



NOVEMBER 2024

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AIMS@JCU Seminar Day

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In September, we enjoyed another wonderful Seminar Day at the stunning Queensland Museum Tropics. The event showcased a diverse range of high-quality seminar presentations, three-minute speed talks, posters, and photographs, all highlighting the impressive work of our student members.

Congratulations to our winners:

Seminar talk joint winners (\$900): Marko Terzin, Martina Lonati & Madeleine Sjölund

People's Choice seminar joint winners (\$300): Ingo Miller & Madeleine Sjölund

3MT Speed talk winner (\$1,000): Marko Terzin

Runner up 3MT speed talk (\$800): Marine Lechene

Poster winner (\$800): Martina Lonati

Runner up poster (\$600): Merle Schlawinsky



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Photographs in this publication were submitted by AIMS@JCU members unless otherwise stated.

We are reducing our carbon footprint by limiting the number of printed copies available. Please let us know if you need a hard copy of this newsletter

About the AIMS@JCU Newsletter:

This newsletter is produced regularly and distributed by email to AIMS@JCU members, AIMS and JCU staff.

If you'd like to be added to our mailing list, or have a query regarding this newsletter, please contact:

Editor: Lauren Gregory

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2024 AIMS@JCU PhD Scholarship Recipient

Sarah Ghobish



Sarah Ghobish hails from Egypt. She studied pharmacy at the Misr International University in Egypt, and, after graduating in 2018, worked as a teaching assistant in the chemistry department. She received her Master's degree in chemistry in June 2023 which opened her eyes to the possibility of applying her passion for chemistry to support the long-term health of the marine environment.

Sarah jumped at the opportunity to pursue a PhD at JCU where she will be working under the supervision of Dr George Vamvounis (JCU) and Dr Cherie Motti (AIMS) to synthesize new safe and sustainable polymers and plasticisers to lessen future environmental impact.

Marine plastic pollution is a major global problem that needs to be addressed. In addition to reducing the number of plastics that enter our oceans, we need to urgently develop new plastics that have minimal impact on marine life. Commercial plastics contain plasticisers that impart flexibility specific to the plastic's application. Unfortunately, many of these plasticisers are toxic and, when immersed in water, can leach from the polymeric matrix and continue to do so as plastics fragment into smaller microplastics. Critically, the development of new sustainable and/or biodegradable plasticisers with lower leaching potential is needed to mitigate the entry of these hazardous chemicals into the marine environment.

Sarah is grateful for the opportunity to learn at JCU and work with AIMS on such an impactful project as well as thankful to have been awarded an AIMS@JCU scholarship that will support the funding of such a project and motivate her research.

Contact: sarah.ghobish@my.jcu.edu.au

Taylor Whitman

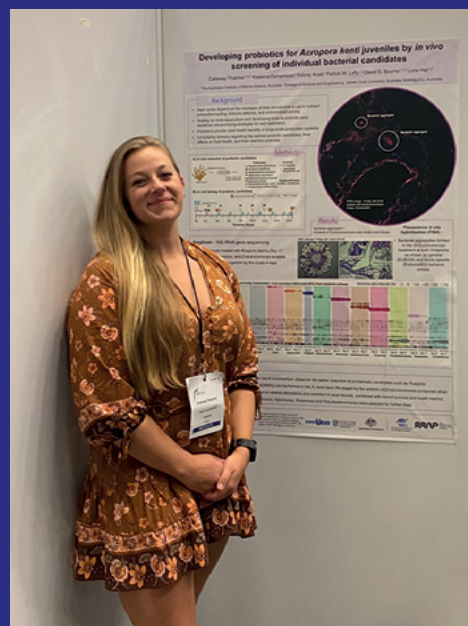
Science Communication Award Report

Callaway Thatcher

Attending the Microbial Ecology Conference ISME19 in South Africa was an incredible experience that broadened my understanding of the field and inspired me to explore new avenues in my research. The conference featured a diverse lineup of talks from leading experts, each sharing groundbreaking discoveries and innovative methodologies. These presentations not only highlighted current trends in microbial ecology but also sparked my curiosity about potential collaborations and research opportunities. It was particularly exciting to learn about several labs that align with my interests, providing a glimpse into future possibilities for my academic journey.

