



Education,
Research,
Stewardship

Beach Log

JANUARY 2011

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
ISLAND COUNTY EXTENSION

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Rosario After Dark:

Nighttime Tidepooling with Mary Jo Adams

One of the first things new Beach Watchers learn is that tide predictions are just that, predictions. The tides don't always follow the same rules as the folks who forecast them. December 21st had a -2.5 foot tide foretold but a big low pressure front and recent windy conditions held the water at higher levels. Nonetheless, five adventurous boot clad Beach Watchers, including coordinator Barbara Bennett trooped out onto the rocks of Rosario to see what was lurking about. In spite of the higher than predicted water levels, the group made some great finds. They saw three species of nudibranchs (sea lemons, shaggy mouse, and barnacle eating), numerous massive and colorful Christmas anemones, and a legion of highly entertaining hermit crabs that danced through the tidepools. In addition, a foot-long gumboot chiton was seen clinging to the apex of a boulder. The hooting calls of a great horned owl added to the into the wilds atmosphere of the evening.

Deadline for the next Beach Log is
March 15th.

Please send submissions to the editor:
Melody Kuschnerreit, at

melodybeachlog@gmail.com

Mary Jo Adams, BW Class of '99



(Left) Beach Watchers Mary Jo Adams, Sammie Kempbell, Charlie Seablom, Barbara Bennett, and Mary Hulbert. (Below) A bright yellow Sea Lemon. Photos by Mary Jo Adams.





Beach Watcher Wins Writing Contest

Sandra Pollard-Snowberger, Beach Watcher class of 2009, has won third prize in the essay section of the Whidbey Island Writers' Association Spirit of Writing Contest 2010 with her submission titled 'Whale Watching'.

Sandra will participate in readings taking place in Sno-Isle libraries on Whidbey Island during January, and will receive a copy of the anthology. All winners will be recognized at the Whidbey Island Writers' Conference Book-signing Reception on April 2, 2011.

This was Sandra's first attempt at entering a US writing competition. She has been a runner-up and short-listed in two national UK writing competitions, and had several articles and short stories published in well-known British magazines. She has also contributed a number of articles and photographs to the Beach Log.

Her short essay 'Nature Notes from Whidbey' (see page 3), written for the Penn Cove Players, was read at the closing of the recent Ebey's Forever Conference by one of the players, Linda Eccles, Executive Director of the Whidbey Central Chamber of Commerce.



(Above) Sandra Pollard-Snowberger standing beside "Ruffles" on Orcas Island last summer.

Photo by Richard Snowberger



Nature Notes from Whidbey

By Sandra Pollard-Snowberger

Not much going on, you might think, looking across Admiralty Inlet to Port Townsend on a quiet, cool fall morning. Just the Coupeville Ferry making its regular run, and a couple of tankers looming on the horizon. There's so little wind that the smoke from the Port Townsend pulp mill rises almost vertically.

Then comes the boom. It resonates across the inlet, and ricochets off the bluff. Scanning the sea's glassy surface, my eyes seek out the source.

Cutting through the flat calm water, I see a number of tall black dorsal fins rhythmically rising and falling. Raising my binoculars I watch as the black and white outline of a killer whale, its sleek body gleaming in the morning sunlight, breaches in a perfect shining arc. Another boom follows the huge splash as Orcinus Orca, meaning Greek God of the underworld, make their way south into lower Puget Sound.

It's Whidbey Island's turn for a rare visit from the endangered Southern Resident Orcas, which spend the summer months in and around the Salish Sea in search of their favorite food, the equally endangered Chinook salmon. Now, in the fall, they are making forays into the inland waters on the 'chum run', their 'second best' choice.

I call Orca Network to report the sighting. I tell them I can see at least a dozen Orcas, including three large male dorsals. Historically J pod are most likely to be here at this time of year, but visits from K and L pods are becoming more frequent. Boat based researchers will now be deployed to track and photograph the whales. Land based

viewers will be alerted through the Robo-call so that they, too, can keep a look out and report the whales' whereabouts.

Mr. Boppy, a silver gray Pacific Harbor seal, glides along the shoreline, smiling benignly. I call him Mr. Boppy because he always seems to be there and 'bops' up and down. Sometimes he swims so close to the beach I expect him to haul out, but then he does a quick dive and disappears.

The Coupeville Ferry slows down for the whales. Lucky passengers! Whales, up close and personal, wild and free...

