

NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 31 | Jan 2025



PI

OCEANS PAST INITIATIVE

New year, new ideas, busy agendas!?

As can be seen from this issue, we have a lot to be looking forward to in 2025 with a wealth of conferences and workshops already announced! We are also trialing a new section to rotate in which will highlight an ECR within our community in an effort to ensure that we are encouraging and fostering a space which supports the stellar ECRs within our ranks.

Rachel M. Winter, OPN Editor

Centre de Recherche sur la Biodiversité et l'Environnement, CNRS, Université de Toulouse†

EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

Introducing a new section and our first feature within it, **Miranda LaZar**, a PhD Candidate in Anthropology with a focus in **zooarchaeology** and **ecological anthropology** at the **University of Arizona**. Continue on to learn about Miranda's work and her insights into the questions we have posed to get to know her better! ~RMW



Introduction to Miranda's research and background:

I am a **PhD candidate** at the **University of Arizona School of Anthropology** with a focus in zooarchaeology and ecological anthropology. Broadly, I am interested in studying human and animal relations in the circumpolar North. I am also interested in **long-term impacts of climate change on marine ecosystems** and how that has, and continues, to affect Alaska Native communities. My BA and MA degrees are in anthropology from the University of New Mexico and University of Arizona, respectively. During my undergraduate and graduate careers, I participated in field and lab research based in New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Alaska.

My current dissertation research examines the **cultural and ecological relationships between the Unanga̋ and seabirds in the Aleutian Islands, Alaska**. I draw from an **ethno-ornithology framework** to challenge the narrative that birds were merely supplemental food sources and use **oral history and ethnohistory** accounts of seabirds to complement zooarchaeology and stable isotope analyses. Seabirds are important sentient beings in

Unanga̋/Aleut ontologies. Seabird skins were used for everyday parkas as well as magical guises that facilitated transformations of people into birds in ancestral times. I also emphasize the importance of an **animal's life history and interactions with its environment** when making inferences about past human/animal relationships. My research explores variations in **human/seabird relationships** across distinct cultural island groups. Lastly, seabird bones recovered from archaeological middens can provide ecosystem baseline data on a large temporal scale. Seabirds are excellent environmental indicators, responding rapidly to changes in the marine ecosystem, and can be used as a proxy to understand larger shifts in primary productivity and fisheries through time. For my dissertation, I am

† 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.

comparing avifaunal collections **from ancestral Unanga middens on Sanak Island (eastern Aleutians) and Agattu Island (western Aleutians)** to demonstrate how local ecosystems and cultural traditions can form vastly different archaeology assemblages within the same broader cultural region and across time. In the future, I would like to expand my project to include other cultural and geographic regions of the North Pacific. I am also working to build relationships with descendant communities and would love to co-design community-based projects as those relationships deepen.

Outside of my dissertation research, I am very passionate about **science outreach and place-based scientific inquiry**. I am on the instructional team at the **UA Sky School**, a **K-12 outdoor science outreach** program that works with schools in southern Arizona. The program emphasizes connection to the local Sonoran Desert and Santa Catalina Mountains and encourages students to learn about their environment through student-led inquiry projects. We also co-teach high school classes on sky island ecology, urban ecology, and climate change.

Our questions for Miranda:

1. What guided you towards your current research interests?

While reflecting on this question, three distinct moments come to mind. During my first year of undergrad at UNM, I started volunteering in the zooarchaeology lab on a project that was testing the ability to use stable isotope analysis as a method for tracking trade networks of flutes made from raptor bones. Through this experience, I realized that human and bird relationships are significantly underrepresented in archaeological research. Later, I was introduced to Alaskan archaeology by my current PhD advisor and two of her previous students. I became hooked after my first field season in Alaska. Not only did I have a deep respect for the diverse cultural traditions of Alaska, but I was struck by the kindness of the archaeology and broader scientific community in Fairbanks. Finally, I had the unique opportunity to take a Traditional Ecological Knowledge class through the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This class challenged my archaeological training and pushed me to think about other knowledge systems when it comes to approaching research in Alaska.



2. How can senior researchers better support and mentor ECRs?

I believe the best way that senior researchers can better support ECRs is to approach the relationships with empathy and understanding. It is time to move past the thinking that suffering in graduate school is a right of passage and instead implement changes to make it easier for the next generation of ECRs. I am incredibly grateful to the senior researchers that have guided me. They have always treated me like a person first and their student second, prioritizing my mental and physical health over academic performance. I have seen many peers leave graduate school and/or academia because senior researchers were not understanding when personal matters arose that impacted their ability to complete research or classwork.

