

## Working Hand in Hand with Aquariums. Opening up Numerous New Horizons

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How does an inhabitant of an ivory tower go out and study fish? Wading with a dip net, hauling nets on a commercial bottom trawler, research cruises on board research vessels. All this involves fieldwork and we need all the help we can get, from professionals sharing common interests and skills. During the course of my career, I have had fruitful and stimulating experiences working together with aquarium curators. I would like to share some of those wonderful experiences I have had with the so-called “wet-thumbs”.

Since 1984, I have worked on life history of fish in Lake Hinuma, a brackish lake, together with Ibaraki Prefectural Ooarai Aquarium. The high potential and popularity of an aquarium as a local social education institution became more than apparent during a tidal movement survey using homemade GPS buoy. Local fishermen and anglers all cooperated in recovering the buoys, resulting in a 90+% recovery rate. A joint research on deep sea demersal fish, Greeneye, *Chlorophthalmus* spp. together with Aquamarine Fukushima was also very fruitful. Research cruises on RV Tansei maru and Shinsei maru, cumulated into numerous publications, press coverage, and a couple of awards. This project led me in conducting a joint research on extant Coelacanth with Aquamarine Fukushima, an ichthyologist’s dream come true. A joint study on Notothenids with Port of Nagoya Public Aquarium took me to the Antarctic Ocean on board RV Hakuhou maru!

Aquariums are not just counterparts of research, but a wonderful stage for outreach activities as well. Symposiums held at aquariums provide a wonderful opportunity to present to the mass, old and young alike, the stimulating and wonderful world of marine biology. I must say, with true appreciation, that I AM indeed blessed and fortunate to have had all these opportunities and interactions with wet thumbs and their aquariums.