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Double Seaweed Epithet Honors for RWU Professor

Jill Rodrigues

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BRISTOL, R.I. – The recent naming of two seaweed species couldn't have been a wiser decision.

Brian Wysor, Roger Williams University's resident phycologist, has had the distinction of having a tropical red alga from the coast of Panama and a subtropical green alga from the Gulf of Mexico named in his honor.

The marine plants received the Latin binomials *Augophyllum wysorii* and *Caulerpa wysorii*, translating to Wysor's beautiful leaf and Wysor's crawling stem. The former has stunning, translucent patterns reminiscent of stained glass, while the latter looks like a tiny marine fern.



Augophyllum wysorii

Both species were dubbed after Wysor, who collected the specimens some 20 years ago as part of his graduate studies at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. These new-to-science species were described in separate articles by two groups of scientists who formally proposed the taxonomy designating his name. It's a common practice in the scientific world to name a species for the scientist known to be the original collector or who has submitted research that first identifies a specimen as a new species.



Caulerpa wysorii

In this case, the RWU marine biologist collected *Augophyllum wysorii* specimens for study during his tenure as a Fulbright Fellow at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Similarly, Wysor collected the unfamiliar *Caulerpa* species as part of a Sustainable Seas Expedition in the Gulf of Mexico with the world-renowned marine scientist Sylvia Earle (who [spoke at RWU](#) in

2014, as part of our President's Distinguished Speaker Series). Wysor also DNA sequenced *Caulerpa wysorii*, which first suggested that those Gulf of Mexico specimens might be a new species.

“It is humbling and a high honor to be acknowledged with a species epithet,” says Wysor, a professor of biology and chair of the biology, marine biology and environmental science department at RWU. “But, to be clear, the hard work of defining species goes to the taxonomic authorities and manuscript authors who have vetted these species as different from all others described.”

With a modest acknowledgement of these tributes, he quickly returns the focus to ongoing research, teaching, and paying his experiences forward to the next generation of scientists. In the tradition of delivering a world-class Roger Williams education, Wysor collaborates with RWU students on real-world research projects, ranging from biodiversity of marine algae to seaweed classification, and field collection expeditions off the coast of our beautiful Bristol campus to the tropical climes of the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean.

“I have had the good fortune to be able to explore relatively understudied habitats throughout my scientific career, which opens the door to species discovery. I have also benefited from passionate academic and scientific mentors who taught me the value of generous collaboration in research, which I endeavor to carry forward through my teaching and research at RWU, in Rhode Island and in Panama,” he