

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

Martina Franchini is a research fellow at the University of Bologna (UNIBO). As a molecular and cellular biologist, within LIFE NatuReef she is responsible for monitoring the biodiversity of eukaryotic marine communities before and after the deployment of the artificial reef.

What is your background?

After graduating, I completed a PhD abroad. When I returned to Italy, I started working on a project on bacteria associated with microalgae at the Algology Laboratory of the University of Bologna in Ravenna. From there, I joined the large 'family' of NatuReef.

How did your passion for biology begin? Where do you see yourself in the future?

I have been inclined toward this field since childhood, probably influenced by my family (my mother is a biologist and my father an agronomist). My main passion is environmental research. In the future, I see myself continuing in academic research. However, I am also strongly attracted to science communication.

What is the most interesting aspect of your work?

I particularly enjoy laboratory work and the applied dimension of research. I feel fulfilled when my work has a tangible outcome and translates into a concrete change in the real world.

What is your greatest professional aspiration?

"I would like to leave something concrete and useful for the environment. In my view, the goal of research is exactly this: to add a small piece, to bring about an improvement, even if it is small."

Have you ever achieved this? When?

I believe so. For example, during research on the processes leading to microplastic formation, we described the interactions between bacteria and microalgae, gaining a better understanding of how they respond to each other. During my PhD, while working on a nitrogen-fixing bacterium, we were able to optimize biofertilizer.

What would you be if you were not a biologist?

"Probably a mechanical or biomedical engineer, for the same reasons that draw me to biology: understanding how things work, exploring mechanisms, discovering how systems and components are structured."

What other passion defines you besides biology?



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“My love for plants. I enjoy keeping them, cultivating them, taking care of them, and finding the right place for each of them. My apartment is full of plants – it looks like a jungle. They follow me everywhere; whenever I have moved, including abroad, they have always come with me. They are nomadic plants.”

A thought on LIFE NatuReef

“NatuReef represents a real attempt to bring about positive environmental change. It is an opportunity to join forces across different research fields and to contribute to the well-being of the environment in which we live.”



The project **LIFE NatuReef** has been co-financed by the Programme LIFE 2021-2027 (LIFE-2022-SAP-NAT - Nature & Biodiversity - Standard Action: GA 101113742)

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