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# THE WILDSIDE



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## THE WILDSIDE


Fall 2019

When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), select Harbor WildWatch as your charity of choice and we will receive a donation. Thank you!


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### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Cocktails & Fishtales**  
at Gig Harbor Brewing  
5:30-7 p.m., 21+, FREE for  
Steward Club members

**September 18** - Climate Change  
and the Impacts on our Health (all  
ages; at Ocean5)

**October 16** - Investing in  
Ecosystem Service Credits

**November 20** - State of the  
Puget Sound Report

**Make Waves Annual Fundraiser**  
Thursday, September 12 from  
6-8 p.m. at Gig Harbor Yacht Club

**Pier Into The Night**  
Select Saturdays, October-March  
Check our calendar online for all  
of the dates!

**Donkey Creek Chum Festival**  
Saturday, November 16



**WHAT AM I?**  
ANSWER ON PAGE 2

### WHAT'S INSIDE



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## CREATURE FEATURE

### Smacks of Jellyfish

Kaytlyn Brabham, Intern with Harbor WildWatch

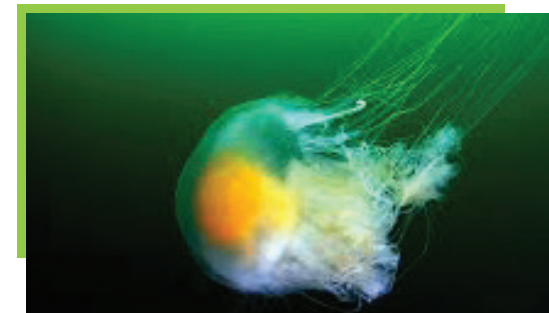
The Puget Sound is home to many weird and wonderful creatures: smacks of jellyfish being one of them! Jellyfish are not actually fish because they lack a defining feature of fish anatomy: a backbone. There are 60 species of jellies in the Puget sound and over 1,000 worldwide! Jellies are considered plankton because they drift (rather than swim), through the water. Their diet consists of plankton, fish eggs/larvae, and even smaller jellies. They use their long, and often thick, oral arms equipped with stinging cells to paralyze their prey then maneuver this prey to their mouth with their tentacles.

The three most common species you may find drifting in the Puget Sound are: Lion's Mane (*Cyanea capillata*), Egg Yolk (*Phacellophora camtschatica*), and Moon (*Aurelia aurita*) jellyfish. The Lion's Mane jelly comes in a variety of colors from cranberry red to plum purple with a bell (the smooth top part) up to a whopping seven feet in diameter. The Egg Yolk Jelly looks exactly as it is named, a translucent body with a bright yellow center, and a bell up to two feet. The Moon Jelly has a translucent body with four, small horseshoe shapes in the center of a bell that can grow up to a foot in diameter.

Jellies begin their lives in a polyp phase in the winter and fall months where they spend their time in benthic (bottom) environments attached to

surfaces such as wood or stones. The polyp phase is when the jelly's body is flower shaped with their mouth and tentacles pointing up. While attached to these surfaces, polyp phase jellies feed and clone themselves. In the spring and summer, they mature into a medusa phase where they reproduce and feed until they eventually die due to bacterial infections, plankton depletion, and predation. The medusa phase is when the jelly's body is umbrella shaped with the mouth and tentacles pointing down; the typical jellyfish that we see in the water!

*Kaytlyn interned for Harbor WildWatch during Summer 2019. She is graduating from Western Washington University in March 2020 with a major in Environmental Science, minor in Geology.*



Egg Yolk Jellyfish; photo by Greg Amptman.

Photo above: Stena, Science Specialist, helps Harbor WildWatch summer camp students conduct a water density experiment.



## Volunteer Feature

Carly Vester, Communications Specialist

We are so grateful for our supportive community and their passionate dedication to environmental education. Rebecca Unruh has been volunteering with Harbor WildWatch since she was 10 or 11 years old, and recently her family's foundation, the Mary and Jeffrey Smith Family Foundation, generously donated \$5,000 to Harbor WildWatch. We chatted with Rebecca and her mom, Jenny, about volunteering and charitable giving:



Stena & Rebecca; sunStar program, 2014

### How long has Rebecca been involved with Harbor WildWatch?

Rebecca - I started as a sunStar when I was about 10 or 11, and I've been involved ever since. I went through

being a sunStar, Junior Naturalist, and this past spring I went through Volunteer Training. I became involved because I love animals, so Harbor WildWatch was a great fit for me to learn more about the local wildlife, and help share that knowledge with others.

Jenny - My husband and I were thrilled to find Harbor WildWatch — a group that gets young people out into the local habitat, learning and protecting, and having fun at the same time... what more could we want?! We eagerly applied to the program for Rebecca. Now, five or six years later, she's still involved.

### What is your favorite thing about Harbor WildWatch?

Rebecca - I really enjoy working at the touch tanks during the farmer's markets. I like watching young kids come up to the tanks and be curious about what they're seeing. I also love when the kids will return with friends to share what they've seen, or come back at a later farmer's market to see what creatures are there. This shows that they're interested, and I love seeing that.

Jenny - I've always been interested in marine environments. Now, living so close to Puget Sound, taking care of our local habitat has become a passion for me. I love that Harbor WildWatch gets out into the community and promotes learning about and caring for our local marine environment.

### Why do you volunteer with Harbor WildWatch?

Rebecca - I volunteer with Harbor WildWatch because I love animals. Teaching people on beach walks and at

touch tanks is a way to help inspire them to help protect the Puget Sound and its marine life. If people learn about the Puget Sound and its creatures, they might be more inclined to do things that would benefit the local wildlife and protect our habitat.

