

THE WILDSIDE

LEARN. HAVE FUN.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Time Sensitive Material
Fall Issue #22
Issue Date - September 2022
Published Quarterly



253.514.0187 | WWW.HARBORWILDWATCH.ORG

Prefer to go paperless? Sign up for the online newsletter by emailing stena@harborwildwatch.org

UPDATES FROM HWW

Fall Fun is in the Air

Lindsey Stover, Executive Director

THE WILDSIDE

September 2022

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, select Harbor WildWatch as your charity of choice and we will receive a donation. Thank you!

The end of summer brings a little sadness to the Harbor WildWatch team as we say goodbye to the warm days spent exploring the intertidal zone. But when I'm feeling down about the end of beach season, I try to remember that two of my personal favorite activities are right around the corner.

OUR STAFF



Lindsey Stover
Executive Director
Lindsey@harborwildwatch.org



Rachel Easton
Education Director
Rachel@harborwildwatch.org



Stena Troyer
Science Specialist
Stena@harborwildwatch.org



Jennifer Beard
Bookkeeper (Volunteer)
Jennifer@harborwildwatch.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Cocktails & Fishtales Facebook LIVE at 6pm

September 21
*At the Intersection of
Art & Science*
with Jen Strongin

October 19 Larval Crab Monitoring with the Becker Lab

November 16
*Climate Change &
Copepods*
with Kristofer Kenneth

Make Waves Annual Fundraiser October 20, 6:30pm Gig Harbor Yacht Club RSVP Online



WHAT AM I?

ANSWER ON PAGE 2



Please recycle

WHAT'S INSIDE

CHUM FESTIVAL
SCIENCE WITH STENA
STEWARDSHIP TIP

2
3
3

KIDS CORNER

Photo above: Summer beach walk at Penrose Point State Park.

Pier Into the Night kicks off our fall calendar on October 1st, and every first Saturday of the month through March. This fan-favorite gives participants a glimpse into the underwater world of Gig Harbor Bay while staying dry and warm on the surface. No two Pier events are alike - with the chance to see meadows of swaying feather duster worms, schools of squid, or even a red octopus hiding in buried treasure! Be sure to join Rachel, Stena, and our incredible volunteer dive team as they explore the nooks and crannies of the pier structures in our downtown community this fall and winter.

Not far behind is our 8th Annual Make Waves Benefit on Thursday, October 20th. This event will bring all our supporters together in-person for the first time since 2019 at the Gig Harbor Yacht Club. Guests will enjoy delicious bites from Ocean5, signature drinks by Heritage Distilling Company, and a fun-filled program and Raise the Paddle event with the Harbor WildWatch team. This year is more important than ever as we are raising funds to bring our staffing back to pre-pandemic levels so that we may better fulfill our mission of inspiring stewardship for the Salish Sea. You can help us reach our \$40,000 goal by purchasing tickets on our website today!

If you have any questions about Make Waves or any other event or activity, please contact me directly at lindsey@harborwildwatch.org. Thank you for your support and enjoy your fall Steward Club newsletter!

What's the difference between a dog and a marine biologist?

One wags a tail, the other tags a whale.

If you turn a boat upside down, did you know you can wear it like a hat?

It's capsized.



Chum Fest 2022

Rachel Easton, Education Director

It is hard to imagine fall will be on our doorstep in a few weeks, but all the signs are there. The low tides aren't as low, and the beach is strewn with fallen leaves, and there's a bit of a chill to the air in the early mornings while I sip my coffee and listen to the birds. The blackberries have ripened, spider webs hang from every branch and I'm buzzing around the house trying to get everything ready for school to start. Backpacks have been located and cleaned out, lunch boxes washed and ready, and school supplies purchased and

ready to be used. While we are regrouping, planning and reflecting, the shortening days and cooler nights signal to salmon that it is time to get moving. While they are hundreds of miles away, chum salmon, who have been foraging and growing large out in the Pacific Ocean, begin their long migration homeward, timing their arrival with the fall rains in late November. Gig Harbor has been welcoming salmon back to Donkey Creek for 15 years with the Donkey Creek Chum Festival, best known as Chum Fest. While we took two years off due to the pandemic, the salmon had no such interruption in their tightly held schedule. This year, we will welcome them back with the largest Chum Festival yet! We are expanding the event to two days, November 19 AND 20th, 2022. Various vendors, non-profits, artists, and entertainers will be there to celebrate and share all things salmon with our community. This expansion to Chum Fest is made possible by funding from Arts WA, Gig Harbor Rotary Foundation, and the Gig Harbor Lodging Tax Advisory Committee.



Donkey Creek is one of the few urban streams where salmon viewing is possible, thanks to the "daylighting" and stream restoration. Short creeks like Donkey Creek, favor chum salmon, the last species to return to the creeks each year and a species that travels the shortest distance in the fresh water. Most of the chum spawn less than five miles from the saltwater. After spawning, with the next generation of fish tucked safely in gravel beds, the adults die and their bodies enrich the surrounding habitat, feeding mammals, birds, and small invertebrates, and most importantly, fertilizing the riparian plants with marine nutrients. When the eggs hatch around January, the tiny fry will stay in the creeks only a few months before heading out to sea for a few years.

