

NEWSLETTER

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OCEANS PAST INITIATIVE

New year, new faces, and much on the horizon

With this rendition of OPN, the deadline for abstract submissions for Oceans Past XI has just passed, leaving many of us with a great conference and chance to be looking forward to in a few months' time! We also see the start of the new year giving us an opportunity to become acquainted with the members of the Community Ocean Observing Laboratory (COOL) at the University of California Santa Barbara.

Rachel M. Winter, OPN Editor
Globe Institute, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

OCEANS PAST SPOTLIGHT*

Marine historical ecology at University of California Santa Barbara, featuring work by undergraduate researcher Hannah Phetbourom

Written by **Michael P. Montgomery**,
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University of California Santa Barbara's (UCSB) Community Ocean Observing Laboratory, or COOL, as we like to call ourselves, is a research group investigating historical and present-day perceptions of marine environmental change along the coast of California.

We are particularly interested in reconstructing the ecological and cultural dimensions of past marine heatwaves and of power-plant discharges that mimicked the heatwaves on a local scale. With support from UCSB's Environmental Studies Program and Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Marine Science, I have been leading the lab since my



University of California Santa Barbara's Community Ocean Observing Laboratory, May 2025. From left to right, Lauren Combest, Nina Jekel, Mia Arias, Hannah Phetbourom, Erica Kinsel, and Michael P. Montgomery. Photo by Riley Tinianov.

former student, Erica Kinsel, and I started it in the fall of 2023. I couldn't be luckier to get to work with this group of undergraduates, now six students strong and with two recent alumnae.

Student Researcher Spotlight. Hannah Phetbourom is a third-year Anthropology and Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology double-major who joined the Community Ocean Observing Laboratory in spring 2024. In addition to research trips to interview fishermen and visit various power plants, Hannah took on an independent project of surveying historical newspaper clippings from the archive of the Monterey Public Library's California History Room, in Monterey, California. Her thematic summary of the clippings, written in part as a finding-guide to the archive, is now available online ([here](#) or via the doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18264946>).

Hannah has given excellent presentations on this research to the rest of our group, and, last summer, to a lecture hall full of students in ENVS 1: Introduction to Environmental Studies. This summer, she hopes to share it with members of the Oceans Past Initiative in Victoria. Hannah's passion for storytelling, not merely as a subject that rewards historical analysis, but as a powerful way to communicate her own original, incisive ideas, is palpable and inspiring to all of us in the lab, to her peers in the wider UC Santa Barbara community, and, I have no doubt, to everyone who meets her.



COOL Researchers in El Segundo, California, March 2025. From left to right, Hannah Phetbourom, Lauren Combest, and Nina Jekel. Photo by Michael P. Montgomery.

Hannah's essay's title and abstract are below. Thank you in advance for reading her work!

"Rare Currents: A Thematic Survey of Historical Marine Life Clippings from the *Monterey Peninsula Herald* (1938-1986)," by Hannah Phetbourom. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18264946>

Abstract: This project examines historical newspaper articles from the *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, dating from the 1930s-1980s, that documented phenomena such as rare marine species appearances and unusual strandings, along with community reactions to these situations. Altogether, the articles reveal how cultural memory, emotional tone, and the form of storytelling all shaped public understandings of ecological disruption before phrases such as "climate change" were significant in common vocabulary.

RESEARCH & OTHER NEWS

Job advert. Postdoctoral researcher position in **marine environmental history** at **Gothenburg University**. The researcher will be working on the **MPA4Fish** project to establish pre-modern baselines for marine protected areas around the Atlantic world. The project is funded as part of the Biodiversa+ programme, aiming to identify, analyse, and comprehend transformation processes that may safeguard biodiversity by mitigating threats and halting—or even reversing—its decline, as well as the benefits it may provide to people. The researcher will work with local teams in pre-selected areas in Spain, Iceland, Norway, France, Italy, Tunisia, Turkey, Brazil, and South Africa. **Application closes 02 February 2026.**

Please see [here](#) for the job advert in English.

For further information, email Professor Poul Holm poul.holm@gu.se or Dr. Per Hallén at per.hallen@gu.se.

2026 OPI Membership Is Now Live

Thank you for your continued support of OPI. We would like to remind you to **renew your 2026 membership**, which expires on 31 December each year.

Why become an OPI member?

OPI membership gives you access to:

- **Discounted registration** for OPI conferences
- Our **quarterly newsletter**, featuring:
 - Updates from the OPI community
 - New publications
 - Job opportunities
 - Upcoming conferences and events

We also offer **reduced membership rates** for students and individuals from Least Developed Countries, ensuring OPI remains inclusive and accessible.

