



# NEWSLETTER

January 2021

Rural Alaska Students in One-Health Research is an education program that mentors high school students in community-based marine research projects and prepares them for college success.



RASOR students meet on zoom in October

## Students launch research from home shores

The RASOR program started its second year ready to tackle new challenges. Ten students from Metlakatla, Petersburg, Sitka, and Craig and three Mt. Edgecumbe students from Unalakleet, Huslia, and Tyonek joined the second year of the Rural Alaska Students in One-Health Research (RASOR) program. While the program has always been centered on community-based research, with a distant learning component, COVID precautions meant that this year students weren't always able to meet in person even with the mentors in their own communities. Kari Lanphier, the RASOR mentor coordinator explains, "Both mentors and students have found creative solutions to make the mentor-mentee experience fun and exciting, even if it happens virtually or 6 feet apart." To support this mentorship, Lanphier sent along RASOR Research Boxes, with fun science activities that can be completed in person, with social distancing, or even virtually. "While we look forward to the day mentees and mentors can collect and analyze samples side by side, the challenges of 2020 haven't stopped these students from becoming budding community scientists!" she added. Students are mentored by Will Peterson in Sitka, Brandon Thynes in Petersburg, Taylor Stumpf in Metlakatla, and Maranda Hamme and Shannon Isaacs in Craig. RASOR students also completed their first college course in conjunction with Sitka WhaleFest, a community ocean science festival (see page 2).



**Become a RASOR student**

Visit

<https://rasor.alaska.edu>

or contact

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907-747-7791



Sierra Nelson (Craig, AK) collects phytoplankton with her SEATOR mentor, Maranda Hamme.

UNIVERSITY  
of ALASKA  
SOUTHEAST



**Sample WhaleFest  
Ocean Trivia  
Question:**

During which month of the year is sea ice extent lowest in the Arctic?

W. June X. July  
Y. August Z. September

(answer on page 3)



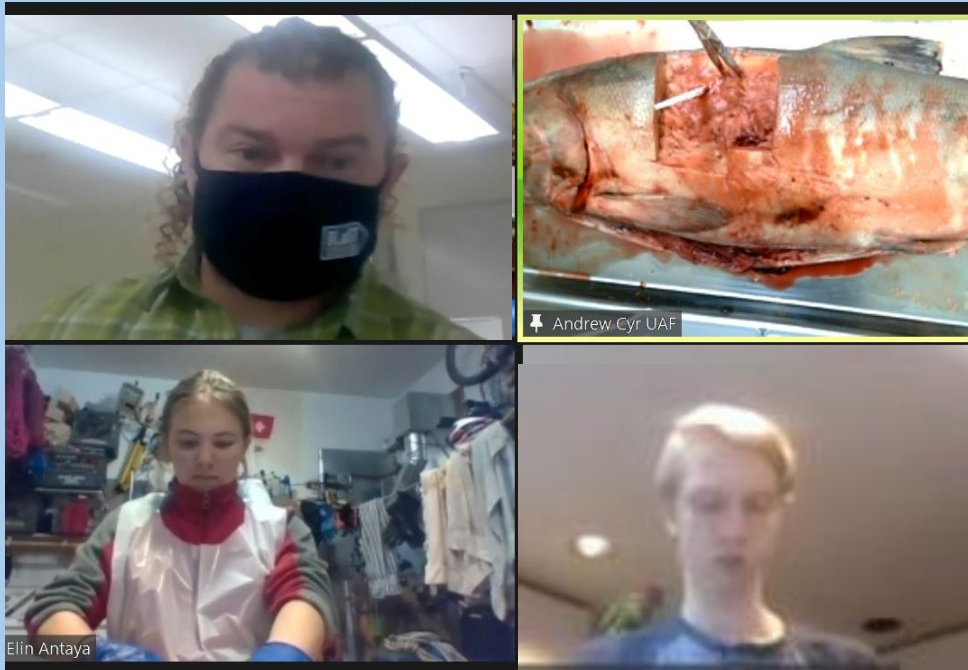
## WhaleFest Workshop Goes Remote, Stays Slimy

