

1. Biography

Feng Zhao, PhD, is a Professor and Deputy Director of the Laboratory of Marine Biodiversity Taxonomy and Systematics at the Institute of Oceanology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (IOCAS).

He received his BSc in Biotechnology from Northeast Agricultural University in 2008 and his PhD in Marine Biology from IOCAS in 2013. After graduation, he worked as an Assistant Researcher at IOCAS from 2013 to 2016, then completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Molecular Ecology Department of Technische Universität Kaiserslautern, Germany (2016–2017). He was promoted to Associate Professor in late 2016 and full Professor in October 2023.

He was awarded the Huiquan Young Scholar of IOCAS in 2021 and selected as a member of the Youth Innovation Promotion Association of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 2022. In 2025, he received the Shandong Marine Youth Science and Technology Award.

Dr. Zhao's research centers on community structure and molecular diversity of marine eukaryotic microbes, with a particular focus on deep-sea protists and ciliates. He has established optimized research methodologies for deep-sea microbial investigation and systematically uncovered the baseline biodiversity of protists across typical deep-sea habitats in the Western Pacific. His landmark discoveries include a potential new high-rank taxon (class-level) of protists, and novel ecological mechanisms governing vertical stratification, seamount effects, topographic forcing, and parasitic protist functions in pelagic deep-sea ecosystems. His work has challenged the Anna-Karenina principle for microbial biogeography and expanded theoretical frameworks for deep-sea biodiversity assessment.

To date, he has published over 50 peer-reviewed journal articles, including 22 first-author papers and 13 corresponding-author papers, many featured in Nature Index or JCR Q1 journals. He serves as principal investigator for more than ten research projects funded by the National Natural Science Foundation of China, the Youth Talent Program of CAS, and sub-projects of the National Key R&D Program.

He holds multiple academic service roles: panel reviewer for the National Natural Science Foundation of China, expert of Shandong Provincial Science and Technology Committee, Youth Editorial Board Member of *iMeta* and *Acta Hydrobiologica Sinica*, editorial board member of multiple Frontiers series journals, and member of the 3rd National Marine Science Terminology Compilation Committee (Marine Resources & Environment). He also acts as an reviewer for more than 20 international SCI journals covering marine microbiology, oceanography, and ecology.

2. List of Research Interests

- (1) Molecular diversity, biogeography and community ecology of marine protists
- (2) Deep-sea microbial ecology
- (3) Planktonic protist distribution and connectivity in oceans
- (4) Ecological roles of parasitic/symbiotic protists in deep-ocean food webs
- (5) Method optimization for eDNA/eRNA metabarcoding of marine microeukaryotes
- (6) Microbial biogeography
- (7) Machine learning modeling of microbial-hydrodynamic relationships