

Introduction to Dr. Adriana Aquino

I am Adriana Aquino. I am a scientist at the American Museum of Natural History. I am an Ichthyologist. I've been at the museum for eight years now, and now for the past three years I've been teaching teachers about science.

I teach about life sciences, and within life sciences I focus on the classification of life, the diversity of life, and how this life came out through evolution.

Systematics is the part of biology that focuses on the discovery, description, and classification of all species of living organisms.

I study the systematics of a particular group of catfishes from South America.

My goal is to clarify what are the species of this group, and then reconstruct the family tree of the species. And from that family tree, try to make a hypothesis about how they evolved.

What I like most about doing research is the moment of the discovery. That discovery comes sometimes after a long time gathering data. Suddenly you find one feature in one fish, maybe it's just an anomaly. And so you start checking other fish, one, and another, and another, and another. And everyone has it.

So you realize, wow, it's a different thing! To realize that you are the first person in the history of the universe that has come across this feature, it's really kind of very nice.

I do believe that teachers are more effective in their teaching when they really feel passionate about what they do. Teaching is probably the hardest job in the world, and the one with the greatest responsibility.