



Newsflash

ECR Monthly Newsletter

05 DECEMBER 2025
ISSUE 45

WELCOME

Welcome to the MARIS ECR newsflash where we share information that will be of use and interest to the broader MARIS ECR community. In this newsletter, you will find the latest news, opportunities and events. Enjoy the read!

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Give MARiS a follow on social media



A special message from ECR Reps



A look in the MARiS ECR Review mirror of the last year

What a year it has been – a true tidal wave of progress! Our community has been like a school of fish, each of us bringing our unique spark to drive forward new frontiers in marine and polar research. We've weathered the storms together, building an inclusive, buoyant environment where collaboration flows as freely as the currents some of us study. From brainstorming in the coffee talks to delving deep into data, we hope that we have created a space that is as welcoming as a lighthouse in a sea of fog. And just like that, we hope to inspire the next generation of researchers to join us on this wild and scientific expedition – because the best discoveries are always the ones made when we stumble upon them together!

Reflecting on the last year, we have had some spectacular highlights. A competitive spirit took over during the Game's nights, sparking fierce rivalries. Although a few egos were shipwrecked, it was all in good fun - no deep chasms were formed, just plenty of laughs and a few salty exchanges. We rolled up our sleeves for a beach clean-up with the Biological Society, proving our commitment to the environment goes beyond the lab. These newly formed rivalries persisted in our annual Quiz Night, with teams testing their general knowledge beyond the confines of the ocean, with one ultimate winning team given the helm. Stepping out of the waves and onto the forest soil, our ECRs enjoyed the best that Newlands had to offer while donning their hiking boots and adventurous spirit. The cherry on top had to be our Inaugural ECR Conference! A huge success, reeling in fresh ideas, venturing deeper into the ECR community's research and spawning new scientific collaborations.

With so much accomplished this year, we're ready to dive into even bigger adventures next year. Wishing you all a wonderful and relaxing holiday!

Dayna Collins and Hayley Swait,
2025 MARiS ECR Reps



A special thanks to our 2025 MARiS ECR Reps from the bottom of our hearts for all that you have contributed to the MARiS ECR Community and Management Team this year.

Please join us in thanking them for their incredible contribution to the MARiS ECR community. You can both be very proud of yourselves on the wonderful work you have done this year! It does not go unnoticed.

Highlights of recent events

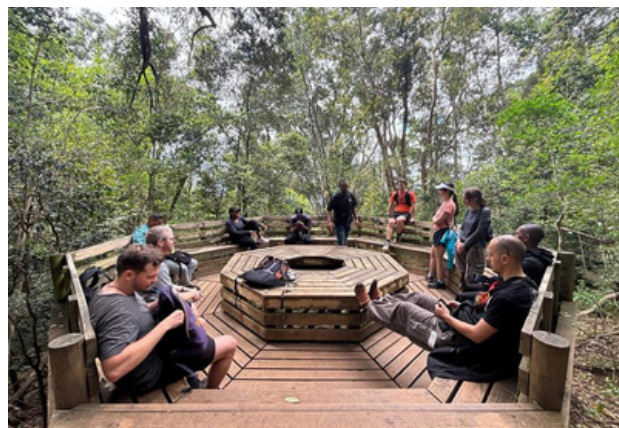
ECR Hike: Newlands Forest

A Saturday well spent out in nature!

Our UCT-MARIS ECRs took to the Newlands Forest Trail for a refreshing morning hike — soaking up nature, history, and good vibes.

Led by one of our ECRs, David Sephton-Poultney, with a fascinating history moment shared by ECR, Magata Mangatane, and an unexpected (but beautiful!) encounter with a puff adder on the way down.

Thanks to our amazing troopers for joining in on the fun on Saturday! We can't wait to explore more of our City's finest paths together. Let us know where we should explore for our next hike in 2026.