I hear my own sharp intake of breath as a massive head rises above the water in a 'spy hop'. These charismatic creatures like to check us out too.

My arms ache from holding the binoculars, but I cannot look away from the picture of grace and power before me as these magnificent animals surge through the sparkling blue water. I'm sure I can hear their blows as I see the shimmering cloud of air and vapor reflected in the sun's rays.

Word has spread. More people are arriving. There are high, excited cries of, "We've got whales!"

Yes, we've got whales. Not only that, but we have Ruffles. Even from a distance his distinctive dorsal fin is unmistakable. And I wouldn't mind betting that swimming beside him is Granny, believed to be Ruffles' mother and the oldest member of the Southern Resident community. The boys stay with Mom all their life. Just think about that!

The rest of Ruffles family, including great-niece Hyshka, will be here too. Her name, which was given to her by the Samish Nation in a Potlatch ceremony, means 'blessing' or 'thank you'. With the Orcas' future imperiled, the birth of this calf was a 'blessing' and a special reason for thanks.

As I gaze across Admiralty Inlet at the spectacle of nature unfolding before me on this beautiful fall day, I cannot help but think that we, who live on Whidbey, are also blessed.



Rideshare Incentives Offered for Island County Residents

This is your chance to be rewarded for following through with a great New Year's Resolution. Now Island County residents have a chance to win \$50 if they choose a means of transportation other than driving alone. Make 10 one-way trips a month by bus, vanpool, carpool, bike or walking instead of driving alone and you could be a winner.

For a chance to win, register at www.Rideshareonline.com. It's an easy to use web site used across Washington State. Register and show how you traveled each day on your own online calendar. The website can help you find a carpool, find local transit information, or get links with other transit systems. It also calculates how much money you're saving and how much less pollution is in the air because of your smart choices. It will even tell you how many people are participating and what a huge difference we're making together.

Two county resolutions—a Sustainability Resolution passed by the Island County Council of Governments in 2008 and a Healthy Eating/Active Living Resolution passed by the Island County Board of Health in 2010—endorse efforts like this one to foster adoption of healthier lifestyles, to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and to promote transportation options such as carpooling, public transit and cycling. This program is sponsored by the Sustainable Whidbey Coalition and supported by cities of Oak Harbor and Langley, Town of Coupeville, Island County, the Island Regional Transportation Organization and the ACHIEVE Coalition with support from Whidbey General Hospital and in cooperation with Island Transit.

Coupeville launched its rideshare program last August. Now they have 96 participants who have logged 419 bike trips, 216 walk trips, 2,055 bus trips, and 760 carpools. This resulted in a 40,893 pound reduction of carbon emissions, saved 2,045 gallons of gas and saved participants \$27,654! The program is now going Island-wide.

Island County Public Health is funding these incentives with a grant provided by a CDC Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant. Studies show that people who take public transit have a less stressful commute which can boost your immune system. Bus riders walk more and of course, those commuting by bike and walking get an aerobic workout without the expense of a gym membership.

America's obesity epidemic is linked to our car-dependent lifestyles. Surprisingly, over 80% of our trips within 1.5 miles from home are made by car. In Island County 62% of adults report being overweight and 29% report being physically inactive. The Surgeon General warns that obesity may result in as much preventable disease and death as smoking.

The National Safety Council says riding the bus is 170 times safer than driving a car. Taking transit gives commuters an opportunity to relax, read, text or listen to music, in a safe, stress-free environment.

To be safe as a cyclist be sure to wear a helmet and bright clothing, put lights and reflectors on your bike, obey the rules of the road and give proper hand signals. Visit: <http://www.bicyclealliance.org/> for other safety tips. For information on local group rides visit: www.whidbeybicycleclub.com Up to three bikes can fit on a bus bike rack.

Island Transit has 5,000 riders a day with their bus, van pools and para-transit services. That makes our roads a lot quieter and less congested. There are 90 van pools in operation. That would take up the space on ½ of a ferry (if they all used the ferry). In contrast, if the van pool riders all took their own cars, it would take up 3 and ½ ferries. Buses are prompt, clean and the drivers are courteous and helpful. During the dark months of the year, it's good to use a flashlight to flag down the bus as it approaches your stop. Get the bus schedule and find out more at www.islandtransit.org

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Rideshare (*Continued*)

Compared to personal vehicles, public transit significantly reduces toxic emissions that can cause serious health concerns for the oldest, youngest and those in our community with respiratory problems.

