

SAERI welcomes Dr Narissa Bax to the team

Dr Narissa Bax

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Dr. Narissa Bax joined the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) in May 2021 as a Marine and Coastal Program Coordinator. Her role, funded by the John Ellerman Foundation, focuses on the coordination and development of research to sustainably conserve a network of Marine Management Areas (MMAs) aligned to international criteria for Marine Protected Area (MPA) designation. Narissa has a PhD from the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, Australia, where she specialised on deep sea coral biodiversity, biogeography,

connectivity, phylogenetics and conservation – across the Antarctic continental shelf and slope, the sub-antarctic, Patagonia and South West Atlantic. Her research agenda as a benthic-ecologist is open to meaningful collaborations, and currently includes the Antarctic Seabed Carbon Capture Change (ASCCC) project which aims to understand the function of polar and subpolar seabeds in the carbon cycle 'Antarctic blue carbon' (Figure 1.).

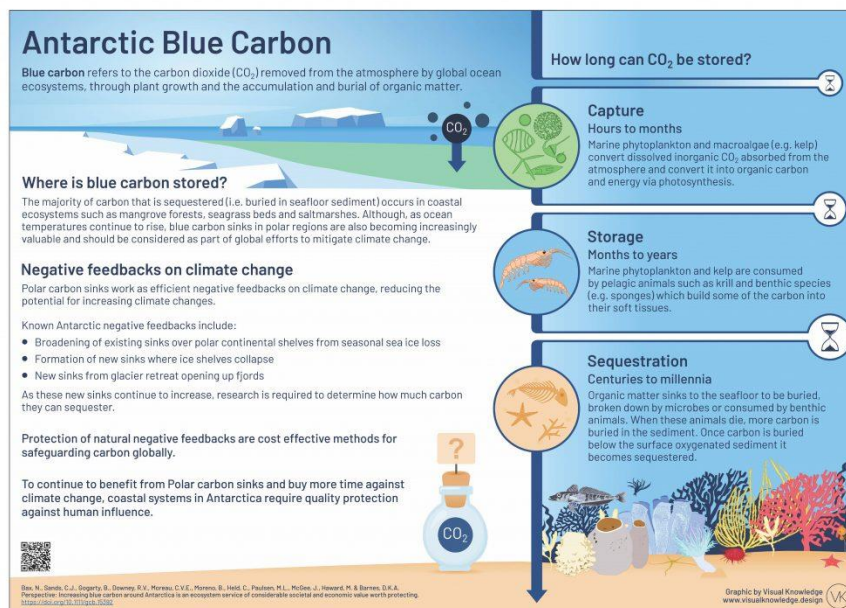


Figure 1. Increasing Antarctic blue carbon is an ecosystem service of considerable societal and economic value worth protecting <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/gcb.15392>

SAERI NEWS

Narissa has worked as a marine scientist in tropical, temperate and polar environments, including five Antarctic field seasons, diving in Patagonia, conservation planning in Myanmar and specimen-based research in natural history collections around the world. She has witnessed some of Earth's most spectacular biodiversity across a career inspired by Indonesia's coral triangle ~17 years ago, and is looking forward to exploring the Falkland Islands over the next two and half years. In order to foster long-term research capacity over this time-frame, she hopes to coordinate at sea sampling and technology in unexplored mesophotic and deep sea ecosystems – where preliminary investigations have identified new biodiversity habitats in 2021. Including previously unrecorded local marine-scapes; new records for stylasterid coral assemblages, rhodolith beds (coralline algae nodules), and reef-like aggregations of parchment worms. Due to the rare frontier location of the Falklands at the intersection of the South Atlantic and Subantarctic – this research encompasses a vast geographic area of globally unique Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs), and advances biodiversity protection and nature-based solutions to climate change globally.



Image 1 (left) and 2 (centre): Dr. Narissa Bax diving in the Patagonian fjords to collect *Errina antarctica*. **Image 3 (right):** *Errina antarctica* is a species of beautiful stylasterid (lace) coral which occur in field-like aggregations and are designated as Vulnerable Marine Indicator taxa in Antarctica.