

The Coasst Line



News for COASST Citizen Scientists

Spring/Summer 2009

Citizen science front and center

Are your ears burning? In the past few months, citizen science and COASST have taken center stage from California to Alaska, highlighting the achievements of all 540 of you.

“There’s a lot of interest from both sides: scientists looking to become more involved with local communities, and citizens who want to be part of scientific discovery happening in their own backyard,” remarks our own Kate Litle, now with Washington Sea Grant. As part of her new position as citizen science specialist, Kate will take over a project started by former COASST intern Chelsey Funis—cataloguing the amazing diversity of citizen science programs in Puget Sound, from monitoring stream water quality in Whatcom County to counting Pigeon Guillemots in Island County to keeping tabs on marine fish and invertebrates throughout Puget Sound.

How does COASST fit into the mix? “When COASST was just beginning,” recalls Julia, “I had to do a lot of convincing: that citizens could take accurate measurements and work out closely related species—COASST has done that and more, becoming a great model for up-and-coming programs.” At the recent Center for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) meeting in Port Townsend, COASST was one of three projects profiled in the session: Elements of Starting Up a Citizen Science Program.

In Alaska, where changes in sea ice, bird distributions, and increased erosion have already been documented, there’s a grassroots effort to start pulling information from all sectors to better understand what’s going on. “Citizen science is becoming increasingly important. People are beginning to see

themselves as part of the environment. COASST is an important tool in the process of merging science and local and traditional knowledge,” adds Nora Deans, director of COSEE Alaska.

While some of us might have a hard time imagining “citizen science” in a sentence without “beached birds,” COASST is responding to the bloom of citizen science enthusiasm by looking into developing other data collection opportunities. Early results from our recent satisfaction survey suggest COASSTers are looking for both marine mammal and beach debris modules. Thanks to the work of UW honors student Laurel Kanawyer, who started with excellent material from the Marine Mammal Stranding Network, we’ve carved out the beginnings of a COASST key to marine mammals and sea turtles.

For our science partners, the value of data collected from such a broad geographic area speaks for itself, but COASST staff are keenly aware why citizen comes first in citizen science: COASST’s success relies on all your enthusiasm and hard work.



Kate Litle (right) represents COASST at the Center for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence meeting in Port Townsend, Washington.

COASSTers' Curiosities

By nature, COASSTers, are pretty inquisitive and intrepid, a “leave no pile of wrack unturned” group of folks. Here we highlight a few non-feathered quips and oddities from COASST surveys. Enjoy! (Something silly or strange on your beach? Pass it our way: info@coasst.org)

Rose and George Power suggested a potential *Jaws* sequel, “Revenge of the Birds” with this photo of two Glaucous-winged Gulls chowing on a salmon shark carcass at Long Beach North, south outercoast, Washington.



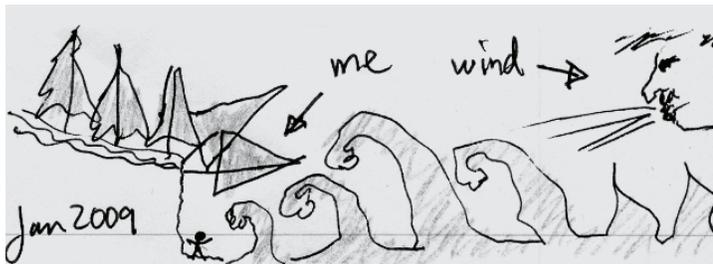
R. & G. Power

Seaside spaceship: Liz Berg and Ingrid Johnson's keen eyes found Queen Amidala, a Clone Wars McDonald's toy, on Keystone Spit South, Puget Sound, Washington.



L. Berg & I. Johnson

Watch out for those waves! Julia Loyd showed us just how cold and blustery a winter survey at Point Hammond on Waldon Island, San Juan Islands, Washington, can be.



S. & L. Latresha

BEAK
about 40 mm—
sharp and curved!

MANTLE
about 27 cm—
no feathers

SPECIES
Humboldt squid!!!

