



Shoreline Education for Awareness, Inc.
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SEAscope

Friends of the Southern Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuges

Fall 2019

SEA Volunteers in Action

Bill Binnewies



Kay Gillman and Beverly La Rue at Simpson Reef

Our 2019 coastal wildlife interpretive season ended on Labor Day Weekend. Many thanks to SEA volunteers who were on site at Face Rock and Simpson Reef overlooks Friday, Saturday and Sunday from early May through the end of our 2019 season.

Your SEA Board is beginning to make plans for the 2020 season. We hope to increase our volunteer base to insure we have full coverage at our overlooks.

Mature male Elephant Seals have been seen frequently throughout the summer at Simpson Reef. Each day SEA volunteers and visitors witness interactions between seals

and sea lions; some dramatic and others humorous. Lots of pups from the four species of seals and sea lions inhabit the beach and surrounding rocks.



Elephant Seal at Simpson Reef

SEA volunteers at Face Rock Overlook have a wonderful variety of seabirds to show visitors such as Tufted Puffins, Common Murre, Oystercatchers, Scoters, Cormorants, Gulls, and Pigeon Guillemot to name a few. A special thanks goes to National Volunteers John and Cindy Dillard and SEA volunteers who were able to

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introduce visitors to seabirds and their breeding and migration stories.



SEA volunteers at Face Rock Overlook

Cindy Dillard shared a story about a Peregrine Falcon that attempted to take a Tufted Puffin (the Puffin got away). Every once in a while volunteers and visitors witness nature's dramatic moments.



Common Murre on Kittens Rock

SEA continues its quarterly beach cleanup program with plastic debris going to Washed Ashore for use in ocean debris sculptures. SEA is also continuing its Coast Watch Mile in the vicinity of Coquille Point and Face Rock.



SEA Volunteers Beach Cleanup Treasures

Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuges: What Does a Refuge Manager Really Do?

Kate Iaquinto



Refuge Manager Kate Iaquinto

Hello SEA! I'm happy to be writing the second installment of my column in the SEA newsletter. In my first article, I introduced myself to you! Now, it's been some time and I've settled in to my position here at the South Coast. I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you all a little more about the responsibilities of my job and



what I do here for the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Let's start from the beginning.

As many of you probably know, the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex comprises the six refuges on the coast, including Cape Meares NWR, Three Arch Rock NWR, Nestucca Bay NWR, Siletz Bay NWR, Bandon Marsh NWR, and who could forget Oregon Islands NWR. The main office for the refuge complex is in Newport, OR. You may know many of the refuge staff that work out of that office including Kelly Moroney, our project leader, Rebecca Chuck, deputy project leader, Dawn Harris, visitor services manager, Shawn Stephenson, wildlife biologist, Kody Godge, maintenance worker, Gary Rodriguez, facilities manager, Lila Bowen, volunteer coordinator, and our new administrative assistant Mary Kostiew. All of these folks have at least some responsibilities for all six refuges in the Complex, but they mostly work on the refuges north of Coos County. I am situated at the Bandon Marsh NWR office in Bandon, OR and am the refuge manager responsible for the South Coast. I work in cooperation with the folks in Newport to perform tasks primarily relating to Bandon Marsh NWR and the southern portions of Oregon Islands NWR including Coquille Point and Crook Point.

The job of a refuge manager is hard to explain! The average refuge manager has a staff that they supervise, typically a few permanent staff folks including a biologist, maintenance worker, visitor services personnel, or some combination of positions. In my case, I am the sole refuge employee at the South Coast office.

Therefore, my job has a lot more responsibilities related to all of the other fields than a typical refuge manager might. Or maybe there's no such thing as a "typical refuge manager" but in any case, I have to be a Jack (or Jill) of all trades. I do everything from initiate sales of vehicles, to plant native plants, to conduct bird monitoring, to hire interns (for next year, YAY!), to clean and organize the facilities, to work with our partners, to oversee construction projects, to get grant funding for invasive removal, you name it! If it's happening on the South Coast of the Oregon Coast NWR Complex, then I've got something to do with it! Or at least, if I don't yet, I will soon!

The projects that I am most looking forward to this year will be bringing a lot of change to Bandon Marsh and the Oregon Islands Refuges. In the coming fiscal year, we will be building a new office building, constructing a brand new overlook at the Ni-les'tun Unit, continuing a long-term biological monitoring project of the Ni-les'tun Marsh restoration, and starting a new project to restore coastal prairie at Crook Point. While these sound exciting, the work that is done to make these projects happen can be a little less so and mostly involves me sitting at my computer typing away as I am right now. Ultimately, I'm working hard toward some big goals and trying to achieve our mission here at the US Fish and Wildlife Service every day through every small project and bit of paperwork.