### Why did you choose Harbor WildWatch to donate to?

Rebecca - Simply, I like what Harbor WildWatch does. I like their goals and programs, and it's an organization I've volunteered with for several years. I like that they're based in my town, Gig Harbor, and do their work locally. I've been impressed with the leaders of Harbor WildWatch: they're friendly and approachable, and have lots of energy as well as knowledge.

Jenny - Same as what Rebecca said. In addition, as a parent, the leaders and naturalists of Harbor WildWatch are phenomenal. They're friendly, approachable, knowledgeable, and have lots of energy and passion for their work.

### Tell us about charitable giving in your family, and your family's foundation:

Rebecca - My grandma involves her kids and grandkids (me!) when she donates to charities; she has us find charities we want to support.

Jenny - Thanks to the hard work of my late dad, my mom has assets that allow her the pleasure of supporting charities that she thinks are important. Of course, there are many that fall into that category. In the spirit of honoring the



Rebecca & Rhubarb; farmer's market, 2018

innate goodness of my dad, my mom started a family foundation to foster the good deeds of organizations, some involved in medical research as well as some dedicated to animal welfare and environmental causes. My sister and I are vice presidents, and help with the decision making. Recently, we decided to start including our children — my mom's grandchildren — to get them thinking about charitable giving, and find charities they would like to support. Our kids now attend our yearly meetings, and suggest charities they think are worthy of support, and justify their reasons. Having been a steady volunteer at HWW for several years, Rebecca proposed Harbor WildWatch, and informed our family of the organization's mission and programs, and her experience and knowledge with the group. Happily, it was selected as a recipient of our family's foundation's distributions this year!

What Am I? (Page 1):  
Opalescent Squid (*Doryteuthis opalescens*) Eggs



## Sit, Stay, Science: Whale Poop Research

Stena Troyer, Science Specialist

If you've owned a dog, it is likely that you've taught them some tricks: sit, shake, down, rollover. You've also likely heard about dogs trained for jobs such as search and rescue, hunting, herding, therapy, and sled racing (to name a few). But, did you know that scientists are using man's best friend to *study whales*? There is a team of pups in the Salish Sea that have been trained to use their keen sense of smell to sniff out, of all things, whale poop!

Scat samples contain a surprising amount of information. When it comes to studying orcas, examining their waste is a non-invasive way to gather a suite of great information. Without getting close to an individual whale, researchers can analyze a sample of whale poo and determine the specific individual, species, sex, reproductive status, stress hormone levels, nutritional status, toxicant levels, disease state, parasites, prey genetics (including what type of salmon and where the salmon comes from... wow!), and even microplastics. This information is compiled into a health database which is especially important during this critical period of recovery efforts for the threatened southern resident orca populations (J, K, and L pods). To gather all of this incredible data, researchers need to find and collect the whales' waste (okay, yes, killer whales/orcas are technically the largest species of dolphin, but, common names and alliterations for the win). According to Deborah Giles, the Director of Science and Research at the nonprofit Wild Orca, "finding [whale] poop is like finding a moving needle in a moving haystack." It's hard to do. That's where the Conservation Canine team comes into play to make this science possible.

Giles' own rescue dog, Eba, has been trained along with other play-motivated pooches to locate floating scat samples from as far away as a nautical mile from the whales. This works by having the research vessel follow far behind or parallel to a group of orcas (200-400 meters

away). When the scent of orca scat is detected, the dog's behavior changes and the handler alerts the boat captain to steer into the wind. They follow the dog's cues until the team arrives at a fecal sample and it can be collected. Because dogs have such a great sense of smell, this is an

incredible way to reduce sampling bias in that even very small samples have an equal probability of being detected. The dog is rewarded for its find with a hearty dose of playtime. Conservation Canines trains play-motivated dogs over food-motivated dogs because they do not want to withhold food from these hard workers. How cool is it that playtime can motivate a pooch to find poop, which in turn helps us to better understand and better protect an iconic species like orcas?! (I think, *whaley cool!*).

The work of Conservation Canines doesn't just focus on southern resident killer whales (SRKW), either. Since the SRKW's haven't been very 'residential' this summer, Giles' team is also collecting samples from the humpback whales that are making a comeback in the Salish Sea. (Fun side note: Netflix will be featuring Giles and her team collecting humpback scat in an original documentary featuring poop, which comes out sometime next year). There are also Conservation Canine projects in progress that have dogs using their sniffers to help scientists study grizzly bear movement in the Canadian Rockies, wolf recovery in the South Cascades, Northern spotted owl research, and more.

If you're an old dog looking for a new trick to help orcas, you don't need to smell poop to do it. One way you can help endangered SRKWs is to purchase local salmon that are marketed with the name of their origin river listed. This ensures that the fish you're eating have already made it past the gauntlet of hungry killer whales, being that a significant threat to SRKWs is that they do not have enough food.



Left to right, the 2019 team: Dr. Sam Wasser, Dr. Deborah Giles, CK9 Eba, and Sadie Youngstrom. Photo by UW Conservation Biology.

## An Octo-Pile of Fun

### What is the plural of octopus?

Octopuses or octopodes. The word "octopus" is Latinized Ancient Greek, from októpous (ὀκτώπους), gender masculine, whose plural is októpodes (ὀκτώποδες).

### How do you make an octopus laugh?

You give it ten-tickles!

## KIDS CORNER

