

OLYMPIC COAST NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

OLYMPIC COAST DISCOVERY CENTER



V O L U N T E E R N E W S L E T T E R - S E P T 2 0 1 3

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 6th – OCDC & Feiro Volunteer Appreciation Potluck

Sept. 6th - 8th – Wooden Boat Festival, Port Townsend

Sept. 21st – CoastSavers International Coastal Clean-up!

Sept. 27th – OCDC Volunteer Cruise on *RV Tatoosh*

Oct. 5th - 6th – Last Chance Salmon Derby, LaPush

Oct. 12th - 13th – **Dungeness Crab & Seafood Fest, Port Angeles.** Olympic Coast Discovery Center will be open that weekend and will have a separate booth on the city pier.

The OCDC will remain open on weekends only (10am- 5pm) in September through Oct. 13th before closing for the fall/ winter.

THANK YOU ALL!

During the month of August, a total of **17** OCDC docents volunteered **129** hours in the Discovery Center, and an additional **27** hours in other supporting projects/outreach! Overall we received **1,537** visitors to the OCDC.

Thank you all for making 2013 run so swimmingly!



Calling all Beachcombers!

Registration is now open for the International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) to be held on Saturday, Sept. 21st! We all know CoastSavers because of their annual April beach clean-ups in honor of Earth Day, but this marks the first time Washington CoastSavers will take the lead in the state's participation in the **International** clean-up efforts, thanks to a grant from Ocean Conservancy and Bank of American. Sign up TODAY to become one of more than a **half million participants** in this global event at www.coastsavers.org! Learn more at www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/international-coastal-cleanup

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Makah Days

In late August, Neah Bay was humming with activity during its 89th annual Makah Days festival, drawing thousands of people out to celebrate the cultural and maritime history of the tribe. Over the course of three days, Makah Days festivities held traditional dancing and singing, canoe races, a royalty coronation, fireworks, a grand parade, slahal bone games, softball competitions, a salmon bake, and more.

Makah Days help promote cultural pride and family ties, with many of the Makah's closest tribal relatives visiting from Vancouver Island as if no international boundary line existed. Open to the public and passers-byers, Makah Days will make anyone feel at home on northwest corner of the Olympic Peninsula with its tribal hospitality. My favorite part about attending Makah Days was the feeling of openness and the ability to connect with those around us. You hear people greeting, "*Happy Makah Days!*" to you and to each other as if it were Christmas. The happiness and excitement is contagious, and you begin to feel the pride that the tribal members embody in their warmth. I cherished the conversations I had with members of the Makah and visiting tribal people from Vancouver

Island, who shared memories of their childhood and daily interactions with and use of their environment. It is easy to read about the interconnectedness of the all beings to their environment in books and papers, but if you attend Makah Days you really gather a sense of how those words come to life. You witness how it still takes a village to raise an individual.



The Makah Tribe is an important natural resource partner of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. We had the privilege of participating in the street fair and hosted an interactive information booth among over 100 other vendors, making paper sea otter puppets with many children and their parents or grandparents. Makah Days is a special place for anyone of any age to lift your spirits about humanity through the power of positivity in community.



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COASST / News from the Field

On August 10th Heidi and Liz ventured to Forks to train 7 new COASST volunteers. This allows for five unfilled COASST beach sites to now be surveyed- yay!

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



Washington COASST volunteers Larry and Patti stumbled upon a massive, recently beached Gray whale in mid-late summer. The initial necropsy shows that this 39-foot mature adult female died in a collision with a vessel *"smaller than a container ship."*



Photo credit: Russ Lewis

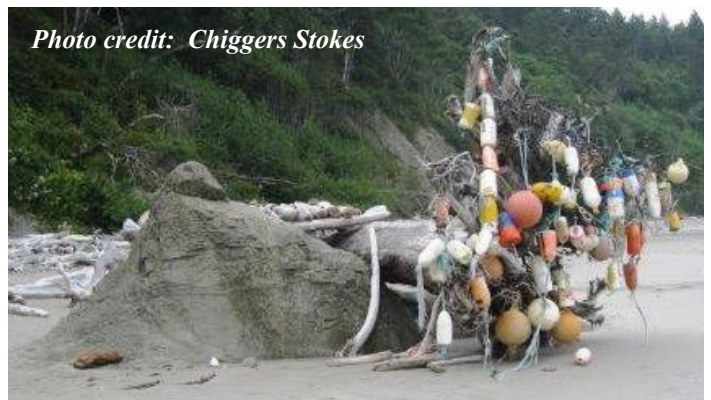
You often never know the story behind a piece of debris you find on the beach- where it came from or how it got there. OCNMS marine

