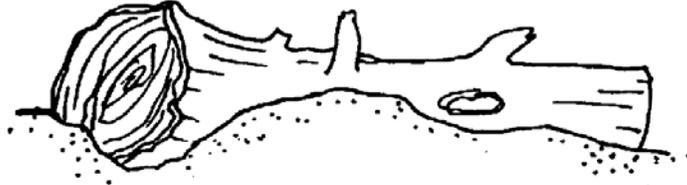




Education,  
Research,  
Stewardship

# Beach Log

JULY 2009



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
ISLAND COUNTY EXTENSION

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## LOG OF A TRAINEE BEACH WATCHER 2009

### DAY 1

1 April 2009  
April Fools Day

It is the first day of Beach Watcher training on Whidbey Island. As I leave the house I gasp at the sight of rain mixed with snow – again! I am excited (and a little apprehensive) as I take my seat in ‘class’ at Race Road Fire Station.

Derek Pritchard hands out name badges; one to wear, the other to prop up on the desk. I see the words *Anthopleura elegantissima* on the reverse of mine. I wonder if this is an exotic translation of my name. No such luck – I discover it means ‘aggregating anemone.’ Rather pretty all the same.

Judy Feldman and Sarah Martin set out for us what it means to become a Beach Watcher. We are told to introduce ourselves to each other (I HATE this), and meet the Training Committee consisting of: Sue Howard, Finn Gatewood, Jill Hein, Jackie Johnson, Mahmoud Abdel-Monem, Jim Somers and Sarah Martin.

I am relieved to see that Jim Somers is not an ogre after all – his e-mail, offering an interview, scared the life out of me when I read that the interviewers would be preparing some ‘humdinger’ questions. The power of suggestion...

We discover that we are a diverse group of trainees from all walks of life, and from a variety of backgrounds. One thing, which we all have in common, is a passion for the beauty and life of Puget Sound, and a desire to do whatever we can to help save it.

We take a break, and sample the delicious snacks on offer. We are encouraged to mingle.

I HATE mingling.

A number of us arrange to car pool. That’s a start towards reducing the pollution, isn’t it?

After stoking up with snacks, we resume class. The bad news is that we have to take a test.

I HATE tests. Maybe I’m going to be an April Fool after all!

Professor Mahmoud Abdel-Monem (aka Professor Honey Bucket – hello there!) reassures us that this is not a test evaluating *our* knowledge, so much as an evaluation of how the Training Committee transfer their knowledge to us, which will be proved when we re-sit the test at the end of the course. OK, I believe you.

We break for lunch. More refreshments, more calories. I just LOVE this in the name of training.

Fortified and ready to continue, we meet Kristin Cooley, who gives a presentation of the Puget Sound Partnership. I admire her enthusiasm and knowledge of her subject – she portrays a complex union with its objectives and goals in a way I can understand.

Then more bad news – we are told we must select a subject from a list and do a presentation.

I HATE presentations.

That’s not strictly true, because I have never done one. All I know is that when either my husband or son have been faced with them, I find them wrapped around the computer into the small hours. Neither of them looks happy. I bought time by opting for a subject covered in the list for October, when we reconvene; by then I might have worked something out.

Professor Honey Bucket returns the marked tests. I’ve managed an average, more by luck than judgment, I suspect. I vow to do better next time.