Join or renew your 2026 OPI membership [HERE](#)

We look forward to another year of collaboration, research, and engagement with the OPI community.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Albano PG, Kallmeyer SKC, Vetina AA, Tibiriçá Y, de Abreu DC, Vittoria Modica M. (2025) **A unique historical baseline uncovers harvesting impacts on intertidal molluscs at Inhaca Island, southern Mozambique**, *ICES Journal of Marine Science*. 82(11). <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsaf206>

Fogliarini CO, Bender MG. (2026) **Historical evidence of marine megafauna declines along the Brazilian coast**. *Ocean & Coastal Management*. 272:108016. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2025.108016>

Lau SC, Thomas M, Williams JM, Thurstan RH, Hancock B, Russell BD. (2026) **Millennial-scale societal shifts drive the widespread loss of oyster reefs in East Asia**. *Current Biology*. 36(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2025.10.048>

McGrath K, Montes TAKdS, Fossile T, da Rocha Bandeira D, Mara Borba F, Cremer MJ, van der Sluis LG, Higham T, Klahold Rosa AP, Saña M, Carlo Colonese A. (2026). **Molecular and zooarchaeological identification of 5000 year old whale-bone harpoons in coastal Brazil**. *Nature Communications* 17, 48. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-025-67530-w>

Miller HK, Fitzhugh B. (2025) **The Little Ice Age and Colonialism: An Analysis of Co-Crises for Coastal Alaska Native Communities in the 18th and 19th Centuries**. *Heritage*. 8(12):499. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage8120499>

Tevzadze G. (2025). **Transfer of royal fish and the non-evolutionary history of Black Sea sturgeons**. *Academia Biology*, 3(4). <https://doi.org/10.20935/AcadBiol8024>

Wigham BD, Pinnegar JK, Polunin NVC, Hunt G, Engelhard GH. (2025). **Century-scale changes in the feeding patterns of demersal fish species in the western North Sea**. *Fish and Fisheries*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.70035>

ANNOUNCEMENTS: CONFERENCES and WORKSHOPS

Upcoming conference.



The abstract deadline for **OPXI (Oceans Past XI)** recently closed on the 15th of January, but still keep the **15-19 June 2026** marked in your diaries for OPXI which is being hosted at the **University of Victoria** in **British Columbia, Canada**. The theme for this edition of the conference is **Ocean-connected communities: Historical perspectives inform modern relationships** and our local hosting team is led by Professors Jason Colby, Loren McClenachan, and Iain McKechnie.

Oceans Past XI themes

Select one or more themes which most closely related to your proposed topic:

- *Trajectories of human influences on the seas: fisheries, pests, and pollution*
- *Indigenous ocean knowledges*
- *Connecting communities: blue memory, place, heritage, and justice*
- *Marine ecosystems past and future, from kelp forests to coral reefs*
- *Physical and biological change in marine systems*
- *Ocean stewardship and belonging*
- *The future past of marine paleobiology*
- *From collapse to recovery: Learning from our shared pasts to inform future policy and management*



Upcoming conference. Whales and Humans: Past Entanglements and Current Relations International Conference at the University of Iceland, June 22 – 23, 2026. Scholarship on the relationship between humans and whales around the globe continues to be exciting and innovative. Yet, since the Sandefjord Whaling Museum last hosted a conference on the topic in 2013, there have been few opportunities for this community of scholars to come together. Therefore, we – a consortium of scholars from Iceland, Japan, and the United States – are soliciting papers for a conference on the history and present of humans and whales, to take place at the University of Iceland, in **Reykjavik, from June 22 – 23, 2026**.

Updates will be posted on the conference website closer to the event, www.whales.hi.is

Conference committee & institutional sponsors:

Kristín Ingvarsdóttir, main organizer, University of Iceland

Ryan Tucker Jones, University of Oregon

Akamine Jun, ArCS III (Arctic Challenge for Sustainability), Hitotsubashi University

Lissa Wadewitz, University of Oregon

Upcoming conference. ESSAS (Ecosystem Studies of Subarctic and Arctic Seas)'s Annual Science Meeting will be taking place between the **23-25th of June 2026** in **Reykjavík, Iceland**. Ben Fitzhugh has noted the following for all of us regarding this conference: “[ESSAS takes place] the week after OPXI. (PESAS, the Paleoeology of Subarctic and Arctic Seas, working group that Ben Fitzhugh co-founded represents the historical dimension of this organization). OPI folks traveling back to Europe ... or interested in visiting Iceland otherwise ... may like to build this conference into their travel plans. There may be an opportunity to visit Norse Medieval and later archaeological sites after the conference. The ESSAS conference theme is **“Borealization” (warming) of northern marine ecosystems**. OPI folks working in northern oceans and coasts likely have something to contribute here.” Further details can be found on the [conference website](#)



CONTACT

Oceans Past News is a quarterly newsletter that aspires to both unite and inform the worldwide community interested in historical perspectives of marine social-ecological systems by providing insight into the wide-ranging and excellent work being done and the resources available. If you would like to propose work for OPN in the future, please contact **Rachel Winter** (info@oceanspast.org).

If you have **news or an event to share with the wider OPI community**, please get in touch with us (info@oceanspast.org) and we would be happy to share your content on our social media platforms.

*The next Oceans Past News will be out in April 2026. We **warmly welcome submissions** through March 2026.*

RESOURCES

The Oceans Past News Archive is available online: <https://oceanspast.org/newsletter/>

More on the Oceans Past Initiative: <http://oceanspast.org>

OPI on X: [@oceans_past](https://twitter.com/oceans_past) and Bluesky: [@oceanspast.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/oceanspast.bsky.social)