So let's review, there's weight loss, physical fitness, cleaner air, quieter streets, less congestion, more relaxation, saving money, saving the planet, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and possibly winning \$50. I can't think of a better way to start the New Year off on the right foot. Or left. Right. Left...

For more information contact Island County's Regional Transportation Planner, Donna Keeler, by email: d.keeler@co.island.wa.us or phone 360- 678-7959. Or visit. www.sustainablewhidbey.org/

To review studies on the health benefits of a car free commute visit: <http://blogs.plos.org/obesitypanacea/2010/11/01/transit-users-more-likely-to-be-physicall-active/>

To get the bike schedule go to <http://www.whidbeybicycleclub.org/>

Maribeth Crandell, Environmental Educator, City of Oak Harbor

Chetzemoka Christening Attracts an Unusual Visitor

On November 13th the Stranding Network received a call from Fort Casey State Park rangers about a "huge live seal" in the campgrounds lying on the beach between two boyscout troops' camping sites. Susan Berta and Howie Garrett responded to find an alert and healthy young elephant seal approximately 4' long basking in the sun. It had used its front flippers to throw sand on its back and seemed content to be causing excitement among the young scouts. It was possibly undergoing a molt, but it was not the normal molting season.

Expecting over 300 people to attend the christening of the Chetzemoka the following day, the ferry attendants were getting heartburn over its presence just a few yards from the ferry landing.



(The only thing the Stranding Network can do with a live animal like this is to keep people from disturbing it. We can't chase it off the beach.)

The next day, the young elephant seal, still in the same location, witnessed the christening of our new ferry and apparently was not bothered by the crowds of onlookers. When the festivities were over, the seal went back into the water and disappeared, not to be seen since. Maybe it was just looking for a little excitement in its life?

Text by Sandy Dubpernell, BW Class of '93

Photo by Susan Berta, Marine Mammal Stranding Network



Whidbey Island Holiday Party 2010

The Holiday Beach Watchers Party was a wonderful experience to participate in. From the set-up at 4pm to the tear-down by 8:30pm; it was an amazing transformation. Led by the Social Committee, there were many more folks that contributed to its success.

What can one say about this event? There was lots of food and many varieties of dishes. Drink and desserts were plentiful and made for a very happy occasion. The entertainment was delightful with Shirley and Mathew Brennick's skit "A Day in the Life of a Beach Watcher", to Vern Olson and his festive holiday cheer, and the Open Circle Singers topping off a night of Christmas to remember.

As Beach Watchers and friends, we were there to support our organization with a raffle and silent auction. We opened our hearts and our wallets to enhance Beach Watcher causes for 2011. But most importantly, we had the opportunity to leave the world for a few hours and simply enjoy friends, laughter and merriment.

We do want to acknowledge our many contributors and sponsors for their generosity in supporting the raffle and silent auction. A special thanks to Whidbey Telecom for their financial contribution to the success of this function.

To those who could not attend the party, your opportunity is coming up again in 2011. We look forward to seeing all of you at the next Holiday Party and silent auction.

Sincerely,

Dick Newsham, BW Class of '08

Thank you to the business community for the donations to the Whidbey Holiday Party:

Coupeville businesses: Anchorage Inn B + B, Aqua Gifts, Captain Whidbey Inn, Collections, Compass Rose B + B, the Cove, Eby Bowl, Front Street Grill, Gerry's Kitchen, Honey Bear, Kapaws, Lavendar Wind Farm, Local Grown, Mosquito Fleet, One More Thing, Pizza Factory, PS Hair Design, Seaside Spa and Salon, Spinnaker Tea Garden B + B, Tea Treasures, Toby's Tavern, Touch of Dutch, Windjammer Gallery

Freeland businesses: Ace Hardware, Book Bay, Ace Hardware, Freeland Cleaner, Linds, Payless Food Store, Radio Shack, Waters Edge, Whidbey's Coffee,

Langley businesses: Café Langley, Callahan, Inc., Carol's Coffee Barn, Clyde Theatre, Half Link Bicycle Shop, K-dub Designs, La Salon Bella, Mukilteo Coffee, Neals Clover Patch, Primo Bistro, Sweet Monas, Useless Bay Coffee, Vegetarian Café, Village Pizzeria, Whidbey Island Center for the Arts, Whidbey Island Soap Company, Whidbey Island Vineyard & Winery, Whidbey Tire & Auto Center,