Chum Fest allows us to share these incredible animals with the people in our community, many of whom have never glimpsed a salmon that wasn't on their dinner plate, or tossed by seafood vendors in Seattle. It's our chance to celebrate everything that salmon overcome in their migration and highlight ways that we can help make their journey more successful. Our focus is on inspiring stewardship for the stream habitat, and making choices that ensure there are plenty of salmon for all to enjoy. And as always, there's a good bit of fun involved. Who doesn't want to make a salmon print, get their face painted, guess the weight of a salmon, watch a salmon dissection, watch dragon boat and kayak races, or see wild fish make their way upstream? Be sure to mark both days on your calendar for the best and biggest Chum Fest yet.

The leather limpet (Onchidella borealis) is more land slug than limpet but is still found intertidally. This cryptic mollusk has no shell and no gills. Rather they have papillae along the edge of their foot (the bumpy knobs) that produce a noxious chemical to protect against predation and they associate with air bubbles to breath when the tide is high. If you are so lucky to see a leather limpet, make sure to take a very close look to notice their two adorable eyes on the ends of short stalks and maybe even give this slug a wink!



What Am I? (Page 1):



Community Science

Stena Troyer, Science Specialist

Baseline monitoring is not always the most glorious of community science opportunities. Ecological change tends to be slow and, thankfully, catastrophic events are few and far between, so observing big changes is not the norm. However, an upcoming project with Pierce Conservation District and PenMet Parks is putting a new pep in our community science step!

For many years, the concrete bulkhead at the Tacoma DeMolay Sand Spit Nature Preserve has been failing, with large chunks of concrete breaking apart and migrating along the beach. Shoreline armoring, such as bulkheads or seawalls, are intended to protect the developments on land but there are unintended consequences to the nearshore environment. This includes depriving beaches of sand, accelerating the erosion of adjacent beaches, hindering beach access, and the ecological outcomes that are associated with these impacts. With the plethora of science revealing the negative effects bulkheads impose on the beach environment, paired with a case of a deteriorating bulkhead, a bulkhead removal project at this site is a no brainer.

Pierce Conservation District is spearheading the project to remove the failing concrete bulkhead and add beach nourishment at the Tacoma DeMolay Sand Spit Nature Preserve. While the project start date is yet to be determined, understanding how this project might change this beach has already been taking place. Harbor WildWatch has been collecting baseline biodiversity data biannually at this beach since the summer of 2013 making us an ideal partner organization. We are excited to use our existing dataset and assist with understanding the changes that a project of this magnitude might have on a site. To do this, we have added some additional monitoring procedures

STEWARDSHIP TIP

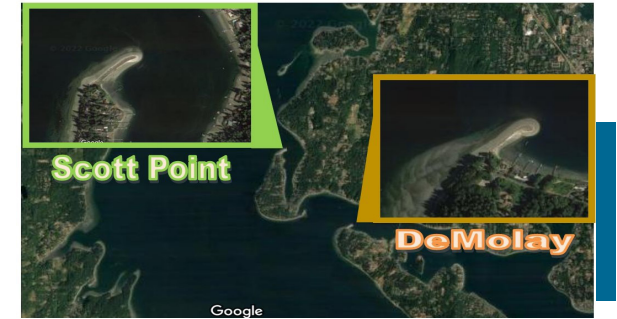
Leave the Leaves

Rachel Easton Education Director

Deciduous trees lose their leaves as the temperature drops and day length shortens. Many people spend hours raking up leaves and disposing of them in landfills, but those leaves are important to the health of the tree and the surrounding habitat. Leaves form a natural mulch around the base of the trees, blocking weeds and locking in moisture. Leaves help prevent run off and erosion as well. With leaves in place, water can slowly filter down into the ground, without them, water drops can cause erosion and soils are washed away. Leaves also provide important cover and food for beneficial insects and worms. Many species of caterpillars of butterflies and moths will overwinter in the leaf litter before emerging in the spring. Many birds will use leaf litter as nest material in the spring as well. Leaves can also insulate and help prevent frost damage. And leaves return nutrients to the soil which aids in healthy tree growth. Lawns do benefit from leaf removal so that light can still reach the blades of grass, but consider mowing with a mulching blade to chop the leaves finely so they can be left in place. Experienced gardeners know the value of leaves as dry matter for compost and will gladly collect leaves from lawns to create soil amendments for vegetable and flower gardens. So before you reach for the rake, think of all the ways that leaves enrich your yard and leave the leaves!

and have added another monitoring site that is a close match in composition and location to act as a control.

Having a comparison or control site is an important way to help document the change that is sure to occur as the bulkhead removal gets underway. While there is no perfect control site when it comes to ecological experiments, we sure connected with a darn good one. Just north of Fox Island is a privately owned sand spit called Scott Point. Comparing the two spits on a map, you might have trouble telling them apart! We are extremely grateful to the property owner for allowing our team to access their beach and conduct the same baseline monitoring efforts at this new location. And that's not all!



A key ecological system that is impacted by the presence of seawalls is forage fish. Forage fish are a handful of different fish species including sand lance, herring, anchovies, and surf smelt which make up a significant piece of the marine food web. From seabirds to salmon, forage fish are a critical part of many other species' diets. And a healthy beach habitat is critical to successful spawning of forage fish. As part of this seawall removal, Harbor WildWatch Community Scientists will also be partaking in monthly forage fish surveys at both beach locations.

With our powers combined, we are putting some serious COMMUNITY in this science. If you are interested in joining the effort, email Stena@harborwildwatch.org and she'll make sure you get in on the fun!