Continues on Page 8



## Wonders of Iverson

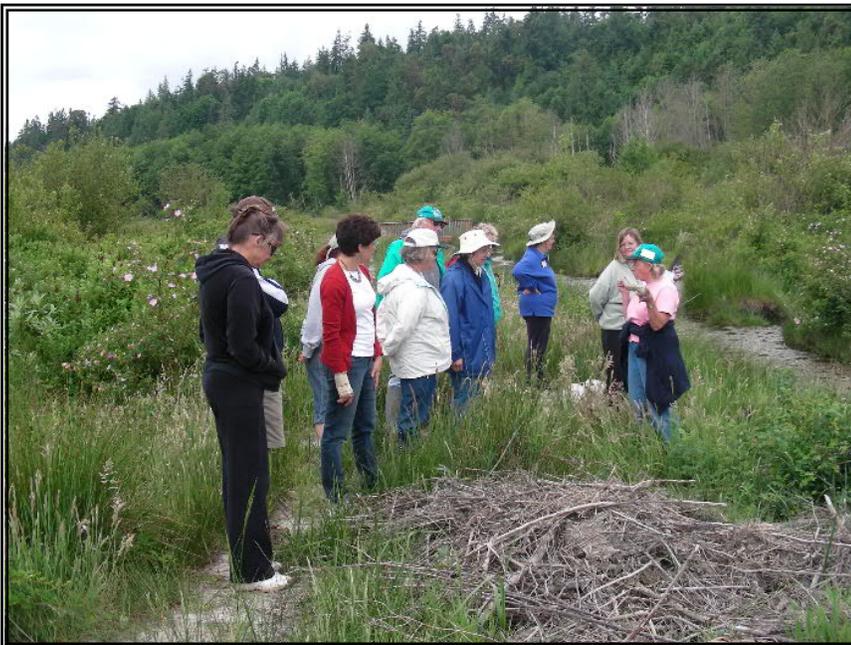
In October of 2008, a handful of Beach Watchers on Camano joined Franchesca Perez, outreach education biologist for the Stillaguamish Tribe, in educating fifth graders from three elementary schools about the importance of one of our county parks, Iverson Spit Preserve, as a large estuary. The kids and volunteers enjoyed the event so much, it was suggested that an event like that would also be a great educational opportunity for adults and families as well.

In past years, Beach Watchers on both islands participated in events called “Wonders of the Islands,” which were meant to educate folks about different locations around our islands. Looking to bring back that great tradition, we decided to plan an event we called “Wonders of Iverson.” Located on the Port Susan side of Camano, Iverson was a farm for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is now part of the county park system. It is also a vital estuary, habitat for birds, salmon, sturgeon, beavers, and many other critters. Over several months, the planning group decided on how this event would happen. It was decided to have a few different “stations” where people could find out about all the fascinating things Iverson has to offer. They could go to the shoreline and see Beach Watchers doing their annual monitoring, head to the upper tidelands/salt marsh area and discover what critters live there, learn about tide gates and beaver dams at another location, or just enjoy a walk through the “Hobbit Trail.” Beach Watchers led walks to the different locations, ending up near the staging and storage area for the recent creosote log removal efforts by Department of Natural Resources.



Jen Chapin (in orange), BW class 2006, and Franny Perez (at left), of the Stillaguamish Tribe, explain the upper tidal/salt marsh zone of the estuary.

There were over 60 people who came for the event, over half of whom lived nearby and had received an invitation to learn about the significance of the park that was just down the street from their properties. Response was very positive, and everyone thanked us for preparing this special learning event. Though families were invited, most of the participants were adults. Sponsored by WSU Beach Watchers, Shore Stewards, and the Stillaguamish Tribe, we look forward to possibly having another such event next year. And I look forward to working with Beach Watchers on Whidbey to have an event like this there in the near future.



Barbara Brock (right), BW class 2002, explains how beavers cut down trees for use in making dams.

*Article and photos by Scott Chase, Shore Stewards Coordinator, BW class of 2002*



## Whale of a Tale

What would you do if you got a call asking you to help cut off the head of a baby gray whale? When Sue Murphy (BW class of 2003) called me in 2005 and asked me to join her in removing the head for eventual display at Cama Beach, I replied that no one had ever asked me that before, and I doubted anyone would ever ask me again, so how could I refuse? The dead one-year-old whale had been floating in Saratoga Passage between Camano and Whidbey, and the previous day had been hauled to a remote beach on south Camano for a necropsy. The consensus was that it probably died after being hit by a large vessel.

Within a few hours I joined Sue, with her husband and daughter, at the Camano Island State Park boat launch. We took their boat, towing a rubber Zodiac boat behind us, down to the whale. The three of us working together took a few hours to cut off enough flesh from the head to get the skull into the Zodiac, to tow it back. With the towed Zodiac riding low in the water, and with more water splashing into it adding to the weight, the Murphys' boat developed engine problems that slowed the process. After a further number of mishaps, we eventually got it onto a pallet on the beach at Cama Beach, and left it covered with a blue tarp until we could retrieve it.



Gray whale skull on display with the baleen.