Greenbank businesses: Greenbank Café, Greenbank Cellars, Greenbank Cheese, Greenbank Winery, Healthy Pet, Island Oasis Nail Spa, Whidbey Pies

Oak Harbor businesses: Applebee's, Arties, Aqua Gifts, Bruce's Septic, China City, Country Store-Skagit Farmers Supply, DH Buffet, El Cazador Mexican Restaurant, Frasers, Good Times Pizza Buffet, Honeymoon Bay Coffee Co, Jumbo Buffet, Sea Tac Shuttle, Whidbey Playhouse, Zorba's

Clinton businesses: Jim's Hardware, Timbuktu, Wild Birds Unlimited, WorkWear Jeans N Things

Off Island businesses: Costco, Half Price Books, Highliner Charters, Pasek Cellars, PF Chang's China Bistro, Trader Joe's



Annual Beach Watchers Meeting

The WSU Island County Beach Watchers Annual Meeting took place on January 11, 2011 at the Deception Pass West Beach Shelter. We turned the heaters on full blast, but still needed to huddle together for warmth, and it eventually worked. About 50 Beach Watchers from Whidbey and Camano islands gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of 2010, hear reports on new projects and opportunities and select new members for the Beach Watchers Advisory Committee (BWAC).

Following welcomes and introductions by Jill Hein, BWAC President, the minutes from last year's annual meeting were approved. John Howard, BWAC Treasurer, reported that grants are shrinking and the BW reserve is being tapped to sustain programming. Jill then presented a summary for 2010 in which over 19,000 volunteer hours were dedicated to BW activities. Awards for hours of service were made to over 15 Beach Watchers who had logged in hours topping milestone levels. Brief presentations were made on Puget Sound Starts Here educational programs, a new project that is being developed for Port Susan, and Island County's Shoreline Management Plan. Barbara Bennett, Program Coordinator, pointed to future opportunities to expand Beach Watcher training and roles and engage other citizens in marine stewardship. The meeting concluded with elections of new members to the Beach Watcher Advisory Council, which is now at its maximum number. We then adjourned to lunch with the Board of the Lighthouse Environmental Programs (LEP) and all present were invited to stay for the LEP Annual Meeting.

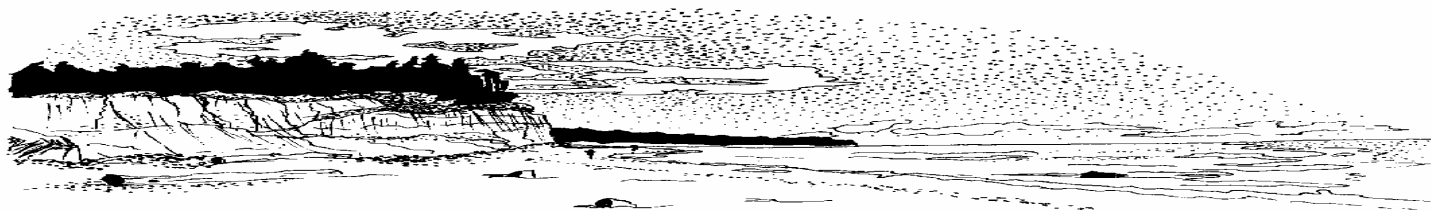
2011 officers were voted in at the BWAC retreat which was held January 18th. The 2011 officers are: President Sue Howard, Vice President Tom Vos, Secretary Mary Hulbert and Treasurer John Howard. New to BWAC for 2011 are – Nicole Luce, Graham Johnson, Janet Kramer, and Michele Johnson, so please congratulate these wonderful volunteers next time you see them.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!

The Annual Meeting is an important opportunity to build relationships among Beach Watchers from the two islands of Island County, learn of emerging opportunities for the year ahead, elect representatives to BWAC and celebrate accomplishments of the year. It takes place during January each year. Mark your calendar to look for an invitation to the next Annual Meeting.



Barbara Bennett, WSU Beach Watchers Coordinator and Jill Hein, New Past President of BWAC, BW Class of '05





Surveying for Salmon

Wading a stream in December looking for salmon carcasses in the snow no less - can one have much more fun? That was my experience last month when I was invited by two members of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to participate in a weekly survey looking for salmon, alive and dead, and "redds" in a small stream in the Skagit River System.

The S.F.E.G. is one of fourteen regional non governmental organizations (ngo's) in Washington which promote partnerships in habitat restoration, education, and watershed stewardship. This particular Fisheries Enhancement Group includes the Skagit and Samish River watersheds, north Whidbey, and the San Juan Islands.