ECR Coffee Talk: Garden Picnic Edition



On the 5th November 2025, we celebrated the last MARiS ECR Coffee Talk - Picnic Edition at the HW Pearson Garden to wrap up this incredible year. 2025 has been a challenging one for many but through the support and collaboration of the MARiS ECR Community, we managed to celebrate the resounding success and strengthening of the MARiS ECR Community through many occasions. We want to say thank you to those who came out to celebrate our last coffee talk for the year. It was lovely to see you all connect with one another and celebrate over some lovely treats and drinks.

ECR Games Night, Part 2

On the 13th November, we celebrated our last fun social gathering for the year as the ECR Community. Joined by friends and family, the ECRs gathered in the UCT Oceanography Seminar Room for a lively and laughter-filled Games Night, bringing various board games such as 30seconds, UNO, What do you meme? and Pictionary.

It was a fantastic evening of friendly competition, teamwork, and light-hearted fun. The event provided a much-needed break from academic fatigue, giving attendees a chance to relax, meet new people, and strengthen connections within the MARiS community.



Here is to continuing creating inclusive spaces for early career researchers - we look forward to continuing to build and strengthen the ECR Community in 2026!

2025 AOS MSc Proposals

On Thursday, 06 November 2025, the MARiS community gathered—both in person and online—for the Applied Ocean Sciences (AOS) Masters Students' Proposal Presentations. A total of 11 students shared their exciting minor dissertation research projects, spanning themes from shark ecology, whale density and sea ice, marine ecosystem modelling, and terrestrial-marine linkages, to offshore environmental impact assessments and West Coast Rock Lobster stranding mitigation.

Hosted in the MARiS AOS Teaching Lab at the MARiS Centre, this hybrid session created a vibrant space for discussion, curiosity, and constructive scientific dialogue. The diversity of topics showcased the interdisciplinary strength of the AOS programme and the passion of our emerging ocean scientists.

We extend our heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us—whether in person or via Zoom. Your engagement, questions, and feedback were invaluable in strengthening the students' research proposals and inspiring their next steps. After the



presentations, the AOS Class gathered at Simons Restaurant, Groot Constantia, for their end-of-year picnic celebration—a well-deserved moment of relaxation, camaraderie, and reflection to close off an enriching academic year.

Special appreciation goes to the [AOS Course Convenors](#), Dr Louise Gammage and Prof Marcello Vichi, as well as all supervisors and collaborators guiding these students through their academic journeys. We look forward to seeing these research projects evolve over the coming months and to celebrating the scientific contributions that will emerge from this talented cohort. Thank you for supporting the next generation of ocean scientists!

MARiS SEA-ICE Team takes SANAP Symposium 2025

16 – 19 November 2025

We are so proud of the research team that represented UCT-MARiS at the 7th South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP) Symposium this week, from the 16–19 November 2025 at the Kwalata Game Reserve, in Gauteng. The Symposium brought together researchers, students, policymakers, and environmental stewards from across disciplines to share discoveries from the Antarctic and Southern Ocean, and to reflect on how these polar regions shape our understanding of global change.

From the southernmost ice sheets to Africa's beating heart, SANAP researchers explore the connections that link polar science to climate, ecosystems, and society. The Symposium offered a unique opportunity to discuss new research, inspire collaboration, and strengthen the community committed to safeguarding the world's most remote environments.



The team that represented UCT-MARiS consisted of the following members from the Oceanography, Chemical Engineering and Electrical Engineering research groups: [Robyn Verrinder](#), [Marcello Vichi](#), [Lawrence Stanton](#), [Yaxuan Zhu](#), [Tristyn Ferreiro](#), [David S.](#), [Sarah Tallack](#), [Megan Sorour](#), [Agoritsa Spirakis](#), [Tokoloho Rampai](#), [Safiyyah Moos](#), Magata Mangatane, Wayne de Jager, [Hamidreza Moradi](#), [Dayna Collins](#), [Amelia Deary](#), [Christina Monteiro](#), [Nikita Qosholo](#) and [Sadiyah Rawat](#).

Here is to celebrating discovery, innovation and shaping a more sustainable polar future.

