

Obituary

Rafael Riosmena Rodríguez (1966-2016)

Phycologist Rafael Riosmena Rodríguez, best known for his work on rhodolith taxonomy and biology, passed away on March 14, 2016, at home in La Paz, México. He was just 49.

Rafael was born in León, Guanajuato in 1966, and like many Marine Biologists had a passion for the ocean and biology at a young age. He obtained his bachelor's degree in Marine Biology at Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur (UABCS), in La Paz B.C.S., México, where he developed his interest in marine plants and coralline algae, specifically. He went on to study phycology/taxonomy in the United States, earning his Masters of Science at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, under the direction of Dr. Michael Foster and William Woelkerling, and culminated his academic training at the University of La Trobe, Australia, where he studied coralline algal taxonomy earning his Ph.D. with Dr. Wm. Woelkerling as his advisor.

Although Rafael was always connected to UABCS he went on to secure a faculty research-instructor position there as the botanist in the Department of Undergraduate and Graduate studies for Marine Biology Department and Graduate studies of Marine and Coastal Sciences. He facilitated courses in marine botany and biogeography at the university and mentored over 80 students in their completion of Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. theses, ranging from taxonomy to ecology and biology of marine plants. He attained a level 3 research status on the SNI scale, the highest recognition within the Mexican National Research System, in part for his many successfully funded research projects and publications. He published over 200 papers and 60 books/book chapters (with more than 1000 citations), many related to aspects of rhodolith biology and ecology. Perhaps one of his proudest academic achievements was the completion and pending release of the book *Rhodolith/Maërl Beds: A Global Prospective* for which he served as a co-editor and chapter contributor.

As an expert in taxonomy of Coralline algae, Rafael played a vital role in bringing international researchers together for collaborations and exchange of information in the tri-annual Rhodolith Workshop. As such, he has developed professional collaborations around the world including México, Brazil, Costa Rica, Europe, Korea, United States, Australia and New Zealand.

Over the course of his career Rafael earned several awards honoring his academic achievements including The State Science and Technology Prize and the Medal of Merit for Science and Technology. He also received institutional recognition from UABCS for excellence in teaching and academic productivity.

He is dearly missed in the scientific community by friends and colleagues, not only for his academic



Rafael Riosmena (left) and Gustavo Hernandez (right) sorting coralline algae. Photo: Michael Foster.

contributions, but for his great energy and full laugh, as well as his drive to push the science of rhodolith biology forward and for natural resource protection in México.

Rafael is survived by his wife Alejandra, son Pablo, Isabel Rodriguez Ajenjo, siblings and extended family, including two dogs Güera and Mora.

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