The plan was to tow the skull to a location where we could cage it underwater, so marine critters could eat the remaining flesh. The engine of the boat had been severely damaged during the towing process, and was taken into the shop for repair, so the head just sat there for a couple of

months. Construction at Cama had not yet begun, but a number of State officials were coming up from Olympia to check things out, so the park staff asked us to remove the skull, and its severely bad smell, to a more remote location in the park. When we removed the tarp from the skull, we saw that flies and their offspring had removed almost all of the flesh. We took it elsewhere in the park, and left it awhile longer for bugs to clean it to the bone. Then Sue and Mike took it to their place to bleach, dry, be reconstructed with their excellent skill and care, and await the opening of Cama and construction of the cabinet.

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, the skull was taken to Cama and put on a platform. The following day, construction of the surrounding lighted cabinet was completed. The funds for the cabinet were raised by Beach Watchers on Camano, through a couple of fund raisers arranged by Dave Baumchen, BW class 2002, and intended for the display of Salty the Sea Lion's skeleton. Since Salty is now suspended from rafter beams at the Welcome Center at Cama, the funds were instead used to build a cabinet to house the whale skull, with the baleen from the whale arranged around the base of the cabinet. The skull can be viewed when the Cama Beach Interpretive Center is open, and is now part of the ever-growing collection of marine mammal skeletons available for the public to view on both islands, courtesy of Island County Beach Watchers.



Sue Murphy puts the finishing touches on the skull while Jeff Wheeler (BW Class of 2002 and Camano Island State Parks Area manager) looks on.

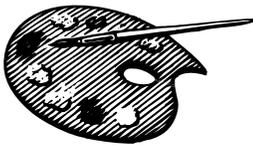


## Dates to Remember

### CAMANO ISLAND

- July 11 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. Open.
- July 14 Art for Children.1:00 pm to 2:00 pm** Camano Island: Cama Beach Park. Contact: Bobbye M..
- July 18 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre.' Bigfoot' presented by: John Andrews.
- July 20 Intertidal Biomonitoring: Camano Island State Park.8:00 am to 11:00 am** Camano Island State Park. Two lines, -2.9 tide at 9:55am  
Jeff W., John C., Duane H..
- July 21 Intertidal Biomonitoring: Camano Island State Park.8:45 am to 11:45 am** Camano Island State Park. One line, -3.3 tide at 10:45am. Jeff W., John C., Duane H..
- July 22 Intertidal Biomonitoring: Utsalady.9:30 am to 12:30 am** Camano: Utsalady. One line, -3.2 tide at 11:34am. Pam C..
- July 25 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. Open.
- July 28 Art for Children.1:00 pm to 2:00 pm** Camano: Cama Beach. Contact: Bobbye M..
- Aug 1 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. 'Recreation on Camano' presented by: Carol Triplett.
- Aug 3 Camano Island BWs Monthly Meeting.9:00 am to 12:00 noon** Camano Center.
- Aug 8 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. 'Whales' presented by: Dodie Markey.
- Aug 11 Art for Children.1:00 pm to 2:00 pm** Camano Island: Cama Beach Park. Contact: Bobbye M..
- Aug 15 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. 'Owls' presented by: Gary Piazzon.
- Aug 19 Intertidal Biomonitoring: Sunny Shores.8:30 am to 11:30 am** Camano: Sunny Shores. One line, -2.0 tide at 10:33am  
Skip I..
- Aug 20 Intertidal Biomonitoring: Mabana.9:00 am to 12:00 noon** Camano: Mabana. One line, -1.5 tide at 11:20am  
Barbara B..
- Aug 22 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. 'Geology of Camano Island: Great ice sheets and floods' presented by: Lawrence Baum.
- Aug 25 Art for Children.1:00 pm to 2:00 pm** Camano Island: Cama Beach Park. Contact: Bobbye M..
- Aug 29 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. 'Square Riggers on the Sound' presented by: Alex Moularas
- Sept 5 Camano Is St Park Amphitheatre Program.7:30 pm to 8:30 pm** Camano Island State Park Amphitheatre. Mushrooms' presented by: Scott and Kathleen Chase.
- Sept 7 Camano Island BWs Monthly Meeting.9:00 am to 12:00 noon** Camano Center.

