

## Nature-based reef solution for coastal protection and marine biodiversity enhancement

### Eva Turicchia

RTDa Researcher at the Department of BiGeA, for LIFE NatuReef, is conducting underwater monitoring and pre-operational seabed sampling. After the reef is placed in the next phase, she will be responsible for seeding oysters and laying down Sabellaria. Finally, she will assess the oysters' growth rate, recruitment, and reproductive success.

### What led you to become a marine biologist?

It was my passion for the sea that brought me here. I had initially taken a completely different educational path—International Political Science in Forlì—but my journey changed during an Environmental Sciences class at Casa Matha, where I realized this was what I wanted to do. I was already a diving instructor, but completing a bachelor's degree in environmental sciences, followed by a master's in marine biology and a PhD in Earth, Life, and Environmental Sciences, allowed me to truly enter this world from a professional perspective as well.

### What does the sea mean to you?

The sea is my peace on one side and my thirst for knowledge and discovery on the other. It is both my leisure and my work, and the pleasure remains the same. Whether I am diving for fun or conducting scientific research and sampling as a researcher and biologist, the joy is the same. The sea also allows me to express my creative side: I have been passionate about underwater photography since I was a child.

### When did you start diving?

I was eight years old the first time, and it was my uncle Rolli, who lived in South Africa, who passed on his passion and initial curiosity to me. He was a diver, and during summer vacations in Italy with my family, he would go diving and snorkeling. I was fascinated and curious as I watched him head toward the sea with fins and masks. As I watched him disappear, a dot in the blue, I wondered what was hidden underwater, and I wanted to find out with my own eyes. I got my first diving certification at 18 and haven't stopped since.

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### What has been your most beautiful dive?

There isn't just one; there are thousands, and they are the emotions I shared with those I was diving with. I've worked as a diving guide since I was a student, seen countless seas, and had so many wonderful experiences. Among many, I could mention the hammerhead shark river in Sharm El-Sheikh, the sunfish at Elba Island, the Tegnùe in the northern Adriatic, the red and yellow gorgonian walls in the Mediterranean, and that time I encountered eagle rays in the Maldives or my first Hippocampus bargibanti seahorse in Indonesia. All of these were moments of pure happiness for me.

### What do you like about LIFE NatuReef?

The fact that we are helping nature to help itself. Nature is part of us, and we are contributing to its preservation. What's truly wonderful is that we are succeeding without being invasive, allowing nature to find the means within itself.