Twenty-seven high school students, including our RASOR students, took part in the annual Sitka WhaleFest Science Festival and course. A highlight of Sitka WhaleFest each year is workshops where students collaborate with researchers in hands-on science. Dr. Andrew Cyr has spent six years developing a fish sampling workshop where students learn fish anatomy and collect samples that scientists will use for research on fish diets and to monitor concentrations of contaminants, like mercury. This year, students weren't able to travel to Sitka but that doesn't mean they didn't get their (gloved) hands dirty. Instead some fresh frozen salmon and dissection kits got on planes and came to them. Juneau student, Adrian Whitney, commented on this strange reversal, "If you asked me what I thought future WhaleFests would look like a year back, I would definitely not tell you I would be dissecting a fish over a video call with a group of scientists from my own home." Fish were provided by the Sitka Sound Science Center hatchery and shipped via Alaska Seaplanes. Of his first virtual workshop Cyr said, "the workshop forced our team to think outside the box but it all came out better than we could have predicted." Seven students from Hoonah, Cordova, and Juneau participated. "The students were patient, attentive, open and basically the most amazing students we could have had," Cyr added. Students shipped their samples back to Sitka so they can contribute to research. Other workshops for high school students included activities related to whale tagging, marine mammal capture and solving a shellfish mystery.

### Sitka WhaleFest

- Six lectures by marine science experts on sea turtles, climate change, dolphin communication and more
- Remote Hands-on workshops
- Ocean science trivia competition
- 1 BIOL 175 credit: Current Topics in Marine Research

<http://sitkawhalefest.org/>



Dr. Andrew Cyr (top left) leads the remote fish dissection as Elin Antaya (bottom left) and Adrian Whitney (bottom right) of Juneau dissect fish shipped to them.

## Positions Available: Rural Advisory Council

The UAS RASOR program is looking to recruit four people from rural communities in Southeast Alaska to be a team of rural advisors to:

1. Contribute local knowledge on how to make the program work best for their community
2. Assist in recruitment, retention and outreach
3. Encourage local RASOR students

Advisory council members will meet with program staff three times a year (remotely by phone or zoom) to guide RASOR by providing local direction in program implementation including ideas for recruitment. Currently we are recruiting for advisory council positions among individuals living in or with close connections to Hoonah, Kake, Klawock, Hydaburg, Metlakatla, or Craig. Compensation is \$2,000 per year. A simple online [application form](#) and [full posting](#) are available.

*Thank you*

Principals,  
teachers, family  
members,  
advisors, IT staff  
and twenty  
volunteer ocean  
bowl referees  
supported our  
students during  
this challenging  
semester.

*Gunalchéech*

*T'oyaxsut 'nüün*

*Háw'aa, dáng an hl k1 'láangang*



Rose Quitslund and Lathum Johnson collect shellfish in Petersburg to send to Sitka to test for paralytic shellfish toxins.





Members of the first RASOR cohort joining remotely last April from Gustavus, Sitka, Metlakatla and Wrangell.

## Keeping up with 2019-2020 RASORites

We will always be indebted to our first cohort of RASOR students who helped us develop and improve the program. We are rooting hard for you and so proud of all you have accomplished already.

- Four former students have started college classes
- Two grads are actively involved in college or community research
- Five seniors are applying for college and scholarships.
- Three H.S. students joined WhaleFest again
- Two grads volunteered as Ocean Bowl referees.

Jade Balansag was recognized during the Rural Alaska Honors Institute by a vote of her peers for the Kyan Olanna & John Jajuruk Students' Choice Award.

Ewa Booth is taking college courses online in Metlakatla and continues to work for the Fish and Wildlife Department including with the new RASOR students.

**Visit the previous RASOR cohort's research posters at**

<https://rasor.alaska.edu/student-presentations.html>

Trivia Answer:

Z. September







If you need help with the application, please contact our office!

# BLaST Scholarships

## Applications Accepted Dec. 7, 2020 – Feb. 7, 2021

See our website for more details



**BLaST is offering scholarships to qualified students for the 2021-2022 academic year.**

Awards will be given to students with an interest in biomedical or health research careers and will cover tuition, fees and a monthly stipend.

**Apply now and have a BLaST!**



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