

Volunteer Newsletter

AUG / SEP 2014

Upcoming Events

Fri. Sept. 26th Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting 10am-3:30pm, Grays Harbor Historic Seaport Authority, Aberdeen. All members of the public welcome and encouraged to attend.

Fri. Sept. 26th “Evening Talks” Seabirds of the Olympic Peninsula by Dr. Scott Horton at 6:30-9:00pm, UW’s Olympic Natural Resources Center, Forks. forkswa.com/events

Sat. Sept. 27th Free Entrance Day at Olympic National Park

Sept 27th -29th Dungeness River Festival, Sequim dungenessrivercenter.org

Thurs. Oct. 9th Fall enrichment activity for all OCDC docents 12:00-1:00pm in classroom! Brown bag presentation by Nicole Harris on ocean acidification activities for public audiences.

Oct. 10th - 12th Dungeness Crab & Seafood Festival, Port Angeles www.crabfestival.org

Thurs. Oct. 23rd COASST and Marine Debris Field Day 8:00am – 5:00pm at Hobuck Beach RSVP heidi.pedersen@noaa.gov or 360-457-6622 ext. 31

Sat. Oct. 25th COASST Marine Debris Pilot Training 10:00am – 4:00pm at Clallam County Courthouse, Port Angeles. RSVP #206-221-6893 or coasst@uw.edu

Sun. Oct. 26th COASST Marine Debris Pilot Training 10:00am – 4:00pm at Olympic Natural Resources Center, Forks. RSVP #206-221-6893 or coasst@uw.edu



THANK YOU ALL!

Our season has already wound down, with Olympic Coast Discovery Center now only open on weekends 10:00am to 5:00pm through mid-October. Summer flashed by too quickly as it often does, but was a success thanks to all of your time and energy!

During the month of August OCDC received **1,806** visitors (up from 1,537 in Aug. 2013), with a total of **13** docents contributing **158** volunteer hours.

Visitors who signed our guest book hailed from 47 different states plus Washington D.C. and 19 foreign countries and left comments that included: “Awesome!” “Inspiring! I am going to volunteer to clean up our beaches.” “Thanks for all the explanations- it was fascinating.” “Very helpful guide!” *Let’s keep up this great energy through the Crab Fest!*

Stay Tuned!

Annual OCDC Awards Ceremony! To be held jointly with Feiro Marine Life Center. Date to be confirmed.

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Introducing Danny Palmer!

Hi there volunteers!

My name is Danny Palmer and I have just started serving OCNMS as the as the Education and Stewardship Specialist through the Washington Service Corps as an AmeriCorps Member. My main duties are to support, assist, and recruit for OCNMS marine stewardship volunteer programs (like the upcoming International Coastal Cleanup this Saturday, Sept. 20th!); and to help develop, implement, and evaluate the North Olympic Watershed (NOW) Science Programs for 4th and 5th graders in partnership with Feiro Marine Life Center.

A lot of different factors led me to OCNMS and Port Angeles. I grew up on 5 different fish hatcheries, as my dad works for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as a hatchery manager, and spent my teenage years in Central Oregon where I instantly became an environmentalist after reading an article about the Great Pacific garbage patch in 11th grade. I went on to get my BA in Environmental Studies and Global Studies from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma in 2012. After graduating I moved to Kauai where I worked on an organic garden and at the Kauai Humane Society (and spent the rest of my time at the beach, obviously). Most recently, I served as an AmeriCorps VISTA at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania where I managed volunteers at the campus garden and worked with local organizations to address food insecurity.

During my time in Pennsylvania I realized how much I missed being near the ocean and how I wanted to expand my own environmental education to include marine systems, while hopefully educating others at the same time. Lucky for me, OCNMS provided just that! I am extremely excited to be serving here and with such a great group of people, staff and volunteers alike. I hope to meet you soon, and am looking forward to working together this year.

Danny

COASST / News from the Field

A very rare Marbled godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) was found by Janice and Vicki at Damon Point East on August 25, only the fifth of this species to be found by COASST volunteers since 1999! This large shorebird has long legs with four free toes lacking claws. Marbled godwits are characterized by brown coloration all over, with cinnamon wing linings and an orangish stripe in the wings. Their slightly up-curved bi-colored bill has a dark tip with pinkish base. What a find!



