

# SPEAKER FORM

**Speaker's Name** : LOUISA S. PONNAMPALAM, PhD

---

**Affiliation 1** Research Fellow, Institute of Ocean & Earth Sciences, University Malaya

---

**Affiliation 2** Chairperson & Co-Founder, The MareCet Research Organization

---

## Speaker's Profile

Louisa is a marine scientist living a childhood dream, specializing in the ecology and conservation of marine mammals, with a focus in dolphin ecology. Her research career on these charismatic marine mammals spans 10 years across various seas, including the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Bering Sea, Gulf of Thailand, Andaman Sea and the South China Sea.

Louisa aspired to be a dolphin researcher since she was a teenager, and had always known that she wanted to be so in her home country of Malaysia, seeing as little is known about marine mammals in Malaysian waters. After high school, she headed west, undertook her tertiary studies in Hawai'i and then Scotland, and subsequently returned to Malaysia to do what she had dreamed of some 18 years ago. And that dream was to start up dolphin research projects and a research organization of her own in her home country.

Louisa did not want her work to remain solely within the bounds of the scientific community, and saw the need to raise awareness about marine mammals and marine conservation to the general public. In 2012, she co-founded The MareCet Research Organization with a fellow colleague Fairul Izmil Jamal Hisne. The underlying objective of MareCet is to spread the message of marine conservation and using science and dolphins as the iconic group to do just that. One of Louisa's main career goals is to raise the profile of marine mammals in Malaysia, and to build local research and conservation capacity for these animals and their fragile marine environment. In her own words, "If I can reduce the number of people asking me in disbelief whether Malaysia has dolphins, then I would have done something right in my career's lifetime".

Louisa was awarded the Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation this year, the first Malaysian to be presented with this prestigious award. Additionally, her efforts were recognized by her country when she was awarded the National Youth Premier Award 2014 (Special Category) by the Prime Minister of Malaysia. She presently serves as a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Cetacean and Sirenia Specialist Groups, and is the current Vice-Chair of the International Consortium for Marine Conservation. She is also a Research Fellow at the Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences, University Malaya and a Honorary Research Fellow at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Her current projects include the Langkawi and Matang Dolphin Research Projects, a dugong research project, a research project on coastal dolphins in Thailand, and the upcoming Langkawi Dolphin Floating Exhibition (FLEX). In her free time, she enjoys travelling and experiencing new and exotic cultures.