I'm thankful to have this responsibility and try to keep the mission at hand with every small task. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission is, working with others, to

conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Gray Whales, Up Close and Personal

Mary Garrett



The Marine Mammal Institute Baja Gray Whale Expedition, February 26 – March 6, 2019

My husband Steve and I were very fortunate to participate in Dr. Bruce Mate's yearly Gray Whale Expedition on the Baja coast in late February/early March 2019. For us, our most anticipated stop would be San Ignacio Lagoon where mother whales give birth and nurse their young before travelling 6,000 miles north to the Bering Sea feeding grounds. The lagoon is a protected sanctuary and visited by only a limited number of people per year. This has been a "bucket list" dream of ours for several years. Unfortunately, we could not go last year due to health reasons but Dr. Mate and his wife Mary Lou were gracious enough to hold our seats for 2019.

Dr. Mate's biography is impressive and extensive. He is known as one of the

world's leading authorities on whales. He is the Director of the Oregon State University Marine Mammal Institute and a Professor of Fisheries and Wildlife. Dr. Mate has done research on seals, manatees, sea otters, dolphins, and whales. He is best known for pioneering the tracking of whales using satellite-monitored radio tags. These transmitters allow Dr. Mate and his associates to discover new information about critical habitats, migration routes, and behaviors of endangered species. Many people in Oregon also know Dr. Mate as a co-founder of the Whale Watch Spoken Here program which Steve and I have participated in the last 6 years.

Our group was also led and supported by Eric Horvath and his wife Claire Smith. Eric is an expert in natural history, birding and whale watching. He was such a delightful guide on our hikes around West San Benito Island, Cedros Island, and San Martin Island.

Our ship, Royal Polaris, is the largest vessel (113 ft in length and a 29 ft beam) allowed in the San Ignacio Lagoon. She has been visiting the Lagoon for over 30 years and Dr. Mate has used her for this purpose for that length of time. The captain and crew were wonderful and very attentive to our needs. Ages within our party ranged from early 30's to mid 70's. Though living on a boat for 8 days is not for the faint of heart, the attention and quality of care given by the Mates and crew made for a delightful and very educational experience. An exceptional treat was having gourmet meals served 3 times a day!

Our 1,000 mile trip began in San Diego heading south along the Baja Peninsula



coastline. We departed San Diego at 11:30 pm on 2/26/19. The boat stopped at the fish bait lockers just offshore and the “night owls” in our party were able to see Black-Crowned Night-herons, Great Blue Herons, and Snowy and Great Egrets. Our first excursion on land (day 3) was the West San Benito island (largest of the three San Benito islands). This island has a high plateau reaching 661 feet high, small rocky beaches, a small fishing village and several hiking trails. There are also numerous Sea Lion and Elephant Seal rookeries along the shores. In one rookery, Dr. Mate led group members one by one up to a resting elephant seal weaner pup to touch. The coat was a beautiful velvet gray and very soft. These pups are weaned from their mother after one month and are left to fend for themselves. There is a highly mortality rate for the pups due to 50% of them being crushed to death by the big bulls as they move around the rookeries. There were also numerous Cassin's auklet burrows on the island which were being monitored by Mexican scientists. Other birds found on the San Benito islands include Xantus murrelets, ospreys, brown pelicans (in mating colors this time of year!), American Oyster Catcher and double-crested cormorants.

Day four found us anchored in the San Ignacio Lagoon close to Rocky Point. The boat was escorted into the lagoon by Common Bottlenose Dolphins bow riding upon our entry. Everyone on the boat was cheering and clapping at this beautiful sight. Once in the lagoon, we were surrounded by whale blows, spy hopping, breaches and flukes. The panga drivers approached our