This photo was taken by Kari Williamson, a COASST volunteer at Duk Point. She and partner John Bowie found 151 bottles of various shapes, sizes and colors in mid-August and then set them up for this creative and impactful photo.

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COASST says, “Variety matters: shapes are sometimes particular to country of origin and tell us how far and where a bottle may have come from.”



By-the-wind sailors, *Verella verella*, have washed ashore in tremendous numbers along the outer coast this year. Related to jellyfish and corals, *Verella verella* are free-floating colonial hydrozoans that live on the surface of the open ocean. The below photo was taken by COASST and NOAA marine debris monitoring volunteer, Mike Tetreau.



As their common name suggests, these “by-the-wind sailors” are at the mercy of winds and currents. The orientation of their “sail” is different in each hemisphere, allowing for them to better catch prevailing winds. While it is common for them to wash onto beaches or congregate in currents, it can take decades for the right combination to bring them together in such density! Once ashore, they will become more transparent and colorless as they dry up. There are reports of Ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*) eating these marine organisms.



Other COASST volunteers, Scott Horton and Sue Keilman, snapped a photo of *V. verella* on the waters near La Push. The sheer numbers of these hydrozoans is remarkable.

Volunteers make Heidi smile! This collection of marine debris from the 100 meter site at Ruby South in September survey was converted into art!



Barbara and Mike found this large pipe at South Butter Clam, measuring over 30 feet long and filled with Styrofoam. These tubes appear to be the remains of a net pen called a polar circle, which is used in salmon farming.



See more at <http://blogs.uw.edu/coasst>

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Creature Feature

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*)



Common murres are currently breeding and are the seabirds that COASST volunteers are most likely to encounter on their monthly surveys this season.

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Alcidae

The Common Murre is a penguin-like bird of the northern oceans, widely inhabiting both coastal and offshore waters from Alaska to California of the Pacific Coast. These crow-sized birds are less chunky than other large alcids and are characterized by a short neck and long, straight bill. Murres have a stark white breast which contrasts with sleek brownish-black feathers to create counter-shaded plumage; outside of the breeding season the chin and lower half of its face are white, with a black line descending from the back of the eye through the white area. Though their flight seems awkward and labored, these water birds dive and swim with great agility giving them an appearance of underwater flight. Murres typically dive to depths of 30 feet to catch small fish, but are able to reach up to depths of 540 feet in pursuit of their prey. Their diet can also consist of crustaceans, marine worms/eels, and molluscs.



Murres spend much of their time on the open ocean and in large bays, venturing further from the shoreline during the non-breeding season. On land they are usually seen sitting upright on cliffs, where they nest on wide, open ledges of rocky cliffs sea stacks. They nest shoulder to shoulder in gregarious colonies on rocky sea cliff ledges, and can be so tightly packed

that individual murres returning from sea often land on the heads of other murres to settle back in. Murres do not build nests, but lay a single pear-shaped egg on bare ground, the shape preventing it from rolling off. This species is quite vocal in breeding colonies, making a deep “mmmmmmmm” sound from which the name “murre” derives. In Washington there are about 18 nesting locations with major colonies at Point Grenville, Split Rock Willoughby Island Quillayute Needles, and Carol and Jagged Islands (as some of our volunteers witnessed during the mid-July appreciation cruises aboard *RV Tatoosh*).

At only 2-4 weeks of age, the still flightless chick dramatically



plunges from the cliff into the sea to join its father, who will care for the young and teach it how to fish and avoid predators for a few months until it can become independent. Adults undergo an annual molt shortly after leaving the breeding colonies and become flightless for 6-7 weeks, dispersing quite widely.

Population fluctuates each year, depending on food availability and climatic events. Common murres are also highly sensitive to human disturbance and can knock their eggs or chicks out of the nest if abruptly fleeing the scene in flight. Unguarded chicks and eggs are then easy prey for gulls, eagles and other large avian predators. Murres are the most frequent seabird victims to oil spills with a loss of an estimated 30,000 during the 1988 Nestucca spill off the WA and BC coasts. Many were also killed from the oil spill during the 1991 Tenyo Maru sinking northwest off Cape Flattery. Other threats to murres include overfishing, gill netting and impacts of climate change.