3. What is a practice or tradition in research that should be more widespread? (E.g., supervisors getting mugs with student's first paper printed on them)

One of my committee members told me that, during graduate school, her lab had a feather boa that the students got to wear in celebration after defending their dissertation/thesis and I think that would be a really fun tradition for more labs to take part in!

4. What areas of research are you interested in exploring further?

In the future, I would like to center acts of Unanga̋ survivance during Russian colonization in my research, particularly through the continued use of bird skin parkas. When the Russian began controlling access to marine mammals, the Unanga̋ used prior knowledge of birds and bird skin parkas to continue making traditional clothing. I also think that it would be important to highlight how Unanga̋ survivance, and its intersection with animals, was not uniform across the archipelago.

5. If you could recommend one paper/book/piece of media related to your research interests, what would it be and why?

I would recommend the paper, "Ethno-ornithology in the Rat Islands: Prehistoric Aleut relationships with birds in the western Aleutians, Alaska" by Caroline Funk. This paper does a great job at demonstrating the benefits of using ethno-ornithology when interpreting archaeological bird bones. By understanding the cultural contexts and indigenous worldviews that shaped human/bird interactions, we as archaeologists can gain a more nuanced and holistic interpretation of those relationships in the past.

This is a new section we are introducing as a way to further highlight the wealth of ECRs that we have in our community, if you would like to volunteer yourself or someone you know for this section, please get in touch with me at info@oceanspast.org. ~RMW

RESEARCH & OTHER NEWS

The [Resilience of Coastal Communities](#) project team have launched their Resilience exhibition at the [National Maritime Museum Cornwall](#) (NMMC) (Nov 2024 – Jan 2026). This playful audio-visual exhibition shares **stories of change in Cornish coastal communities**. It illuminates people's experiences of living with numerous and diverse disruptions through their lifetime - from the personal to those accelerating under global environmental change - and conveys how those who work with the sea have coped with, adapted to or transformed what they do in the face of these change events. We invite you to come along and stand under the buoys to hear their stories for yourself. The exhibition is a collaboration with [Kaleider](#), photographer [Steve Tanner](#), the NMMC, sea shanty groups, and the Cornish participants who kindly shared their time and stories.



*Images from exhibition attributed to **Ian Cross**.*

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Chong-Montenegro C, Castellanos-Galindo GA, Robertson DR. (2024). **Local ecological knowledge as a conservation tool for identifying threats to the Pacific Goliath grouper (*Epinephelus quinquefasciatus*) in Panama.** *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems*, 34(11), e70021. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.70021>
- Macedo TP, Ziveri P, Varela B, Colonese AC. (2025). **Local knowledge and official landing data point to decades of fishery stock decline in West Africa.** *Marine Policy*, 171, 106447. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106447>
- Nabais M, Soares R, van den Hurk Y. (2024). **The Zooarchaeology of ancient whaling practices in Portugal: A review and a new Roman Republican contribution at Castelo Velho de Safara.** *PloS One*, 19(11), e0310215. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0310215>
- Robson HK, Hausmann N, Laurie EM, Astrup PM, Povlsen K, Sørensen SA, Andersen SH, Milner N. (2024). **The effects of Mid-Holocene foragers on the European oyster in Denmark.** *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 121(46), e2410335121. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2410335121>
- Rude, E. (2024). **Fishery collapse and the American fertilizer industry: A case study of the Pacific Guano Company.** *Business History Review*, 98(3), 613–635. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007680524000552>
- Rude, E. (2025). **Cookbooks and menus as ecological sources: An example of the Eastern oyster.** *Environmental History*, 000–000. <https://doi.org/10.1086/733200>
- van der Plank S. (2024). **Policy priorities to enable engaged and transformational adaptation on the coast: Learning from practitioner experiences in England.** *Environmental Science & Policy*, 159(103806), 103806. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2024.103806>
- zu Ermgassen PSE, McCormick M, Debney A, Fariñas-Franco JM, Gamble C, Gillies C, Hancock B, Laugen AT, Pouvreau S, Preston J, Sanderson WG, Strand Å, Thurstan RH. (2025). **European Native Oyster Reef Ecosystems Are Universally Collapsed.** *Conservation Letters* 18:e13068. <https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.13068>