(Sumer and Latresha Starling, Cranberry North, 10/27/08)



Courtesy of R. Ollikainen

Fowl weather friends: the self-proclaimed “Bird Brains” from the Oregon Mile 286 daily survey team march in the Cape Meares’ Fourth of July Parade, 2008.

Todd Hass: Catching up with an old friend

COASST: As our first-ever staff member, you played an instrumental role in the development of COASST. What was it like to be around when things were just getting started?

Todd: Initially, the goals for COASST were pretty modest—we imagined a few tens of beaches and maybe double that number of volunteers. Mary Sue and Barb remember—when the guide was first being developed, they tested out a stapled version of *Beached Birds* on Hobuck survey (luckily no rain that day!). After COASST's first trainings in Ocean Shores and the San Juans, momentum picked up, and we never looked back.

COASST: Were there any memorable projects in the early days?

Todd: One of the most telling experiences of my early days involved the development of the program's logo. Cathy, our graphics designer developed two great mock-ups—a murre skull and a pair of feathers. I thought that birders like me would prefer the skull. Luckily, Julia convinced me that our volunteers would probably not share the same appreciation and that the feathers would have a softer, broader appeal. Putting ourselves in the volunteers' shoes was essential to COASST's success.



Courtesy of T Hass

Todd counts seabirds at the Edmonds fishing pier for Seattle Audubon Puget Sound seabird survey.

Todd and his son Sullivan, born last October.



K. Hass

COASST: Where did your career take you after COASST?

Todd: At first, I really focused my time on teaching. I taught ecology, conservation, and environmental science at a number of institutions, including the University of Washington and the Cornish College of the Arts. But I missed working with local communities, so I jumped at the chance to become the community outreach and environmental education specialist for the Washington State Department of Ecology's Spills Program. It's a great fit because I get to combine my passion for education and outreach with a chance to improve the health of the Washington coast.

COASST: What's a day like for you now?

Todd: Some of my duties aren't much different from a day at COASST. Whether I'm re-writing technical documents or tackling jargony web pages, it's all about communication—making information applicable to and approachable by the public, industry and other stakeholders. But each day is also a new story. One day I may be helping set up an oil spill summit for the governor and the next I'm on a vessel field testing one of the State's Geographic Response Plans.

COASST: Fondest memory?

Todd: Well, the one closest to my heart is Katie, who I met working with COASST. In October we had a baby boy, Sullivan, so these days I'm a busy dad as well.

Quiz Time!!



W. Williams

Found: 12/30/08
 Agate Beach
 Oregon North
 Bill: 31 mm
 Wing: 27 cm
 Tarsus: 50 mm



C. G. Herzig

Found: 1/11/2009
 North Head Lighthouse S
 South Coast, WA
 Bill: 70 mm
 Wing: 20 cm
 Tarsus: 77 mm

Recording Refinds: The Write Stuff

| Bird # of day | WF | R | C | FC | E | BP | EN | O | FOOT TYPE | BILL (mm) | WING (cm) | TARSUS (mm) | SPECIES | A | P | SEX | # OF PHOTOS | WHERE FOUND |
|--|----|---|---|----|---|------------------|-----|---|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------|---|---|-----|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Ex | S | Y | N | S | G | H, 2W, 1F - left | NET | N | 3 WEBBED, 4TH ABSENT, ALCID | 47 | 22 | 38 | COMU | A | B | U | 2 | HIGH BRACK SURFLINE UNKNOWN |
| COMMENTS: Wing tangled in fishing net. Secondary feathers are white tipped. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tag ID# 43 COLOR GREEN-YELLOW WHERE RW (RIGHT WING) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| # 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | REFOUND (Y/N) |
| COMMENTS: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tag ID# COLOR WHERE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SEQUENCE TAGGED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| # 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | COLLECTED (Y/N) |
| COMMENTS: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tag ID# COLOR WHERE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SEQUENCE TAGGED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| # 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | FOOT CONDITION |
| COMMENTS: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tag ID# COLOR WHERE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SEQUENCE TAGGED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| # 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | PLUMAGE |
| COMMENTS: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tag ID# COLOR WHERE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SEQUENCE TAGGED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

We've noticed there's been some confusion as to what should or shouldn't be recorded for refinds. So here is the definitive list:

- **Where** the bird is refound
- What **body parts** are left
- **Species** or group (if still recognizable)
- **Tag ID**:

Refinds should be *far less* work than new finds. This means we do not want you to take the time to re-key out these birds. If you know what species (or group) the refind is then please include it; otherwise writing "unknown" is ok.