### Artists Run Amok! Art Show, Sale & Benefit for Beach Watchers, 8/7-8/9



Save the date (and please offer to post flyers around Island County and beyond)! Artists Run Amok presents "Island Light", an art exhibit and sale to benefit Beach Watchers. The show will be held at Penn Cove Pottery, 26184 SR 20 in San de Fuca between Oak Harbor and Coupeville--hours are from 10am-8pm on 8/7 and 10am-5:30pm on 8/8 and 8/9. You are cordially invited to meet the artists, view the new paintings, glass, and sculptures, and enjoy an evening of wine and hors d'oeuvres at the reception on Friday, 8/7, 5-8pm. To assist with posting flyers for this show during the month of July or for more information, please contact Sarah Martin.



## WHIDBEY ISLAND

- July 11 Digging for Dinner.** 12:30 am to 2:30 pm Penn Cove - Coupeville (Zylstra at Madrona)\*. Learn how to responsibly dig for clams, the importance of filling the holes you dig, all about the Washington State rules and guidelines, and lots of clam lore. To register and receive driving directions, call 240-5558 or e-mail [n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us](mailto:n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us).  
\*NOTE: In addition to having shellfish license, individuals must buy an annual parking permit to park at Zylstra..
- July 18 Digging for Dinner.** 8:00 am to 10:30 am Double Bluff - Freeland. Learn how to responsibly dig for clams, the importance of filling the holes you dig, all about the Washington State rules and guidelines, and lots of clam lore. To register and receive driving directions, call 240-5558 or e-mail [n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us](mailto:n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us)..
- July 19 Annual ALL WSU Island County Beach Watchers Picnic!** Our annual BW picnic (and hootenanny!) will be held Sunday, July 19th at the concession stand at Deception Pass State Park from noon to whenever! Lunch will start to be served at 1:00pm. We have building reserved for the day at no cost (so we are covered for rain and shine!). BWAC will provide hamburgers, veggie burgers, brats, hot dogs, coffee and water etc. We will also have plenty of mussels because Beach Watchers have been busy collecting mussel disks from Island County beaches (which we exchange for bags of Penn Cove Shellfish mussels). We are allowed to drink liquor in the park so we will be able to BYOB. Bring your own place settings and drinking vessels and a pot luck dish for appetizers, side dishes or desserts. Games (outdoor games like horse shoes and bocce ball as well as indoor games in the case of inclement weather) will follow a good meal, and . . . The theme will be "Heller High Water" because Rick Castellano and his Heller Highwater Boys Brass Band will play for free (a tip jar will be available).
- July 20 Beach Monitoring - Whidbey Island.** 8:30 am to 12:30 am Columbia Beach. Team Lead - Bill Blair [bchblairs@whidbey.com](mailto:bchblairs@whidbey.com).
- July 21 "Beach Monitoring - Whidbey Island "** 9:00 am to 12:00 noon Possession Point. Team Lead - Jim Shelver [shelver@whidbey.com](mailto:shelver@whidbey.com)
- July 21 "Beach Monitoring - Whidbey Island "** 9:15 am to 12:15 am Cornet Bay. Team Lead - Heather [Leahy-Mackheather.leahy-mack@comcast.net](mailto:Leahy-Mackheather.leahy-mack@comcast.net).
- July 22 "Beach Monitoring - Whidbey Island "** 8:00 am Partridge. Team Lead - Jan Holmes [janholme@whidbey.net](mailto:janholme@whidbey.net).
- July 22 "Beach Monitoring - Whidbey Island "** 9:15 am Honeymoon Bay. Team Lead - Finn Gatewood [mrcfinn@whidbey.net](mailto:mrcfinn@whidbey.net).
- July 23 "Beach Monitoring - Whidbey Island "** 9:00 am Double Bluff Cirque. Team Lead - Libby Hayward [libby@whidbey.com](mailto:libby@whidbey.com).
- Aug 8 Digging for Dinner.** 10:00 am to 12:30 am Penn Cove - Coupeville (Zylstra at Madrona)\* Learn how to responsibly dig for clams, the importance of filling the holes you dig, all about the Washington State rules and guidelines, and lots of clam lore. To register and receive driving directions, call 240-5558 or e-mail [n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us](mailto:n.zaretzke@co.island.wa.us).  
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- Aug 19 "Beach Monitoring - Whidbey Island "** 9:00 am Old Clinton. Team Lead - Evelyn Blair [bchblairs@whidbey.com](mailto:bchblairs@whidbey.com)
- Sept 9 Whidbey Island Beach Watchers Regular Meeting.** 11:00 am to 1:00 pm Race Road Fire Hall. Bring a brown bag lunch and enjoy an educational program about whales from noon to 1pm..



