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INTERVIEW: ANOUK GOEDKNEGT

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ANOUK IS IN HER FOURTH & FINAL YEAR OF HER PHD AT THE ROYAL NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR SEA RESEARCH (NIOZ). WE CAUGHT UP WITH ANOUK TO PICK HER BRAINS ON STUDYING AT THE ROYAL NIOZ

**NAME:** ANOUK GOEDKNEGT

**INSTITUTE:** ROYAL NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR SEA RESEARCH (NIOZ)  
[WWW.WORKINGATNIOZ.COM](http://WWW.WORKINGATNIOZ.COM)

**COUNTRY:** NETHERLANDS

**DEGREE:** PHD: EFFECTS OF INVASIVE SPECIES ON NATIVE PREDATOR-PREY AND PATHOGEN-HOST WEBS



CREDIT: JOHN CLUDERAY



CREDIT: ANNIKA CORNELIUS



CREDIT: DAVID W. THIELTGES

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## WHAT IS YOUR PHD?

I investigate the effects that an invasive species, the Pacific oyster, can have on native species via transmission of parasites. The institute is situated on an island at the border of the Wadden Sea and the North Sea, where I can do a lot of field observations and experiments on the intertidal mudflats to find answers to my research questions.

## WHAT ABOUT THE BROADER ASPECT OF YOUR ROLE WITHIN THE ROYAL NIOZ?

At the NIOZ, I am part of the Parasite Ecology group that is led by Dr. David Thielgtes. Together with another PhD student, Jennifer Welsh, we form the backbone of the group. Regularly we have Master's and Bachelor's students around that we have to supervise and teach. There is a very friendly atmosphere and everyone always helps each other when it's needed.

## WHAT IMPORTANCE DOES YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT HAVE FOR THE ROYAL NIOZ?

Biological invasions threaten ecosystems and biodiversity worldwide. Most of the studies focus on the direct effect of invasive species on native species, by looking at predation and competition. In our project we focus on the indirect effects on native species. We found that the invasive Pacific oyster introduced a parasite in the Wadden Sea that not only infects Pacific oysters but also native blue mussels, common cockles and Baltic tellins. These are important species, both ecologically and economically.

## WHAT IS YOUR ROLE WITHIN THE BROADER RESEARCH TEAM?

Technically I am working in two teams: the team of my project group and in the Parasite Ecology group of the Royal NIOZ. The project group exists out of researchers from the NIOZ and from the Alfred Wegner Institute (AWI), situated on the island of Sylt in the north of the German Wadden Sea. I am the only PhD student in the group, which is a privilege. I really learn a lot from all the team members, with their different backgrounds and experiences.



CREDIT: KATIE O'DWYER

### DESCRIBE THE ROYAL NIOZ AS AN INSTITUTE...

The NIOZ is a very open, intimate institute. You get to know people quickly. There are several science departments employing physicists, chemists, geologists, biologists and marine technicians. We cooperate a lot. We have about 27 nationalities working here, so that shakes up your perspective.

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF WHILE WORKING AT THE ROYAL NIOZ?

I've learned that you never finish learning and that's a challenge I really like. Once you solve a problem, another problem comes up. That can be frustrating but at least it's never boring. I've also learned to plan, to ask people when I need help, to cooperate with people with different backgrounds and to take a day off when I have worked truly hard.

### HOW WILL THIS ENRICH YOUR ACADEMIC LIFE IN THE FUTURE?

I like to preserve a kind of openness to new experiences – it's what you need if you want to continue to have a career in science; meet new challenges; learn about the way people think or act. Maintaining scientific growth is important to me; I like to make sure my research contributes to sustaining marine ecosystems. That is what's driving me.

### WHAT WAS YOUR ROUTE INTO STUDYING?

I started at the University of Groningen with a full-time Marine Biology BA. It was there that I came into touch with the Royal NIOZ for the first time, as we went there for three separate courses. With the courses, I was able to explore the science practice for the first time. After this, I completed two Master's: Science Communication and Marine Biology Research. During the Master's I arranged my second internship at the NIOZ. Coincidentally my current supervisor, Dr. David Thieltges, had a PhD position open. I applied for this and luckily was accepted.



CREDIT: ROBERT D. HOLT

## HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE ACADEMIC ATMOSPHERE AT THE ROYAL NIOZ?

You can feel that everyone is very ambitious, but it doesn't feel overly competitive to me. Colleagues invest their time to improve your research. It is also inspiring to discuss your research with other PhD students during lunch or in PhD meetings that I organise once in a while.

## WHAT IS YOUR PLAN AFTER YOU FINISH YOUR PHD AT THE ROYAL NIOZ?

Continue in science as a post-doc. I really like science, the creativity, the challenges, the cooperation with others and the flexibility in working hours.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BRITISH STUDENTS WHO ARE THINKING OF STUDYING ABROAD IN A MARINE SCIENCE ENVIRONMENT?

Choose NIOZ of course. Working here is hectic, fun, challenging and international. You will work with renowned Dutch scientists, but also team up with foreign nationals who have the same dreams in another language. Together we want to make a difference, gain knowledge on seas and oceans and share it with the world.

## WHAT DO YOU DO AWAY FROM STUDYING?

Together with some colleagues I share a little beach house on the island. We like to hang out there with friends and enjoy long summer evenings. And I love to do sports. I've been playing volleyball in the NIOZ team for four years. I also like to go running through the dunes or in the pine forest. But my biggest pleasure comes from big Atlantic winds bringing in waves, as they allow me to surf. I love it.



CREDIT: TOBIAS KRAUSS



CREDIT: MARCEL KOHLER