Print

Synergy: Microbes

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Elizabeth Halliday at work in the Ross Sea, Antarctica. (Photo: Elizabeth Halliday)

Enlarge image

Different kinds of phytoplankton collected from the Ross Sea, Antarctica, as seen under a microscope. (Photo: Dr. Rebecca Gast)

Microbes

I am a recent graduate of the MIT/WHOI Joint Program, where I studied microbial ecology with WHOI biologist Rebecca Gast.

In our lab, we use microscopy and molecular biology to study the basic ecology of microbes within different marine systems. From water quality at bathing beaches to the massive phytoplankton blooms in the southern ocean that oxygenate our atmosphere, the tiniest microbes have an incredible impact on human and environmental health, and so much about them remains to be discovered.

Besides their global importance, microbes can be strikingly beautiful.

For Synergy, I am excited to share images of phytoplankton with artist Janine Wong. These photos were taken by Dr. Gast while conducting research on the microbial food web in the Ross Sea, Antarctica. I believe that by telling the story of the phytoplankton bloom visually and poetically, the Synergy project is an amazing way to invite people to connect with a mostly-invisible part of the natural world, and to consider the chemical cycles on earth that are impacted by humans and phytoplankton alike.

My personal musings on microbes and clips of my science writing can be found at http://amoebabe.wordpress.com/

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Mail: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 266 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA.
E-Contact: info@whoi.edu; press relations: media@whoi.edu, tel. (508) 457-2000
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