



# 2024 Blue Ocean Symposium

## Presented by Gells Apparel

Friday, March 29, 2024  
9:30-4:00



Star Theater, 120 Rogers Road, Kittery, Maine 03904

## Agenda

**9:30-10:00 Registration/Sign In, Coffee, Snacks**

**10:00- 10:15 Welcome**

**10:15-11:00 Keynote, Small plastics, big problems? The truth about our complicated relationship with these materials.**

Dr. Charles Rolsky, Executive Director, Shaw Institute

Shaw Institute

**11:05-11:25 Litter on Local Beaches**

Jen Kennedy, Executive Director, Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation

**11:30-11:50 Whales of Jeffreys Ledge, 2023 Season Summary**

Dianna Schulte, Director of Research, Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation



**11:50-12:00 Break**

**12:00-12:20 Measuring Sand Mud Properties: A Civil Engineering Perspective**

Dr. Julie Paprocki, Assistant Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering, UNH



**12:25-12:45 From the Bay to your Belly...and Beyond**

Laura Brown, Owner and Director, Fox Point Oysters



**12:50-1:10 Standing on the Shoulders of Giants - Commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle against big oil in Great Bay**

Melissa Paly, Great Bay-Piscataqua Waterkeeper, Conservation Law Foundation



**1:10-2:00 Lunch**

**2:00-2:20 Protecting the Piping Plover on Busy Beaches – What You Can Do to Help This Rare Bird**

Brenden Clifford, Wildlife Biologist, Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program at the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department



**2:25-2:45 Avian Influenza and Other Emergent Diseases Impacting Wildlife**

Bob Dale, Marketing & Outreach Coordinator, Center for Wildlife  
Abby Schofield, Senior Wildlife Specialist, Center for Wildlife



**2:50-3:10 Saving a Species from Extinction: Protecting the North Atlantic Right Whale**

Heather Pettis, Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life, New England Aquarium – North Atlantic Right Whales



**3:15-3:45 Promoting Conservation of Sharks by Developing Innovative Technology and Engaging Stakeholders in Fisheries**

Dr. John Mohan, Assistant Professor, School of Marine and Environmental Programs, Mohan Shark and Fish Ecology Lab, University of New England



**3:45-4:00 Wrap Up/Surveys/PD Certificates/Upcoming Events**

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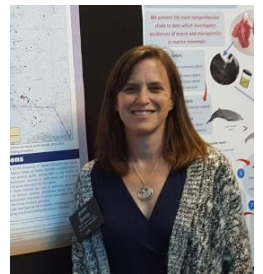
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## Presenter Biographies

Dr. Charles Rolsky is the Executive Director of the Shaw Institute in Blue Hill, Maine. Charlie received his master's and PhD from Arizona State University's Biodesign Institute, where he researched plastic pollution in marine and terrestrial ecosystems. As a postdoctoral research scholar in the Biodesign's Center for Sustainable Macromolecular Materials and Manufacturing, he focused on green chemistry and sustainable materials science. Charlie and his research have been featured on *ABC News* and *PBS*, and in the pages of the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Washington Post*, *Forbes*, *Smithsonian Magazine* and many other prestigious media outlets. Currently, he focuses on researching links between environmental contamination and human health, which includes plastic pollution, PFAS chemicals, and other contaminants of concern. Charlie is extremely passionate about citizen science and public outreach, with groups ranging from kids to lifelong learners. A teacher for over eight years, he continues his mentorship through a range of internship and educational opportunities at the Shaw Institute.



Jen Kennedy is Executive Director and co-founder of Blue Ocean Society. She has a MS degree in Resource Administration and Management from the University of New Hampshire and a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources from Cornell University. Although Jen grew up in Rochester, NY far from the ocean, she has always loved the water and being outside, and had an interest in whales from an early age. Jen has worked in an educational capacity over the last 26 years through her work with Blue Ocean Society and aboard local whale watch and tour boats. She became involved in marine debris issues when Blue Ocean Society adopted Jenness Beach in Rye for monthly cleanups through what was then the National Marine Debris Monitoring Program. Cleanups at this one beach evolved into our Adopt-a-Beach Program, group cleanups, and partnerships with NH Sea Grant and other organizations to study and mitigate marine pollution in the region. Jen enjoys managing the day-to-day operations of the organization while taking the opportunity to get out to the beach or on the water as much as possible. Jen lives in Eliot, ME with her husband, daughter, and several pets and enjoys walking, hiking and kayaking.



