



What did you do at the Lighthouse ?

In 1999, I did my Masters degree in Ecology at the University of Aberdeen. I spent a couple of months in Cromarty doing the fieldwork for my project: 'Changes in the vocal activity of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) in relation to boat traffic in the Kessock Channel, Moray Firth'. Dr. David Raffaelli and Dr. Vincent Janik were my supervisors. It was one of the best moments of my career as a marine biologist and I really enjoyed living there, learning and sharing experiences with researchers, experts and dolphins. I also took some pottery lessons during the weekends and explored the Highlands a couple of times. At the beginning of 2000 I returned to Colombia, South America, and I continued my bioacoustics research with river dolphins and manatees, as part of the Omacha Foundation.

What are you doing now ?

I became the scientific coordinator of the Omacha Foundation in the Orinoco River basin, where I led all the scientific research, not only related with marine mammals, but also with reptiles, fish and their impact on local indigenous communities. In 2006 I joined Conservation International, an NGO with offices in 23 different countries in the Americas, Africa and Asia. I started leading the Colombian Marine Program, as part of the regional initiative called ETPS (Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape), between Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Ecuador. My responsibilities included strengthening inter-institutional capacities and relationships; supporting the development of national policies and laws related with marine protected areas; developing management strategies for ecosystems and species inside and outside marine protected areas including sharks, sea turtles and mammals; and providing economic alternatives to local communities to minimize negative impacts on biodiversity, among others. After a couple of years, I became the director of the Oceans Program within the same organization, with projects country-wide, both in the Pacific and Caribbean region. During that process I developed the first humpback whale satellite tracking program in Colombia, and I was invited to be part of the first scientific expedition to the Antarctica (2014-2015) leading the project on whales.

At present I am part of a global program to conserve and restore blue carbon ecosystems including mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes, acting as Director.



Maria Claudia Diazgranados

MSc • 1999