

**NEWSLETTER**  
VOLUME 29 | Jul 2024



**PI**

**OCEANS PAST INITIATIVE**

## Salt air, sweet company : summary of OPX

Summer is always a notoriously busy time of year for everyone, whether it be writing grants, preparing for autumn term, fieldwork campaigns, and/or hopefully getting some respite and holidays. Since our last issue, we also had the pleasure of partaking in the Oceans Past Initiative's 10<sup>th</sup> conference! For those that were unable to join us (virtually or in person) please read on for a summary of the event, recent publications, and additional events to look forward to this year!

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## OCEANS PAST SPOTLIGHT\*



*Oceans Past X Conference attendees.*

**Cornish coastlines, countless cod, and cordial conviviality : Oceans Past X International Conference**  
*Historical perspectives on human-ocean interactions: deep understandings for informing ocean futures*

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At the end of last month we had a stellar programme of 4 diverse keynotes, 61 oral presentations, and 28 posters with associated speed talks. Here you can read a recap of the events of OPX between the 25<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 at the University of Exeter's Penryn campus in Cornwall, United Kingdom. We had participation from 125 (!!) folks with 97 of those being in person, 45 of *those* being Early Career Researchers, and 17 countries represented in total. It was a very full programme with carefully curated sessions during the days and social activities each evening. A special thank you to the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas for their financial support of ECR attendance and participation!

<sup>†</sup> Views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect that of my employer

\*Each issue of Oceans Past News includes a feature article, either as an **Oceans Past Spotlight** or as **10 Questions**. If you would like to be considered for either, or to nominate a colleague or mentee, please contact Rachel Winter at [rachelwinter@palaeome.org](mailto:rachelwinter@palaeome.org).

We started the **first day** with a warm welcome from Ruth Thurstan and a keynote given by Professor Jason Colby (*University of Victoria*). Prof. Colby presented us with the exploitation history of the gray whale since the 1840's and his [Devilfish](#) project (definitely visit the very rich project website to learn more!). We then moved into a morning of sessions on cross-disciplinary and molecular studies of marine animals which covered more marine mammals, seabirds in Alaska, ancient + sedimentary DNA, sclerochronology, and so much more (but we do limit the length of this newsletter a bit). Before lunch was the conference's first speed talks in which poster presenters were given 3 minutes to entice delegates ahead of the poster session on the first evening. The afternoon session continued with our theme of molecular and isotopic studies, treating us to three coordinated talks from the [Aleutian Mercury Dynamics](#) project before a few cod-centric talks and our final two rounds of speed talks for the day. To wrap up the first day, delegates headed over to the Environment and Sustainability Institute for our poster session and a conference reception.



Ruth Thurstan welcoming delegates to the opening of OPX.



Conference attendees at Gylly beach in Falmouth, UK.

**Day 2** saw us welcoming in the day with two sessions around the theme of 'Exploitation, coastal communities and interdisciplinary approaches' which provided us with oral presentations and speed talks covering a wide range of settings including historical mid-19th century seafood consumption in Denmark, local ecological knowledge from Mexican and west African fisheries, turtle butters in Amazonia (yes, we were *all* intrigued by this one!), and the impacts of bottom trawling throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Wednesday afternoon continued with our wide range of disciplines covered including ancient environmental DNA from the North Sea, ecosystem modelling, zooarchaeology, and historical literature. For continued learning and listening, as part of the 4-OCEANS project Dr. Cristina Brito told us about, a new podcast called [Oceanities](#) (available wherever you listen to podcasts!) was started earlier this year. We

wrapped up the afternoon with our second keynote speaker, Dr. Nadia Rubio ([Mar Sustentable Ciencia y Conservación](#)) and her fascinating work recovering local ecological knowledge of sawfish in the Yucatán Peninsula and some final talks covering historic kelp forests in Tasmania and historic cod fisheries. At the end of day 2, provisions remaining from the poster reception were taken down to Gylly beach and a few brave souls braced the chilling (but refreshing) Atlantic waters.

