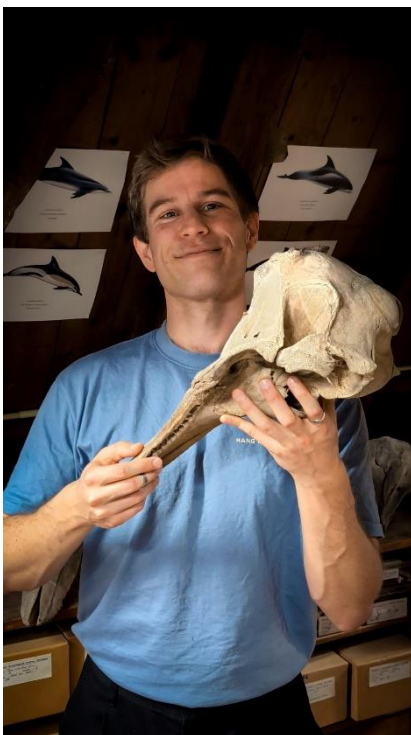


Getting to know our community

I think that one of the aspects about OPI that has most excited and drawn me in over the years has been how wide-reaching – geographically, career stage, and disciplinarily, the OPI community is and how much my own thoughts about the aquatic world have been enriched by the range of folks I have met through OPI. Featuring two ECRs in this edition, **Jannick Scheepstra** and **Mubarak Mammel**, who will both be at OPXI this June, has revived that excitement and anticipation of conference season within me and the eagerness with which I look forward to our upcoming conference just around the corner!

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

OCEANS PAST SPOTLIGHT*

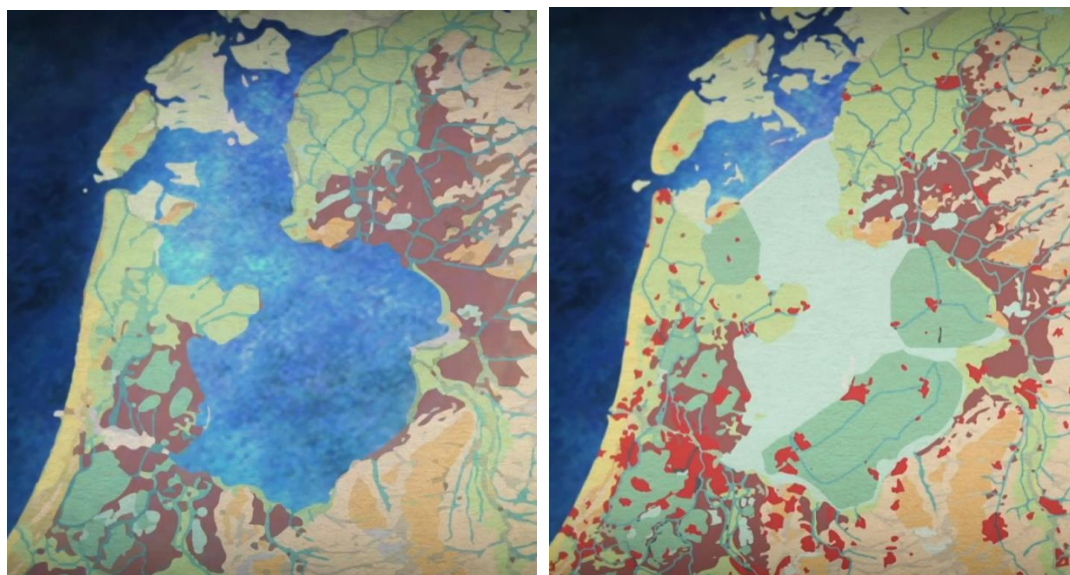


Hi everyone! My name is **Jannick Scheepstra**, and I'm a beginning **PhD candidate** at the **University of Groningen's Rudolf Agricola School of Sustainable Development** in the Netherlands. I'm passionate about rewilding and I want to find out how human societies, particularly in Europe, can live with nature in a way that leaves space for truly wild ecosystems. My work is driven by the belief that the past can offer us guidelines not just for restoring ecosystems, but also for rethinking our relationship with the environment we depend on.

In my PhD project, I want to explore this by specifically looking at the **environmental heritage** of the **former Zuiderzee region in the Netherlands**, to see how people and the environment shaped each other over time, what traces of that relationship persist today, and what this means for future sustainable spatial policy.

