

CSC/SETI Institute Colloquium Series

Fred Sharpe

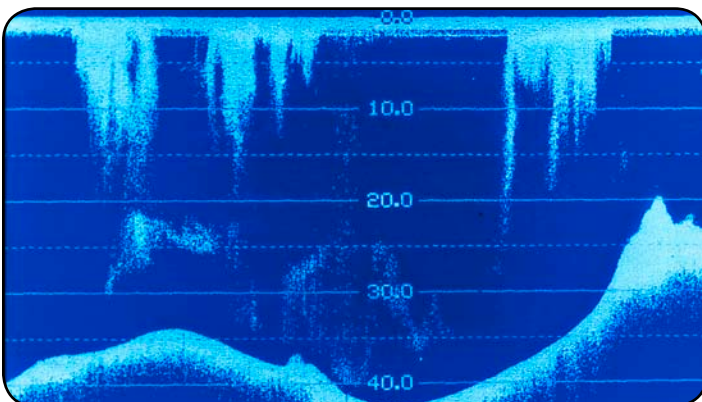
Principal Investigator, Alaska Whale Foundation

Friday, Mar. 21, 12:00 noon
The SETI Institute, Europa room

Humpback Whales and the Social Intelligence Hypothesis



The Drake Equation predicts a positive correlation between a silent cosmos and a tendency for intelligent life to self extinguish. Alternatively, we simply may not be able to detect or recognize intelligence life in the cosmos --or on planet earth. Humpback whales provide interesting test case, as they appear to exhibit high levels of social intelligence. In Alaska, groups of non-kin form large hunting teams with enduring bonds, specialized tasks, tool use, and gender equity. Their haunting songs and social chatter also suggest that an un-deciphered intelligence echoes through our oceans. Dr. Fred Sharpe of the Alaska Whale Foundation has teamed up with Dr. Laurance Doyle of the SETI Institute, and Dr. Brenda McCowan and Sean Hanser at the University of California, Davis. This team brings the signal processing prowess developed for interstellar inquiry to focus on the phonations of these ocean dwelling societies. We seek to define universal rules of communication and understand how humpback whales fit into the Drake Equation. We also seek to understand how intelligent societies endure or self-extinguish by balancing beneficent behaviors with bellicosity.



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