

For Immediate Release

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6th Annual Whalefest Monterey to be held on January 23 & 24, 2016 at Old Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey, California

The Whale Watching Capital of the World™

December 2015 (Monterey, CA) –The Monterey Fisherman's Wharf Association will sponsor and hold the 6th ANNUAL WHALEFEST MONTEREY at and around Old Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey, California, The Whale Watching Capital of the World™ on Saturday, January 23rd and Sunday, January 24th, 2016 from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

This free, fun and educational interactive family event for all ages celebrates the migration of the gray whales! The event also benefits many local and national marine organizations that inspire, educate, explore and empower the public to protect the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Among the highlights will be a symposium with lectures and documentaries related to ocean and marine life conservation, musical performances, and many educational displays by participating organizations. Thousands of attendees are expected again this year that range from local families and school children who want to learn more about our maritime environment to visitors from near and far who want to explore the annual whale migration.

Whale watchers come from around the world to view hundreds of whales, orcas, dolphins and pelicans who continue to feast on a "krill and anchovy buffet" in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Throughout the year, this Whale Watching Capital of the World™ offers sightings of 15 species of whales, 10 species of dolphins, 2 species of porpoise, 6 species of pinnipeds and 1 species of fissioned (sea otter).

Weather permitting, whale watching tours, fishing, sailing and glass bottom boats (for a fee) will be operating from the Wharf, and Wharf restaurants will be serving lunch and dinner. Wharf shops will also be featuring marine-themed merchandise.

The two-day event will feature a wide array of fun and informative activities including:

A 60-foot model whale – Humphrey the Humpback Whale (attendees can climb inside), will be on site to honor the migration of his friends, the gray whales. There will be squid dissection by scientists from the Hopkins Marine station and interactive displays from the Shark Research Center. Learn more about the Web Entanglement Team (WET) coordinated by Marine Life Studies that help rescue the increasing number of entangled whales. MY Museum will bring Wheelie Mobilee with lots of interactive activities for kids.

Currently, the participating marine conservation and other organizations that will provide information, demonstrations and activities include:

American Cetacean Society

California Coastal Commission

Camp SEA Lab

Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers

Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

Hopkins Marine Station

Marine Life Studies

Marine Mammal Center

Monterey Academy Oceanographic Science (MAOS)

Monterey Regional Waste Management District (MRWMD)

MY Museum

Moss Landing Marine Labs

Otter Project

Pacific Grove Museum

Pacific Shark Research Center

Save the Whales

U.S. Coast Guard & Coast Guard Auxiliary

Whale Entanglement Team (WET)

Ventana Wildlife Society

Additional organizations will be participating too.

Whalefest Monterey once again has lined up world-renowned marine scientists, researchers, authors and historians to speak at a two-day Symposium on January 23rd and 24th, 2016 as part of the Whalefest Monterey event on and around Old Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey. This year's presentations focus on the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and its wildlife; climate change, weather and water anomalies and their affects on marine life; whale entanglements and rescues; and local marine history.

On Saturday, Paul Michel from MBNMS/NOAA will provide an overview of the abundant marine life in Monterey Bay; while leatherback turtle researcher Scott Benson will discuss biology and ecology of leatherback turtles including information specific to the endangered western Pacific population that utilizes US west coast waters as a foraging region. UC Santa Cruz distinguished professor Dan Costa will share his research experience with elephant seals.

Cannery Row Foundation founder and John Steinbeck expert Michael Hemp explores the fate of the Western Flyer research ship that took "Doc" Ricketts and John Steinbeck on a well documented research trip to the Sea of Cortez 70 years ago; and local fisheries historian Tim Thomas will entertain with tales of whales, sardines and canneries in old Monterey.

Scientist, researcher and New York Times bestselling author of "Blue Mind", Wallace J. Nichols, will be on hand to share his insights on the remarkable truth about the benefits of being in, on, under or simply near water. He'll also sign copies of his book, available at the event.

Sunday's program focuses on climate change and recent meteorological and oceanographic events and their affect on marine life in general and whales in particular. Marine Biologist Steve Webster, one of the founders of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, will talk about the effects of climate change on whales; while marine ecologist Steve Lonhart explores warm water abnormalities recently observed in Monterey Bay and beyond. Rounding out the program are presentations by the Northern California Whale Entanglement Team, including founder Peggy Stap of Marine Life Studies, who'll share their experiences and insights into rescuing injured whales on the high seas and in port.

A full schedule of the program with additional speakers (subject to change) will be released later. Additional information about the presentations and speakers' biographies can be found on the Monterey Wharf's website: <http://montereywharf.com/index.php?page=whalefest-monterey-2013>

For more information and updates, go to www.montereywharf.com or call [831-238-0777](tel:831-238-0777).

