

Phenomena

Phenomena give life, and inspire us in life, especially as aspiring scientists on Earth. To some, childbirth is a phenomenon that bring life on Earth, while to most, the Aurora is a rare beautiful phenomenon that can be witnessed more frequently in certain parts of the world; and to others, Paris Hilton is a walking phenomenon of timeless beauty.

And what kind of phenomena can bring awe in the eyes of marine scientists, that prompts us to redirect focus on self and towards our surroundings?

The Barbie Lake



A metagenomic studies conducted by Australian Genome Research Facility (AGRF) Brisbane identified extremophiles specifically known as halophiles inhabiting the salty Lake Hillier which possess a pastel Barbie pink colour. AGRF found out that the creator behind this phenomenon is a bacterium species, *Salinibacter ruber*. During this research, scientists have stumbled upon an unexpected microbe, *Dechloromonas aromatica*, which can break down compounds used in chemical solvents. This may present evidence for a tanning station that once existed by the lake and used the lake for

tanning purposes. The power of metagenomic analysis, don't you think?

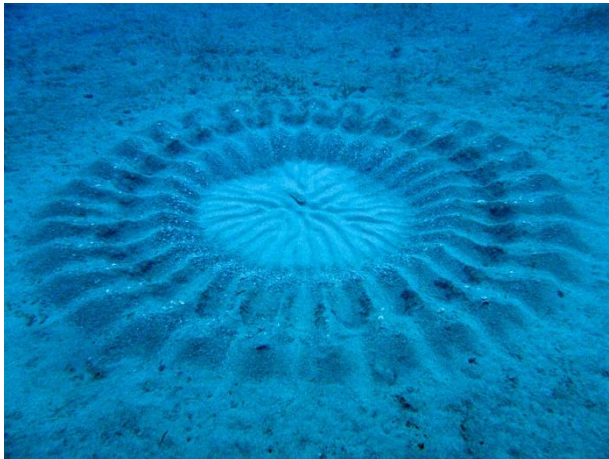
Underwater waterfall



Optical illusion is often man-made, as we see in visual art museums. But could it be that these artists are also inspired by nature?

Here, an illusion of underwater waterfall in Mauritius is the result of seafloor spreading due to tectonic plate movement. Sand from the shore are pushed by the ocean currents and fall into the depth of the ocean trench, creating this illusion. No earthquakes, just the science behind this beautiful optical illusion, that leaves us in awe.

Underwater UFO



Famous among marine biologists, is the crop circle created by an alien that lives under the ocean. Do you recall about the conspiracy theory of aliens landing on Earth and creating patterns on the croplands in countries such as the USA? Well that is fake, and this perfectly symmetrical underwater crop circle is real! We have discovered a male alien species called the Japanese Pufferfish which created this crop circle to attract its potential mate. Very meticulous indeed, and I'm sure this pufferfish species must have picked up this cultural trait

from its Japanese ancestors.

Friends or Foes?



Having being recently back from a whale watching trip in Tromso, nature has inspired me again. Orcas and Humpbacks were feeding at the bay filled with Herrings. The tour guide observed a baby humpback swimming with some Orcas, which is an unusual sight considering the tension generally observed between the two Cetacean species. The Orcas would try to kill the Humpbacks, possibly due to the lack of

food resource, or the interference in the Orca chase for its prey by the Humpback. On the other hand, with the Orcas ability to communicate over 100 miles, the Humpbacks pick up on the communication, relying on Orcas in the search for feeding grounds. With the effects of climate changes and fishing pressure, it looks like the political game between them, will only get stronger.