Dianna Schulte Director of Research and co-founder of Blue Ocean Society. She has a BS degree in Zoology with a minor in Marine Biology from the University of New Hampshire. She also holds a US Coast Guard captain's license for 100-ton vessels. Dianna has worked as a deckhand and naturalist aboard commercial whale watch boats in NH and MA for decades. Dianna has also served as a mate for (National Geographic) Lindblad Expeditions aboard environmental cruise ships that traveled to Alaska and Baja California, Mexico, providing passengers with unique experiences in unspoiled natural areas. For nine winters, Dianna migrated south with the whales, working as an aerial observer and team leader for organizations focused on protecting the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale on their calving grounds off Florida and South Carolina. In addition to field research, Dianna coordinates data collection, analysis and cataloging efforts here at Blue Ocean Society. At home, she enjoys her menagerie of pets and often fosters critters from local shelters.



Dr. Julie Paprocki is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UNH with a specialization in marine geotechnics. She holds a BS degree in civil engineering from the University of Cincinnati in 2017 and a MS degree and PhD degree from Virginia Tech in 2018 and 2022, respectively. In her spare time, she can be found collecting unique sand samples, knitting a collection of homemade clothes, and playing with her cat Stanley.



Laura Brown started Fox Point Oysters in 2012 in Little Bay, NH. After a fulfilling life in the arts, Laura switched gears and began an oyster farm on the advice of her sister, a research scientist at UNH. The farm serves as a sweet spot for growing tasty oysters sold throughout the local community, to educate and perform research and as a space to help raise oysters for restoration projects in Great Bay.



Melissa Paly is Conservation Law Foundation's Great Bay – Piscataqua Waterkeeper, advocating daily for the health of the waterways that make the Seacoast region of New Hampshire and southern Maine such a spectacular place to live, work and play. Melissa works closely with a wide range of stakeholders from state and federal environmental officials to scientists, consultants, local decision makers and grassroots activists to reduce pollution and restore the health of the Great Bay ecosystem. Before joining the CLF, Melissa was a principal of CrossCurrent Communications where she provided communications strategy, PR and media production services to state agencies, businesses and non-profits focused on environmental and social issues. She previously worked for USEPA Region 1, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and World Resources Institute. Melissa holds undergraduate and master's degrees from Yale University and serves on the boards of Kittery Land Trust, Coastal Conservation Association-NH, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust.



Brendan Clifford is a wildlife biologist within the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program at the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Brendan has spent the last 18 years monitoring the state's threatened and endangered species, with a focus on beach-nesting birds and rare snakes. Notable species he has monitored and implemented conservation measures for include the federally threatened piping plover as well as the state endangered timber rattlesnake. Other species Brendan has worked with include the northern black racer, Blanding's turtle, eastern box turtle and marbled salamander.



Bob Dale is the Marketing & Outreach Coordinator at Center for Wildlife. He has been with Center for Wildlife for four years, helping conduct outreach while also coordinating Center for Wildlife's educational programming. Bob graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in Environmental Sciences and spent years eco-guiding, advocating for sustainable transportation and held a handful of marketing roles before making his way to Center for Wildlife. At Center for Wildlife, Bob's primary focus is on connecting community and educating the public about wildlife and habitat conservation.



Abby Schofield is the Senior Wildlife Specialist at Center for Wildlife. She attended Roger Williams University in Rhode Island where she completed her B.S. in Environmental Science with a minor in Sustainability. Growing up with many animals in the woods of Maine, she was always passionate about wildlife and care taking. Abby completed a 3-month internship at the Center for Wildlife and felt connected with the sustainability aspect of rehabilitation. In 2019, Abby accepted the full-time position of Wildlife Specialist, and beyond providing excellent medical treatment and care to our patients and ambassadors, she takes the lead on housing and facilities upkeep.



Heather Pettis' primary research interests are using visual health assessments to examine trends in right whale health at both the individual and population levels and to investigate the impact of anthropogenic injuries on right whale health and survival over time. She serves as the executive administrator for the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium, a collaborative data sharing group committed to long-term research and management efforts to provide management, academic, and conservation groups with the best scientific advice and recommendations on right whale conservation. She is also interested in photo-identification and population monitoring.



John A. Mohan completed his PhD in marine science at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, with a focus on fish ecology and natural chemical tracers. He was a post doc and research scientist at Texas A&M University at Galveston in the Shark Biology and Fisheries Science Lab, before relocating to New England. Mohan is now an assistant professor at the University of New England, in the School of Marine and Environmental Programs and leads the Mohan Shark and Fish Ecology Lab.

