

**THIS WEEKEND,**

**NOT ALL THE SEA LIFE AT THE WHARF IS ON A PLATE**

By ELAINE HESSER

LEARNING ABOUT whales and other marine life can be a lot of fun, and for the sixth year running, Monterey's Fisherman's Wharf Association is presenting Whalefest to prove it. The admission-free celebration of the loveable, blubbery mammals is this weekend, Jan. 23 - 24.

A 60-foot model of a humpback whale — named "Humphrey," of course — is sure to be an attention-getter. Big Sur Charter School's Coastal Stewardship Program will host a mini-science lab about marine mammals, while the University of Mississippi's Seafloor Science Remotely Operated Vehicles Day Camp will bring underwater robots to build and operate.

Presentations at the Museum of Monterey on Custom House Plaza, featuring authors, researchers, historians and other experts

talking about the waterfront, Monterey Bay and marine life. Many of the speakers are locals with long histories of studying and taking care of Monterey Bay and the ocean beyond.

Despite the name, the event's not only about whales. Hopkins Marine Station will be dissecting squid for people who just couldn't get enough of biology class, and historian Tim Thomas will tell tales of old-time Monterey on his popular walking tours.

For the kids, MY Museum is bringing its Wheelie Mobilee with lots of fun activities.

In front of Abalonetti Bar and Grill, youngsters will be able to try their hands at Gyotaku, the Japanese art of making fish prints. Using actual fish.

There will also be a wide variety of presentations at the Museum of Monterey on Custom House Plaza, featuring authors, researchers, historians and other experts talking about the waterfront, Monterey Bay and marine life. Many of the speakers are locals with long histories of studying and taking care of Monterey Bay and the ocean

beyond.

For example, on Saturday morning at 11, you can hear Michael Hemp, who created the Cannery Row Foundation in 1983 and has been president of its board since 2008, lead an informal discussion about the ongoing restoration of Ed Ricketts' fishing boat, the Western Flyer. The vessel was made famous by John Steinbeck's "Log from the Sea of Cortez."

Hemp is now a consultant to the ship's new owner, marine geologist John Gregg, who owns Gregg Marine in Moss Landing along with several other companies. Gregg purchased the boat in 2015 for \$1 million, and he and Hemp predict it will take about \$2 million and 2 years to fully restore the boat. When they're finished, Hemp said, it will be a state-of-the-art "floating classroom" that will travel the Pacific coast from Washington and Oregon to Mexico to educate kids and hopefully attract some of them to marine biology as a career. Monterey will always be its home port, however.

In a completely different realm, at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Carmel's Wallace J. Nichols — who goes by "J." — will talk about his book "Blue Mind," on the importance of water to our psyches. A marine biologist by training, Nichols said he always knew intuitively that being close to clean, healthy water — whether it be the beautiful Monterey Bay, a river, fog or even a koi pond — has psychological benefits. But

when he wanted to read a science-based book on the subject, he couldn't find one.

After trying unsuccessfully to persuade several other colleagues to research and write the book, he decided to do it himself. He'll sign copies and will have some available for sale, with part of the proceeds going to local marine charities.

Sunday at 1:20 p.m., Steve Webster, Cachagua resident and retired senior marine biologist from the Monterey Bay Aquarium, will speak on climate change and its possible effects on whales. He'll also share some of his experiences diving with dwarf Minke whales near Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Although all the topics are interesting, if kicking back with some food and music is more your thing, you can enjoy live performances by the Monterey High Jazz Band, Jonah and the Whale Watchers, and other local groups. The wharf's restaurants will be happy to sell you a cup or bowl of hot chowder to take the chill off, and if it rains, everything moves into the giant tent on Custom House Plaza.

For more information and a full schedule, check out the Events tab at [montereywharf.com](http://montereywharf.com)



Tales of Monterey's waterfront and the wildlife that Whalefest organizers say make it the "Whale Watching Capital of the World" will be plentiful this weekend at Fisherman's Wharf