

16th Annual Whalefest Monterey Set for April 11–12, 2026 including a Two-Day Symposium and much more!

March 3, 2026 — Monterey, CA — Save the date! The 16th Annual Whalefest Monterey will be held on Saturday and Sunday, April 11–12, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day, at and around Old Fisherman’s Wharf and Custom House Plaza within Monterey State Historic Park. This free, family-friendly event brings together marine education, science, history, and the arts to raise awareness and support for the protection of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

The many event activities and schedule are continuously updated on the website, www.whalefest.org.

Whalefest Monterey features interactive marine-themed exhibits, live music, hands-on marine educational activities for all ages, and public tours of research and rescue vessels. The festival benefits numerous local, regional, and national marine organizations dedicated to exploring, educating, and inspiring the public to protect the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and its ecosystems.

The popular Whalefest Symposium will be held on both days from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the theater at the Monterey History & Art Association’s Stanton Center, located at [5 Custom House Plaza](#). The Symposium will feature presentations by marine scientists, researchers, conservation leaders, and policy experts.

A highlight this year will be a close-up look at “whale entanglements and crab traps – problems and solutions” with representatives from Oceana, government, technology and fishing communities. Other speakers will be presenting information related to marine science and protected areas of the ocean. Schedule and any updates will be available at <https://whalefest.org/symposium>

Throughout both days, Old Fisherman’s Wharf and Custom House Plaza will host interactive exhibits and activities including Gyotaku fish printing, origami, scrimshaw demonstrations, and the popular Abalone Races provided by the Monterey Abalone Company. “Dee,” the life-size inflatable humpback whale model that visitors can walk inside, will also return. Maritime historian Tim Thomas will lead history walks highlighting Monterey’s maritime heritage. Two days of live music performances will add to the festival

atmosphere at the Wharf.

Research and rescue vessels will be available for public tours at the California Dock on Old Fisherman's Wharf. Scheduled vessels include, on Saturday, April 11, 2026, the R/V Current'Sea (43 feet) from Marine Life Studies, the R/V Sheila B (30 feet) from Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, and the General Pershing Boat (60 feet) from Monterey Boat Heritage. On Sunday, April 12, 2026, vessels include the R/V Current'Sea (43 feet) from Marine Life Studies and the Western Flyer (77 feet) from the Western Flyer Foundation.

Whalefest Monterey will feature marine educational and engaging displays from dozens of nonprofit organizations, including American Cetacean Society; the California Coastal Commission; California Department of Fish and Wildlife; the California Killer Whale Project; California Ocean Alliance; California State Parks; Camp Sealab; the Citizens' Climate Lobby Monterey Chapter; City of Monterey Library and Museums and Office of Sustainability; Clean Oceans International; CSUMB – Ocean Predator Ecology Lab; Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve; Hi'llani O Ke Kei OCC; Marine Life Studies; MBARI; MEarth; Monterey Bay Ecotours; Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary; Monterey SEA; Monterey Waterkeeper; Moss Landing Marine Lab; Oceana; Ocean Conservation Waves of Freedom; O'Neill Sea Odyssey; the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History; the Paul Watson Foundation; Save Our Shores; Save the Whales; Sea Otter Savvy; Sea Floor Science ROV; Sprout Up (Monda Elementary School, Santa Cruz); Sunflower Star Lab; the Surfrider Foundation; The Marine Mammal Center; United States Coast Guard and Auxiliary; Ventana Wildlife Society; the Western Flyer Foundation; and the Yacht Club of the Monterey Peninsula. Exhibitors are subject to change, and additional organizations continue to be added.

The Monterey Bay Plein Air Painters Association will be present throughout event locations, offering opportunities to interact with artists as they share their approach to composition, technique, and creative process. Additional artists will be exhibiting.

Whale watchers from around the world visit Monterey Bay to observe hundreds of whales, as well as orcas, otters, dolphins, and seabirds that gather to feed in these productive waters. Throughout the year, Monterey Bay offers sightings of 15 species of whales, 10 species of dolphins, two species of porpoise, six species of pinnipeds, and one species of fissiped, the sea otter.

Whalefest Monterey is supported by sponsors and partners including the City of Monterey, Fisherman's Wharf Association, Monterey State Historic Park – Custom House

Plaza, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Marine Life Studies, Save the Whales, Bay Federal Credit Union, Pacific Grove Animal Hospital, Del Mar Seafoods, Mahoney & Associates, Monterey Bay Boatworks, Nicora Law, Pebble Beach Company, Monterey County Bank, California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Anthony Lombardo & Associates, Wecker Group and more. Media sponsors include Monterey County NOW, Foolish Times, KMBY Radio 1240 AM/95.9 FM, KAZU Radio 90.3 FM, and the Shag Bag Radio Show. As a free public event, Whalefest relies on sponsorships and donations. Sponsorship opportunities are still available for the 16th Annual Whalefest Monterey, and interested parties may contact Mary Alice Cerrito Fettis at maryalicefettis@gmail.com for additional information.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as trustee for 14 national marine sanctuaries and two marine national monuments, protecting more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. The National Marine Sanctuary System works with diverse partners to promote responsible and sustainable ocean uses that support ecological health, recreation, tourism, and coastal economies under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

For updated schedules, exhibitor information, sponsorship details, and presentations from past years available on the Whalefest Monterey YouTube channel, visit www.whalefest.org. Additional information is available at www.montereywharf.com, or by emailing whalefestmonterey@gmail.com.