For those less familiar with the **history of Dutch landscapes**: the Zuiderzee was once a bay of the North Sea that extended deep into the Dutch heartland, connecting much of the country to the ocean until 1932. In that year, the Dutch government finished construction of the Afsluitdijk ('closure dyke'). At the time the world's longest seawall by far, it closed off the Zuiderzee entirely and permanently turned it into a freshwater lake. It eliminated the constant threat of coastal flooding and enabled one of the largest land reclamation projects in the world, creating highly productive agricultural land, resulting in an enormous economic boon for the Netherlands. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the Afsluitdijk

looms large in the Dutch national consciousness as a monument to the country's perceived victory over the encroaching sea.



Maps of the Zuiderzee-IJsselmeer region in 1860 (left) and 1960 (right).

Archeologische Kaart IJsselmeergebied, version 1.0, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, Amersfoort.

Authors: B.I. Smit, J. Zomer, R. Schrijvers, D.H. Schmutzhart & D. Jansen, 2021.

But there is another perspective. The Zuiderzee was a **hyperdiverse estuarine landscape** of saltmarshes, mudflats, seagrass meadows, and shellfish reefs. This wealth of microhabitats supported a unique marine wildlife community. Over the centuries, various human communities also developed around this ecosystem, intimately connected to it in many different ways. To these coastal communities, the Zuiderzee seascape was (and still is) central to their culture and local identity. The closure of the Afsluitdijk destroyed the intertidal ecosystem and completely uprooted the lifeworlds of the Zuiderzee communities. The perspectives and interests of these human and non-human stakeholder communities were ignored by policymakers at the time, causing environmental and societal harm that reverberates through to today.

In my **research**, I will **combine zooarchaeological and ecological approaches** with insights from **heritage and spatial studies** to reconstruct how this **human-ecosystem relationship** functioned in the past and how it continues to shape perspectives today. For example, I use stable isotope analysis of archaeological fish and marine mammal remains, alongside archival sources, to reconstruct past food webs and establish ecological baselines. I then connect these insights to present-day stakeholder perspectives through ethnographical research, exploring how changing environmental memories and different understandings of the landscape can inform future spatial planning.



Traditional eelgrass harvesting off Wieringen, 1900.

Ultimately, my goal is to **connect the past to the future through policy integration**. By connecting and involving local stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, I want to co-create knowledge together with the communities involved, and establish a new inclusive, bottom-up framework for spatial policy.

I'm still at an early stage of this project, so I'm especially interested in exchanging ideas, approaches, and perspectives. I'm really looking forward to learning and getting inspired by everyone else at OPXI in June! If you're working on similar questions, or if this raises new ones for you (or you just want to talk about wildlife) feel free to reach out or come find me and my poster in Victoria!

EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT



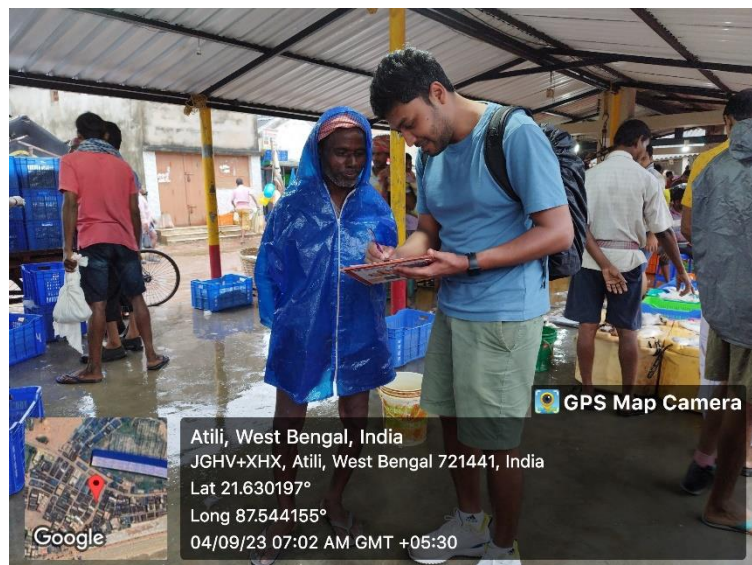
Mubarak Mammel is a **postdoctoral researcher** in the **Department of Environmental Biology and Fisheries Science (EBFS)**, **National Taiwan Ocean University (NTOU)**, Keelung, Taiwan, specializing in **Fisheries Oceanography**, with a strong focus on integrating advanced **remote sensing technologies** and **socio-ecological system (SES)** approaches to better understand marine ecosystems. His research centers on mapping fish habitats and examining how environmental variability and climate change influence marine biodiversity, particularly within small-scale fisheries (SSF). He has contributed to a growing body of literature on coastal fisheries and oceanographic dynamics in the Taiwan Strait and the broader Pacific Ocean, with the goal of supporting sustainable fisheries management and strengthening environmental resilience.