## The Coupeville Wharf

Captain Thomas Coupe claimed 320 acres on the south shore of Penn Cove in 1852 and founded the town of Coupeville in 1853, and I wonder how his vision of the future compares with the reality of today.

As I walk past the redwood-constructed house that he built on Front Street in 1854 and the Wharf comes into view, Captain Coupe could never have envisaged that WSU Beach Watchers would be using the building to promote their theme of 'education, research and stewardship.'

Constructed in 1905 by a company comprised of local farmers and merchants, the Wharf has a different face now compared to 100 years ago. In 1914 Elmer Calhoun purchased the Wharf and a grain tower was added. A waiting room and rest-room were built on the north side of the building for steamboat passengers, and the Mosquito Fleet provided regularly scheduled services for materials and passengers throughout the early 1900s between Central Whidbey, Saratoga Passage and the mainland. Although Island Transportation stopped their steamboat service to Seattle in 1936, freight boats still used the Wharf during harvest.



The Coupeville Wharf on a calm day.

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at: [www.island.wsu.edu/](http://www.island.wsu.edu/)**





In 1949 Richard Hansen purchased the Wharf for a grain screening mill and warehouse. In 1969 the new Port of Coupeville purchased it for \$28,400. It was registered as a historic structure within Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve in 1978, and in 1985 the causeway was renovated and the grain tower removed. The Wharf was rehabilitated consistent with historical considerations and code standards in 1996/97 with the creation of a Harbormaster's office, commercial spaces for rent, a sanitary sewer system and public lobby area. A concrete fuel dock was also added and an underground fuel tank installed, plus additional mooring floats for the use of pleasure boats. In 2001, old dolphins were removed and two moorage floats were added. Four mooring buoys were placed in a line west of the Wharf.

Making my way across the Wharf causeway to meet fellow Beach Watcher, Sandy Dubpernell, in the public lobby area, I take a look around. On either side lie the azure waters of Penn Cove, calm today. In the distance, against the backdrop of a clear blue sky, stands majestic snow-capped Mount Baker. I cannot quite believe that I am 'off to work' amongst such beautiful surroundings, having spent most of my 'gainful employment' years in legal offices surrounded by dusty tomes. Another reason I find it difficult to believe that I will be putting in Beach Watcher time at the Wharf is the memory of my reaction to it when I first visited Coupeville some years ago. I read the display information about the capture of the Orcas in 1970 and was deeply saddened. I never wanted to visit Coupeville again.

When I started Beach Watchers training in April 2009, like most of my fellow trainees I was uncertain as to where my interests lay. With so much information to absorb and a large variety of subjects to explore (and more yet to come), I had an open mind on which direction I would take. I never thought of myself as a teacher and the term 'docent' was unknown to me before I moved to the United States. When I had my Beach Watcher interview and was asked what type of class, and size, I would prefer to address, I mumbled 'small and mature,' hoping that the occasion would never arise.

Now here I was, about to join Sandy and tell the public about the marine mammals in and around Puget Sound, the Stranding Network, the problem of plastics pollution and what we, as Beach Watchers, are trying to do. Rosie the Gray whale makes a wonderful introductory tool as people wander into the lobby, often oblivious of the massive skeleton above their heads. When their attention is drawn to it, most of them are amazed at what they see and want to know more. With the educational display material available, introducing people to this impressive creature's world is made easy. As their eyes wander, many people want to know more about Rudy, the Dall's porpoise, and then go on to read and learn more about our Southern Resident Orcas.

I have met people from all around the globe while acting as a 'docent' at the Wharf. Most of them are interested to know about what we do as Beach Watchers, and to learn about the wildlife in the area. They are shocked when they learn of the pollution in our waters, the contamination by toxins, the dangers that plastics and monofilaments represent to the birds and marine life.

I never thought that I could gain so much satisfaction and energy from telling people about the 'wonders of the deep.' To see the children's eyes wide with wonderment as they peer at Rosie and to know that I have managed to convey to visitors something about our area and what it has to offer, gives me a buzz. After Rick Castellano of the Island County Historical Society brought along a group of school children and asked me to tell them about Rosie, I smile as I remember the answer I gave at my interview. There was a particular satisfaction in this interlude as Rick asked about the Junior Beach Watchers' program, and from this enquiry a link is being formed between them and the Island County Historical Society.

