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Winter Issue #20
Issue Date - January 2022
Published Quarterly

THE WILDSIDE



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THE WILDSIDE

January 2022

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UPDATES FROM HWW

Year in Review and the Year Ahead

Lindsey Stover, Executive Director

The Harbor WildWatch team is ready for another year of providing access to quality environmental education to those in our community and beyond. This means offering a combination of digital and in-person programs that will educate and inspire participants to be good stewards of the Salish Sea – or whichever body of water they are near.

Before we talk about what's upcoming, let's quickly review what your financial contribution helped us accomplish last year. A total of 322 programs were delivered with over 500,000 views and 5,286 participants in 2021. This includes:

- 200 digital programs with 528,203 views (and counting)
- 76 in-person activities with 728 participants
- 46 STEM workshops and field courses with 804 students
- 4,482 visitors at the Skansie Visitor & Interpretive Center

Compared to 2020, this is an increase of 42% in programs delivered and 19% in digital views! We are delighted with this progress and confident that our impact will continue to grow in 2022.

So, what do you have to look forward to in the next few months? For starters, get ready for a series of digital night beach walks January through March that are sure to show you a side of the beach you haven't seen before. We are also excited for the return of our popular monthly speaker series, Cocktails & Fishtales, in February via Facebook LIVE. Our Community Science activities will continue as well, with seabird surveys and an oyster predation study on the Key Peninsula. With so many opportunities this winter, we hope you find a program (or two) that you will enjoy. Be sure to watch your inbox for weekly updates about our upcoming events, creature features, stewardship tips, and videos from the field. Thanks, and enjoy your newsletter!

What do you get when you cross a shark with a snowman?
Frostbite!

What do you call the stuff in a sharks teeth?
Slow swimmers.



Photo above: Leather star

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

February 16
Salish Sea Seabirds
with Dr. Peter Hodum

March 16
Seastar Recovery
with Chris Jendrey & Mo Turner

April 20
Coastal Community Science
With Rebecca Mostow

Pier Into the Night

Join us at a local dock for a peek beneath the Pier
February 5, 6pm
March 5, 7pm



WHAT AM I?

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WHAT'S INSIDE



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KIDS CORNER

Volunteer Training

Rachel Easton, Education Director

When we moved to all digital programming at the start of the pandemic, one of the things I missed the most was working alongside our amazing volunteers. With digital programs we grew our audience, but things just didn't feel the same. Not only are our volunteers a huge help to us, many of them have become good friends too. While things aren't quite back to normal, our volunteer program will resume this spring and I couldn't be happier.

Things will look a bit different in 2022 compared to past years. We have adapted our traditional training to the digital model and will be offering 6 weekly training sessions via Zoom followed by a low tide field trip to the beach. By the end of our training, our hope is that volunteers feel educated and empowered to speak on a variety of topics related to the stewardship of the Salish Sea. And because our motto is "Learn. Have Fun" we guarantee lots of smiles will be shared along the way.



The six workshops will cover a wide variety of topics, including the formation of Puget Sound, beach etiquette, basics of good environmental interpretation, and tips and tricks for speaking to the visitors at the beach. We will go into what makes the Salish Sea such a unique and abundant habitat, how it was formed, and what human influences are affecting it. Volunteers will learn some basics of biology as we showcase the variety of species and what makes each phylum interesting. And we will cover our history as an organization, volunteer roles and expectations, our mission and vision, and the Salish Sea as an ecosystem.



The low tide field trip will allow volunteers a chance to test their knowledge while at the beach and learn from one another. We will practice locating animals in each of the



intertidal zones and take turns interpreting to one another. My favorite part of volunteer training is when all the ideas click into place and are put into practice. I absolutely love watching volunteers encourage and learn from one another.

If it seems like a lot, that's because it is! Rather than try and cram that all into one or two training days, we decided to slow it down, stretch it out and embrace the flexibility of digital learning combined with getting our feet wet together at the beach. Whether you are a new volunteer with lots to learn or an experienced veteran of the intertidal zone with experience to share, we guarantee you will *learn and have fun* at this year's volunteer training.