MARiS End of Year Party 2025

2025 has been such a successful year, and we are truly proud of what the MARiS Team, including the management team, academic researchers and ECRs has achieved together. We thoroughly enjoyed celebrating our achievements together as a team at the End of Year Party last week on the **28 November at the Clay Cafe, in Hout Bay.**

A big thank you to all who could attend and make it a huge success. It was really entertaining see some of you get creative during the ceramic painting activity - thank you for the great sportsmanship and mingling with one another.

In 2025, the MARiS community experienced both meaningful progress and notable challenges. Members celebrated strong communication, dynamic events, growing interdisciplinarity, and increasing enthusiasm for outreach, research visibility, and teamwork. At the same time, many faced obstacles including intense workloads, time-management pressures, demanding MSc/PhD milestones, lab and method-development difficulties, administrative frustrations, and limited capacity to engage fully with peers. Several highlighted the need for greater ECR support, more PI involvement, and expanded opportunities for collaboration, social connection,



and funded professional development. Despite these challenges, many expressed gratitude for a supportive environment and a desire to contribute more intentionally in the year ahead.

Looking to 2026, the community aims to build on its strengths by deepening interdisciplinary collaboration, growing social and outreach activities, improving research-sharing platforms (including podcasts and videos), and supporting ECRs through increased engagement, funding opportunities, and recognition of their contributions. Addressing administrative bottlenecks, diversifying event times, and creating structures that lighten workload pressures where possible will also help the community thrive. With intentional planning and open communication, MARiS can continue growing as an inclusive, vibrant, and connected hub for marine and polar research. **Here's to wishing the MARiS Team a successful 2026!**



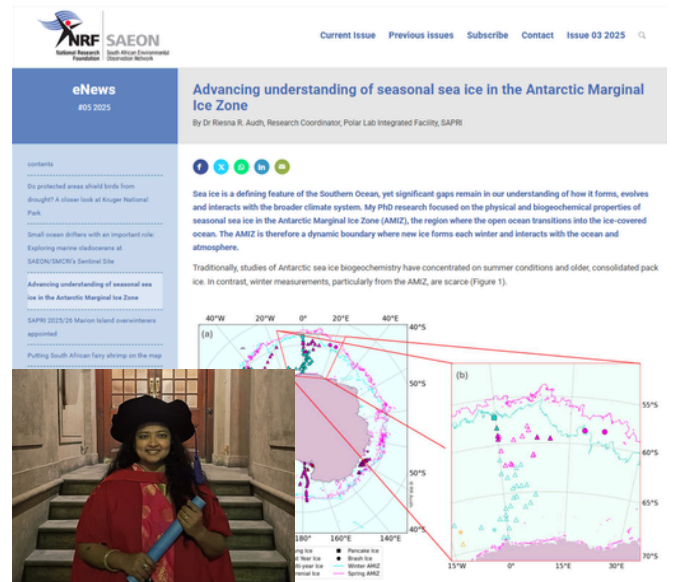
A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to such a productive and engaging year, we look forward to the upcoming year and hope that MARiS continues to shine and grow from here. A special thanks to our MARiS ECR Working Group Committee for planning and organizing all of the incredible social events, including the 2025 ECR Research Conference this year: Dayna Collins, Hayley Swait, Sarah Hutton, David Sephton-Poultney, Natalie Le Roux, Yameen Badrodien, Humeshni Pillay, Lillina Ruiters and Leila Nefdt.

News Article: Advancing understanding of seasonal sea ice in the Antarctic Marginal Ice Zone

By Dr Riesna R. Audh, Research Coordinator, Polar Lab Integrated Facility, SAPRI

We are proud to announce the publication of “Advancing understanding of seasonal sea ice in the Antarctic Marginal Ice Zone”, authored by early-career researcher Riesna R. Audh of South African Polar Research Infrastructure (SAPRI) / Marine and Antarctic Research centre for Innovation and Sustainability (MARiS), in collaboration with University of Cape Town (UCT-MARiS).

Her work delivers a major breakthrough — showing that Antarctic winter sea ice is not a biological desert, but hosts active biogeochemical processes. By sampling young and first-year ice in the Atlantic sector of the Antarctic Marginal Ice Zone (AMIZ), her research reveals previously unrecognized biological activity during ice growth, challenging long-held assumptions.



This accomplishment not only expands global understanding of sea-ice dynamics and climate-ocean interactions, but also highlights the critical role of South African polar science in filling knowledge gaps for the Southern Ocean. As a proud MARiS community, we celebrate Riesna’s achievement and hope her journey inspires many more marine and polar scientists to follow in her footsteps. To read her article, check out the [SAEON News Article here](#).

Call for ideas for MARiS Podcast Series



The UCT-MARiS Communications Team is planning to launch an exciting new Marine & Polar Science Podcast Series in 2026/2027, and we want you — our Early Career Researchers — to be part of the action.

This platform will showcase the incredible work happening across MARiS, highlight the voices shaping the next generation of ocean and polar science and engineering, and inspire students and future researchers across South Africa and beyond.

We will be inviting ECRs to submit ideas, topics, or published work you’d like to share on the podcast, including:

- Recent or upcoming publications
- Your research projects (Honours, Masters, PhD, Postdoc, etc.)
- Fieldwork stories or expeditions
- Innovative methods, new technologies, or modelling approaches
- Reflections on careers, challenges, or successes in the marine and polar sciences
- Any other topics that will spark curiosity, conversation, and impact

Whether your work focuses on meteorology, oceanography, marine biology, robotics, socio-ecological systems, modelling, conservation, climate, or polar studies — your voice belongs on this platform.

Stay tuned for more information in the new year! You can email your ideas to comms.maris@uct.ac.za.

SANCOR Webinars

- 10 Dec 2025 [Ocean-atmosphere coupled model development based on dynamical and data-driven paradigms](#)
- 22 Jan 2026 [Overview and history of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation \(ENSO\) theory](#)

Stay tuned for more information on our upcoming 2026 MARiS ECR planned events.

SANCOR Vacancies

December 2025-January 2026

Looking out for the next step in your career path?

The South African Network for Coastal and Oceanic Research (SANCOR) has listed some recent vacancies available within the marine and coastal environment.

Here are a few posts available:

Communications & Public Relations Officer

SAAMBR, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Closing Date: [05 December 2025](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

Individual Consultant - Lead Science Officer - GOOS BioEco Panel

*Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)
Paris, France or remote*

Closing Date: [09 December 2025](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

Postdoctoral Fellowship: Quantum Ecology

UKZN, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Closing Date: [12 December 2025](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

Postdoctoral Fellowship: Benthic Stress Indicators

UCT, Cape Town

Closing Date: [15 December 2025](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

Individual Consultant - Support to the preparatory process of the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)

Closing Date: [15 December 2025](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

Assistant or Associate Professor: Integrative Biology in Marine Environments

Faculty of Biological Sciences, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile Santiago, Chile

Closing Date: [22 December 2025](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

Consultant for Marine OECM Pilot Site Analysis

WWF-SA

Closing Date: [16 January 2026](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

Support Engineer for scientific coordination and skills sharing

PEPR BRIDGES, CNRS-Ifremer-IRD Saint-Denis, Reunion Island

Closing Date: [20 November 2026](#)

Find out more information [here](#).

To view the rest of the vacancies, check out the SANCOR website using this [link](#).

Other job opportunities can be found on [International Science Council Job Alerts and Opportunities](#) and [here too](#).

Funding Opportunities

Check out UCT's current funding opportunities [here](#) and other student research grants [here](#).

Funding opportunities have also opened up through the Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP) Network Programme or you could have a look at the NRF [website](#) and [Proposals for Funding in 2025](#).



2025/2026 Opportunities

Practical Application of Ocean Accounting in Marine Spatial Planning

Closing date: 15 Dec 2025

Unlock the potential of Ocean Accounting to drive informed decisions in Marine Spatial Planning (MSP). This **intensive single-day workshop** is designed to introduce participants to the core concepts of ocean accounting and demonstrate its practical application as a robust decision support tool for MSP. Participants will engage in a practical role-play exercise, requiring them to make and defend real-world spatial planning decisions. Using ocean accounting information, attendees will learn to evaluate trade-offs across economic sectors, critically assessing the associated social community and environmental costs and benefits.

Date: Wednesday 21 January 2026

Time: 8am – 5pm

Venue: The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Kirstenbosch Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa.

Call for 2026 SCOR Visiting Scholars

Closing date: 15 Dec 2025

The **2026 SCOR Visiting Scholar program** invites ocean scientists from both developed and developing countries to apply for a \$2500 USD scholarship to travel to developing country institutions for a minimum of two weeks. The core purpose of the visit is knowledge exchange and capacity development through teaching short courses and providing mentorship, not conducting joint research. Applicants must submit a detailed working plan developed with the host institution, and proposals will be evaluated based on the expected benefits to students and the potential for new scientific collaborations.

RFP: Consultant for Marine OECM Site Analysis

WWF South Africa invites proposals from qualified consultants or firms to conduct a situational analysis for three marine OECM (effective area-based conservation measure) pilot sites: False Bay, Kogelberg and Dyer Island. The analysis will inform stakeholder engagement and management objectives aligned with global and national biodiversity frameworks. Applicants should have a Master's degree in a relevant field, five years' experience, and expertise in marine socio-ecological systems. Proposals must include methodology, timelines, budget and team profiles. **Submission deadline: 16 January 2026 to jgarridigan@wwf.org.za.**

AMI Microbiome Workshop | 26–30 Jan 2026 | Cost: From R500

AMI's (African Microbiome Institute) advanced microbiome analysis workshop taking place from 26 - 30 January 2026 at the venue: BMRI, Tygerberg Campus, Stellenbosch University. We will cover advanced targeted sequencing analysis, including longitudinal analysis, functional prediction, multivariate integration & shotgun metagenomics data analysis and interpretation. The workshop will blend theory, hands-on sessions, & discussions on reproducibility and best practices. There are 2X R3500 scholarships available to assist with travel costs for those in need, and we are seeking 2 teaching assistants. **Apply [here](#)!**

There will still be 2 more virtual preparation sessions for those in need of basic bioinformatics training prior to the workshop (please see the application form for details), which will be free and open to all. If you would already like to sign-up for these, please choose your preferred session from the list below (01 December no longer available).

Poll: If you would like to attend the basic bioinformatics webinar, please select your slot [here](#).

2026 Opportunities

MADRAS 2026 Workshop

5-8 January 2026 | Zanzibar, Tanzania

The MADRAS 2026 workshop, titled "[Air-Sea-Land Interactions: Modelling and Observations](#)," is a four-day event focusing on the complex system of geophysical flows that influence the Earth's weather and climate, specifically the Upper Ocean and Atmospheric Boundary Layer dynamics in coastal regions. Hosted by the IIT Madras Zanzibar Campus in Tanzania from 5-8 January 2026, the workshop brings together experts and early career researchers to discuss key themes including ocean biogeochemistry, remote sensing, and fine-scale modelling, promoting academic collaboration and research.

Attention ECOPS: AAORIA Intergenerational Dialogue Session

Closing date: 15 Jan 2026

A webinar will be held on **30 October 2025 at 4:00 PM GMT** to launch the Ocean Panel's "Handbook on Sustainable Ocean Plans: A practitioners' guide." This new technical manual provides a step-by-step framework to help governments develop Sustainable Ocean Plans (SOPs)—comprehensive, strategic blueprints for achieving 100% sustainable ocean management, vital for addressing the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The event will feature a presentation by the lead authors and a discussion with Ocean Panel member countries about their experience implementing SOPs.

Bergen Summer Research School--now accepting applications!

The annual [Bergen Summer Research School](#) takes place in beautiful **Bergen, Norway**, **1-11 June 2026**. It will welcome up to 100 PhD students from around the world for five parallel courses. The theme next summer is Ocean Expectations, with courses from many disciplines:

- [Accounting for sustainability: water and climate](#)
- [Ocean productivity and seafood in a changing climate](#)
- [The oceans and planetary health justice](#)
- [Ocean desires, ocean diversities](#)
- [Diverse ways of sensing, knowing, and valuing the ocean \(external link\)](#)

We will also have a joint workshop:

- [Systems thinking and creative problem-solving](#)
- And many additional talks, panels, and excursions!

