

OLYMPIC COAST NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

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V O L U N T E E R N E W S L E T T E R - A U G U S T 2 0 0 9

A Day on the *RV Tatoosh*

OCDC Volunteers Jaci and Jeanne Pumphrey, Douglas Parks, Nicky Andrews, Rose Forbes, and Chris Butler-Minor with Rob Rountree and Dave Kirner from OCNMS headed to La Push on July 27 for a cruise on the *RV Tatoosh*. The weather was nice with a light breeze and moderate swell. They cruised off of Cake Rock and Sea Lion Rock, where seeing several Stellar Sea Lions, some California Sea Lions, and various birds including pelicans, Tufted Puffins, and Common Murres. Returning to La Push after several hours, they went to lunch in Forks and returned to Port Angeles around 4:30.

September 9 or 10 is the next opportunity for volunteers to spend a day at sea. The trip is offered to volunteers based on the number of hours they work in the OCDC between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Douglas Parks

I suppose our two-hour long sea voyage really began in the parking lot of Safeway in PA where I met up with Rob and the rest of our gang; we then carpooled out to La Push. At the marina we (the motley seafaring crew) were greeted by a pleasant temperature and a pleasant captain. We were told what to do in an emergency situation and given lifejackets. Without farther ado we set sail, or jet. I'm not quite sure which to call it, because there weren't any sails.

It was a beautiful day to be out sailing. The mild temperature suited me perfectly and I found that I thoroughly enjoy conditions that make others seasick. The first island we visited was fairly devoid of birds in the air, though there were quite a few on the ground and in the water. After a few minutes we spotted the culprits:

there were two bald eagles sitting on the top of the island. Once we had taken a decent amount of bird pictures, bald eagles among others, we decided to move on.



We headed for Sea Lion Rock, but for some reason we didn't actually visit it. Instead, we moved past it to another rock with sea lions. Actually it was more like an island, considering the size, but there wasn't much vegetation. So I am not quite sure whether to call it a rock or island... anyway, we stopped near a small rock that had quite a few birds roosting on it. There were pelicans on that rock, but strangely no one was very interested in the pelicans. We were far too busy staring at the sea lions to spare any time for the pelicans. As we stood there trying to find a way to get a steady picture on the pitching deck, the sea lions got curious about us. A group of about 12 to 16 sea lions detached themselves from the rocks and made their way toward our boat. I think maybe they were hoping to be fed. They swam around and even under our boat acting very cute. We didn't have any food we were willing to share though. Also, I am almost positive you aren't supposed to feed the sea lions. Once the sea lions had

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decided that we weren't interesting, or that we weren't going to feed them, they headed straight back to the rock and began to sunbathe.

Since we were getting hungry (and in some cases seasick) we decided to start heading back. We did have one more stop on the way; Cake Island. There really wasn't much to see there. Its main point of interest was the rock strata of which it was made. Not wanting to linger and further delay our lunch, we headed back to the marina. After refueling our boat, it was off to Forks and a pleasant little Mexican restaurant at which I bought a quesadilla. Once lunch was done we headed back to PA and parted ways. The voyage was over, but the memories would live on.

Nicky Andrews

While I am lucky enough to explore Port Angeles' local beaches and tide pools fairly frequently, it is not often that I get a chance to actually put to sea and observe our oceans as a fully enveloping ecosystem. Our crew were of a similar mind, and once we had gained our sealegs, we dutifully started to scan the horizon for flukes, fins and feathers.

The seas are teeming with an astonishing array of creatures, and the day of our trip was no exception. Our captain called our attention to a Common Porpoise on the starboard side of our vessel, and other species sighted included the Pelagic Cormorant, Common Murre, Western Gull, and Pigeon Guillemot, all in fairly notable numbers. What a vision it was, to see such species in their natural habitat, with no powerlines to perch on, and no scraps of rubbish to squall over.

One of the stars of our trip made itself known fairly early on. Undulating with the waves, my eyes were met with a seemingly endless palette of blue-green until they suddenly clasped upon a red-orange shock of colour – the Tufted Puffin. Surely one of Mother Nature's jests, this remarkable bird is comical in appearance – it is of squat build, sports an outrageously-bright beak and legs, and is crowned with yellow tufts reminiscent of a receding hairline. Likened to parrots and clowns alike, this plucky

fellow is no wallflower in the water – it was with delight that we saw scores of puffins dive, fish, and bob on the waves, unbothered by our presence. More thrilling still was the spectacle of flight – puffins launching themselves from sea to air with no more than a few steps to build momentum. Truly a versatile creature, in the air the puffin appears streamlined and graceful.

