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**Dr. Jan Vicente Joins Bishop Museum's Natural Sciences Department  
as Curator of the Invertebrate Zoology Collection**

Honolulu, Hawai'i — [Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawai'i Museum of Natural and Cultural History, announces the appointment of accomplished researcher Jan Vicente, Ph.D., as curator of its Invertebrate Zoology collection. With 10 years of research and field experience in the islands of Hawai'i and 20 years around the world, Dr. Vicente will oversee the collection's more than 49,000 cataloged lots and 1,000 type specimens of sponges, corals, crustaceans, echinoderms, and other animals without backbones.

[Catalogued lots are similar specimens stored under one shared identification number, while type specimens are single, unique specimens that serve as the official name-bearers for new species.]

Dr. Vicente's research is noted for documenting more than 200 sponge species from which 10 new species of sponges have been described just from efforts in Kāne'ohe Bay on the island of O'ahu, increasing the known diversity of sponges for the entire archipelago by threefold. He has also designed new molecular techniques for improving the detection of cryptic diversity of invertebrates in coral reefs, as well as discovered more than a dozen novel natural products from sponges and their microbiomes with biomedical potential for human use.

[Cryptic diversity refers to species that look identical but are genetically distinct. If an individual species is thought to be another, this "hidden" species may not be protected and thus, the preservation of its environment's biodiversity may be threatened.]

"Coral reefs are considered the 'rainforests of the sea,' providing an incredible abundance of marine invertebrate diversity," said Dr. Vicente. "We have developed a pono strategy to access this diversity with the use of Autonomous Reef Monitoring Structures or 'ARMS,' which are essentially tiny 'hotels' for sea creatures. This has led to the discovery of hundreds of species we didn't know existed in our treasured Hawaiian reefs. With these new discoveries come new scientific opportunities to understand the complexities of coral reefs and the role they are playing for the broader ecosystem."

Dr. Vicente is not new to the Museum and has worked with its Invertebrate Zoology collection for the last five years, acting as its curator and lead researcher. In his official role, he will prioritize pairing DNA sequencing with classic taxonomic approaches to describe the species in the collection, improving local reference databases tied to physical Museum vouchers accessible to scientists around the world.

[Vouchers are preserved biological specimens that scientists use as physical proof of an organism's identity, traits, and other qualities during a study.]

“My mission is to shine light on the hidden, but mostly endemic, community of marine invertebrates in Hawai‘i,” said Dr. Vicente. “These discoveries will undoubtedly provide opportunities for research in STEM for students who are interested in learning from our ocean resources.”

Since 2022, Dr. Vicente has been a Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology marine biologist at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, a position he continues to hold. He received his doctorate in Environmental Molecular Biology and Biotechnology from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science – Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology, and a Master of Science with a minor in Marine Policy from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He has been successful at obtaining more than \$1.5 million in grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration and holds numerous affiliations and certifications, including being a member of the International Coral Reef Society and certified as a scientific diver and SCUBA instructor. He has extensive teaching experience and serves as a mentor for students from the University of Hawai‘i, Hawai‘i Pacific University, Hampton University, University of the Ryukyus, Iowa State University, and the University of Puerto Rico.

Dr. Vicente’s goal is to make the collection at Bishop Museum accessible to the world, and in particular, to students from under-represented groups. He is dedicated to inspiring the next generation of scientists with these resources.

For interview opportunities and photos, please contact Krislyn Hashimoto via the information provided above.

### **About Bishop Museum’s Invertebrate Zoology Collection:**

The Invertebrate Zoology Collection contains more than 49,000 cataloged lots with more than 1,000 type specimens. It is the only collection in the world devoted solely to marine invertebrates of the Pacific islands, with its primary focus being the Hawaiian Archipelago. It houses marine animals that span 18 major animal groups, including Porifera (sponges), Cnidaria (corals, jellies), Crustacea (crabs, lobsters), and Echinodermata (sea stars, urchins). The collection represents more than 100 years of scientific research in Hawai‘i and the Pacific and is the basis for the Checklist of Hawaiian Marine Invertebrates. Learn more at [BishopMuseum.org/Explore/Invertebrate-Zoology](https://BishopMuseum.org/Explore/Invertebrate-Zoology).

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### **About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History:**

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum’s mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration, and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai‘i and the Pacific. The Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the Museum thrives as an educational center for

the community and is widely regarded as the world's premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content.

Bishop Museum's vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over 2 million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and 1 million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai'i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years.

Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits. Guests are encouraged to pre-plan their trip to #HawaiiisMuseum with its [free digital guide](#), available through Bloomberg Connects.

To learn more about the Museum's research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit [BishopMuseum.org](https://www.bishopmuseum.org), follow @BishopMuseum on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), visit Bishop Museum's [YouTube](#) channel, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at [BishopMuseum.org/Careers](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/Careers) and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai'i's oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1,200 titles and distributed over 1 million books in 72 countries worldwide. Bishop Museum hosts a restaurant and gift shop on campus, [Tūtū's Place by Highway Inn](#) and [Shop Pacifica by Nā Mea Hawai'i](#).

Past news releases can be viewed and downloaded at [BishopMuseum.org/NewsRoom](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/NewsRoom).