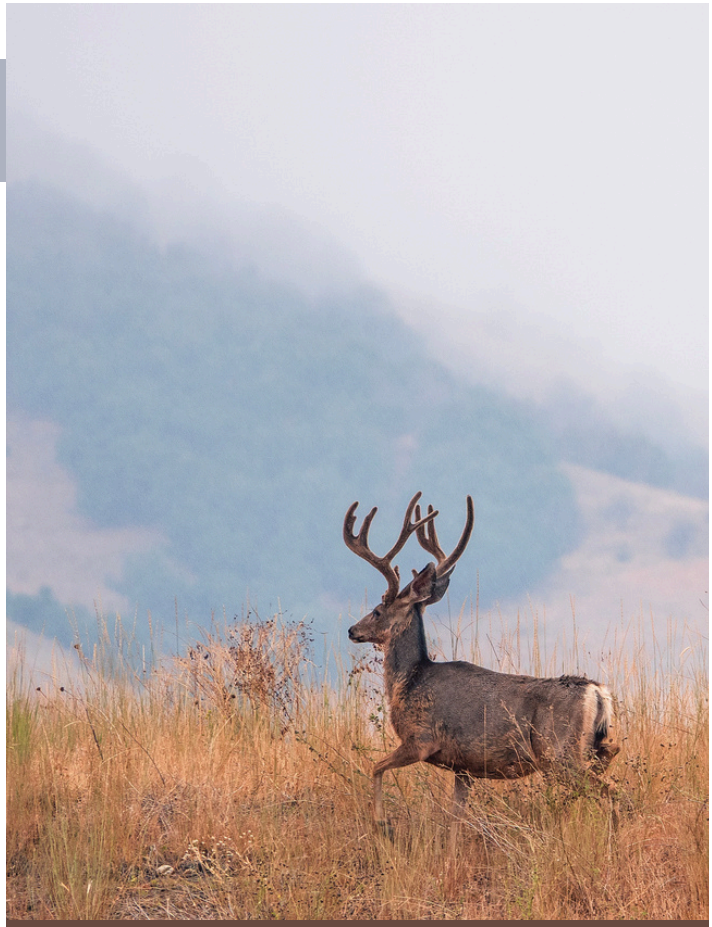
NEWSLETTER #8 OCTOBER 2026

OSLO CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES NEWSLETTER



OTHER WAYS OF SEEING

Seaweed, wetlands, microbes, vanishing species. A lot of this semester came back to looking closely, and to seeing things from a point of view not our own. Here's what the Center got up to.

DEAR FRIENDS

Autumn is well underway, and our Center is busy again. After the slower rhythm of summer, October filled up quickly, turning into one of our fullest months in a while.

The calendar ranged widely. Some events were hands-on: a seaweed workshop on the Oslofjord, a bread-making afternoon with a microbial ecologist, a wetland walk that tried to see the place through its animals. Others were for thinking and talking: a lab talk on extinction, a symposium on animality and neurodiversity, a workshop on running an independent press. And the al-ARD Book Club opened its new season with Sahar Khalifeh's *My First and Only Love*.

If there's a thread holding it together, it's attention. Most of these were about noticing things we'd normally pass by. A good way, we think, to move into the darker months.

NEWSLETTER #8 OCTOBER 2026

OCTOBER AT OCEH

A full month across the lab, the fjord, a wetland, and a farm. A look back at the season:

- *OCEH Social: Halloween Gathering* (Oct 30) – An afternoon of treats, hot drinks, scary stories, and pumpkin carving at the OCEH Lab, with everyone welcome – friends, partners, and children included.
- *Ecologies of Animality, Disability, and Neurodiversity* (Oct 26–27) – A two-day symposium at the intersection of disability, neurodiversity, ecology, and animality, gathering scholars and advocates to ask how these might become methods for more just and liveable worlds. Convened by Michael Lundblad and Ombre Tarragnat.
- *Lab talk: Timo Maran on extinction* (Oct 19) – The Estonian ecosemiotician and poet asked how extinction appears in human culture, and how it might appear to endangered species themselves, drawing on a five-year research programme.
- *Wetland Walkinar III* (Oct 18) – A walk around Østensjøvannet with Timo Maran and the Pavilion collective, using “umwelt cards” to approach the wetland from the perspective of the animals that live there, with waffles and coffee at the visitor centre.
- *Eating the Bread of Change* (Oct 17) – An afternoon of talk and tasting with microbial ecologist Tiff S. Mak and Anna-Katharina Laboissière at Losæter farm, on the histories and biologies of grain and bread, ending with flatbread baked together in the farm’s oven.
- *Academic Toolkit: The Ins and Outs of an Independent Press* (Oct 16) – A session with Christopher Sand-Iversen of Copenhagen’s RSS Press, on how to set up and run a small press and get your work into the world.
- *Seaweed Sensorial Workshop* (Oct 10) – A day on the Oslofjord with the Unstable Ecologies team, meeting seaweed through printmaking, cooking, tasting, and writing, led by freediver and ocean educator Melanie Endemann and writer Ting J. Yiu.
- *al-ARD Book Club: My First and Only Love* (Oct 6) – The book club opened its new season with Sahar Khalifeh’s novel of love, memory, and resistance in modern Palestine – the first of a year of Arabic literature on land, displacement, and care.