This trip reinforced many things for me – our reliance on and connection with the ocean, the importance of conserving coastal habitats, and our role as volunteers to engage with and educate the public regarding our waterways. Those of us who met as strangers parted ways as friends.

It was an amazing opportunity to experience an ecosystem in a pristine state, and see some of the unique species that inhabit it. It is humbling to realise that we indeed have one ocean, with many features.



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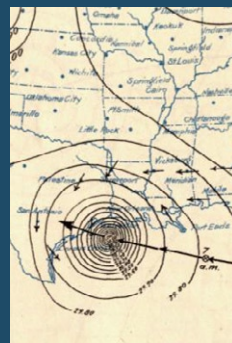
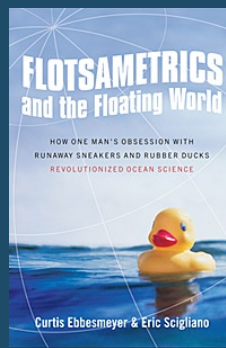
Thank you volunteers!

Thanks to all the awesome volunteers who give up summer hours to staff the Olympic Coast Discovery Center and talk to visitors about our new coral exhibit. Jim Fedderly is our top volunteer of the month, with 14 hours in the OCDC and three hours spent “seal sitting” on the Fourth of July. Lisbeth Jardine, Jim and Becky Jewell, Bruce Ferguson, Bill and Sherrill Bjorklund, Veronica Ayres, Chris Butler-Minor, and Mary Canaan have all been a big help in the Discovery Center. Also a special “thank you” to Jaci Pumphrey and Carol Huard who also helped with seal sitting at the boat launch on Ediz Hook.

If you haven’t been in recently, please remember that we need volunteers 49 hours a week through Labor Day, giving all of you ample opportunity to sign up for the shift of your choice!

New books have been recently added to our library

Flotsametrics and the Floating World: How one man’s obsession with runaway sneakers and rubber ducks revolutionized ocean science by Curtis Ebbesmeyer and Eric Scigliano. Part biography of Curt’s years at the UW and his work for oil companies, and an excellent, if depressing, discussion of marine debris and its damaging effects on the ocean environment. “Our global ocean has a vast, invisible artery system that sustains its life—ocean currents. Everything is connected and this book shows that we must treat our ocean with respect and not as a garbage can of civilization.” ~ Jean-Michel Cousteau



Isaac’s Storm: A Man, a Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History by Erik Larson.

The Galveston Hurricane of 1900 is to date the deadliest natural disaster ever to strike the United States, causing an estimated 8,000 deaths and wiping out more than half the homes and businesses on Galveston Island. Erik Larson carefully researched every aspect of this disaster, bringing to life the weather forecaster who missed the fatal warning signs, and who was prohibited from using the term “hurricane” by his supervisors

Andy Lamb to speak October 3

Marine naturalist, educator, and author Andy Lamb, will be at the Feiro Marine Life Center on Saturday, October 3 for a lecture on the kelp forest community. He will also bring signed copies of his newest book *Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest*. Call the Feiro Marine Life Center at 417-6254 to reserve a seat. A suggested donation of \$5 helps continue this lecture series.

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Scientists study huge plastic patch in Pacific

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) – Marine scientists from California are venturing this week to the middle of the North Pacific for a study of plastic debris accumulating across hundreds of miles of open sea dubbed the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch.”



A research vessel carrying a team of about 30 researchers, technicians and crew members embarked on Sunday on a three-week voyage from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, based at the University of California at San Diego.

The debris is located about 1,000 miles west of California and includes everything from old fishing lines to plastic bottles. This is a problem that is kind of out of sight, out of mind, but it is having devastating impacts on the ocean. There appears to be little that anyone can do to clean it up. That’s largely because most of the plastic has broken into tiny fragments and simply floats on the surface like confetti, shifting with the season and the currents.

The expedition will study how much debris -- mostly tiny plastic fragments -- is collecting in an expanse of sea known as the North Pacific Ocean Gyre, how that material is distributed and how it affects marine life.

You can follow the progress of the expedition on the Scripps website at <http://sio.ucsd.edu/Expeditions/Seaplex?loc=interstitialskip>