We surveyed approximately 0.4 mile of a small stream which has had two restoration projects within the past dozen years. Although the previous week's survey yielded some 60 live Coho salmon and 21 redds, the day we counted found 13 alive (barely), 16 carcasses, and 17 redds. The January 5 count yielded 2 alive, 17 carcasses, and 6 redds. The fish were measured and marked so as not to count them in future surveys. These particular Coho measured between .65 and .85 meters which meant the live weight was probably 8-10 pounds - impressive by any standards.

The returning salmon have probably not eaten for one to two months and that combined with the return to a fresh water from the marine waters negatively impacts the fish's immune system. Prior to dying the fish are laden with large fungal and bacterially infected areas. It is believed that the decomposition and consumption of the carcasses by scavengers promotes the distribution of marine borne nutrients to the surrounding forest. Isotope studies of trees, songbirds, etc. seem to confirm the release of these marine materials to the stream and forest ecosystems.

The sharp eyes and experience of my fellow surveyors were able to detect a number of new "redds" since the previous survey. A redd is the nest of the spawning salmon made by the female using her tail to create an elongated shallow hole or disturbed area with a smooth pile of gravel on the downstream end of it. As the eggs are deposited they are fertilized by the male(s) and then covered by gravel. The female will create additional redds upstream allowing the relatively dirt free gravel to be deposited over the eggs which helps oxygenated water to flow around the eggs during incubation. The newly formed redds are recognized by the usual stream flow pattern as the result of the gravel buildup. The flow of the stream reduces the gravel pile within a short period of time (hours to days) so it is indistinguishable from any other formation on the bottom.

Of anecdotal interest, one of the stream-side landowners was concerned until just recently because no fish had been seen in the stream. It apparently required a high water event for these particular salmon to find their way into this stream. In addition, the landowner reported in past 2 - 3 years he had seen no evidence of spawning activity. Judging by past survey numbers of this stream which at times recorded numbers in the hundreds the presence of spawning Coho is highly variable.

Jim Somers, BW Class of '04





SOUND WATERS



This is an exciting month for Beach Watchers who are busy organizing our **Sound Waters event for February 5, 2011**. Months of planning and set up are beginning to show great results! You may have seen one or more of the pieces we've put together to spread the word- posters, postcards, emails, articles, advertisements and a spectacular brochure both hard copy and online, not to mention the Sound Waters website itself. Beginning in December, we put the word out in as many spots as we could find with hopes of having a great registration kick off on January 7th. Within a few days after registration opened we had more than 300 sign up to attend!!!

Running for more than 15 years, Sound Waters this year will take place at the **South Whidbey High School**, a new venue for us. We've spent some time at the school and get more excited about having it there every time we go. We've got some great partners at the school helping us navigate rooms and technology, registration, eating and display areas. There will be plenty of room for a large crowd of Sound Waters participants! We are encouraging public transportation and rideshares to get to South Whidbey. Check the website for options that may work for you.

If you haven't signed up to attend, you still have time! This is a great opportunity for you to learn more about something you are passionate about, not to mention spending the day with like minded folks sharing the same vision for our natural world. You can register on-line at www.beachwatchers.net/soundwaters. The website is packed with information to help you decide and keep you informed on what's happening with Sound Waters. The conference includes keynote presentation by Dr. Rick Keil, University of Washington School of Oceanography, three class sessions all related to our marine environment and where we live, and an extensive exhibition area open all day. More than 35 of our 65 classes are *new* this year. Classes fall into eight different categories that are about "All Things Puget Sound:" Earth, Education, Energy, History, Island Living, Marine Environment, Plants, and Wildlife. Come learn how overpopulation affects all things in our natural world, how raptors make their living, or how to buzz bomb for pinks. Learn how to connect kids to nature, the history of farming the Ebey Prairie, or about the possible underwater turbine projects off our shores. Discover the importance of eelgrass beds for marine life, oil spill threats to our area, and much more. Learn about what *you* can do in your home, yard, and shore to make a difference to the health of our waters. Classes are filling fast, but the good news is there are so many to choose from!

See you Saturday, February 5th – South Whidbey High School!