Occasionally there are people who don't want to know about the whales or displays. They have that right; it's their time, their choice. Even so, they may still take away an image they will remember at some time in the future. At least we know that this is not a case where 'the minority' will spoil it for 'the majority.'

*Article and photo by Sandra Pollard-Snowberger, BWClass of 2009*

## Travel with Beach Watchers



Help us plan the next Beach Watchers Travel adventures. Beach Watchers and friends traveled to Kenya in 2005, to Peru (Amazon and Machu Picchu) in 2006, to New Zealand in 2007, and to Patagonia and the Queen Charlottes in 2009. Each of these trips brought together small groups of local Whidbey and Camano Island folks who had fun together, learned a lot about other cultures and natural habitats, and benefited Beach Watchers financially at the same time. If you are interested in considering traveling with fellow Beach Watchers in 2010, please let me hear from you now. Non-Beach Watchers are welcome to come along too, so your friends and neighbors are welcome. Please contact Linda Ade-Ridder for more information at (360-579-2521), by email (ADERIDL@whidbey.com), or by mail (6978 Sills Road, Clinton, WA 98236). Thanks!



Our first day finishes with another presentation by Sarah Martin, drawing attention to where our Beach Watcher **LOG OF A TRAINEE BEACH WATCHER 2009** *continued from page 1*

activities can lead us. This reminds us of our original aims, and why we want to become Beach Watchers. We remember what drew us here in the first place. For me, it started with a whale watch trip from Anacortes two years ago, when I met Jill Hein, the onboard naturalist. I learned about various marine mammals, and I learned about Beach Watchers.

When I moved to the U.S. last year, the outing stuck in my mind. It wasn't long before I learned of the plight of our Orcas and Puget Sound by attending the *Ways of Whales Workshop* in January, and *Sound Waters 2009* in February. The pristine waters and stunning scenery surrounding us hide a dark secret.

Having been brought up in Cornwall, England, where one is never more than ten miles from the sea, I have an affinity with the beach and the water. In 1968 I witnessed at first hand the devastation caused by the oil spill from the *Torrey Canyon*, the supertanker carrying a cargo of 120,000 tons of oil, which struck Pollard's Rocks (ironically my name is Pollard) in the Seven Stones reef, between the Scilly Isles and Land's End, Cornwall. 31,000,000 gallons of oil leaked from the ship and spread along the sea between England and France, killing most of the marine life it touched along the whole of the south coast of Britain and the Normandy shores of France, and blighting the region for many years thereafter, so much like the *Exxon Valdez*. It is estimated that more than 30,000 sea birds were killed and, in a sample of 1,223 dead birds of eight different species, 97% were guillemots and razorbills.

I have never forgotten the stench of the putrid oil lapping along the shores of pure white sand, coating the barnacled rocks in a thick black film and trapping desperate sea birds, their wings clogged and their gullets blocked. As I stood and surveyed the appalling catastrophe, I have never felt so helpless.

Hopefully such a thing will never happen on that scale in Puget Sound. But perhaps it is not too strong an analogy to say that it is already, as in its own way the Sound is being insidiously strangled.

If I can make just a smidgeon of difference by helping to educate people, and monitoring what is happening in the Sound so that records are available for reference in the event of any such emergency, then count me in.

As I finished my first day with a sense of enrichment and purpose, I found myself looking forward to the following Monday with relish. Which, quite frankly, is amazing, as I almost forgot to say...I HATE Mondays.

DAY 2 :

6<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2009

Back to class. It's a glorious clear, sunny day with high temperatures in the forecast (what a change from the day of our initiation). As we meet at Trinity Lutheran Church to car pool, we confess we would rather be outside than learning about Growth and Shoreline Management and Low Impact Development, both subjects on today's agenda.

Matt Kukuk, Resource Enhancement Manager for Island County Planning and Community Development, kicks off at 9:00 a.m. with an excellent lecture on water and shoreline jurisdiction. The aerial photography shots give us a much clearer idea of the issues concerning both bluffs and bulkheads, and the whole presentation gives us a better perspective of the shoreline of Whidbey Island.

10:30 a.m. – time to sample those wonderful snacks!