Our **third day** kicked off with a keynote from Professor Anna Clark (*University of Technology Sydney*) which invited us to think about our personal relationships with beaches and introduced her ongoing work for a forthcoming book. We continued our morning with additional thought-provoking talks surrounding our collective usage, knowledge, and even folklore surrounding the sea. Continuing our morning with perceptions, politics, and policies we heard about the architecture of intertidal fisheries, historic fisheries sciences, changing cuisines (see oysters → shrimp in the 20th century southern US) in light of marine declines, attempts to establish early underwater nature reserves in Italy, Icelandic fisheries through time (hint: there was a lot of cod) and if you're looking to gain literacy on the human

history of trying to 'govern' the sea, look no further than Erika Techera (speaker at OPX) and Joy McCann's forthcoming book this November, *The Unruly Ocean: Law and Justice in the World's Oceans, Seas and Shorelines*. After lunch we resumed our programme with historical perspectives on human-ocean interactions including museum collections in Mozambique, historical records in Iceland and Newfoundland, the UK's complex history of seafood consumption, invasive species in Lake Balkhash, and calls for better defining the data we rely upon. That afternoon was the General Meeting for OPI Members in which amendments to the constitution were unanimously adopted (for details see [here](#)). Transitioning into the evening, delegates were treated to a night at the local Maritime Museum for some after-hours exploring and continued networking.



*Photo from the local Maritime Museum.*

The (inevitable) **final day** seemed to come all too quickly! Dr. Bryony Caswell (*University of Hull*) ushered us into this last day with her keynote exploring the vast array of data available to us to explore marine functional connectivity throughout time. We then had our two final sessions which encompassed molecular methods and reconstructions of the past. We were immersed into research on Atlantic herring, dugongs, sea turtles, oysters, elasmobranchs, cod, and salt marshes. Final talks given, it was time for prizes! Thus, many congratulations to Madison Bowden-Parry for best oral presentation, Ursula Dhillon for the best poster presentation, and Willemien de Kock for the best interdisciplinary project! As a final send off from the conference, many of the delegates went for a relaxing and scenic boat ride from Falmouth along the coast and into the Helford River.



*Conference attendees partaking in a boat tour on the final day.*



*Photo from the boat tour and somewhere along the Helford River.*

This conference very clearly required a lot of work and countless hours behind the scenes from many *many* folks so innumerable thanks to the local and non-local steering committees, moderators, and especially Ruth Thurstan for putting on such a brilliant week!

RESEARCH & OTHER NEWS

Conclusions of the OPI General Meeting

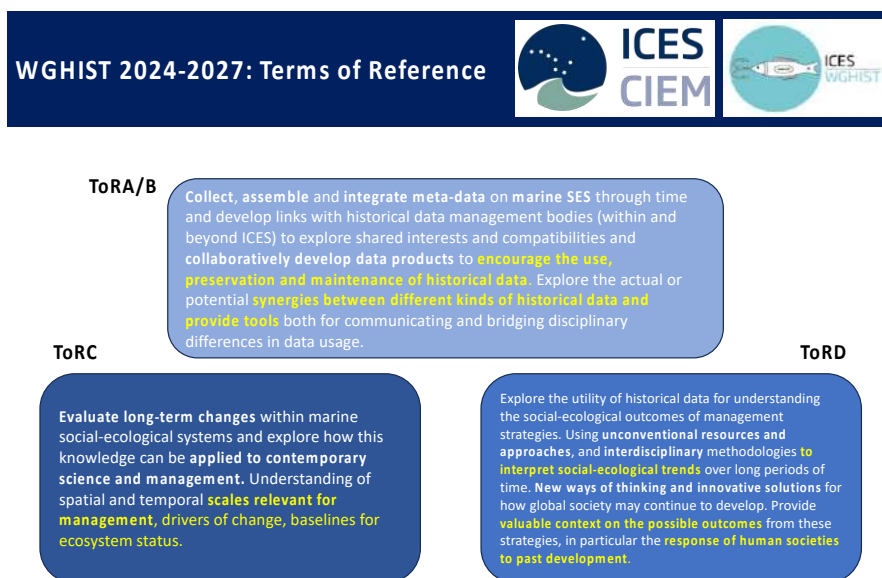
The OPI **General Meeting (GM)** took place on the **27<sup>th</sup> of June 2024** at **14.00 BST (British Summer Time)**, in the Peter Lanyon Building Lecture Theatre 5, at the University of Exeter’s Cornwall campus. The agenda of this meeting is provided below. The **key pieces of news** from this event were that the proposed changes to the OPI Constitution were unanimously passed. What these changes mean for members is that **1.** we have now defined a structure of our Steering Committee and **2.** elections for new steering committees may take place online instead of needing to be done in person. If you would like to read in greater detail the exact language that is now in our constitution please consult [here](#).

