



CommOCEAN 2026
Plenary 3:
‘Increasing citizen engagement and ocean literacy
through communication’
Thursday 3 September
09:30-10:30

SPEAKERS:

- [Chantal Lyons](#), Senior Research and Innovation Lead, Mindfully Wired: ‘From Conflict to Collaboration: Communicating Bycatch and Coexistence with Marine Mammals’
- [Carlyn Scott](#), independent: ‘The meme economy: Using social media to improve ocean literacy and engagement’
- [Roshin P. Raj](#), Senior Researcher, Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Centre (NERSC): ‘ENGaging Researchers and coastal population In Communicating ocean’s role on human Health (ENRICH)’
- [Rita Costa Abecasis](#), Marine biologist & Science Communicator – Head of Ocean Education Unit, Centre of Marine Sciences (CCMAR), University of Algarve: ‘From the airport to Ria Formosa: an immersive exhibition as science communication in transit spaces’

Moderator: Kelle Moreau, Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS) in Belgium and member of the European Marine Board Communications Panel

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Chantal Lyons, Senior Research and Innovation Lead, Mindfully Wired: ‘From Conflict to Collaboration: Communicating Bycatch and Coexistence with Marine Mammals’

While the public often view seals and dolphins as charismatic, many fishers across Europe experience them as direct competitors. Depredation – where marine predators remove fish from fishing gear – is an increasing challenge, with economic, operational and social impacts. Yet the issue remains underrepresented in public discourse, contributing to mistrust and disengagement from conservation efforts.

This presentation explores how acknowledging - not avoiding - contentious issues like depredation can strengthen communication and collaboration between scientists and fishing communities.

Drawing on two initiatives - Clean Catch (UK) and CIBBRiNA (Europe) - it examines how two-way communication has reshaped project delivery. By actively listening to fishers’ experiences and motivations, both projects adapted their approaches to improve participation in bycatch mitigation efforts for Endangered, Threatened and Protected species.

The talk will share:

- How different communications framings influence trust and willingness to engage
- Practical examples of communication approaches that improved collaboration
- Lessons learned, including where engagement strategies fell short
- Early evidence of how aligning conservation goals with fishers’ priorities can increase uptake of mitigation measures

Rather than positioning depredation as a conflict to be managed, this presentation explores how it can be a productive entry point for more effective, trust-based ocean communication.

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Carlyn Scott, independent: 'The meme economy: Using social media to improve ocean literacy and engagement'

As social media becomes an increasingly dominant source of information, science communicators must adapt to the digital environments where public understanding is increasingly shaped. An estimated 60% of the global population uses social media, with many users falling within the 18-34 age range. These audiences, having grown up in digital spaces, are familiar with the visual and cultural language of the internet, including memes.

Memes, templated images, videos or other forms of media that convey cultural information or ideas, are widely shared across social media platforms and are increasingly appearing in science communication efforts. This presentation explores the potential role of memes in communicating marine science concepts and promoting ocean literacy.

While memes are often viewed as informal, proponents argue they may help make scientific concepts more accessible and relatable to broader audiences. At the same time, concerns remain regarding accuracy, audience interpretation, institutional credibility and the effectiveness of memes in communicating complex scientific information. As science communicators continue to navigate evolving digital landscapes, understanding the strengths and limitations of emerging communication tools is increasingly important.

Discussion: How is social media currently being used to convey scientific information and promote engagement? What opportunities and risks are associated with this style of communication?

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Roshin P. Raj, Senior Researcher, Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Centre (NERSC): ‘ENgaging Researchers and coastal population In Communicating ocean’s role on human Health (ENRICH)’

ENRICH is an Indo-Norwegian transdisciplinary project that aims to engage researchers and the coastal population to effectively communicate and disseminate research-based knowledge on climate related changes in the ocean and its implications on human health vulnerability. ENRICH project funded by the Research Council of Norway has also been endorsed by UNESCO as one of the UN Ocean Decade activities.

ENRICH focuses on the state of Kerala, the most densely populated coastal zone in South India (total length – 593 km; population – 36 million). ENRICH design is based on an integrated approach. It includes selection of research enumerators who are trained to collect data using structured questionnaires/surveys from coastal communities.

Data is also collected through Focused Group Discussions and interactions with different target groups. Statistical models are employed to identify the relationship between socio-economic and climate related changes in the ocean and water associated disease prevalence, which is further used to develop regional vulnerability maps.

Based on the knowledge obtained detailed awareness and knowledge sharing modules are developed. The dissemination materials are then be transferred into an Interactive open access web-based platform to expand the outreach. Engaging a larger population is ensured by involving and educating local communities, conducting training sessions and seminars to citizen scientists from local communities.

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[Rita Costa Abecasis](#), Marine biologist & Science Communicator – Head of Ocean Education Unit, Centre of Marine Sciences (CCMAR), University of Algarve: ‘From the airport to Ria Formosa: an immersive exhibition as science communication in transit spaces’

How do you communicate science in a space defined by rush, noise and divided attention, like an airport? How can a high-traffic transit environment be transformed into a space of discovery, emotional engagement, and connection to local ecosystems?

This presentation introduces an art-science intervention developed for Faro Airport (Portugal, 10 million yearly passengers), within the RESTORESEAGRASS project, to raise awareness of local seagrass meadows and the need to protect and restore these important marine habitats. Built around the concept of "the airport as an extension of the Ria Formosa", the installation unfolds as a continuous narrative combining kinetic artworks, locally produced art pieces and interactive elements distributed along the passenger journey.

The design departs from the specific constraints of airport environments: short and variable dwell times, high sensory load, cultural diversity, security restrictions and continuous crowd flows. These limitations demand communication strategies that are visual, intuitive, modular and accessible — capable of capturing attention within seconds, while sustaining interest across longer interactions. This case study offers transferable insights for science communication professionals working in unconventional, non-captive audience settings.