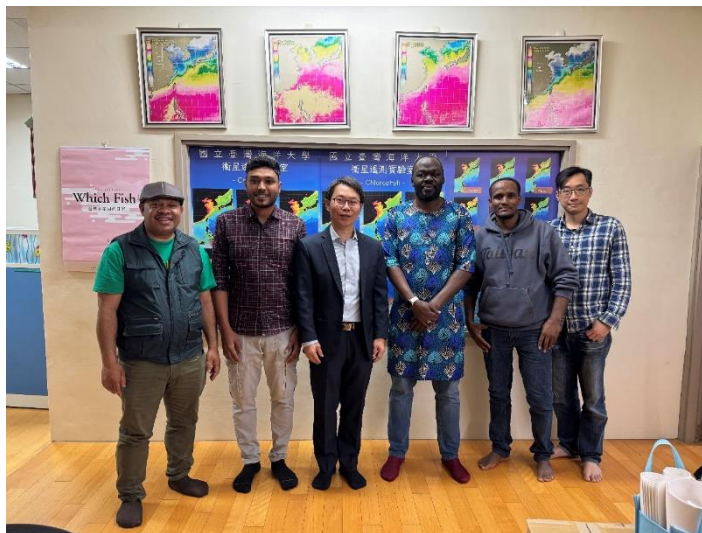
Born and raised on a small island (**Agatti Island, Lakshadweep, India**) in the Arabian Sea in southwestern India, Mubarak developed an early connection with the ocean and its living resources. This personal background inspired his academic pursuit in marine and coastal fisheries, eventually leading to a PhD in Fisheries Oceanography. Throughout his academic journey, he had the opportunity to collaborate with leading scientists, which significantly shaped his interdisciplinary perspective and strengthened his analytical and research skills.

A defining aspect of his professional development has been his mentorship under Professor **Dr. Ming-An Lee (Professor at National Taiwan Ocean University)**, a renowned expert in satellite remote sensing and marine ecological modeling. Under this guidance, Mubarak gained expertise in applying oceanographic data and satellite-derived information to understand fish habitat dynamics and ecosystem variability.

Currently, his postdoctoral research expands beyond physical oceanography to incorporate socioecological system (SES) modeling. His work focuses on understanding the **challenges faced by small-scale fishing communities** across **Taiwan, India, and Papua New Guinea**, particularly in the context of **climate change, shifting marine resources, and socio-economic pressures**. By combining field-based participatory approaches with environmental data analysis, he aims to develop integrated, community-informed strategies that enhance resilience and sustainability in SSF systems, especially within the Asia-Pacific (APN) region.

In addition to his research, Mubarak is deeply committed to teaching and mentorship. He has served as a teaching assistant, contributing to course development and guiding students through practical and laboratory-based learning. He believes that education plays a crucial role in advancing scientific knowledge and is dedicated to fostering the next generation of marine scientists. Looking ahead, his long-term goal is to establish a research-driven academic career where he can make meaningful contributions to society through science. His work aligns closely with global priorities such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Outside academia, he enjoys music, reading, travel, football, and fitness, which help him maintain a balanced and motivated lifestyle.





The research team from Professor Ming-An Lee's Laboratory. From left to right: Louis George Korowi, Mubarak Mammel, Professor Ming-An Lee, Dr. Baker Matovu, Ayana Chimdo, and Jun-Hong Wu (MATLAB expert).

1. Was there a particular book, course, or life experience that profoundly impacted you and contributed to your current research interests? Growing up on a small island in the Arabian Sea was the most influential experience shaping my research interests. I witnessed firsthand how deeply coastal communities depend on the ocean for their livelihoods and food security, and how vulnerable they are to environmental changes. This lived experience sparked my curiosity about marine systems and motivated me to pursue Fisheries Oceanography. Academically, my exposure to ocean remote sensing and ecosystem modeling during my graduate studies, particularly under the mentorship of Professor Dr. Ming-An Lee and Dr. Baker Matovu (Blue Economy, Ocean Policy researcher) further solidified my interest. Learning how satellite data can reveal hidden patterns in ocean dynamics and fish distribution was transformative and inspired me to integrate environmental science with human dimensions in small-scale fisheries research.

