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NOAA FISHERIES
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2025 AFSC Seminar Series

Dana Wright, AFSC Marine Mammal Lab; University of Washington CICOES

Tuesday, February 25th @ 10 am Pacific

Right whales in the North Pacific: a decade of discovery through sound

The critically endangered eastern North Pacific right whale (NPRW; *Eubalaena japonica*) is currently one of the rarest whale populations (n < 50), having been severely depleted by historic legal and illegal whaling. Despite their precarious status, little is known about their contemporary distribution and seasonal movements. During this seminar, I will present findings from over a decade of passive acoustic recordings from historical NPRW feeding areas, specifically the eastern Bering shelf, Aleutian Islands, and northern Gulf of Alaska. These passive acoustic data came from an existing network of long-term passive acoustic recorders maintained by AFSC's Marine Mammal Laboratory. Right whale detections reveal strong seasonality consistent with contemporary feeding grounds, with spatial and temporal variability linked to oceanographic and prey features. These findings provide new insights into their contemporary habitat use, which could inform ongoing revisions to critical habitat designations among changing ocean conditions.

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