COMING UP



Photo: C. J. Alvarez

The season isn't over yet. A few events to look forward to in November:

- *al-ARD Book Club: The Law of Inheritance* (Nov 3) – The book club continues its season with Yasser Abdel Latif's novel of a young man coming of age in 1990s Cairo, and of migration, belonging, and Nubian family history.
- *Book Launch: Cultural History and the Anthropocene* (Nov 3) – Editors and contributors present the new Bloomsbury volume with short chapter talks and a panel, over refreshments.
- *The Pasvik Archives: Mussels, Letters, Landscapes* (Nov 5) - A hands-on, interdisciplinary workshop exploring the colonial history of the Pasvik region through historical archives, more-than-human timekeepers, material culture, and landscapes.
- *Ecology, Relations, and Exchangism in the Study of Religion* (Nov 12) – A lunch seminar with Stuart Strange (National University of Singapore) on what "ecology" really means when religious studies reaches for it, drawing on fieldwork in Singapore and Suriname.
- *Online talk: Park Ji Yun, (Welcome to) The Planet of Orchids: Artistic Practice and Research Towards a Plant Perspective* (Nov 19) - Artist Park Ji Yun on her project weaving together multispecies ethnography, conservation ecology, and ecocinema to imagine the world from a plant's perspective.
- *Adaptation and Maladaptation in the Chihuahuan Desert* (Nov 27) – A lab talk with C. J. Alvarez on what North America's largest desert, and its 20,000 years of human history, can teach us about building an ecological consciousness for the future.
- *Academic Toolkit: Good Q! Question Asking in Practice* (date TBA) – The semester's second toolkit session, on the art of asking good questions in practice. Date to be announced soon.

Full details for each event are on our events page.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...



AN OCTOPUS “THINKS” WITH ITS ARMS

An octopus has around 500 million neurons, about as many as a dog. But unlike us, only a third sit in its brain. The other two-thirds are spread through its eight arms, which can taste, touch, and react largely on their own.

Did you know most of an octopus’s mind is in its arms?

In our bodies, thinking happens in one place. An octopus works differently. Roughly two-thirds of its neurons live not in its central brain but in its arms, each of which can explore, taste, and make decisions with a striking degree of independence. One arm can investigate a crevice while the others are busy with something else entirely. The brain sets the goal; the arms work out the details.

It is a completely different way of being a mind, one so unlike our own that the philosopher Peter Godfrey-Smith called the octopus the closest thing we have to meeting an intelligent alien.

And that is what makes it more than a curiosity. We tend to measure intelligence by how closely it resembles ours, and to overlook the kinds that don’t. The octopus is a reminder that there are other ways to have a mind, and other ways to experience the world. Learning to recognise them may be one of the more important things the environmental humanities can do.

NEWSLETTER #8 OCTOBER 2026

WHO WE ARE AT OCEH

Meet the Team Creating the Center



HUGO REINERT
Head of OCEH

Hugo is an Associate Professor of Cultural History and Environmental Humanities at the University of Oslo, and since 2025 he has served as the head of OCEH. His research spans topics from forests to deep-sea environments, with a special focus on how human and nonhuman worlds intersect.

As the center's second leader, Hugo continues to guide OCEH's growing community of researchers and students, strengthening its role as a hub for environmental humanities in Norway and beyond.



KAROLINA POLTORAK
Admin. Coordinator

Karolina serves as Adviser and Administrative Coordinator at OCEH, overseeing the center's daily operations and supporting the OCEHLab. She brings together project management, administrative guidance, event planning, and research support to help OCEH run smoothly day-to-day.



SONJA IRENE ÅMAN
Lab Manager

Sonja is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Environmental Humanities at the University of Oslo, where she explores the politics and cultural histories of marine life – like herring migrations and Indigenous whaling practices.

Trained as an interdisciplinary environmental humanities researcher, Sonja weaves together environmental history, political ecology, and rich storytelling to examine how people and nonhuman worlds intersect.

NEWSLETTER #8 OCTOBER 2026

STAY CONNECTED



Want to keep up with OCEH between newsletters? Visit our website for news, updates, and upcoming events – and follow us on social media for more.

hf.uio.no/oceh

We are on Bluesky and Facebook:

Edited by Karolina Poltorak, on behalf of the Oslo Center for Environmental Humanities.