ship and picked up 8 to 12 people for a few hours of close-up whale watching. They moved about the lagoon by motoring very slowly until we came within a short distance of the whales. At this point, they cut the motor and we would drift among these beautiful and peaceful animals. It was up to the whales to seek us out and amazingly they did. The mothers and calves were by far the friendliest and seemed to really enjoy being touched and rubbed. Dr. Mate made sure everyone got to touch a whale and it was kind of a mad rush to whatever side of the panga the whales came too. Fortunately, the pangas are very stable and guaranteed not to tip over. Steve got to rub the gums of one female gray whale and said it felt like rubber, much like the hide. She let him rub her gums a few minutes before moving away. The baleen on the upper gum was within 12 to 18 inches away and was impressive to actually see. I was able touch the nostram of one female after she blew in my face. She had quite a few barnacles on her which were very rough compared to her smooth skin. There was no breath odor from the mouth or the blows as they had not fed for the most part after leaving the northern waters. One exception was a close blow that smelled like rotten fish. Dr. Mate happened to be on our panga and said the whale must have fed fairly recently due to the odor. During the following day, one group would be dropped off on the shore of Rocky Point with Eric to explore flora and fauna while the other group boarded the pangas to go hang out with the whales. We spent 1 1/2 to 2 hours before switching back with the other group. We were in the lagoon for 3 days and got to go out twice a day. One trip in the pangas took us into the



Red and White mangrove with our naturalist expert for some bird watching. We saw White Ibises foraging in the salt marsh, Little Blue Herons, a Tricolored Heron and Snowy Egrets. There were plentiful Brandt's and Double-crested Cormorants as well.

The number of whales in the Lagoon was increasing each day but Dr. Mate explained that there weren't that many calves as compared to previous years. He said that whales are arriving later so next year's expedition will take place a couple of weeks later to compensate for the whales' later arrival. Our whole group felt exhilarated and overjoyed with the whale contact experience. Many were drenched (happily) from close whale blows and several folks were able to kiss both momma and calf. As we were leaving San Ignacio, Dr. Mate led a memorial service at the stern of the boat. Many people honored lost family members and friends and thanked the whales for allowing us to enter their sanctuary.

On our 7th day, we visited Cedric Island where many enjoyed a 4 hour hike in Frog Canyon. There was an amazing display of shells, colorful beach rocks, quartz and agates. Gold and copper mines were once operating on Cedros and one party member even found some gold! I was able to snag some beautiful purple agates and Turbine Snail shells. The perennials and annuals were in full bloom. We later arrived at the northern end of Cedros and put out the anchor. The crew helped load folks in the ship's smaller boats to go and investigate California Sea Lions on the beach. A number of juvenile sea lions became curious and approached the small boats. They were

frolicking and quite humorous as they followed us.

The last island we visited was San Martin. This is a small, somewhat circular island consisting mostly of lava rock. We landed at a small, seasonal, undeveloped fishing camp which was vacated at the time. There were quite a few bones littering the island which were identified as harbor seals. The vegetation was mostly ice plant (my favorite), cacti, succulents and low desert growth. There were Harbor Seal and Sea Lion rookeries along with few scattered Elephant Seals. We observed a colony of Harbor Seals from a distance with quite a few babies in residence.

We headed back to San Diego on March 6th and disembarked soon after customs approved our arrival. What an amazing adventure and one I would highly recommend.

Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve

Bill Binneweiss

Port Orford is the base for the Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve. A marine reserve is an area of Oregon's coastal waters dedicated to conservation and scientific research. All removal of sea life is prohibited marine reserves. Marine protected areas are adjacent to marine reserves. These areas prohibit ocean development, but allow some limited fishing activities.

The establishment and management of marine reserves requires local community support. The Port Orford community, including the local fishing industry, provided

the support that made the Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve possible. The Redfish Rocks website is: www.redfishrocks.org and their Community Team is: www.redfishrocks.org/redfishrocks-community-team

They have established a Redfish Ranger program which is similar to SEA in that they provide on site interpretation with local volunteers. Recently, Maya Holiman, Redfish Ranger Coordinator published a ***Redfish Rangers Example Script*** which covers the physical aspects of the marine reserve, history of the reserve, research and cultural aspects of the reserve, and other useful information as a guide for their interpretive volunteers. SEA donated a spotting scope for their use.

The Redfish Rocks program provides visitors with an opportunity to learn about the diverse ecosystem under the surface of the ocean. Research continues to expand knowledge about this ecosystem. Check it out as everything that goes on below the surface affects everything above the surface.



No, I am not a rockfish. Here is looking at you, and I hope to see you next year if not before.



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Your tax-deductible contribution to Shoreline Education for Awareness directly supports SEA’s coastal wildlife interpretation program as it continues its crucial role in the education of local residents and the growing number of visitors from around the world. You can also contribute by becoming a volunteer. Please use the form below to become a member, make an additional contribution to the program, or to indicate your interest in volunteering.

- Enclosed is my monetary contribution to help support SEA
- I would like to volunteer for the wildlife interpretation program

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