

14th Annual Whalefest Monterey Announces Symposium Speakers and More New Activities

March 12, 2024. Monterey, CA. The 14th Annual Whalefest Monterey's Symposium will take place on Sunday April 14, 2024 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Stanton Center next to Custom House Plaza near Old Fisherman's Wharf. This year's program once again offers an exciting lineup of speakers from the world of marine science covering whales, sharks, sea otters, as well as climate change, sustainable practices in packaging and agriculture.

Dan Haifley from the Board of Directors for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation and former Director of Sea Odyssey of Santa Cruz will be the MC for the Symposium.

Natalie Barefoot of Earth Justice will discuss how whales and their poop fight climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere through how they swim, migrate, die, and, importantly, poop. Join us to learn how climate change is affecting whales in our ocean and how healthy and robust populations of whales can play a role in combating climate change.

David A. Ebert, Ph.D., from the Pacific Shark Research Center at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, will talk about how popular culture has brought attention to the fields of shark science and conservation. A popular television guest, Dave has appeared on various programs for the BBC, Discovery Channel, and National Geographic. As a regular on Shark Week, Dave has led expeditions in search of the rarest, most elusive sharks in the world including new shark species. **Katie Finch**, a Rehabilitator with Monterey Bay Aquarium's Sea Otter Program, will share her experience working in the Aquarium's unique program rescuing otters and utilizing their resident otters as surrogate mothers for pups in need.

Renata Massion is an environmental enthusiast and the Senior Sustainability Manager at Cruz Foam, where she supports the development of cutting-edge packaging foam that embodies a new frontier in sustainable materials. She explores how Cruz Foam has embraced the concept of life cycle thinking to assess the environmental impacts of their products from raw material extraction to end-of-life disposal or recycling.

Jazmine Mejia-Muñoz is a Water Quality Program Manager at the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation where she implements innovative solutions to critical issues affecting the interface of land and marine resources. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation have partnered up with agricultural stakeholders to explore plasticulture alternatives used in agricultural fields during crop production. Join us to learn about innovative plasticulture efforts, geared towards reducing and preventing marine debris sources.

Will Oestreich, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral fellow at the **Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute**. He will discuss how sperm whales provide a valuable window into the world of deep-sea ecosystems: their echolocation clicks are the loudest known biological sounds on Earth, and convey detailed information about their presence, behavior, size, and demographics.

Peggy Stap of Marine Life Studies and the Whale Entanglement Team will discuss the process behind a whale rescue, examples of disentanglement efforts, and how "kelping" can result in

whales getting entangled. Kelping is when animals, including whales, engage with kelp in various ways, such as playing, resting, or feeding within.

Lisa Wooninck, Ph.D., Superintendent of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, will discuss iconic kelp in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

For more details, go to www.whalefest.org. As always, admission is free to the Symposium, but please come early to secure a seat.

Other Activities for Whalefest Monterey:

A NEW exhibit from the Mission Science Workshop in San Francisco: "Gracie" the 30ft real gray whale skeleton. This provides attendees with the opportunity to actually touch and hold real whale bones, and see first-hand the magnitude of this incredible animal! After this experience, students become more invested in protecting marine life and becoming stewards for our oceans.

There will also be a **Calamari Cooking Demo by Award-winning Chef Tene Shake, sponsored by Del Mar Seafoods.**

Whalefest Monterey will feature over **three dozen educational and engaging interactive displays from local, regional and national non-profits**

There will be lots of live music including performances by **Celtic Roads, Hālau Hula Hi'ilani 'O Ke Kai, David Holodiloff, HOLYSEA, Kuumbwa Jazz Honor Band, Michael Martinez, Monterey High School Jazz Band, Nicholas Fettis and His "Orca"stra, Pacific Pop 'n' Jazz, Saxophonia and Stu Heydon.**

Fun activities like Gyotaku, Scrimshaw, Whale Origami, and the "almost famous" Abalone Races that will be featured on both April 13th and 14th on Old Fisherman's Wharf. Local historian Tim Thomas will once again conduct his very informative historical Wharf Walks.

In addition, Save the Whales returns with **Dee, the 43-foot inflatable whale model on Saturday, April 13 only.** You can go inside of it and see its internal organs! This very popular exhibit will be on Custom House Plaza where also most of the other exhibits are located.

There will be several research and rescue boats, open for public tours, creating an engaging atmosphere for all attendees for both days, including the return of the Western Flyer (Sunday only), Current' Sea, Pearl and NOAA's Fulmar (Saturday only).

For additional information, go to www.whalefest.org or www.montereywharf.com.