

In Memoriam



Dr. Rodrigo Alexis Wiff Onetto (1976-2025)

Dr. Rodrigo Wiff Onetto, our dear colleague and friend, passed away on September 21 in Santiago, Chile. A Marine Biologist trained at the Universidad de Concepción, he also earned there a Master of Science with a specialization in Fisheries (2004). He later completed a Ph.D. in Biology and Statistics at the University of St. Andrews (Scotland), with a dissertation focused on models to predict consumption and production in fish populations.

His professional career combined applied science, teaching, and public service. He worked at the Instituto de Investigación Pesquera (INPESCA) (2003-2004) and at the Instituto de Fomento Pesquero (IFOP) for nearly a decade (2004-2013), making significant contributions to stock assessments, particularly for demersal fisheries in southern Chile.

In academia, he conducted a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Concepción (2012-2015), served as a Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen (2016-2017), and, since 2014, was as a part-time researcher at the Center of Applied Ecology and Sustainability (CAPES) at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, linking frontier research to real-world management challenges.

His expertise lay in stock assessment and statistics applied to fisheries: age- and size-structured models, life-history traits, effort standardization, geostatistical, and risk analysis; as well as time-series and spatiotemporal modelling. In recent years he also explored mark-recapture approaches and non-invasive methods for ecological observation. These lines of work are reflected in a substantial scientific output spanning from macroecological studies to methodological developments with direct impact on management decisions, never losing sight of those lesser-studied resources-elasmobranchs, deep-sea fishes, and inshore species. He also leaves several works in progress that attest to his unwavering commitment to knowledge.

Rodrigo had a remarkable ability to build bridges: between theory and practice, across institutions and teams with diverse backgrounds, and among people of different generations. He served as researcher and project lead in national and international initiatives; collaborated closely with public agencies, research centers, and academic institutions to advance knowledge and inform decision making. He consistently championed evidence-based fisheries, helping to improve abundance indices and assessments for multiple resources. His contributions also extended to international technical cooperation and fisheries management forums.

His vocation as an educator was equally notable. He dedicated his time and generosity to teaching quantitative methods, fostering critical thinking and statistical rigor as the foundation for sustainable management of marine resources. He argued with conviction for the value of models and high-quality data as indispensable tools to protect the oceans and the communities that depend on them.

Those of us who worked with him will remember his conceptual clarity, intellectual rigor, and ability to integrate both qualitative and quantitative variability. We also cherish his warmth, consideration, and humility; the joy, curiosity, and creativity with which he embraced challenges; and above all, the generosity with which he shared his knowledge and guided students and colleagues.

Rodrigo's legacy endures in the methods he helped to consolidate, in the teams he built, and in a stronger scientific community thanks to his work. His absence is painful, but his imprint inspires us: it calls us to uphold rigorous assessment, meaningful dialogue across ways of knowing, and an ethical commitment to the sea and to those who live from it.

Valparaíso, November 2025