You’ve probably guessed by now, summer will look different at Harbor WildWatch this year. From the beginning of the pandemic, our team has met weekly via Zoom to answer the questions we all have and deciding the best way to support our community, volunteers, and team as we make digital pivots. We have taken our plans week-by-week, looking further ahead in broad strokes of contingency. I look forward to these meetings every week for the camaraderie over morning coffee and sanity of planning during such an uncertain time.

In fact, it seems that everyone’s summer is going to look a little different. Maybe you had a special event, travel plans, hopes to go camping, a job or personal prospect... It looks different now.

Our team hopes that during this unsure time you can find your love for the environment, stewardship, and community through Harbor WildWatch. We miss all of you.

Trust us when I say that you’re constantly in our thoughts and considerations for our programs. Summer may look a little different, but different might be a new reason to stay curious and look at new opportunities.

What’s next for Harbor WildWatch this summer? We joke that our lives are scheduled around the tides. If there’s a low tide, chances are, we’re at the beach! Last year we led close to 40 public beach walks from June-August, plus weekly touch tanks at the Farmer’s Market, Summer Sounds Concerts, and Movie nights.

While we are going to continue exploring our beautiful, local beaches digitally this summer, we also plan to mix things up a bit and share other Puget Sound beaches. This includes traveling north to the San Juan Islands and west to Tongue Point near Port Angeles. We hope that we can bring the familiar intertidal creatures to our community, as well as some new surprises they may not normally see in the south Puget Sound intertidal zone! Think urchins, sea slugs, kelp, and more.

Tune into both our Facebook page and YouTube channel all summer long for videos, most of which will be live and interactive.

And as always, thank you. Your support during this time means a great deal to all of us. We invite you to reach out to us if you have any specific ways we can support you. Maybe you’re unable to go to a particular beach, or you simply have a burning science question. We’re here for you.

We hope that you are staying healthy, taking a breather when and if you can, and finding a way to find the sunny spots... even if they’re in your own home!
Volunteer Feature

Every year at Harbor WildWatch’s Annual Meeting, we celebrate our wonderful volunteers. Cyndy Dillon has been a volunteer with Harbor WildWatch for over ten years and we are excited to recognize her as our Community Science Volunteer of the year! We sat down with Cyndy for a quick Q&A to talk about her experience with Harbor WildWatch, what she’s learned, and her favorite parts about being a volunteer.

Tell us about becoming involved with Harbor WildWatch: I trained as a Beach Watcher volunteer in Kitsap County in 2009 with Joyce Murray, who told us about Harbor WildWatch. Beach Watchers let the few volunteers from Gig Harbor use Harbor WildWatch hours for our volunteer commitment. I also enjoyed getting back into marine biology that I studied in college.

What programs have you volunteered at? Mostly Get Your Feet Wet beach walks, a few Pier Into the Night touch tanks, and a couple of low tide Beach Surveys, but I also volunteer with Stena in Puget Sound Seabird Surveys at Purdy Sand Spit.

What is your favorite part about volunteering with Harbor WildWatch? Learning about invertebrates from the incredibly smart beach naturalists, who are so enthusiastic and always sharing new information.

Do you have any fun memories from volunteering that you would like to share? Watching the excitement of the kids in discovering marine life, such as a young boy who found a gurneel under a rock at Kopachuck and raced to gather others to observe it. I am also astounded by seastars & Beyond students who sound like PhD candidates when they describe specific invertebrates. One not so fun memory at Narrows Beach was when a toddler touched a beached lion’s mane jelly and wouldn’t stop screaming, which set off his older brother too. We offered some meat tenderizer for the sting, but the mother whisked the boy off to an urgent care clinic.

Is there anything else you would like to share? Harbor WildWatch has done a tremendous job adapting to lockdown requirements in making information available online to volunteers and the public. (Thanks for the kind words, Cyndy!)

Con-“grad”-ulations!

We are so proud of our graduating Harbor WildWatch students and volunteers — congratulations to each and every one of them! Pictured are Max and Michael. Michael joined our organization 9 years ago and he brought Max the very next year. Since then, these two have put in an impressive amount of hours serving as volunteers and interns and we are so grateful for their hard work and dedication over the years. Both are planning to pursue the sciences at University. When we received this photo of the two of them outside Harbor WildWatch, our whole team felt the joy and pride. Thank you both for inspiring stewardship of the Puget Sound — we are so proud of both of you!