

Blamed for shootings

Fishermen draw fire from seal defenders

By JACK DESMOND
Of the Emerald

Are Oregon's harbor seals in the gun sights of the state's salmon fishers?

Yes, say environmentalists, who claim the animals are shot because they eat salmon already caught in nets.

No, say the salmon fishers, who deny shooting the seals and say they aren't a problem.

Harbor seals, once shot for bounty, have been protected from hunting since the U. S. Congress passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972. Since then the slowly increasing population of harbor seals has been returning to rivers and estuaries their former habitat. This is much to the consternation of salmon fishermen who are faced with dwindling salmon stocks and shorter fishing seasons.

Steve Gilbert, representing the Eugene chapter of Greenpeace, cites a study that examined dead marine mam-

mals washed up along the coast.

"Of the 23 harbor seals, the primary cause of death was from bullet wounds for nine, and another two died from diseases caused by bullets," Gilbert says, calling this an indication that one-third to one-half of all harbor seals die by gunfire. "That one study shows fishermen have a pretty heavy impact on the seals," Gilbert adds.

Bob Hudson of the All-Coast Fishermen's Marketing Association says he is not aware of fishermen shooting harbor seals and doubts gillnetting fishermen shoot harbor seals.

"Gillnetting is done at night," Gilbert adds. "It would be incredibly dumb for them to shoot." He says fishermen couldn't see the harbor seals at night and fishermen wouldn't shoot because of the danger of hitting other fishermen.

"The harbor seal is the coyote of the Pacific Coast," says Gilbert, who says he un-



Photo by Peter Stoel

derstands the frustrations facing the fishermen.

"When you have salmon trapped in a gillnet, it makes it easy for the seal to take a bite out of the salmon," he says.

Gilbert notes salmon populations are low because "man in-

general is the fishermen's problem more so than the seal."

Hudson says harbor seals are a problem, but agrees with Gilbert.

"They are not the prime issue," Hudson maintains. "If we try to compare them with dams, water quality, and water allocations, they are not in that league."

Gilbert claims the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is using the harbor seals controversy in an attempt to manage harbor seals by getting a waiver from the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

"The state feels this blanket protection is going too far and that it was a knee-jerk reaction to what was going on before," says Gilbert. "They feel it is against modern wildlife principles of maintaining sustainable yields. They feel it is necessary to constantly cull the populations."

Gilbert says the ODFW's ideal management is of a "population that is always under stress and always cranking out as many as possi-

ble."

He adds, "It gets down to a philosophical notion that man has to play God and man has to manage for all the species since Mother Nature can't do it."

Dale Snow of the ODFW denies his agency is seeking an immediate waiver to the Act.

"Eventually we might. Right now, we don't have the data."

Snow says it is necessary to conduct a study of the interaction between the seals and fish along the Columbia River to determine seal predation. The proposed \$657,000 study has drawn criticism from environmentalists who say it's a duplication of 12 earlier studies which reveal that fewer than 10 percent of the harbor seal diet is salmon.

Environmentalists also claim a current study of harbor seals in a Washington state estuary should be an adequate indicator. A permit to kill 230 seals was granted for the study.

Snow notes the Washington estuary being studied is larger than all the estuaries in Oregon combined.

IFC says no to Oregana; slices folk dance budget

The Incidental Fee Committee denied a budget request from the Oregana because of its ties to the EMU administration during a budget hearing Friday night.

"I see nothing but problems," said IFC chair Janet Eggleston. "If we fund Oregana it will open up one hell of a barrel of worms."

IFC members objected to Oregana's recent reorganization establishing it as a revenue-producing part of the EMU.

"We don't fund revenue-producing areas," said Kevin Chambers, IFC member, adding that Oregana's \$1,863 request for stipends "basically adds up to a subsidy."

Dusty Rhodes, the only IFC member to vote for the budget, argued that the IFC may be forcing Oregana to fold if it voted against funding.

"We can't vote Oregana out of existence," said Rhodes. "But we can provide a

small amount of money to keep them going. If not, we may be dooming them to closing up."

"Some things just have to be given help," said Oregana editor Rick Taylor, after the vote. The motion to fund Oregana's request failed 5-1.

The IFC cut the Recreational Folk Dance's budget from \$2,281 to \$1,158 after debating whether the IFC should reverse an earlier decision not to fund the program's dance activities.

"The goal failed," emphasized Rocky Schatz, IFC member. "We can't fund them for that goal."

Well, maybe we made a mistake in the goal hearing," said Harry Ricks, IFC member, noting the program was the first to have a goal hearing. "We're human aren't we?"

The IFC allocated all but \$150 of the corrected budget request for the Architecture and Allied Arts Student Union.

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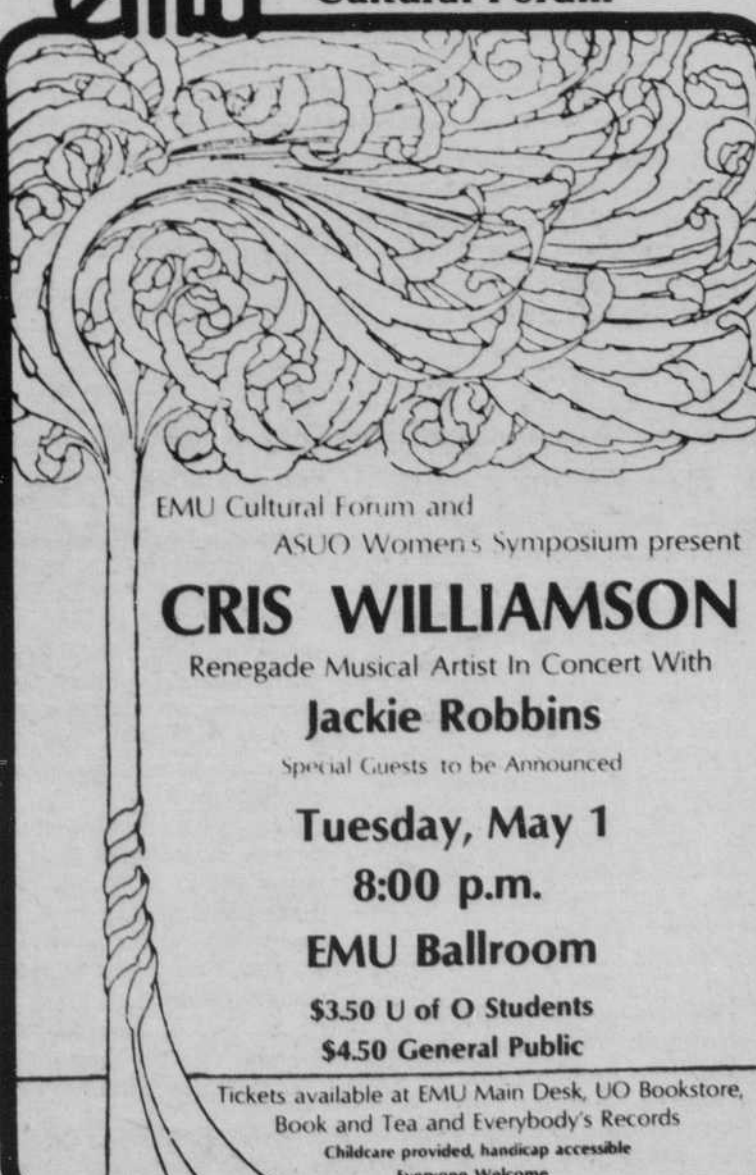
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