008. When I first met her, I was impressed by her command of English and other languages, which, in addition to her native Spanish, included Catalan, Italian, German and Hebrew. Although I only worked with her on jellyfish projects, she loved working in Antarctica, which was the subject of her doctoral research. She continued to study there whenever she could and also through some of her students. In the years after 2008, I took every opportunity I could to work with her. She understood immediately what I meant and began to work on any project I suggested. As I got to know and work with her, I was impressed by her ability to create and maintain a group. Her immediate family, which came to Barcelona to be with her, included her husband (Alejandro Olariaga), two brothers (Javier and Martin) and her father (Hugo). She included me and her students in her family. Everyone who worked with her appreciated these qualities in her, as is illustrated by the following comments of some of her ten doctoral students.

Dr Giacomo Millisenda. Verónica considered her “jelly group” like her family. She made us grow scientifically

by transmitting her curiosity and her energy, transforming the laboratory into our second home. Thanks, Vero, for your great friendship and for your teachings, I will jealously guard the memories that bind us, the laughter and the endless conversations over a glass of good wine.

Dr Melissa Acevedo Dudley. Verónica was a great, talented and passionate researcher. As a team leader and friend, she encouraged us to go beyond our fears and keep our eyes wide open to the wonders of nature. Vero, I feel so grateful for all the time we shared observing and protecting our beloved sea. Memories will always bring back celebrations at which you brought together so many friends and family around a table to share infinite happy moments.

Macarena Marambio. When I first met Vero, she was inspiring. She transmitted love and passion for what she was doing and teaching. She transmitted courage. I appreciate the time I shared with her, and I will always remember her, our conversations and all the good memories that will remain in me and for sure, in her whole jellyfish group.

Dr Uxue Tilves. Since I was a child, I had always known I wanted to study and understand the ocean.

Luckily, I ended up in the medusa group and met Vero. Her passion for the sea was contagious and she gave me wings to enjoy my love for the ocean in my own way, to go as far as I desired. Thanks to her I was able to make my dream come true.

Verónica Fuentes was born in Cordoba, Argentina on 18 February 1975. She obtained her doctoral degree from the Alfred Wegener Institut in Hamburg, Germany in 2006 on the interactions of salps and krill in Antarctica. She also was a postdoc at the same institution, at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina and at ISMER in Rimousky, Canada. She subsequently became a tenure-track researcher at the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC) in Barcelona, Spain in 2008. Despite the untimely death of Dr Francesc Pagès in 2007, she quickly brought their active laboratory up to world class in gelatinous zooplankton research.

During her time at the ICM-CSIC, she conducted research on leading topics regarding gelatinous animals, including jellyfish stings and the interactions between jellyfish production, temperature and salinity, between jellyfish and fish, and between jellyfish and finfish aquaculture (e.g. Bosch-Belmar et al. 2017, Milisenda et al. 2018, Tilves et al. 2018, Ballesteros et al. 2021). I still am incredulous that she could scoop ephyrae of *Pelagia noctiluca* from the ocean surface at night with the ship slowly underway! She also conducted valuable research on the first blooms of invasive species (*Mnemiopsis leidyi* and *Carybdea* sp.) in the Mediterranean Sea (e.g. Fuentes et al. 2010, Marambio et al. 2013, Canepa et al. 2017). She worked with the Spanish life guard community to collect a multi-year record of jellyfish observations on the beaches, stressing the importance of citizen science and developing a phone app to transfer jellyfish information to society (Marambio et al. 2021). Many students enjoyed the course she organized at CSIC in 2014. I was amazed at the breadth of her research and the devotion she showed. The entire jellyfish community enjoyed the Fifth Jellyfish Bloom Symposium in Barcelona, Spain in 2016, which she and her students organized. So much more could be

said. This is a small sample of her contributions. We all love her and will miss her terribly.

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