

Anglers look at aquariums differently



Fishing

Henry Miller

Guest columnist

NEWPORT — “That’s making me hungry,” the grandmotherly woman said to her husband as they shepherded a couple of bumptious preschoolers through the massive Passages of the Deep walk-through saltwater aquarium.

The appetite-whetting source of the hunger pangs was a 5-foot sturgeon swimming along the thick, clear plastic tunnel that encircled us.

While others may have been entranced by the graceful sinuous glide of the huge prehistoric fish, she probably was envisioning sturgeon steaks, smoked sturgeon or, my personal favorite, sturgeon chowder.

The finny occupants of the Oregon Coast Aquarium’s passages exhibit look different to people who like to fish.

Where the uninitiated may see a flock of black rockfish or China rockfish and other species swimming by, those in the hook-and-line fraternity tend to see animated Cajun-blackened fillets or Panko-dipped halibut fish and chips.

Oh come on, admit it.

Could you really not look at the fish-identification handout you got at the entrance, discover that the shimmering curtain of small, slender, chrome-bright minnows in front of you are anchovies ... and not think about pizza?

Seriously?

Admit it; beauty truly is in the eye, and the stomach, of the beholder.

Which is not to say that even the most avid angler can’t appreciate the grace and beauty of fish in their element?

But still ...

Take the sea otters, as an example.

No, no, not as a main course or side dish.

Too cute, too cuddly and waaaaay too playful and appealing to ever be considered as table fare.

But my wife, Kay, and I happened to be there at feeding time.

“Wow,” I enthused. “Look at the size of those clams



Delightful to watch or delicious to wok? For anglers at the Oregon Coast Aquarium, the answer is both.

they’re feeding them!”

It was a simple case of otter envy.

Also, it was well past the lunch hour.

Which didn’t make a lot of the indoor exhibits any easier.

Some of the attractions included live Pacific lobsters, crabs, assorted shrimp, a smallish abalone and some of the largest scallops that I’ve ever seen.

Better move over to the jellyfish exhibits or the giant eel tank.

Handy rule for anglers touring an aquarium: When hunger is inevitable, search out the inedible.

One last thought about our visit to the aquarium during a three-day, two-night stay at the coast.

Looking at the turkey vultures in their mesh enclosure at the aquarium, I couldn’t help but think about what they probably say at feeding time.

“Well what do you know? Leftovers again.”

It only took three decades...

Driving back to Salem, Kay and I decided to stop at the beach access at the Chinook Winds hotel (the old Shilo Inn) in Lincoln City.

Strolling on the beach looking for agates and shells, I noticed a shiny glint of cobalt blue peeking out from a loose coil of kelp on the sand.



A walk on the beach was productive for the Millers during Antiques Week in Lincoln City. Glass floats are put out on the beach for visitors to find mid-October through Memorial Day each year. PHOTOS BY HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

A GLASS FLOAT!

Float No. 1359, to be precise, according to the sticker on the delicate glass bubble, an early Easter egg from the tourism-promotion community.

One of 300 of the baubles put out during Antique Week in Lincoln City.

Until then, the only glass float I’d ever seen in the wild was an authentic basketball-size Coke-bottle-green Japanese fishing-net float.

That was spotted about 35 miles out in the Pacific on a halibut fishing trip.

The deckhand who had spotted it first got to keep it.

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Kitzhaber charged with 10 ethics violations

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Former Gov. John Kitzhaber violated the state’s ethics laws 10 times during his third term, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission unanimously decided Friday.

Kitzhaber could be fined as much as \$50,000. He now can appeal or try to reach a settlement.

The long-time Democratic politician, who resigned in 2015 just weeks into his fourth term, defended himself before the commission for nearly two hours, saying it was the only opportunity he has had during multiple investigations to tell his side of the story.

“My concern is the assault on my integrity,” he said.

The ethics commission launched a preliminary review in fall 2014 after complaints alleging Kitzhaber, 70, and his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes, 50, used their positions for financial gain.

The complaints centered on Hayes’ dual role as an unpaid adviser in the governor’s office and as a private, paid consultant working on the same issues.

The commission suspended its review while state

and federal criminal investigations were underway. It resumed the ethics investigation when the criminal inquiries ended without charges.

In November 2017, the commission rejected a potential settlement with Kitzhaber that would have allowed him to admit violating the state’s conflict of interest law and pay a \$1,000 fine.

A 131-page investigative report, released Wednesday, alleged Kitzhaber violated conflict-of-interest laws seven times, violated a law prohibiting the use of public office for private gain three times, and violated a law limiting gifts to public officials to \$50 one time.

The commission decided to remove one violation of misuse of office — for allowing a staff member to care for Hayes’ pets — after Kitzhaber explained that the staff member also was an old friend who volunteered to provide the care.

Kitzhaber said he was willing to admit he made mistakes of omission by trusting staffers and advisers to ensure his actions complied with ethics laws.

“I am more than happy and willing and ready to accept accountability for the mistakes I did make,” he said.

But he vehemently denied any attempt to attain financial gain for himself or for Hayes.

“I withstood the scrutiny of eight elections in 26 years,” he said. “This is the first time my integrity has ever been questioned.”

Kitzhaber’s lawyer, Janet Hoffman, argued that Kitzhaber wasn’t aware of what Hayes was doing. The couple did not live together and sometimes went weeks without seeing each other, she said.

“He did not know that it would be a problem for her to give good counsel, intelligent counsel, as long as she wasn’t selling that role,” Hoffman said. “He didn’t know she was selling that role. He did not authorize her to use those roles for her financial gain.”

Commission members weren’t swayed.

“As the governor of this state, he had a tremendous amount of power. He used that power to open doors for his fiancée, to give her access, and to put her in a position where she could use that access, and did use that access, to enrich herself,” member Nathan Sosa said. “I think it was incumbent upon him to exercise oversight

over that situation and not to simply hand it off to staff, hand it off to counsel.”

On Jan. 5, the commission decided that Hayes separately committed 22 ethics violations. She could face a maximum fine of \$5,000 per violation, and could be required to repay up to twice the amount she earned from contracts received because of her position. Hayes also has the chance to appeal or negotiate a settlement.

Some commissioners expressed respect and admiration for Kitzhaber’s long history of service to the state, and said it was heartbreaking to reach their decision.

But they said they had no choice but to support the investigators’ findings.

“This was a complete blurring of the lines,” commission Chairwoman Alison Kean said. “To not hold a former governor with so much experience to the standard that every other public employee is held to, because he decided that it was easier to go along with his fiancée’s demands than his staff’s concerns, would be a disservice to the state and would be a disservice to why we’re here.”

Attorneys for Kitzhaber and Hayes did not respond to interview requests.

Kitzhaber’s publicist released a statement on his behalf Friday afternoon:

“After deliberation, the Ethics Commission did not find that I intentionally used my office for personal gain. However, I did unintentionally violate several provisions of Oregon ethics law and assume full responsibility and accountability for those infractions,” it read.

The ethics commission next will vote on final orders, including proposed fines, in both the Kitzhaber and Hayes cases, said Ron Bersin, the commission’s executive director.

An appeal would first go to the state Office of Administrative Hearings. If Kitzhaber or Hayes disagree with those findings, they could appeal to the Oregon Court of Appeals and then the Oregon Supreme Court. tloew@statesmanjournal.com, 503-399-6779 or follow at [Twitter.com/Tracy_Loew](https://twitter.com/Tracy_Loew)

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