ANNOUNCEMENTS: CONFERENCES and WORKSHOPS

Call for papers and upcoming conference. **Out of the Blue: an Interdisciplinary Workshop on Oceans** will take place on **Friday 11th of April 2025** at **Sciences Po-Paris, France**. The aim of this workshop is to foster the development of blue scholarship and interdisciplinary collaboration to bring together social scientists across fields who consider the aquatic in some way in their research. The call for papers is therefore open to a wide variety of topics and disciplines, including but not limited to marine resource use and/or aquaculture, ecological governance, coastal adaptation, contamination and pollution, and piracy and trade. **Abstracts** of approximately **400 words** should be sent to **Emelyn.rude@sciencespo.fr** no later than **Friday 14th February**, decisions on participation will be made by February 20th.

Upcoming conference. **2025 Ecosystem Studies of the Subarctic and Arctic Seas (ESSAS) Open Science Meeting** will be held in **Tokyo, Japan** between **24th - 26th of June 2025** at the **National Institute of Polar Research**. Twelve sessions, including “Historical ecology of the Subarctic and Arctic Seas: perspectives from archaeology and history,” and a workshop are planned. Abstract submission closes on **28th February 2025**. Additional details, including a list of all of the sessions, can be found on the [conference website](#).



Upcoming conference and call for papers. The **Back to the Future: Zooarchaeological Isotope Approaches to Modern Questions** will take place between **25th – 28th June 2025** in **Reading, United Kingdom**. This conference is organised by the International Council for ArchaeoZoology (ICAZ)'s Stable Isotope Working Group. Abstract submission is open until the **28th March 2025**. For additional details and to submit an abstract, you can visit the [conference website](#).

Upcoming conference. The **International Society for Biomolecular Archaeology** will have their 11th biannual meeting in **Turin, Italy** this coming summer from the **26th – 29th August 2025**. There will be a session exploring biomolecular archaeology in the context of “**Environmental change, sustainability, and ancient ecosystems**”, where showcases from coastal archaeology are welcomed. Abstract submission closes **31st January 2025**, further details can be found on the [conference website](#).

Upcoming conference and call for papers. The **Built Ocean** is the theme for the **EAHN (European Architectural History Network) 2025 Thematic Conference** taking place in **Porto, Portugal** on **September 10-13, 2025**. EAHN Porto 2025 will be hosted by the research project **Fishing Architecture** at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto. Architects require solid ground on which to base their practice, yet oceans have always been a key element shaping the history of architecture and the built environment. This themed conference aims to shift the focus of architectural history from the land to the sea. It will address the planet's bodies of salt water either as areas of increasing urbanization (through the building of structures such as underwater cables, oil rigs, windmills, etc.), as connectors between space and cultures (navigation routes for people and resources, transported in the form of knowledge, labour, and materials), or as an ecosystem functioning, in connection with the land, as an essential life-support system (defining climatic patterns, providing resources from food to raw materials, and securing services from carbon sequestration to large-scale habitats). The **conference aims** to bring together scholars representing a wide range of interdisciplinary knowledge and sets out to cover a broad chronological scope, from deep history and archaeological sources to more recent accounts of ecological decline and potential futures. *Where is the architecture of the sea? To what extent does the built environment impact saltwater landscapes? What reciprocal impacts do seascapes have on the built environment?*

Registration opens in **April 2025**.

For further details, please see the conference website: www.thebuilttocean.com or email: fish@arq.up.pt

Upcoming conference. The **11th World Conference on Ecological Restoration (SER2025)** will take place **30th September – 04th October 2025** in **Denver, Colorado, United States**. SER's World Conference is an exciting and inspiring biennial gathering of global experts in ecological restoration, making the 11th World Conference on Ecological Restoration (SER2025) the premier venue for those interested in being active members of the global restoration community. Abstract submission is open until **30th January 2025**. More information can be located on the [conference website](#).

Upcoming conference and call for papers. The International Council for ArchaeoZoology (ICAZ)'s Ancient Genomics, Proteomics, Morphometrics Working Group will have their next meeting in **Copenhagen, Denmark** between the **14th – 17th of October 2025**. The conference theme is: “Exploring the Past, Informing the Future: Two Decades of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Archaeozoology” and will include a session of particular relevance to this community that is focused on marine fauna (especially fish). Keep an eye out, as the call for papers will open soon with abstracts due **25th April 2025**.



[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).

*The next Oceans Past News will be out in April 2025. We **warmly welcome submissions** through March 2025.*

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)