



The University of Hong Kong
School of Biological Sciences

**Qualifying
Seminar**

Exploring the resilience of cryptobenthic fish in urbanized coastal ecosystems

Date: 9th April 2025

Time: 3 pm – 4 pm

Venue: 3N01 – KBSB, HKU



About the speaker:

Maxine Cutracci is a 2nd year PhD student in the Molecular Ecology and Evolution lab, under the supervision of Prof. Celia Schunter.



Abstract:

Cryptobenthic fish are small fish typically less than five cm in size, closely associated with the benthos, and behaviorally cryptic. They play a vital role in marine ecosystems as they support trophic pathways, converting energy from their microscopic prey into consumable fish tissue for larger predators.

Despite their importance, cryptobenthic fish are relatively understudied worldwide due to their cryptic nature, and data on them have mostly been collected in pristine environments.

My research aims to uncover the pattern and distribution of these fishes in urbanized ecosystems to understand how they respond to urbanization and coastal development. Through molecular techniques including DNA barcoding, environmental DNA, and transcriptomics, I aim at answering two overarching questions: 1) What factors affect the distribution of cryptobenthic fish in urbanized ecosystems? 2) How do these fish cope with the pollutants released into the marine environment?