2024 General Meeting Agenda:

1. Achievements of OPI 2022-24
2. Membership summary
3. Financial report
4. Summary of business undertaken on behalf of members e.g. organisation of conference, OPN editorship, social media accounts
5. Vote on constitutional changes
6. Final call for nominations and overview of election process
7. If the proposed constitution changes are rejected by vote of the members in attendance (agenda item 5), then Election of the next Governing Board
8. Venue for next conference (which remains to be determined!)

WGHIST Annual Meeting 2024

The annual meeting of the **ICES working group** on the **History of Fish and Fisheries (WGHIST)** was held online from the 4th-6th June. The c. 80 members heard about work utilising data spanning >10,000 years of human and natural history, and considered past fisheries practice, its impacts, the response of social-ecological systems to change, techniques for reconstructing ecological baselines, and how history can inform present-day management. This was followed with discussions on how this contributes to WGHIST’s ToRs (see image).



We heard about new analyses on material collections and their development, interpolation approaches (e.g. for historic plankton, reconstructing CPUE), and modelling approaches that might help quantify biases including temporal gaps and varying perspectives. Presentations demonstrated the power of interdisciplinary analyses including historical ecology and osteology with proteomics, aDNA, and stable isotopes many of which depend on the existence of textual, visual and material collections. We heard from the inter-disciplinary **Marine Ecosystem, Animal Resources and Human Strategies in Ancient Mediterranean: MERMAID project** ([https://www.cepam.cnrs.fr/sites/mermaid/?page\\_id=12](https://www.cepam.cnrs.fr/sites/mermaid/?page_id=12)) and the **UN Ocean Decade Endorsed project Indigenous People, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and Climate Change: The Iconic UCH of Stone Tidal Weirs project** (<https://oceandecadechfp.org/projects/indigenous-people-traditional-ecological-knowledge-and-climate-change/>). A range of different historical fish and fisheries research, new initiatives and future work, followed with discussions on how this contributes to WGHIST's ToRs (see image).

If you are interested in Marine Historical Ecology and in working with a diverse and international group, feel free to contact us!

You can come and meet us on the **10<sup>th</sup> of September** at the **ICES-ASC**, contact one of the chairs ([b.a.caswell@hull.ac.uk](mailto:b.a.caswell@hull.ac.uk)) or find us online (<https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WGHIST.aspx>) if you would like to learn more.

## RESOURCES

**Function of Oceans Past News (OPN) emailing list.** From the responses received it appears that folks are indeed open to receiving additional content from us about relevant news (e.g., conferences, job adverts, abstract deadlines, etc.). Thus, going forward if you have time sensitive material that you would like sent out, please be in touch with me ([rachelwinter@palaeome.org](mailto:rachelwinter@palaeome.org)) for wider dissemination through our community!

**Two research positions** have recently come up with the **Spanish National Research Council** in **Barcelona** with the **HUMANE - Archaeology and Human Ecology** research group as part of the **bluePALEOeconomy: analysis of coastal socio-ecological systems in the long-term through data science** project (PI: **Déborá Zurro**). The contracts are both set to start before 31 December 2024 and are for 4 years. One position is for predoctoral researcher and the other is for a postdoctoral researcher. If you are interested please visit the link [here](#), navigate to the 'Catalogue of Opportunities' and see pages 24 and 154 for predoctoral and postdoctoral positions respectively.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Dierickx K, Schauer P, Harland J, Pipe A, Oueslati T, Lehouck A, Eryvynck A, Wouters W, Von Tersch M, Orton D, Alexander M. (2024). ***Finding the right plaice at the right time: Multi-molecular analysis of flatfish reveals historical catch habitats.*** *Fish and Fisheries*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12847>

Fossile T, McGrath K, Comes P, Villanueva J, Sayle KL, Gilson S-P, Haimovici M, Alves MC, Bartz MC, Bandeira D da R, Borba FM, Ferreira J, & Colonese AC. (2024). ***The historical ecology of subsistence and early commercial fisheries in mangrove systems in Brazil.*** *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 166, 105986. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2024.105986>

Holm P, Hayes P, & Nicholls J. (2024). *Historical marine footprint for Atlantic Europe, 1500-2019*. *Ambio*, 53(4), 624–636. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-023-01939-9>