debris volunteer Russ Lewis found not only an exception to that fact, but a remarkable story behind it as well. While performing his regular patrols on a stretch of Long Beach Peninsula, Russ would collect various pieces that he found particularly interesting in his garage. Reporter Kyle Iboshi and his cameraman from Channel 8 News in Portland asked to follow Russ while searching for relevant blog bits for the

"Washed Away" series on Japanese marine debris. Among other items, Russ showed Kyle a brightly colored volleyball with oriental lettering that he picked up earlier in June. Kyle immediately sent off photos of the volleyball to friends in Japan and was surprised to hear back later that same day. The ball read *"Takata High School,"* located in the town of Rikuzentakata, a town of about 23,000 people that had been devastated by the March 11, 2011 tsunami. Kyle told Russ in an email that friends in Rikuzentakata were ecstatic to hear about the volleyball, with one person stating, *"It's like the gods are smiling down on us."* He was happy to return the volleyball to Japan, enabling it to complete its epic odyssey. Russ quoted, *"This has been on a long voyage from a terrible disaster and it finally made landfall on the other side of the Pacific Ocean in Washington State and I was lucky enough to find it."*

Heidi Pedersen of OCNMS shared Russ's update with Nir Barnea, the West Coast Regional Coordinator for NOAA's Marine Debris Program, who passed it to the Consulate General of Japan in Seattle. The story aired on 8/23 and can be found at <http://www.kgw.com/lifestyle/Volleyball-returned-to-Japan-town-after-tsunami--220276161.html> with a video.

Photo credit: Chiggers Stokes



Marine debris float art at Mosquito Creek from loyal COASST and marine debris volunteer Chiggers Stokes.

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Creature Feature

Northern Elephant Seal **(*Mirounga angustirostris*)**

When you spot a mature male Northern elephant seal, you simply cannot mistake it. Their prominent, trunk-like proboscis and massive body size characterize these marine mammals. Although Northern elephant seals are not particularly common along our outer coast in Washington, some visitors to the Discovery Center report observations of molting elephant seals near our sanctuary. Northern elephant seals inhabit the eastern Pacific Ocean, breeding on remote sandy and gravel beaches during the spring and summer primarily between the California coast and Baja California Peninsula, with limited haul-out sites extending as far north as British Columbia. For the majority of the year, Northern elephants seals range widely into the eastern and central North Pacific to forage on fish, squid, octopus, hagfish, ratfish, small sharks and more. Males tend toward continental shelves whereas females occur more commonly in deeper open waters, both displaying impressive diving capabilities. Adults can dive down to over 1,500 meters feet deep and stay under for an average of 20 to 30 minutes at a time.



Clumsy and blubberous on land, elephant seals aggregate in colonies for the annual breeding season beginning in December. Dominant males defend their harem of pregnant females and will compete with intense displays of chest blows, loud snorts and grunts inflated out of their proboscis. Males are strikingly larger than females, a biological phenomenon known as sexual dimorphism,

and can mate with up to 50 females! Females will nurse their pups for about four weeks before weaning and leaving them on their own, and will be able to mate right away again. Pups must quickly become accomplished swimmers and divers over the course of four to six weeks before making their way out to sea to hunt and avoid predators.



Molting is the 3-5 week process when seals shed their outer layer of the skin and hair. During this time the animals must conserve body heat and concentrate their energy to new skin and hair growth, which means avoiding the cold waters of their temperate range. They will not eat for that period, and then face another long journey ahead covering a distance of more than 6,000 miles, a trip they take twice each year. Threats to Northern elephant seals include disease, pollution, loss of habitat, oil spills, entanglement in derelict fishing nets, and human disturbance. They are preyed upon by Great white sharks and Orcas.