Mary Hulbert, BW Class of '09





Dates to Remember

Upcoming Camano Island and Whidbey Island Events

ALL ISLAND EVENTS

- Jan 25th** **Port Susan MSA Public Planning**
6:30 PM Camano Senior Center
- Jan 27th** **Port Susan MSA Public Planning**
6:30 PM Stanwood Center
- Feb 2nd** **SOUND WATERS!**
8:00-4:30 South Whidbey High School
(REMEMBER - NEW LOCATION)

CAMANO EVENTS

- Feb 7th** **Camano BW Monthly Meeting**
9:00 - 11:00 Camano Community Center
- Feb 26th** **Camano Is./Stanwood Snow
Goose Festival**
Greater Stanwood/Camano Island
Starts at Floyd Center, Stanwood
- Mar 7th** **Camano BW Monthly Meeting**
9:00-11:00 Camano Community Center

WHIDBEY EVENTS

- Feb 14th** **South Whidbey Breakfast**
8:30 AM Neil's Clover Patch (Bayview
near the Goose)

The Circumference of Home


When Kurt Hoeling realized the gap between his convictions and his carbon footprint, he gave up traveling by car for a year, staying within 100 kilometers of his Whidbey Island home. Join us for Kurt's presentation and book signing.

"The question is no longer whether I must respond. The question is whether I can turn my response into an adventure."

Funded by the Friends of the Oak Harbor Library and the City of Oak Harbor.

TUESDAY, FEB 8
5:30 p.m.

OAK HARBOR CITY HALL
865 SE Barrington Drive

 www.sno-isle.org

2011 Monthly Meeting Schedule, Mondays, 9- noon:

Jan 10th, Feb 7th, Mar 7th, Apr 4th, May 2nd, June 6th, Aug 1, Sep 12, Oct 3rd, Nov 7th, Dec 5th

2011 Steering Committee Schedule, Wednesdays, 9:30 am:

Jan 5th, Feb 2nd, Mar 2nd, Mar 30th, Apr 27th, Jun 1st, Jul 27th, Sep 7th, Sep 28th, Nov 2nd, Nov 30th

Note: all Beach Watchers are welcome to attend the Steering Committee meetings held in the Beach Watchers office.



Volunteer Opportunities

Outdoor Classroom

Volunteer Teachers needed! At the Outdoor Classroom we will present lessons about aquatic insects, water quality and riparian vegetation to elementary students. Come share your passion for Whidbey Island and join us for our volunteer teacher training on April 13th from 9:30-2:00pm. Classroom sessions will run from April 26th through end of May. Beach Watchers gain volunteer outreach hours when working on our projects!

Contact Robin Clark, Watershed Program Manger at Whidbey Watersheds for more info.

(360) 579-1272

Snow Goose Festival

We will be sharing a booth at the Floyd with the Snohomish County Beach Watchers.

Sheila Means is chairing this event and would like help with setup and manning the booth, please contact Sheila if you can help out.

Setup Friday afternoon

Sat, Feb 26, 9-4

Sun, Feb 27, noon-4

Admiralty Head Lighthouse

New and exciting things are happening at Admiralty Head Lighthouse! As a Beach Watcher you have the opportunity to volunteer as a host docent or in the gift shop during the season the lighthouse is open. If you like talking with people from all over the world, helping them to enjoy our wonderful island and share some lighthouse and fort history this may be a job for you. No experience is necessary and there will be a one day Docent training held this spring. The lighthouse is open from 11.00AM -5:00 PM weekends in the spring and fall and full time during the summer. Time spent helping at the lighthouse earns you Beach Watcher volunteer hours. Scheduling for the 2011 season will begin soon.

For an application or more information call 240-5540 or 321-5111 (extension 5540) or send email inquiries to admiraltyhead-lighthouse@gmail.com

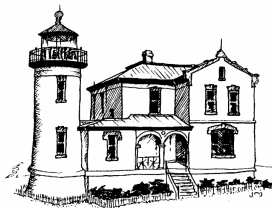


Table at Four Springs

Bobbye will be doing bird masks and could use some help, please contact Bobbye if you can help out at bobbyeamiller@yahoo.com.

Sound Waters

We'd love your help to continue spreading the word about Sound Waters! Ask a friend or a neighbor if they would like to join you. Share the website or pass them your brochure if you have one so they can get excited about participating in Sound Waters too.



Thanks to our Sponsors



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
ISLAND COUNTY EXTENSION



*“In the end we will conserve only what we love;
We will love only what we understand;*

*We will understand only what we have been
taught.”*

~Baba Dioum, Senegalese ecologist

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT BEACH LOG
MARCH 15**