McClenachan L, Rick T, Thurstan RH, Trant A, Alagona PS, Alleway HK, Armstrong C, Bliege Bird R, Rubio-Cisneros NT, Clavero M, Colonese AC, Cramer K, Davis AO, Drew J, Early-Capistrán MM, Gil-Romera G, Grace M, Hatch MBA, Higgs E, ... Van Houtan KS. (2024). *Global research priorities for historical ecology to inform conservation*. *Endangered Species Research*, 54, 285–310. <https://doi.org/10.3354/esr01338>

Royle TCA, Kennedy JR, Guiry EJ, Jackman LS, Shichiza Y, & Yang DY. (2024). *Sharkaeology: Expanding Understandings of Historical Chinese Diaspora Shark Fisheries in Monterey Bay, California, through the Genetic Species Identification of Archaeological Chondrichthyes Remains*. *Human Ecology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10745-024-00521-5>

Scherer C, Ludlow F, Matthews A, Hayes P, Klais R, & Holm P. (2024). *A Historical Plankton Index: Zooplankton abundance in the North Sea since 800 CE*. *The Holocene*, 34(7), 843–859. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09596836241236332>

Vales, DG. (2024). *A reconstruction of the marine mammal harvest by the Real Compañía Marítima through the analysis of historical sources (AD 1790–1804)*. *The Holocene*, 34(6), 681–692. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09596836241231444>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS: CONFERENCES and WORKSHOPS

**Call for papers** and **upcoming conference**. The 2024 **International Council for Archaeozoology (ICAZ) Fish Remains Working Group (FRWG)** will be the **22<sup>nd</sup> FRWG meeting** and it will take place between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of August in Toronto, Canada. (N.B. Registration is closed, but there is usually a short summary of the meeting published afterwards in the ICAZ newsletter!) [Conference website](#).

**Upcoming conference**. 9<sup>th</sup> **International Maritime History Association International Congress of Maritime History** will be held in Busan, Korea between 19<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2024. The main theme will be “Oceans: Local Mobility, Global Connectivity”, and the aim is to investigate the many aspects of the relationship between humans and the oceans. [Conference website](#).

**Upcoming workshop. International Workshop and training:** “Detecting, describing and disentangling pre-industrial climate and human impacts on marine ecosystems”. **Plakias, Crete (Greece) 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> September 2024.** Sponsored by Past Global Changes and the EU COST action Marine Animal Forests of the World. There is an option to join some of the sessions virtually: if interested email [b.a.caswell@hull.ac.uk](mailto:b.a.caswell@hull.ac.uk). The programme is available here: <https://pastglobalchanges.org/calendar/137506>



### International Workshop and Training

Detecting, describing and disentangling pre-industrial climate and human impacts on marine ecosystems



Plakias, Crete (Greece) and online  
2–6 September 2024

The study of pre-industrial climate and human impacts on marine ecosystems has so far been fragmentary. Previous attempts to devise indicators and apply modeling techniques in this framework, although successful, were spatially limited, and have yet to be transferred to a scale that is greater than regional or even to different parts of the world. The main problem is the apparent incompatibility of the data deriving from vastly different approaches that range from History and Archaeology to Ecology and Geology.

The aim of this meeting is to provide clear guidelines on how to combine such diverse data, in a way that can be useful as inputs for ecosystem models. In order to achieve these objectives, our objectives are to: a) gather specialists in historical, archaeological, geological, paleontological, genetic, geochemical and ecological methods (particularly early-career as much as possible) and exchange training specifically focused on the assumptions, advantages and limitations of each method; b) chart the complementarity of the methods and compatibility of the data derived from them; and c) draft methodological outputs on how to combine these methods to disentangle climate and pre-industrial human impacts on marine ecosystems.



**Upcoming conference.** The 7<sup>th</sup> International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC7) will be held from 13<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2024, in Cape Town, South Africa. The registration deadline is August 16<sup>th</sup>. [Conference website.](#)



**Upcoming conference.** International conference 'Commodities and Environments in Early Modern Global Asia, 1400–1800', organised in the framework of the ERC-funded project CAPASIA The Asian Origins of Global Capitalism and hosted by the European University Institute in Florence from the 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024. [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** ([rachelwinter@palaeome.org](mailto:rachelwinter@palaeome.org)).

*The next Oceans Past News will be out in October 2024. We **warmly welcome submissions** through September 2024.*

## RESOURCES

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

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

OPI on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/122288493384/> and Twitter: [@oceans\\_past](https://twitter.com/oceans_past)