Participating in the Early Career Researcher events was especially valuable, as it facilitated meaningful discussions with fellow researchers and mentors. These sessions offered a platform to share experiences, seek advice, and forge connections within the scientific community. Attending ISME19 with fellow AIMS@JCU PhD students enriched the experience even further, creating a strong sense of camaraderie and support. Sharing insights and discussing our takeaways from the talks fostered a collaborative spirit that enhanced our learning and motivated us to explore new research ideas together. Overall, ISME19 was a pivotal experience that has inspired me to pursue new research directions and foster collaborations that will enhance my career in microbial ecology.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to AIMS@JCU for their generous funding, which helped make my attendance possible.



Redbird
Ferguson

Contact: callaway.thatcher@my.jcu.edu.au

2024 AIMS@JCU Writing Retreat Summary

Callaway Thatcher and other attendees

The 2024 AIMS@JCU writing retreat took place over three idyllic days on Magnetic Island, set in a beautiful Airbnb. Nine PhD students came together with a unified objective: to enhance their academic writing and move closer to completing their degrees. Each day kicked off with invigorating beach yoga sessions, followed by engaging discussions with guest speakers focused on boosting productivity and effective daily planning. Participants also took part in productive pomodoro writing sessions—25 minutes of focused writing followed by a mandatory 5-minute break. Throughout the retreat, they savored delicious meals, enjoyed stunning vistas, and took leisurely strolls along the beach with fellow peers. Social gatherings like barbecues and a dinner out also provided a supportive atmosphere for students to unwind and exchange valuable advice on navigating the challenges of PhD candidature.



Student endorsement:

"Opportunities to present and receive feedback on our work were integral to the retreat experience. All of us achieved our initial writing goals with significant progress made in drafting chapters and publications. Prior to the retreat, many of us felt that our chapters and publications were in rough shape; by its conclusion, they had been well drafted and edited with the help of thoughtful peers.

Several of us have attended multiple AIMS@JCU retreats and can attest to their transformative impact. Each time we leave reinvigorated, motivated, and feeling profoundly accomplished. The retreat's structured environment, free from everyday distractions like meal planning and commuting to AIMS/JCU, proved pivotal in accelerating manuscript and chapter drafting processes. We

2024 AIMS@JCU Writing Retreat Summary

continued

cannot overstate the camaraderie and collaborative spirit that permeated the retreat, where we not only worked together on academic pursuits but also shared meals, resources, and forged lasting friendships.



Special recognition goes to Lauren for meticulously organizing an exceptional venue, coordinating schedules, providing delicious meals, and fostering a warm, supportive atmosphere. Her efforts were instrumental in the retreat's success and our heightened productivity. We also extend our gratitude to AIMS@JCU for their generous funding and provision of a conducive space, which has consistently supported us in achieving our academic milestones and advancing towards graduation. The retreats remain an invaluable resource for current and future AIMS@JCU students, underscoring their crucial role in our academic journey."

Thank you to Callaway, and the other attendees who contributed towards this lovely write-up, for their kind words. I'd also like to congratulate all of the attendees for their excellent commitment to the values of the retreat and their consideration of the venue, each other and myself. In addition, thanks so much to the fabulous in kind contributors from both AIMS (Libby Evans-Illidge and Daniela Ceccarelli) and JCU (Liz Tynan) who took the time to join us and add so much value to this retreat with their expertise and experience. It's always a pleasure to see how much is achieved by the dedicated students at the end of these retreats, and the strengthening of our student cohort.

Contact: aims@jcu.edu.au

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AIMS@JCU Seminar Day

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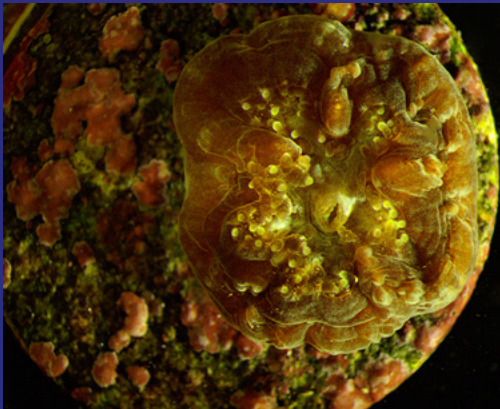
The winning photographs are below, with the photographer receiving \$100 each:

Research in Action: Valerie Cornet



Boy or girl? Before or after tagging a whale shark, we have to dive down into their personal space to identify whether we're studying a male or female

Photomicrograph/Macro: Elizabeth Ivory



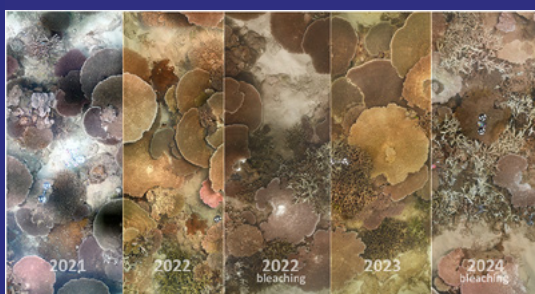
A homegrown Platygyra recruit pokes its tentacles out to explore a new environment.

Research Subject: Sharaynu Jakhete



From Bycatch to Buycatch! Captured during a small survey on the western coast of Maharashtra, this snapshot highlights the untended journey of a shark—caught as bycatch and now a buycatch on sale. The lack of sustainable fishing gear, proper monitoring, and effective policies lead to high bycatch rates, impacting species like bull sharks, hammerheads, and epaulettes. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring the survival of these remarkable sharks in their natural habitats, rather than in the marketplace.

People's Choice: Marine Lechene



Throughout the years – composite orthomosaic of a site at Orpheus from 2021 to 2024 and through two bleaching events.

Taylor Whitman

AIMS@JCU Seminar Day

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Thank you to everyone who made this event so very special. The combination of students, staff, post-docs and industry stakeholders make this day a really important event in our calendar.



AIMS@JCU end of year celebration invite

Happy holidays AIMS@JCU members!

To celebrate yet another wonderful year full of AIMS@JCU achievements, we invite all AIMS@JCU members to join us for a fun afternoon at X-Golf! We'll start at 2.30pm for 90 minutes of mini-golf, pizza and drinks.

Please RSVP by 22nd November if you'd like to come along.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Happy Holidays!

Image by Crystle Wee

Crystle Wee

Research Director Report

What a fabulous year 2024 has been for our AIMS@JCU family. We have achieved so much: with a total of \$13,250 being awarded in competitive student grants; four AMSA student memberships sponsored; important networking and educational events organised, such as the seminar day, R-Course, morning teas and our writing retreat; we are in the process of recruiting three more post-doctoral fellows, as well as four more PhD scholarship students; we have supported ATSIMS, the JCU Winter School, two 12-week Indigenous Internships and have put into place a new indigenous undergraduate scholarship; five of our student members have completed their degrees; and we've welcomed new members (19 staff and 38 students). The AIMS CEO, Professor Selina Stead, has had a new paper published with an AIMS@JCU affiliation (<https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/16/19/3371>). Behind the scenes we have a whole new Science Advisory Committee and Executive Committee who are committed to creating our next triennial plan and prioritising AIMS@JCU across both institutions. We even have a new JCU home in the Bebegu Yumba campus: Building 48, Room 219!

Thank you to everyone who has put so much effort in to making these many successes possible. It's been a year full of trials and obstacles, but we have all managed to pull together to show what an amazing alliance AIMS@JCU is. A lot of our outcomes cannot be measured in normal, quantitative ways, however the consistent amount of emails thanking AIMS@JCU for the support and encouragement along their journey, are testament to the difference we are making for our members. Here's to another fruitful year ahead, I hope to see you at the end of year celebration for some light relief!

The AIMS@JCU office will be closed from 23rd December and will reopen on 6th January 2025. If there is an urgent matter between these dates, please contact me on 0434 596 948.

All the best and have a lovely Christmas season,

Cherie Motti, AIMS@JCU Research Director

(c.motti@aims.gov.au)

Elizabeth Ivory