The deadline to apply is 1 February 2026

Financial assistance will be provided to some students, on a competitive basis. Make sure your peers and colleagues know about this opportunity — follow/like/share/comment our posts on [Linkedin](#) and [Facebook](#). For more information, contact Sehoya Cotner via email at sehoya.cotner@uib.no.



Podcasts:

What to listen out for?



There are so many new amazing podcasts available online so we thought we would share some of those that might interest you. Have a listen to them in your spare time, you might learn something new from various people's stories or from the array of environmental topics discussed.

[Climate Frontiers](#)

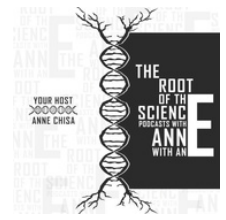
A podcast series exploring the latest thinking, approaches and debates in climate science, hosted by the Climate System Analysis Group, or CSAG, at the University of Cape Town.

[The Root of the Science Podcast](#)

Hosted by Anne Chisa. This show has interviews with guests involved in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

[Ready or Not, Change is Coming](#)

A 12-part Climate Podcast Series, dedicated to breaking down climate change into chewable elements to help us all understand it better, dispel the myths and remove the ambiguity. Tracey Thomas is the host of the the RONCIC series.



[The AtlantECO podcast](#)

A science popularisation show, revolving around conversations between the host and a guest to discuss aspects of AtlantECO, a marine science project which focuses on the Atlantic Ocean.

[BEPSII Podcast: Sea Ice Research, Studies, and Scientists](#)

the official podcast of BEPSII brings you the research studies and work, stories and resources by the members of BEPSII (Biogeochemical Exchanges Processes at Sea Ice Interfaces) – scientists from all over the world and at all career stages.

[Iceworld podcast - British Antarctic Survey](#)

From polar scientists to plumbers, ICEWORLD is a series of interviews with ordinary people who are doing extraordinary jobs in Antarctica. The team talk climate science, extreme living, expeditions and becoming a community. Iceworld is hosted and recorded by Nadia Frontier, and produced in partnership with Boffin Media.

Call for ECRs to join the Working Group for 2026

The **UCT-MARiS ECR Working Group** is looking out for volunteers to assist us in putting ideas and actions together to better the ECR community, to build relationship and foster a spirit of community-led research. We aim to have representation from each of the MARiS-related departments, so that we can have a balanced set of ideas and planning throughout the year.

We have several portfolios that each of us contribute to in the working group, see as follows:

1. Events
2. Transformation and Outreach
3. Integration and Sustainability
4. Communications
5. Finances

The ECR working group meets bi-monthly and usually dedicates a couple hours a week to make sure to get the necessary work done in preparation for an event or the next WG meeting. If you are interested in getting involved and committing to assisting the ECR Working Group for the next year, we would love for you to mail us at ecr.maris@uct.ac.za and let us know which portfolio you would prefer to work with. We're especially looking for enthusiastic ECRs from the Electrical Engineering and Chemical Engineering departments to ensure a well-balanced group, but everyone is welcome to join! **[Sign the form here too!](#)**

If you are interested in generating content for MARiS, please email comms.maris@uct.ac.za directly. We want to share marine related content, involving interdisciplinary research, whether it may be fun facts, opportunities available, or sharing your current research, fieldtrips, cruises, conferences, workshops, events, etc. You let us know!



We want to know what is happening in the marine and Antarctic sphere and share it with our networks.

Follow us and feel free to tag us on social media and we'll be happy to repost what you get up to with your research:

Twitter: @MARIS_UCT
Instagram: @maris_uct



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Because you are part of our MARiS ECR network.



Give MARiS a follow on social media

CONTACT US

If you'd like to sign up for the [ECR mailing list](#) or you'd like to include an event or opportunity in our next newsflash, please email ecr.maris@uct.ac.za.