2. What do you think more senior researchers can be doing to support and mentor early career researchers? Senior researchers play a crucial role not only in guiding scientific development but also in shaping confidence and independence among early career researchers (ECRs). Beyond technical training, I believe they can provide more support by fostering inclusive and collaborative research environments, encouraging interdisciplinary thinking, and actively involving ECRs in proposal writing and decision-making processes. Constructive feedback, open communication, and recognizing individual contributions are also essential. Importantly, mentorship should extend beyond academia by guiding ECRs on career development, networking, and navigating challenges such as work-life balance and research uncertainties.



3. What is a practice or tradition that you have seen in your research thus far that you have cherished and think should become more widespread? One practice I deeply value is participatory engagement with local fishing communities during research. In my work with small-scale fisheries across regions like India, Taiwan, and Papua New Guinea, directly interacting with fishers and incorporating their traditional ecological knowledge has been incredibly enriching. It not only improves the relevance and applicability of research outcomes but also builds trust and mutual respect between scientists and communities. I believe this collaborative, co-production approach to knowledge should become more widespread, as it bridges the gap between science and society and leads to more sustainable and inclusive solutions.

4. What areas of research are you interested in further exploring but perhaps are not yet sure where to start or have not yet had the opportunity to dabble into? I am particularly interested in expanding my work into the integration of emerging technologies such as environmental DNA (eDNA), machine learning, and artificial intelligence for marine ecosystem monitoring. Combining these tools with satellite remote sensing and socio-ecological data could provide powerful insights into biodiversity patterns and fisheries dynamics. Additionally, I am keen to explore climate adaptation strategies for small-scale fisheries at a policy and governance level, but I am still seeking opportunities to engage more deeply with interdisciplinary collaborations in this area.



5. If you could recommend one paper/book/piece of media that pertains to your research interests to everyone, what would it be and why? One highly relevant resource I would recommend is the “The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods for Social-Ecological Systems”, edited by Reinette Biggs, Alta de Vos, Rika Preiser, Hayley Clements, Kristine Maciejewski, and Maja Schlüter. This handbook provides a comprehensive overview of interdisciplinary research methods for studying complex socialecological systems. It offers valuable insights into integrating ecological, social, and governance dimensions, which are essential for understanding and managing small-scale fisheries. I find it particularly useful because it emphasizes transdisciplinary approaches and practical tools for linking science with real-world challenges, aligning closely with my research focus on sustainability and community-based resource management.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

de Alencar Sousa Silva R, Vierira Faria V, Charvet P. (2026). **Sawfishes in Brazil: A Historical Review.** *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems*, 36(4), p.e70365. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.70365>

De Kock W, Van Der Meer MT, Van Bommel R, Taurozzi AJ, Von Tersch M, Allentoft ME, Mackie M, Ramsøe M, Collins MJ, Alexander M, Palsbøll PJ. (2026). **Stable isotope evidence of anthropocene disruption in African softshell turtle foraging.** *PloS One*, 21(2), p.e0339589. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0339589>

Dillon EM, Arosemena R, Cybulski JD, De Gracia B, Finnegan S, Chien-Hsiang L, Mora J, Pallacks S, O'Dea A (2026). **Fossil otolith assemblages reveal millennial-scale changes in reef fish biomass and trophic structure across the Isthmus of Panama.** *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci* 22 January 2026; 381 (1942): 20240419. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2024.0419>

Schuhbauer A, Teh L. (2026). **A dual sustainability crisis for Kenya's small-scale fisheries.** *Nature Food*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-026-01342-z>

Siriwardana TM, Jayasekara IR, Nonis J, Dissanayake NH, Perera J. (2026). **Coastal foragers beyond the mainland: Seafaring and early island settlement on Velanai, Jaffna, Sri Lanka, ca. 3460 cal BP.** *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology*, 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15564894.2026.2624853>

ANNOUNCEMENTS: CONFERENCES and WORKSHOPS



Upcoming conference. We are fast approaching the **Oceans Past XI Conference (OPXI)** taking place the **15-19 June 2026** and 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. Support for the conference is being provided by the University of Victoria's Faculties of Social Science and Humanities, the [School Environmental Studies](#), the Departments of [History](#) and [Anthropology](#), the [Oceans Past Initiative](#), the [International Council for the Exploration of the Sea](#), and the [Scripps Center for Marine Archaeology](#).



