

News from the Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission

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What Are Phytoplankton and Why Should You Care? RU Marine Biologist Austin Grubb Will Discuss These Tiny Powerhouses and Their Role in Life on Earth, Sept. 7 via Zoom

Phytoplankton are microscopic marine algae that play an outsized role in sustaining and sometimes interfering with life beneath and above the sea.

Marine biologist Austin Grubb of Rutgers University will discuss these tiny powerhouses and the myriad ways they influence the life-sustaining carbon cycle at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 7, in an Option Green virtual event presented via Zoom by the Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission in partnership with the East Brunswick Public Library.

To register for the Zoom webcast, click [here](#).

According to the National Ocean Service, “phytoplankton provide food for a wide range of sea creatures including shrimp, snails, and jellyfish. When too many nutrients are available, phytoplankton may grow out of control and form harmful algal blooms (HABs). These blooms can produce extremely toxic compounds that have harmful effects on fish, shellfish, mammals, birds, and even people.”

Grubb, who is a Ph.D. candidate in marine science, will share strategies used by oceanographers to study phytoplankton in the environment, illustrated with photos and videos from his recent research cruise.

His research focuses on a group of phytoplankton called coccolithophores. The goal of his research is to understand the costs and benefits of calcification for these phytoplankton and how these tradeoffs are impacted by light intensity.

His talk is the first Option Green program of the fall season, coordinated by Friends EBEC in partnership with the library. Friends EBEC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conservation and environmental education. In addition to the Option Green lecture series, its programs include the Community Garden, Freecycling Days, National Moth Week and the Salamander Protection Program.

For more information on Friends EBEC programs, visit friendsebec.com and sign up to receive program and event news.

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