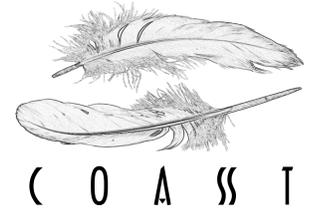


The Coasst Line



News for COASST Citizen Scientists

Fall 2004



Sue Trevathan and Carol Elder assess the oil spill cleanup efforts in Quartermaster Harbor.

Volunteers Respond to Dalco Passage Oil Spill

On October 14, 2004, a “mystery” spill was reported in the Dalco Passage area of south Puget Sound, affecting several miles of beach on nearby Vashon and Maury islands as well as the waters of Quartermaster Harbor, an Important Bird Area and wintering ground for Western Grebes. With seven beaches in the area, COASST volunteers responded to the crisis by stepping up their survey frequency. Thanks to everyone who responded to the spill, especially volunteers who conducted *daily* surveys to monitor possible effects on seabirds and beaches.

No dead birds have been documented by COASST to date, and officials are still working to identify the spiller. While it appears that seabirds largely escaped harm in this incident, there is concern about the possibility of larger spills in the future. To improve oil spill response, Governor Gary Locke has organized an Oil Spill Early Action Task Force with representatives from tribes, corporations, conservation organizations, community groups, government entities and resource management agencies. The panel will make recommendations for improving notification procedures and response policies, and for the use of better response technologies. A final report is expected in January.

Please check the “Breaking News” section of www.coasst.org for updates on this spill. We will be paying special attention to the results of future surveys in the area and possible effects on Western Grebes, a species of concern in Washington.

Volunteer Survey Reveals High Level of Satisfaction, Suggestions for Improvement

Thanks to everyone who took the time to fill out our volunteer survey and provide us with candid, thoughtful feedback. We were thrilled with the 50% response rate, which allowed us to better understand what we are doing well, and how we can improve.

Communication is one area that is both effective (via *The Coasst Line* and *COASST Reports*) and in need of improvement (quarterly phone calls and timely response to your inquiries). We promise to work on our weak spots. Nonetheless, we are glad to know that 73% of respondents are *very* satisfied with the program. However, only 10% described COASST as *fun*, and we’re not sure what to make of that . . .

While we are always amazed by the efforts of our volunteers, we were especially heartened by the number of people willing to staff a COASST booth at community events, host a reporter or donor on a beach survey, assist with fundraising, create thank you notes or throw a house party. Thank you for your offers of increased involvement! As opportunities arise, we will be in touch to solicit your help.

The winner of our drawing for a COASST rain jacket is John Haxton, who surveys Oregon Mile 255. Congratulations, John!

Service Milestones Recognized with Rewards

Just being outdoors during a survey can be its own reward, but COASST is pleased to honor volunteers who have achieved specific milestones. Cool COASST gear was mailed in October to those who achieved specific benchmarks (see table at right) during the 2003 – 2004 fiscal year. Please note that we are adding travel time into the “hours” calculations for next year, so make sure you are using the most current COASST datasheet with the “travel time” field. You can download the data sheet from our web site or request copies from the COASST office.

| Hours | Surveys | Reward |
|-------|---------|---------------|
| 40 | | Water bottle |
| | 25 | Clipboard |
| 150 | | Messenger bag |
| | 75 | Raincoat |

New Volunteers Expand Coverage in South Puget Sound, Establish First Hood Canal Beach

COASST welcomes the 34 volunteers who recently attended our training sessions for residents of Vashon Island and south Puget Sound, hosted by the Vashon Public Library and the Tahoma Audubon Society. This group of enthusiastic COASSTers will enable us to monitor long-term effects of the Dalco Passage Oil Spill, expand our coverage in south Puget Sound, and establish our first beach along Hood Canal.

Please Take Note of Yellow Drift Cards

For the next year, Portland State University will release biodegradable yellow cards each month to model the potential movement of *Spartina*, an invasive cordgrass, out of Willapa Bay in Washington. If you find a drift card, note the card number, time, date and location where the card was found. Please report this information to COASST and to the Spartina Watch Program at spartinawatch@pdx.edu or 1-800-880-6568 (503-725-9767 in the local area). To learn more about the project, visit www.clr.pdx.edu/projects/spartina.



How to Get Feedback on Bird ID and Other Issues

If you would like feedback regarding bird ID, please attach a note to your datasheet and we'll attempt to answer your question(s) within one week. And when Science Coordinator Todd Hass verifies the data you collect, he will provide you with additional feedback if necessary. If you have other questions that require a more timely response, please contact us at info@coasst.org or (206) 221-6893.

Funding Update

COASST Evaluates Expansion into Alaska

COASST thanks the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program for a \$10,000 contract to study the feasibility of expanding COASST into Alaska, which is home to 62 million seabirds of 38 species. COASST surveys in Alaska would provide the baseline data against which to measure catastrophic events, enable the detection of both natural and human-associated mortality events, and provide monitoring for species of concern.

Gift Launches New Fundraising Efforts

COASST expresses appreciation to Sherold Barr and Extraordinary Work Group of Eugene, Oregon for a gift of \$500 designated for fundraising database software and consulting. We appreciate the generous contribution, which will advance our efforts to diversify the organization's funding sources.

If you would like to receive this newsletter via e-mail in PDF format, please send a request to Shelly Ross, COASST Outreach Coordinator, at sross2@u.washington.edu.

Can you identify these birds?

Found: 6/5/04
Oregon Mile 196
Yachats, OR
Bill: 110mm
Wing: 50cm
Tarsus: 95mm



photo by Bert Johnstone



photo by Bert Johnstone

Found: 7/17/04
Oregon Mile 196
Yachats, OR
Bill: 22mm
Wing: 12cm
Tarsus: 25mm

Found: 8/17/04
Oregon Mile 255
Neskowin, OR
Bill: 45mm
Wing: 25cm
Tarsus: 45mm



photo by John Haxton

Bottom) Pelagic Cormorant

Middle) Cassin's Auklet

Top) Black-Footed Albatross

Answers: