

The Coasst Line



News for COASST Citizen Scientists

Summer 2010

COASST Cards: Collect Them All

For years, COASSTers have been handing out cards to curious onlookers, explaining what COASST is and why documenting beached birds is important. Last year, Jane wondered why these cards were so “old and stodgy”—with today’s digital technology, surely we could do better.

Thanks to generous support from the Washington State Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) Volunteer Cooperative Grant program, we enhanced and enlivened the COASST beach handout. Each of the 10 versions features a priority marine bird species in Washington: Brandt’s Cormorant, Common Murre, Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin’s Auklet, Short-tailed Albatross, Brown Pelican, Western Grebe, Marbled Murrelet, Common Loon, and Tufted Puffin.

The front of each card displays a stunning photo and information on species distribution, population threats, and—of course—the COASST ranking. The back provides information on COASST: who we are, what we do and how to get involved.

And don’t just use them on the beach. Attending an event/festival/fair that would be perfect for profiling the new handouts? Is your grandson doing a school project on seabirds? Help us get the word out about COASST. We printed lots: just ask and we’ll resupply you.

So, next time someone on your beach asks, “what are you doing?” whip out COASST find #1 (Common Murre) and hand it over.



Cathy Schwartz, graphic designer (left), and Penelope take a final look at the COASST handout proofs.



A. Hansen

Oil Spills Past and Present

With a cap on the well (and holding, at least for now) attention turns to clean-up efforts that could get trickier during the hurricane season. How does the Deepwater Horizon spill compare with spills of heavy fuel (crude oil, Bunker C oil, and Intermediate Fuel Oil) that we've seen in the COASST range since the *Exxon Valdez* spill?

When?	Where?	How Many Gallons Spilled?	How Many Seabirds Salvaged?
4/24/10	Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Horizon	205,800,000 ¹	3839 ²
12/7/04	Unalaska, Alaska M/V <i>Selendang Ayu</i>	321,052 ³	
2/4/99	Coos Bay, Oregon M/V <i>New Carissa</i>	70,000 ⁴	1300 ⁴
11/26/97	Unalaska, Alaska M/V <i>Kuroshima</i>	39,000 ⁵	150 ⁶
11/21/91	Cape Flattery, Washington F/V <i>Tenyo Maru</i>	354,800 ⁵	4300 ⁵
3/24/89	Prince William Sound, Alaska T/V <i>Exxon Valdez</i>	11,000,000 ⁷	36,000 ⁸

Beach-nesting shorebird populations, such as Snowy Plovers, could be affected by the spill.²

Pigeon Guillemot and Pacific Herring populations have not fully recovered.⁷

¹ RestoreTheGulf.gov ² FWS Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Response ³ FWS Alaska Region, Fisheries and Ecological Services ⁴ FWS Pacific Region, Oregon Fish & Wildlife Office ⁵ Damage Assessment, Remediation, & Restoration Program (DARRP) Northwest Region ⁶ NOAA "Final Restoration and Environmental Assessment for the M/V *Kuroshima* Oil Spill" ⁷ Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council ⁸ NOAA Hazardous Materials Response and Assessment Division

Quiz Time!!

Rusty with the Wing Table (*Beached Birds: A COASST Field Guide*) or Wing Key (*Beached Birds: A COASST Field Guide to Alaska*)? Test your bird ID skills! Answer on the back page.

Found: 6/26/09
Dungeness Bluff
Strait of Juan de Fuca
Bill: 19 mm
Wing: 13 cm
Tarsus: 26 mm



C. Rene



C. Rene

COASST Profiles: Dr. Julie Ellis

Dr. Julie Ellis is the Seabird Ecological Assessment Network (SEANET) Director, a program similar to COASST on the East Coast. We caught up with Julie to find out more about SEANET, her work there, and how the Gulf Spill may affect SEANET volunteers.

COASST: *How did you get hooked with SEANET?*

Julie: My PhD work focused on seabirds as “marine ecosystem engineers,” and changes in nearshore and island ecology. Some of that field work was done by citizen volunteers, so the move to SEANET was a perfect fit: it combined my interest in seabirds, coastal ecology, and citizen science.

COASST: *Citizen science has contributed to your personal research, but what’s the broader appeal?*

Julie: I love the notion of citizen science. We (scientists) have these big data holes because we rely on biologists to collect the data about birds—the trouble is, birds don’t only live in refuges and remote islands. But these “holes” can be filled by citizen scientists, if given the right tools. *Beached Birds: A Field Guide for the North Atlantic* is a perfect example. It uses characteristics that are tailored to the identification of dead birds (i.e., the extent of facial skin in the

Julie at work on Smuttynose Island off the coast of New Hampshire.



Courtesy of J. Ellis

Northern Gannet). SEANET volunteers are sentinels watching over our coastline and reporting back what they see. For instance, if it weren’t for them, we never would have detected the Red-throated Loon bycatch incident on the tip of Long Island.

COASST: *So what’s a typical SEANET “sentinel” likely to see on the beach?*

Julie: Northern Gannets, our signature species, hit the coast during fall migration (south). We also see Greater Shearwaters in early fall, Thick-billed Murres throughout the winter, and Common Eiders in fall and spring. Seanettors keep watch on important breeding populations of endangered and threatened species including the Piping Plover and Roseate Tern.

COASST: *Are SEANET volunteers likely to see oil from the Gulf on their beaches? Are there lessons to be learned from the spill?*

Julie: Our volunteers are really worried, and everyone is wondering “Is the oil going to hit the Gulf Stream? Is it going to foul our beaches?” It’s something nobody can predict. We’ve been told, “Let’s wait. If oil starts washing ashore, then we’ll mobilize beached bird surveys.” In my mind, that’s too late. Like COASST, we *really* wish there would have been beached bird surveys in the Gulf *before* the spill. That baseline data is a critical missing piece.

Have a friend on the East Coast who wants to survey a beach for SEANET? They can get involved by contacting seanet@tufts.edu.



Courtesy of SEANET

SEANET’s signature species, the Northern Gannet (a pouchbill) shows off its four webbed toes and a classic oil stain. Limited dark facial skin around the eye and bill distinguishes it from a Masked Booby.

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 eye-catchers from COASST surveys. Enjoy! (Something silly or strange on your beach? Pass it our way: info@coasst.org)



R. Power

Rose Power spotted this live, Black-footed Albatross tangled in a fishing line on the Long Beach Peninsula in early July. With the help of a passerby, she cut the line, and contacted the appropriate authorities. The bird was brought to the Wildlife Center of the North Coast, where it is expected to make a full recovery. Black-footed Albatross wash up on West Coast beaches, June–July (10 others were picked up for necropsy on the Long Beach Peninsula that week) and are of particular conservation concern because of their declining population.



J. Lamont

Beached Birds: Thanksgiving Edition

Always featherless. Commonly accompanied by cooking instructions and plastic packaging. Species: Butterball Turkey. Found by Janet Lamont on Hobuck Beach-North Coast, Washington.



M. Kasek

A deep-sea, open-ocean species, this Longnose Lancetfish, found by Melanie Kasek and Edge Gerring on South Jetty Beach (Humboldt) in June, marks the fifth recorded lancetfish on a COASST Beach (two on Murrari Road Beach, one on Oregon Mile 286 and one on Beach One). If you see an odd fish, send us a photo!



J. Boyden

Outstretched arms for sale? Squids come in all sizes, but Jane Boyden and son Ian did this Jumbo (Humboldt) Squid justice with some clever photo editing. Found by Jane and Sue Gabriel on Oregon Mile 254 last September.

COASST Happenings



J. Dolliver

A juvenile Bald Eagle spotted on Cannon Beach during Jane's trip to Yakutat, Alaska.

APRIL

- 3 *Intern fieldtrip*—COASST welcomed Bethany and Natasha to the COASST undergraduate internship with a field trip to Ocean Shores, Washington.
- 17 *COASST training*—A huge success! Penelope recruited another 27 volunteers at Padilla Bay Breazeale Interpretive Center.
- 22 & 24 *COASST training and social* in Juneau, Alaska with Jane—nicest day of April! Welcome new COASST volunteers Teri and Heidi.

MAY

- 1 *Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival*—Student interns Sarah and Michelle wowed kids of all ages with COASST's build-your-own murre masks at Hoquiam Elementary.
- 4 *Observer Training*—Just in time for the summer fishing season, Jane trained 12 new fishery observers bound for Alaska waters.
- 5 *COASST Training*—Janet, Mary Sue, and Penelope helped boost COASST ranks in the Strait and North Coast with a WSU Beach Watchers-sponsored training in Port Angeles.
- 14 *COASST Talk*—co-sponsored by *Coast Watch*, Julia entertained folks with "It's Not Rocket Science, It's Citizen Science" at the Ecotrust building in Portland, Oregon.

- 15 & 16 *COASST Trainings*—Penelope did some island-hopping in the San Juans, with trainings on Orcas and San Juan Island, Washington.

JUNE

- 5, 6, & 7 *COASST Trainings*—On a whirlwind tour, Penelope led trainings at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, in Charleston; in Brookings, Oregon and Arcata, California.
- 19 *COASST Training*—One of Yakutat's two flights a day brought in Jane for a COASST training—welcome Judy, Mark, Teresa, Allyson, and Sophie.
- 26 *COASST Training*—Jane got the royal tour of Kenai and Kenai birds thanks to Chet, and Kathy who managed to rope Dan into volunteering, too.
- Intern field trip*—Starting summer quarter off right, Penelope enjoyed good weather in Ocean Shores with Kaitlyn, Omar, Stephanie, Ann, and Alex.

JULY

- 9 *COASST Talk*—"Common Murres of Tatoosh Island" was Julia's latest topic, hosted by Makah Fisheries and the Makah Museum in Neah Bay.
- 17 *UW Marine Biology COASST Field Trip*—Starting them off young...Jane gave 16 undergraduates the chance to try out their dead bird skills on Ocean Shores beaches.



J. Dolliver

Julia points out a fishing float with goose-neck barnacles to Doug Coleman, a Makah Fisheries intern.

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Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team



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 Answer:
Using Beached Birds: A COASST Field Guide and the Wing Table, this wing fits into the tiny wing chord category. With a dark upperwing and a pale underwing stripe, it's either a Cassin's Auklet or Least Auklet. A larger bill, wing and tarsus make this find a Cassin's.
Using the Wing Key of Beached Birds: A COASST Field Guide to Alaska, you've chosen: dark upperwing, underwing linings not white, wing chord less than 35cm, and reached Q12. The dark-light-dark pattern on the underwing and wing chord make it possible to ID this one as a Cassin's.

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