

OLYMPIC COAST NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



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Coming events

January 27 - "Humpback Whales of Puget Sound and the Salish Sea"
7 p.m. at Vern Burton Center

February 17 - Brown Bag lunch at the OCDC. Speaker to be determined. Any suggestions?

March 6-7 - Beachcombers Fun Fair at Ocean Shores Convention Center

March 17 - Pizza at 5:30, and Mary Sue Brancato talking about the seabird wreck

March 20 - Feiro Marine Life Center presents echinoderm expert Phil Lambert of the Royal British Columbia Museum

April 8 - Volunteer training begins. Please help us spread the word to anyone you know who might be interested. Training dates and topics will be published soon – all volunteers are welcome to attend any or all sessions.

collection of marine animals corresponds to those in our sanctuary made this outing extremely relevant. We were greeted by Karen Matsumoto, the Marine Science Education Coordinator. She took us on a "behind the scenes" tour. We saw labs and food preparation and storage areas. The water filtration system was very complicated. One of the divers who feed fish in an exhibit talked with us. Everywhere we went people were hard at work. Between caring for the animals and maintenance of the facility, it's easy to understand why there are 100 employees and 450 volunteers. There are biologists, researchers, grant writers, administrative staff, curators, engineers, and educators. Karen said that the volunteers keep the aquarium running.



There is an exhibit of shore birds including the Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Pacific Golden Plover, and Black Oystercatcher. There were also Alcids consisting of the Common Murre, Rhinoceros Auklet, Tufted Puffin and Pigeon Guillemot; all of which are common to Puget Sound. It was a treat to see these birds in such close proximity.

Eight daily educational programs were conducted by naturalists on the day of our visit. Numerous school programs are offered in the aquarium, classroom, and outdoors. Throughout our visit we saw parents

A Day at the Seattle Aquarium

by Carol Huard

If you haven't visited the Seattle Aquarium lately you'll be pleasantly surprised when you do. The 1890's vintage Pier 59 has been expanded and renovated; opening in 2008. Most of the interesting creatures in the aquarium are found near Mushroom Rock off Neah Bay in the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Knowing that the aquarium's

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with preschool age children and heard their squeals when they observed and/or touched the animals.

The most fascinating exhibit for me was the newest one, “Life on the Edge,” made up of Ocean Oddities, Pacific Coral Reef, Sixgill Shark Research, Giant Pacific Octopus, Moon Jellies and Tide Pool. A glass “donut” teeming with dozens of mystical Moon Jellies captivated me as I walked under it. Some tanks feature actual living coral, while video screens describe different aspects of reef-life and the dangers humans pose to this delicate habitat.

A Sample of Aquarium Trivia

- ✓ *all food for marine animals must be USDA grade (restaurant grade approved)*
- ✓ *more than 75% of the workers are volunteers*
- ✓ *all divers are volunteers who work in 1.5 hour shifts*
- ✓ *the birds are fed three times a day*
- ✓ *there are more than 200 species of fish in the exhibits*
- ✓ *the Seattle Aquarium was the first in the world to successfully breed Sea Otters*
- ✓ *the expense of food for one Sea Otter is \$10,000 a year excluding the cost of staff time*
- ✓ *four Sea Otters make their home at the aquarium*

Touring the Seattle Aquarium

by Nicky Andrews

On Wednesday 20 January, a contingent of OCDC volunteers set out in the wee hours of the morning for the Seattle Aquarium. The group, led by OCDC staff Janet Lamont and Rob Rountree were to be treated to a day at the aquarium. During the winter months the OCDC is closed, so the trip was a welcome opportunity to catch up with fellow volunteers.

Upon our arrival at the aquarium, we were welcomed by Marine Science Education Coordinator, Karen Matsumoto. While the aquarium is run by the City of Seattle, it often coordinates school trips in association with the OCDC and the Feiro Marine Life Center, so Karen was happy to meet our volunteers and get them up-close and personal with some of the marine life that swims within our marine sanctuary.



The sea otters and northern fur seals were an instant hit with visitors who delighted in their antics as they sunned and dove in their exhibits. It really was a treat to be able to observe these remarkably charming creatures within such close proximity. We also happened to reach the puffin and auk exhibit at feeding time which offered the chance to witness the birds chase and dive for their food.

As the tour continued, we caught a glimpse of the day-to-day work that goes on to keep the aquarium running smoothly. The facility’s multiple kitchens with walk-in-freezers would be the envy of any chef, particularly with their stock of fresh seafood including Dungeness crab, krill, and snapper. The keepers do their best to emulate natural feeding habits, as was demonstrated by their use of “sea otter ice toys” – hiding chunks of food in toys that will

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encourage the otters to forage for their meals.

We also explored holding tanks for quarantined specimens, and talked with some of the 75 aquarium staff onsite. One highlight was talking to a diver surfacing from the magnificent “Window on Washington Waters” exhibit – just one of many passionate volunteers donating their time to educate the public. Deep underground, we wove around a maze of pumps, filters and tanks that are the lungs of the complex.

At the conclusion of the guided tour, we were given free reign to explore the exhibits – from the sprawling touch-tanks to the UV-lit displays of coral and deep sea life. The Seattle Aquarium receives 800,000 visitors each year, and it is easy to see why – the exhibits hold a mysterious appeal.

The OCDC volunteers had a wonderful time and would like to extend their thanks to Karen and the Seattle Aquarium staff; who were gracious, accommodating and informative in answering our questions and making us feel at home as fellow ambassadors of marine life. Thanks also to Janet and Rob for putting together an amazing day for us – we enjoyed it immensely and look forward to our next trip!

Fascinating Fish

by Janet Lamont

I enjoyed Sam Brenkman’s talk From Headwaters to the Sea: Tools to Assess Fish Populations in Olympic National Park.

Sam is the Senior Fish Biologist for the park, a job description which literally covers a lot of

territory. Olympic National Park contains 12 major watersheds, two large lowland lakes, over 600 high lakes, and approximately 4000 linear miles of rivers and streams, which are home to 31 native freshwater species, 70 unique populations of Pacific salmonids, and 7 non-native fish species. It is one of the last places on the west coast to protect wild fish.



How is such a large and complex ecosystem studied? Sam’s talk highlighted some of the fascinating research being conducted here on the Peninsula.

Spawner surveys are used to count Beardslee trout redds in the headwaters of the Lyre River. The number of redds, or “nests” shows a dramatic increase since the implementation of the Lake Crescent catch-and-release policy in 2000.

Radiotelemetry: tagging 128 bull trout and tracking individuals for up to three years, both at fixed stations along the Hoh, and also by plane, boat, and along hiking trails. 55% of tagged fish entered the Pacific Ocean, 20% then entered other rivers along the coast; while some fish remained in the Hoh River the entire time.

Otolith (ear bone) chemistry: from a microscopic slice of an ear bone from a bull trout caught on the

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