Fortified by refreshments, we hear from Stacy Smith, Island County Service District, about Low Impact Development. Looked at on paper this subject doesn't seem too exciting, but as we break down just what it means, our interest quickens. From fencing to forestry planning, manure and mud management, we learn about Bio-retention, integrated management practices, permeable pavements, amended soils, pervious concrete installations, rainwater harvesting, vegetated roots, minimal excavation for foundations and native vegetation. Stacy tells us how to go about making a rain garden: Chose location; test soils; calculate run off; plant during wet months (October – February) ... are those really the only wet months!? ... and maintenance.

After Stacy's discourse, it's time for lunch. Sarah Martin comes up with a great suggestion. Why don't we take a shorter break, reconvene and finish earlier to take advantage of the weather? A unanimous murmur of assent fills the room.

At 12:30 p.m., Jill Hein, Beach Watcher, introduces her monofilament recycling project. Jill has been instrumental in piloting a project to introduce monofilament collecting containers and distributing them around Whidbey Island. Mono-



filament plastic, used by fishermen, does not biodegrade. When discarded in water or on the beach, it entangles wild-life and can be eaten by birds and fish, often causing death. It is also hazardous to divers.

Jen Kingfisher, Port Townsend Science Center, continues with the theme and presents a horrifying picture of 'plastics and the sea.' What a garbage pit! John Johnson, a fellow student, tells of his firsthand experience of sailing through a 12-mile stretch of rubbish, which included part of a house. We can only wonder about the circumstances surrounding that.

One of the most shocking visual images is that of the carcass of an albatross. The bird's stomach was filled with everything but the kitchen sink – or so it seemed.

Albatross sleep while flying, mate for life and have one chick a year. The parents take turns to get food, such as fish eggs, for their young. This bird skims the surface for anything floating and shiny – it cannot differentiate between plastics and food. Half of albatross chicks don't survive; many of those found dead have high amounts of plastics inside them.

Next it's time for a 'trainee presentation.' Tilley is the first to put her toe in the water, so to speak. She follows on from the previous talks on plastics, and we learn how we can each do our bit towards reducing this aspect of waste in our own community.

As we step into the warmth of the afternoon sunshine and look up at the clear blue sky, one of a pair of nesting Ospreys circles above. Their presence serves to remind us of the beauty of nature around us, and the need to do all that we can to help preserve the precious balance of our surroundings.

DAY 3

APRIL 8, 2009

On today's agenda:

'Climate change' with Lara Whitely-Binder

'Suzuki film' with Sarah Martin

'Sustainable living' lecture and field trip with Janet Hall

Everyone is mingling so well now that we are almost reluctant to sit down and start 'class.' However, after being called to order we are soon immersed in Lara Whitely-Binder's excellent presentation on climate change. It makes for depressing listening, but is offset by a second presentation by Sarah Martin titled 'Suzuki Film,' by scientist and activist David Suzuki, which provides an alternative viewpoint to the 'doom and gloom' predictions. The different perspectives give food for thought.

Talking of food, it's time to break for lunch. Flossie and I decide to take a 'power walk' along Race Road to burn off some of the calories we have just consumed from the selection of, yet again, delicious snacks. We take a couple of bags with us to collect garbage – Flossie does cans, I do plastics, although for the sake of expediency we overlap. We can hardly believe the amount of rubbish we bring back to the Fire Station as, puffing and panting, we clock in ready for the 12:30 lecture by Janet Hall on Sustainable Living.

Recycling and composting feature large in this agenda, before we don old shoes and head for our field trip to the Island County Transfer Station. I confess that I would never have expected a tour of 'the dump' (as I call it) and sewage treatment center to be so interesting. Everyone leaves the Transfer Station with a much better idea of the journey our recycling takes from start to finish and a better knowledge of how hazardous materials are dealt with at the site. Above us, squabbling seagulls congregate, their beady eyes watching for any edible garbage. Bald eagles circle above the trees, the immatures practicing their flying techniques nearby. As I said earlier, I would never have thought a visit to 'the dump' could be so interesting.





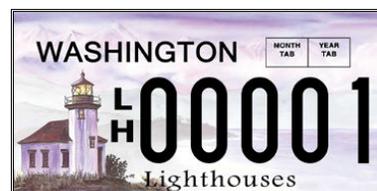
Children displaying their bird masks after spending a day with the Camano Beach Watchers.



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