

Washington Park seals probably doing fine

"Yellow Tag," "Bub," "Cinco" and little "Yaquina" — those four harbor seals released into the ocean in November after losing their home at the Washington Park Zoo — are probably doing fine, even though little has been seen or heard of them since their release, an Oregon State University Sea Grant scientist says.

Robin Brown, an OSU oceanographer who radio-tagged the seals with the help of other scientists, said it's not unusual for several weeks to pass before a signal from one of the animals is received. Three of the four seals had special radio transmitters glued on their backs before their release to be ocean at Netarts Bay.

"With the work we've done with other harbor seals in the past, it's not unusual to tag a seal and let him go and see him once or twice, then not locate him

for weeks or months — partly because we're not out there looking constantly," said Brown. "Then the animal turns up again at one of the estuaries on our coast. So we're not really concerned that these animals are not located every time we out to find them."

Brown flew a small plane from Newport to the Columbia River last month equipped with a radio receiver in hopes of finding one of the seals.

One seal, "Bub," was sighted several days ago on a Newport jetty. Brown was pleased to see the animal had not lost weight, since he was concerned the man-raised seals might have difficulty locating food on their own.

"One of our concerns was whether the animals would be able to find adequate food and feed on their own live fish," he explained. "Bub, however, is a good

example that they have easily done that. It was quite apparent to me that he hadn't lost any weight in the wild."

At the same time, Brown is concerned about the safety of the seals because they've never lived outside captivity. They must adapt to the wild, forgetting their ties to man, he said. On close examination, it was apparent Bub had suffered a head injury, though Brown was unsure of the cause.

"They really do get some incredible wounds in the wild," Brown noted.

Bub was treated at Marine Science Center, then released into Netarts Bay once again.

Brown is hopeful that the seals will learn to stay clear of people. He thinks there is a good chance of that.

"When we released the animals, they were quite aggressive to the people

who handled them," he said. "I believe this was a good sign that they weren't going to be overly friendly to people in the future."

The transmitters used on harbor seals are programmed with a special signal to identify a special seal. The ones carried by Yellow Tag, Cinco and Bub were glued onto their backs. Their movements will be traced in an effort to learn more about seal habits.

The device will remain in place until late summer, when they lose their fur during their annual moult. The transmitter is limited, however. It only works when the animal is at the water's surface or on shore.

Brown explained that OSU Sea Grant researchers also mark the animals by painting dye on a portion of their backs and by attaching color-coded cattle tags on their flippers (which denote the age and

sex of the seal). They can be spotted and identified from a distance.

The four seals were given up by the Portland Zoo because their enclosure, originally designed for primates, was inadequate for the needs of the pinnipeds. In addition, coins and other objects thrown into the seal's tanks by zoo visitors were sometimes ingested by the animals, causing digestive problems. They were turned over to the zoo when they were pups, Brown said.

"To date, we've tagged and released about 60 harbor seals," said Brown. "About 50 of these animals have been wild, but the other ten are animals like these four, which were either in captivity for some time or were pups taken off the beach and believed to be abandoned."

Pups found on the beach by well-meaning beachcombers are an an-

nual problem, Brown said. They are picked up, thought to be abandoned, which is seldom the case. Bub was an example of this, he said. The animal was found on the southern Oregon coast and turned over to researchers at the

University of Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, at Charleston, then later to the zoo.

"We always try to get the notice out each spring when they begin to be born that it's quite common for harbor seal pups to rest on

shore," Brown said. "Just because someone sees a pup alone on the shore, doesn't mean the pup is in danger or has been abandoned. They should be left alone, because it's very likely that the mother is in nearby waters."

Publication on farm goals free

No matter what the situation, getting things done often seems less difficult when you set goals, said Clayton Wills, OSU extension agent in Clackamas County.

The new Oregon State University extension service publication, "Setting Farm Business Goals, is about goal-setting and how farm business managers can benefit from it.

According to Gene Nelson, OSU extension

farm management specialist and author of the publication, the way to get results, make improvements and be successful is to set goals.

"When you know where you are going and when you want to be there, it's easier to get the job done," the specialist says.

The publication specifically describes several factors that should be taken into consideration when setting goals and

outlines six steps in defining what a goal should consist of.

Nelson says that by setting goals, farmers can shape events, rather than letting events shape them. He adds that success in farming depends on setting and attaining goals.

"Setting Farm Business Goals," Ec 1097, is available free of charge from the Clackamas County Extension office by phoning 655-8631.

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