We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and X̱m̱səpəm/Esqumalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Early bird registration (with reduced rates) closes on the **15th of May 2026**. Discounts are available for OPI members, early career researchers and those from lower income countries. Registration fees include four lunches and two dinners during the conference. We also have options for remote participation for those of you that cannot join us in Victoria. Registration can be found here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/oceans-past-xi-june-15-19-2026-conference-registration-tickets-1984781608219?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl>

Conference **registration rates** are also **reduced** for members of the Oceans Past Initiative! If you're not already a member, now is thus a great time to join 😊 *Please note: All OPI memberships run over a calendar year and cease in December. Hence, except for members who have taken out a lifetime membership, payment must be made on an annual basis accessed at the "[OPI Membership 2026](#)" link to maintain membership benefits.*

Additional **conference details** including venues, practical matters pertaining to Victoria, keynote speakers, and so much more can be found on the **conference website**: <https://sway.cloud.microsoft/KADeY01cx1zBnFVvk?ref=Link>

~~~~~

**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](http://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](#).

~~~~~

**Call for abstracts.** The 23<sup>rd</sup> ICAZ Fish Remains Working Group meeting will be taking place **28 September – 03 October 2026** in **Nice, France** hosted by the **CEPAM laboratory (CNRS)**. The call for abstracts has just opened and closes **30<sup>th</sup> May 2026**. The meeting will showcase the diversity of approaches, geographical areas, chronological periods, and themes, from the historical fluctuations of aquatic ecosystems to the diverse ways humans have exploited marine and freshwater environments through time. Fishing, fish farming, and the trade of fresh or preserved fish are just a few examples of economic activities centered on this essential resource. Furthermore, fish consumption may have had symbolic or religious significance in many cultures around the world. A particular focus will be placed on the historical dynamics of fisheries resources and the ecological impacts of fishing at various scales. Abstracts of 300 to 500 words should be written in English and accompanied by 5 keywords. Paper presentations will be limited to 15 minutes in length, and they will be followed by a 5-minute question-and-answer round. Submission can be made [here](#) and conference details such as the venue, tentative schedule, and the engaging back story to the conference logo can be found on the [conference website](#).



~~~~~

Call for sessions. International Council for Archaeozoology (ICAZ) International Conference 2027 will be taking place **17-22 May 2027** in **Vancouver, Canada**. The ICAZ 2027 Organising Committee is currently inviting proposals connected to their overall conference theme of **Interconnections Among Communities Past and Present - Ocean, Land, and Sky** and sub-themes:

- Ocean Communities Connected
- The Public, Stakeholder Engagement and Descendent Community Priorities
- Transboundary Approaches in Archaeozoology: Across Land and Sea, and Beyond
- Social Zooarchaeology
- Old Bones - New Methods - Blue Skies
- Economy and Domestication
- Multispecies Worlds

To register a session, please visit the conference website: [ICAZ 2027 \(English\)](#) / [ICAZ 2027 \(Français\)](#) Note the revised deadline: **session submission closes May 22, 2026 (11:59 PM Pacific Time - PT)**. Decisions by the Scientific Committee are anticipated June 21, 2026.

Session Formats

Session organizers should provide a title, session abstract (up to 250 words), nominated conference theme, and indicate the number of individual papers/posters anticipated or invited. Please note that all oral presentation will be strictly 15 minutes in duration, with 5 minutes for questions/discussion. We recommend session proposals account

for a single session of 2 hours to 4 hours (6 – 12 papers; inclusion of discussant(s) may reduce this. Sessions based on panel discussions are also welcome.

Hybrid oral sessions in a webinar format are available for the first time at ICAZ 2027. Hybrid session chairs are expected to attend the meeting in-person to coordinate online and in-person presentations. The number of hybrid sessions may be limited by scheduling and availability. If you are interested in chairing a hybrid session please select this option at the time of session submission to be considered.

The **call for individual presentations is expected in June**. Presenters may only present one paper and one poster during the conference but may co-author on other papers and posters. Session organizers and presenters must be ICAZ members to participate and attend the conference. To become an ICAZ member, please follow this link: <https://alexandriaarchive.org/icaz-wp/>

Questions can be directed to the ICAZ 2027 email: icaz2027vancouver@gmail.com



[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 M. Winter** (info@oceanspast.org or rachelwinter@palaeome.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 July 2026. We **warmly welcome submissions** through the end of June 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)