

Corps: Sea lions ‘are a huge draw to our city’

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Sea Lion Defense Brigade
Watching the Port employees, as they often watch anything involving sea lions on the lower Columbia River, are a couple of volunteers from the Sea Lion Defense Brigade.

Veronica Montoya, who’s lived in Astoria about a year and said she came for the wildlife, walks the docks Friday with a camera. Living nearby, Montoya said she heard two loud noises Thursday night, she said a live-aboard boater told her were sea bombs.

“These animals are not being protected,” Montoya said, noting a dead sea lion floating near the basin’s boat launch ramp Friday, the supposed seal bombs and recent shell casings and bleeding sea lions recently found at the basin. The pinnipeds are supposed to be protected from harm by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Montoya leveled multiple complaints against the Port, from its unwillingness to protect sea lions, to its lack of communication with Defense Brigade members to its refusal to release nighttime surveillance tape from around the time the shell casings were found.

Shortly after the discovery, the Port released the surveillance tape to investigators from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, who are looking into the 19 shell casings found Easter weekend on the basin causeway as a possible shooting of sea lions.

Finding a solution
Evert said he’s heard from the ODFW, National Marine

Fisheries Services and other wildlife organizations about the need to get sea lions off the docks and back onto rocky breakwaters, a natural habitat.

“California sea lions reside in the Eastern North Pacific Ocean in shallow coastal and estuarine waters,” reads NOAA’s information page on the animal. “Sandy beaches are preferred for haul out sites. In California, they haul out on marina docks, as well as jetties and buoys.”

Port staff recently mentioned that environmental group Sea Shepherd had offered to pay for a sea lion-only dock, but only if ODFW was evicted from its dock at the basin.

“The states have been trapping and branding California sea lions in Astoria since 1997 as part of long-term study to monitor the movement, feeding habits and migration patterns of the animal in the Columbia River and along the Pacific Coast,” read ODFW’s question-and-answer page on California sea lions. “By (re-sitting) individual animals throughout their lives, we can learn about age-specific survival, habitat use, age at sexual maturity, reproductive rates and longevity. All of this information is crucial to understanding sea lion life history in order to (ensure) the overall health and well-being of the population.”

Montoya said she doesn’t see why ODFW has to do the trapping and branding in the middle of Astoria.

“These are a huge draw to our city,” she said of the people who regularly come out on the causeway to watch the animals, similar to the visitors to the docks in Newport.



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian
Maintenance staff from the Port of Astoria strings construction fencing up along a P Dock finger pier at the East End Mooring Basin in a new effort to keep sea lions off.



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian
Visitors to the Port of Astoria’s East End Mooring Basin Friday watch California and Stellar sea lions congregate on O Dock, along with Port staff stringing up construction fencing along P Dock in a new effort to keep the pinnipeds off.



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian
By the start of this week, the sea lions had apparently defeated the orange construction fencing, which the Port has since replaced with metal chicken wire.

Marine: Jordan and his mother had been planning the surprise for a couple of weeks

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deployed for seven months with the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force — Crisis Response — Central Command out of Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Based in Kuwait during the tour, Jordan said he served with the 1st Maintenance Battalion on his first combat tour. He joined the Marine Corps at 18 and is coming up on his six-year anniversary in November.

Members of the Special

Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force have been returning since last month from the Middle East, where among other actions, they’ve supported operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Most of Jordan’s family didn’t know he was back yet, save for his mother Sheryl, who’d been planning the surprise with him for a couple of weeks, and two sisters in California who Law had been visiting with before flying into Portland Monday. His

younger siblings hadn’t seen him in two years.

“He’s big on surprising them, every time,” said Sheryl, adding while the family’s kept in touch via Skype, it’s never the same as seeing their brother in person.

They’d been planning the reunion to take place at Astoria High School, where Law’s little brother Landon and sister Lexis, 16-year-old twins, attend school. But a teacher in-service day, meaning no school for the kids, caused them to scramble, eventually

reaching out to Fort George.

“I thought we just came for lunch,” said Landon, adding that it did seem peculiar, with the TV crews and his father, Steve Law, showing up from work.

“I saw him, but I didn’t recognize the face,” said Steve, who came from his job at Lum’s Auto Center.

Jordan said he’ll spend some time with his family until Thursday, after which he leaves for Camp Pendleton and goes back into the field for more training by Sunday.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian
From left: U.S. Marine Sgt. Jordan Law’s partner, Cameron Holiday, his mother, Cheryl Law and his sister, Lexis Law, smile after Jordan Law surprised his family at Fort George Brewery.

St. Helens woman died in Highway 30 crash; Warrenton woman injured

CLATSKANIE — U.S. Highway 30 has reopened after a 26-year-old St. Helens woman — Heather Robison — died Monday morning in a motor vehicle crash on Hwy. 30 near the intersection with Jack Falls and Lindberg Roads, according to the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office.

Robison’s two sons, 6 and 1, who were traveling with her, were transported to area hospitals, as was 20-year-old Kierstin Merila of Warrenton, who was driving another vehicle in the crash.

The children were reported to be in stable condition, according to the sheriff’s office.

Merila was taken to St. John Medical Center in Longview. Her condition was not immediately available.

Columbia County Sheriff Jeff Dickerson described the crash as two cars colliding after one was not in its lane.

Dickerson could not confirm the make or model of the two vehicles, but did say Robison was driving one and Merila was driving the other.

“As far as who is at fault, we have not determined that,” Dickerson said.

The Washington County Crash Analysis Reconstruction Team is assisting with the investigation.

A third vehicle swerved to avoid the crash, but none of the occupants were injured.

The crash occurred at 10 a.m. Monday.

The highway was closed for 7 1/2 hours while emergency responders rendered aid to the motorists, and later as investigators from the Washington County Crash Analysis and Reconstruction Team conducted its investigation.

“We are grateful for the help we received from CART, from the State Police, and from the Rainier Police



Courtesy of the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office

Department,” Sheriff Jeff Dickerson said. “Columbia 911 dispatchers and Columbia River Fire and Rescue personnel also provided tre- mendous help, including with their assistance in notifying the family of the deceased.”

On the record

Harassment
• At 4:36 p.m. Friday, Astoria Police arrested Michelle Diane Roth, 59, Astoria, for harassment

on the 600 block of Ninth Street in Astoria.

DUII arrest
• At 10:08 p.m. Sunday, Clat-

sop County Sheriff’s Office arrested Sara Elsner, 37, Gresham, for driving under the influence of intoxicants at North Y in Seaside.


Lotteries

OREGON
Monday’s Pick 4:
1 p.m.: 5-6-5-4
4 p.m.: 5-6-5-4
7 p.m.: 9-1-1-7
10 p.m.: 5-6-5-4
Monday’s Megabucks:

03-26-32-34-41-48
Next jackpot: \$2.6 million
WASHINGTON
Daily Game: 4-3-6
Hit 5: 03-06-12-27-36
Estimated jackpot: \$410,000

Keno: 01-05-08-14-15-25-42-45-48-51-55-58-59-66-68-69-70-71-74-80
Lotto: 05-18-31-33-39-40
Estimated jackpot: \$2.7 million
Match 4: 02-04-09-12

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