

**Javier A. Montenegro Gonzalez**

Masters student in Marine Biology. Expected graduation October 2012.

I am originally from Colombia and a graduate student at the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa, Japan. I am currently working on research about the diversity and systematics of invertebrates associated with sponges in the J. Reimer laboratory (MISE). I began with my research on these invertebrates a few years ago in the Caribbean Sea and now I am continuing it in the Pacific Ocean, thanks to the support that the University of the Ryukyus and the Reimer laboratory have been continuously offering me.



This Master's course has been a new experience at different levels. Culturally, it has been interesting and enriching since the University of the Ryukyus exposes the student to a very strong international socialization environment that pushes us to develop different aspects of our personality. About the Japanese language, I have been able to learn some Japanese and improve my English, and particularly have developed my skill in conversation. The special program for international students (OIMAP) in particular has the advantage that it offers enough resources and space to grow professionally under the supervision of your tutor and following your own objectives.

Okinawa has been very convenient for my research, since the diving spots are easily accessible, a fact that allows me to have fun and do my job at the same time. The corals reef are still well preserved and with a little bit of good luck you will be able to see some awesome wild marine life.