For more information or to sign up, visit our website, or email Rachel@harborwildwatch.org. I'm excited for our low tide season to begin and I especially can't wait to see all my new and old friends in-person once again. Until then, stay curious.



What Am I? (Page 1):
An aggregation of fresh squid eggs. Each elongated white sac contains up to 300 eggs from an individual female squid. As the eggs mature inside the protective outer casing, look closely to see if you can see the rice sized babies, eyes, tentacles, and all!



Protect the Puffins

Stena Troyer, Science Specialist

Did you know that there are breeding populations of tufted puffins in Washington State!? This was at first exciting news to me because I love puffins—they're such striking birds! Tufted puffins are known for their appearance during the breeding season with their sleek black feathers, bright white face, brilliant orange bill, and most notably, the tufts of buttery feathers above their eyes that extend in long swoops down their neck. And now I am sorry to share that unfortunate news that this lovable bird is predicted to be absent from WA in the next 40 years.

Historically, the tufted puffin was considered common in WA with 44 nesting colonies documented throughout the San Juan Islands, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and along the outer coast of the Olympic Peninsula. In the early 1900's, the population of tufted puffins along the outer coast was estimated to be 25,000 birds. Over the next several decades those numbers remained stable with surveys done in the 1970's and 80's estimating 23,000 birds breeding at 35 colonies. Then things tanked. In 2009, surveys found nesting birds at only 19 sites with fewer than 3,000 puffins. According to scientists, counts since then have only gotten worse with colonies in the Salish Sea shrinking to almost nothing. This decline of tufted puffins in Washington corresponds with a pattern of decline across their southern distribution including CA, OR, and Japan.

There are many reasons for decline in WA. This includes direct events like an oil spill event off Cape Flattery in 1991 that killed thousands of seabirds including an estimated 9% of Washington puffins. But also includes the changing ocean

conditions because of climate change, declines in marine productivity, increased bald eagle predation, human impacts and more. These changes make it hard for puffins to find enough forage fish to eat and makes it harder for them to raise their chicks (which are adorably called, pufflings). At the state level, tufted puffins have been a candidate for listing since 1998 and have been identified by the Washington Audubon Society as a species at high risk from the impacts of climate change.

However, because tufted puffin populations are robust in their core Alaskan habitats, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not list tufted puffins as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. There's a lot of complexity around listing a species as threatened or endangered (state or federally). To some degree, it's nice to know that there is enough evidence to keep the tufted puffin off those lists and consider the decline of tufted puffins in WA and beyond, more of a range contraction. But talk about a significant bummer to realize that the southern range of the tufted puffin no longer has the resources available to meet their needs and it is likely that these birds will abandon the breeding habitats in Washington within my lifetime.

It's one thing to endure this unfortunate shift as long as plenty of puffins continue to thrive in Alaska. However, if threats to puffin habitat continue to go unchanged, a decline here could be the signal of larger problems to come in their core habitat. I'd prefer to have the proactive conversation about puffin conservation so join virtually us for the first Cocktails & Fishtales event of 2022 and learn more with Dr. Peter Hodum!

SCIENCE WITH STENA

STEWARDSHIP TIP

Rachel Easton, Education Director

When the sun shines and the water is as smooth as glass, you simply must stop and stroll along the shore. I was driving across the Purdy spit and decided to stop and get my feet wet. I could see lots of debris along the strand line and stopped to investigate. I saw lots of the expected things like large logs, uprooted eelgrass, seaweed, and some shells. But by far what dominated the debris on the beach was yard waste. Branches of curly willow, a whole Japanese maple tree, juniper bushes, some firewood, tangles of English ivy, and even a Christmas tree were all littered along the beach as far as I could see. While those items are biodegradable, they should not be disposed of in the Puget Sound. In addition to being an unsightly eyesore along our beautiful beaches, floating yard waste creates a navigational hazard for boaters and can cause animal entanglement. In addition to taking months, if not years to break down fully, yard waste may also be a source of harmful pollution from pesticides and fertilizers. A much better place for yard waste is a compost pile or the local transfer station which collects yard waste and turns it into compost for free. Please keep the beaches and water quality nice for everyone and dispose of yard waste properly. Thank you!