Photos are optional. But *do* take a photo if there is a question. For instance, if you think tags are missing or tags have faded so much you can't decide between two colors.

Here are the things you are **never** required to do:

- Re-measure the bird
- Determine age
- Determine plumage
- Determine sex

This information has already been recorded and doesn't change over time.

We hope this helps put everybody on the same page.

Remember: Refinds count, don't leave them out!

COASST Happenings

MARCH

Two of our fantastic interns, Laura and Breanna, kicked things off at the Beachcombers Fun Fair in Ocean Shores, Washington, wowing the young fair-goers with Common Murre egg painting. That same weekend, Jane and UW students Erin and Vi braved hail and snowstorms on Shi Shi Beach (North Coast of Washington), as a part of Barb Blackie's Peninsula College field trip. Not missing a beat Jane headed down to Newport, Oregon to train fishery observers (beach-cast and bycatch look pretty similar...), sponsored a talk by Oregon State Professor Rob Suryan and signed up 7 new COASSTers at a training the next day.

APRIL

Can you say tired? COASST packed this month with a record breaking 7 talks, 5 trainings, and 2 festivals. COASSTers Max Smith and Sarah Swanson stepped up to the plate, representing COASST at the Birds and Blues Festival in Pacific City, Oregon. Julia keynoted at the Storming The Sound Conference in Seattle and sailed across Puget Sound to talk at the Olympic Peninsula BirdFest. Searching for snow she jetted up to Fairbanks, Nome and Shishmaref, Alaska to establish COASST's most northern sites. Deep breath, change of clothes! Julia soaked up some sun at a training/talk combo on San Juan Island, then zoomed down to Coos Bay, Oregon to delivery two talks and a training for the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology. Meanwhile, Jane crisscrossed Julia on the talk tour—at Beachwatchers



Penelope's beach walk on the spit in Homer Alaska included this shot of some evening fishermen

P. Chilton

groups in Puget Sound before flying to St. Paul Island in the middle of the Bering Sea, for the Bering Sea Days Festival. Mary Sue and Penelope, not wanting to be left out, trained more than 25 Beachwatchers in Port Angeles to fill in spots on Strait and North Coast beaches.

MAY

Unseasonably warm weather accompanied Jane to the Wings and Waves Festival in Lincoln City, Oregon and Penelope to a training and talk in Trinidad, California. Two weeks later, Penelope embarked on her maiden voyage to Alaska! Driving down from Anchorage, she made a quick moose-crossing stop before socializing with Kenai and then Homer COASSTers, finally hopping a flight to Kodiak Island the next day to put 5 new beaches on our map.

Send In Your Data Sheets!

If ever there was a time to send in your data sheets, it's now! The data deadline for *COASST Reports 08-09* is July 15th (and this year we mean it). Make sure your data are included in this year's report!



Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team

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Box 355020
Seattle, WA 98195-5020

Upcoming Events

Want to know when we will be in your community?
Please check the events page on our website for more
details and updates about future trainings and talks:
<http://depts.washington.edu/coasst/involved/events.html>

Quiz Answers

Top: Ok, this is a tubenose with entirely dark plumage: a Sooty or a Short-tailed Shearwater. Based on bill measurements it's a Short-tailed, which makes sense because most Sooties have pale to white underwing linings.
Bottom: This gull has a flat tarsus, so it's either a grebe or a loon. Lobed toes point to the grebes. A dark shoulder and long measurements rule out the Red-necked Grebe. It's either a Clark's Grebe or a Western Grebe—the eye in dark part of the face gives it away, it's a Western Grebe.

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