

Ilaria Bardini

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Deep-sea community ecology; megafaunal succession; species interactions in extreme environments; ecological responses to environmental stressors; conservation and vulnerability assessments in the context of deep-sea mining and climate change.

EDUCATION

M.S. Marine Science (Expected May 2027)

San José State University - Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

Thesis: *Megafaunal Community Dynamics at uniquely brine-dominated hydrothermal vents along the Cleft Segment of the Juan de Fuca Ridge (JdFR)*

B.S. Marine Science, Minor in Journalism (2024)

University of Maine, Honors College

Summa Cum Laude, High Honors

Honors Thesis: *The Use and Application of Multimedia in Marine Conservation*

Domestic Study Abroad:: University of Alaska Anchorage - Semester by the Bay Program, Conservation Ecology

HONORS, GRANTS & AWARDS

2026 - CSU BIOTECH Faculty-Graduate Student Research Collaboration Awards

2026 - COAST: Dr. Kenneth Coale Graduate Scholar Awards

2026 - Dr. Earl H. Myers and Ethel M. Myers Trust Grant

2026 - Signe Lundstrum Scholarship, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

2026 - San José State University Grad Slam (3MT) - Semi-finalist

2025 - Signe Lundstrum Scholarship, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

2023 - 2024 - Maine Sea Grant Undergraduate Scholarship for Marine Science

2023 - Ralph Demont Oceanographic Scholarship, University of Maine

2020 - 2024 - Dean's List, University of Maine

RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant (2024 - Present)

Invertebrate Ecology Lab, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

Advisor: Dr. Amanda Kahn

- Analyze ROV transect imagery using BIIGLE 2.0
- Conduct morphological assessments of deep-sea sponges
- Map species distributions in ArcGIS
- Investigate megafaunal succession across hydrothermal vent gradients

Graduate Research Assistant (2024 - 2025)

Marine Pollution Studies Lab, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

Advisor: Dr. Marco Sigala

- Processed eelgrass samples for biomass, trace metals, and epiphytes
- Performed laboratory preservation and data management

Scientist – R/V Atlantis (Summer 2024)

Juan de Fuca Ridge Hydrothermal Vent Expedition

Lead Scientists: Dr. Geoff Wheat, Dr. Jeffrey Sewald

- Sorted and preserved deep-sea specimens for molecular and microscopy analyses
- Logged ROV dives using SeaNav
- Assisted with CTD operations and science camera surveys

Research Assistant (2022 - 2023)

Darling Marine Center, University of Maine – Zooplankton Lab

Advisor: Dr. Jeffrey Runge

- Analyzed lipid content and size variation in *Calanus finmarchicus*
 - Conducted plankton sampling and image analysis (ImageJ)
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PRESENTATIONS

Bardini, I. (2024). *Implications of eDNA for detecting endangered Cook Inlet Beluga populations*.

Semester by the Bay Poster Session, Alaska

Bardini, I. (2023). *Effects of warming temperatures on Calanus finmarchicus in the Gulf of Maine*.

Darling Marine Center, Summer Research Symposium

LEADERSHIP, MENTORING & OUTREACH

Undergraduate Research Mentor, Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center (UROC) (Summer 2026)

California State, Monterey Bay | Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

- Mentored undergraduate researcher through project design, laboratory methods, and scientific communication, culminating in a conference- style abstract and research poster

Vice President, Student Body (2025 - 2026)

Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

- Organize community events and mentor incoming graduate cohorts

Founder & Coordinator, Run and Walk Club (2024 - Present)

- Lead outdoor community-building events for MLML students

Student Video Spotlight Series (2025 - Present)

Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

- Transformed typical student spotlights into video-based interviews
- Conceptualize, film, and edit graduate research interviews
- Produce engaging digital science communication content

Social Media Content Development (2025 - Present)

Moss Landing Marine Laboratories

- Develop and design social media content to highlight laboratory research, fieldwork, and student achievements
- Create high-engagement posts (tiktoks, flyers, etc) that expand institutional visibility and community interaction (ex. one post I created gained over 122k views!)
- Contribute to strategic outreach efforts to broaden public reach

Link to MLML social media content: [My MLML Social Media Portfolio](#)

Workshop Co-Leader, Expanding Your Horizons STEM Conference (2024)

- Designed and facilitated “Fantastic Deep-Sea Beasts and Where to Find Them” workshop for middle and high school students
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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Scientific Illustration - Camp SEALAB (Summer 2026)

Monterey, CA

- Designed and taught a scientific illustration course for high school students
- Demonstrated the role of illustration in marine science research using my research with deep-sea specimens and sponge microscopy
- Taught observational drawing and watercolor techniques through algae illustration

Guest Lecturer, York School (2025)

Monterey, CA

- Developed and delivered an interactive lesson on deep-sea sponge ecology for high school students
- Led a hands-on laboratory activity introducing sponge spicule microscopy and scientific observation

Learning Assistant – Introduction to Calculus (2022 - 2023)

University of Maine

- Led review sessions and provided individualized support for undergraduate students
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TECHNICAL SKILLS

Software: RStudio, BIIGLE 2.0, ImageJ, SeaNav, ArcGIS

Field: CTD deployment, Niskin sampling, eDNA filtration, plankton tows, deep-sea specimen handling

Laboratory: Zooplankton ID, sponge morphology, histology prep, molecular sample processing

Communication: Scientific writing, videography, Adobe Creative Suite, Canva

Certifications: PADI Open Water, CITI Lab Animal Research, Alaska Wildlife Safety