

Marine Science Symposium Kicks Off Tomorrow

Monday, 21 April 2014

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

This week kicks off the Kodiak Area Marine Science Symposium, also known as KAMSS. The free event starts on Tuesday night and will run through Saturday, with dozens of scientific presentations and workshops designed to engage the general public in research being done around the archipelago.

Kate Wynne is a marine mammal specialist with the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program through University of Alaska Fairbanks, which puts on the symposium. Wynne came on KMXT's Talk of the Rock last week and said KAMSS began about three years ago.

"And the impetus was it seems like a lot of good science happens in our backyard but very little of it was getting to the people of Kodiak. So Alaska Sea Grant and the Marine Advisory Program decided it was time to get it back to the public basically. So we put out a call for papers and got great response from all the local scientists. They were asked to put their presentations in a user-friendly format and we had school kids show up and college kids show up and fishermen show up — great free open to the public kind of talks. And it was so well received that we decided we needed to do it again."

She said they decided to host one every three years, which means this week's symposium will only be the second one in the program's history.

Wynne said the goal truly is to present information to the public and present the science that affects many folks here in Kodiak.

"A lot of our livelihoods, certainly the Kodiak economy is based on good science that goes into management practices and so I think it's in everyone's best interests to see what's driving their system, but people are often really curious about what's going on and so this is an opportunity to bring that forward."

While majority of the presenters will be local scientists, the symposium will also feature two keynote speakers from out of town. Julie Matweyou is also with the Marine Advisory Program and joined Wynne on Talk of the Rock last week. She said the entire symposium will kick off on Tuesday evening with a talk from John Calambokidis from Cascadia Research in Olympia, Washington.

"We've invited him up and he'll be speaking. His title is Blues, Grays and Humpbacks: New Insights on Whales and Impacts of Human Activities. (Wynne adds) And particularly I think people will be interested that he's been studying ship strike mortality and navy sonar related mortality in whales. He's

one of the few blue whale researchers in the Pacific so he's got great stories to tell."

On Wednesday, Matweyou said the day will begin with the symposium's second keynote speaker.

"Carol Ladd, she's with the NOAA Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory and she's going to be kind of laying the foundation for the rest of the symposium. She's going to be talking about oceanographic mechanisms and physical oceanography that drives our ecosystem here."

The presentations that will take place as part of the symposium will be short – roughly 15 minutes long with 5 minutes for questions and answers. Wynne said the goal is to avoid heavy data talks, but rather touch on the meat of research being done and put some fun facts and interesting information out there.

Many of the presentations and talks are being held in conjunction with Whale Fest, which kicked off last week. You can find the symposium's full schedule and register for presentations and workshops online.