



RASOR NEWSLETTER

Rural Alaska Students in One-health Research

December 2022

Rural Alaska Students in One-health Research is a university-tribal partnership to engage rural and indigenous students with mentored research experiences and academic preparation in their home communities across Southeast Alaska.

RASOR Students Travel for In-Person Whalefest Symposium

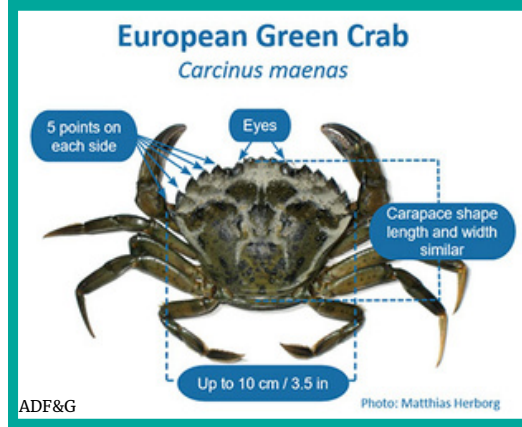


For the first time since 2019, students from around Southeast Alaska were able to attend the Sitka Whalefest Symposium in person. RASOR students arrived early for a day of hands-on research experiences in the field and the lab. Then they attended nine talks by scientists on the theme "How it's Made: Courting, Babies, & Growth." Talks covered everything from the weird and fascinating lifecycles of jellyfish and octopuses, to parental care in pilot whales, to the importance of traditional foods for inter-generational health. Students also participated in question-and-answer sessions with the scientists, an ocean science quiz competition (aka "Ocean Bowl"), a wildlife cruise, and an ROV workshop. This year we have students from Metlakatla, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Sitka, Juneau, and Hoonah as well as Mt. Edgecumbe students from Sitka, Unalakleet, and Nome. We would like to thank all of the teachers, chaperones, volunteers, the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, and the Sitka Sound Science Center for helping make Whalefest a great experience for students!

[The Whalefest experience] helped me understand more about my environment and every way I affect it and ways I can help support it.

- Abigail Stevenson, Hoonah

Now students return home for more mentored research and coursework focused on an individual environmental issue that is important to their community.



Metlakatla biologists trap invasive green crab, educate students

In July 2022, the Metlakatla Indian Community discovered several invasive green crab carapaces, the first in Alaska. Since then, biologist and RASOR mentor Taylor Stumpf has been trapping and studying green crabs from sites around Annette Island. Green crabs harm native species through the destruction of eel grass bed habitat and predation.

In November, Taylor led a workshop for RASOR students to learn about and identify green crab in their communities. More info at: https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=invasiveprofiles.europeangreencrab_characteristics

Interested in joining the 2023-2024 RASOR Program?



Or email us at uas.rasor@alaska.edu

Check out the RASOR website: <https://rasor.alaska.edu/>



National Institutes of Health



RASOR program finds new home at UAF College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences

I am excited to announce RASOR has a new home and some new faces in its 4th year. Jan Straley, the RASOR Principal Investigator (PI) retired last spring, but continues advising the program as faculty emerita. I have taken on the role of PI and started a new appointment as Research Assistant Professor of Marine Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF).

However, the RASOR program is keeping its roots in Southeast. Both the program and I will continue to be based in Sitka at the UAS Sitka Campus. RASOR courses will also continue to be taught through UAS. The program continues as a partnership with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska and Southeast Alaska Tribal Ocean Research (SEATOR) network, to provide community-based mentored research projects. We are excited to be a part of world-class research and education at the College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (CFOS) and to build connections to Southeast Alaska's beaches and classrooms.

This fall we welcomed Willa Johnson as the new communication specialist for the RASOR Program. We also welcomed Aurora Taylor as the new mentor coordinator through the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Aurora brings her previous experience as a research mentor and lots of creativity and humor to the role. With Willa and Aurora, we can ensure that both students and mentors will get timely personalized support, allowing them to focus on the crabs, microplastics and shellfish at hand! Brynn Presler-Marshall and Paul Cook are our new mentors in Hoonah and Sitka. Kim Wickman (Wrangell), Taylor Stumpf (Metlakatla), and Akléi Helen Dangel (also Sitka) are returning mentors this year. RASOR is in a great position for the year ahead!

Sincerely,
Ellen Chenoweth
RASOR PI and Program Director



RASOR Research Day: Students learned from Sitka Tribe of Alaska biologists

Left: Deitrich Lewis, Abigail Stevenson and Teresa Lewis from Hoonah practice using micropipettes.

Middle: Lauren Bell teaches Wrangell students Mia Wiedersphon, Daniel Harrison and Jacen Hay about testing shellfish for paralytic shellfish poisoning.

Right: Metlakatla, Juneau and Ketchikan students learn about marine debris surveys from mentors Akléi Helen Dangel and Paul Cook.

OCEAN BOWL TRIVIA

What species of shellfish can store saxitoxin, the biotoxin that causes paralytic shellfish poisoning, for up to 2 years?

W. Blue Mussel

X. Butter Clam

Y. Oyster

Z. Razor Clam

See page 3 for the answer

More about Willa, RASOR Communication Specialist

Willa is from Seattle, graduated from Whitman College with a BA in Biology and has been living in Sitka since 2019. Willa previously worked for the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game.

The students have already benefited from her excellent organization, communication and mushroom identification skills. So far her favorite thing about RASOR is seeing students get excited about science research!





Mia Wiederspohn samples sediment for microplastics in Wrangell.

WHALEFEST BY THE NUMBERS

- 126** Total hours of mentored research experience
- 50** College credits earned
- 9** Whalefest Symposium lectures
- 7** Communities represented
- 4** Rounds of Ocean Bowl
- 3** Q&A sessions with scientists
- 1** Awesome long weekend!

In case you missed it: 2022 Student Poster Presentations

In April 2022 RASOR students presented their research projects. You can view the posters and recordings of the presentations on the RASOR Program website:

<https://rasor.alaska.edu/>

- **Testing PST Levels in Littleneck Clams Near a Landfill on False Island Beach, Craig, AK** By Alexis Lawnicki, Makenna Taylor, Alissa Durgan and mentors Maranda Hamme and Shannon Isaacs
- **Comparing Influence of Low to High Foot Traffic on Microplastic Presence in Ocean Water Samples in Petersburg, AK** By Emiko Newman, Wyatt Litster, Mikayla Garza, DD Toyomura and mentor Brandon Thynes
- **Quantity of Fecal Coliforms on a well-used dog trail in Wrangell, AK** By Kiara Harrison, Devlyn Campbell, Brodie Gardner, Liana Carney, Killian Booker and mentor Kim Wickman
- **Effects of Location and Species on Microplastics Content in Subsistence Foods, Sitka, AK** By Atigun Pensley, Jessica Noden-Bocatch, Mary Simeon and mentor Akléi Helen Dangel
- **The Effects of Covid-19 on Shellfish Ages at Starrigavan Beach in Sitka, AK** By Karl Cranston Simmons, Kelcey Simic and mentor Aurora Taylor

Ocean Bowl Trivia Answer:
X. Butter Clam

