



What did you do before the Lighthouse ?

I grew up by the sea in a small town along the coast of Italy, but my real passion for marine mammals only started when, as a 10-year-old girl, I met Dr. Sabina Airoidi, a fantastic researcher who studies the whales and dolphin inhabiting the waters of the Pelagos Sanctuary. To me she was a superhero and growing up she became a mentor and a guide. My first real hands-on experience was with Sabina on the Pelagos, Tethys's Institute research boat. During that week I clearly remember thinking that I was going to do everything in my power to make marine biology and research my future career. I went back a few times to work with Tethys on the Pelagos, and it still remains one of my favourite places in the world. Following Sabina's advice, I went on to study a BSc in Marine Biology at the University of Aberdeen which finally led me the Lighthouse. I came to the Field Station to do my honours project and have not left since.

What are you doing at the Lighthouse ?

I am currently finishing my PhD at the Lighthouse on marine top predators' movement and foraging behaviour. In my research I use GPS data and accelerometers to study the behaviour of seals and underwater acoustics to study bottlenose dolphin occurrence and foraging. During my project I became more and more interested about how these incredible animals use their cognitive abilities, in particular memory, to guide their movement and make decisions. Being at the Lighthouse has also given me the opportunity to help other researchers including participating on a research cruise on Marine Scotland's Alba na Mara. I am incredibly grateful to be part of this fantastic team.

What advice would you give someone who wants to follow in your footsteps ?

Believe in your dreams and in yourself, if you can think it, you can make it happen. I was very lucky to know what I wanted to do from a very young age, but I was also incredibly determined to make my dream come true. I would recommend everyone to get out there and talk with as many people as possible, in research having a good network is fundamental, and you will also make a lot of great friends along the way.



Virginia Iorio
Honours & PhD candidate • 2017 - present

