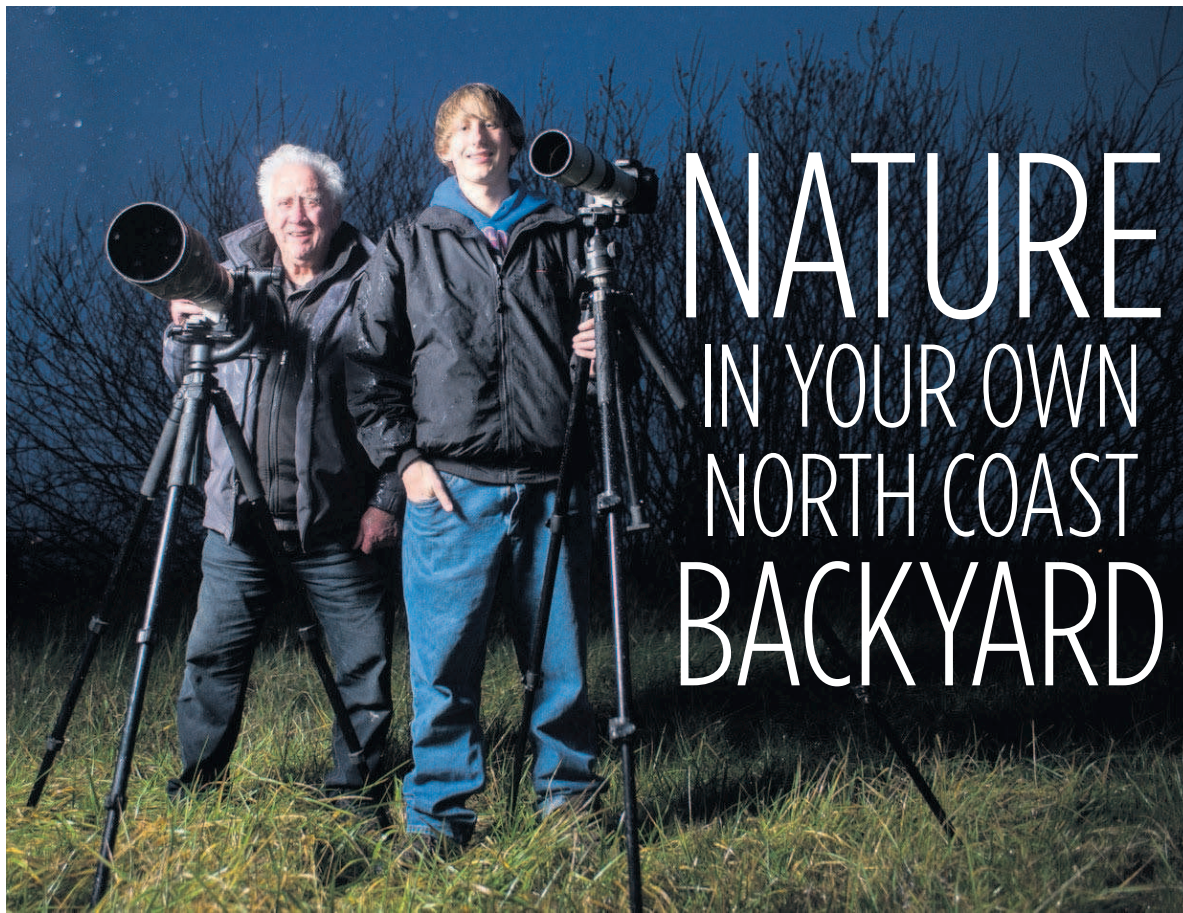


Coastal Life

Story by NANCY MCCARTHY



NATURE IN YOUR OWN NORTH COAST BACKYARD

Photo by Joshua Bessex

Neil Maine, left, and his grandson, Michael Wing, right, are both avid photographers.

Local photographer Neal Maine and his grandson, Michael Wing, go on a ‘wildlife safari’ every day

The story goes like this: Two caspian terns show up on Del Rey Beach, each holding a fish in their bright orange beaks. The female tern stands between them, trying to decide which suitor to choose.

Caught in a photograph entitled “Taking Terns,” the scene needs no caption. It’s a quandary as relevant to humans as it is to the black-hooded, white-bodied birds, waiting patiently for the female to make her move.

Michael Wing, who was 16 when he shot that photo two years ago, happened upon the scene while joining his grandfather, Neal Maine, on one of their regular excursions to see what nature offered in their own backyard.

For at least eight years, the two have spent several days a week together, capturing photos that delight,

surprise and intrigue viewers. Their partnership has become PacificLight Images. Their mission: to show residents and visitors the variety and vibrancy of wildlife that surrounds them on the North Coast.

“Photography is sort of like filling the gas in the nature car,” Maine said. “It’s the gas, but the end product is having people be aware and be engaged.”

A retired biology teacher who taught Seaside High School students the wonders of the local landscape for 31 years, Maine wanted to pass that education along to his grandson.

“I hung out with Grandpa many times, and I saw him do photography, and I just decided I would try and pick up on that,” Wing said. “I picked up my first camera — it was a Canon Rebel — and I started taking

pictures of cups in the sink overflowing with water while the faucet was on. I was 10 years old.”

Pretty soon they started hanging out together every day while Wing was young. Even now, at 18, Wing, who is a father and who works at Lektro full time, tries to catch a few moments with Maine out in the “wild.”

“We’ve got a friendship, a bond; it’s hard to explain but it’s a wonderful feeling knowing you can have your grandfather as your best friend, not just someone you have to visit,” Wing said.

For them, the definition of “quality

time” is traipsing through the forest — no matter the weather — in search of nesting birds, elk or interesting plants. They may hunker down for hours near, or even in, a stream, waiting for a salmon to swim in view or

**‘That’s another
thing I learned
from photography:
Patience is key.
And I use it in
everyday life now.’**



Submitted photo by Michael Wing

A salmon swimming upstream garnered young photographer Michael Wing a rating of 10 from his grandfather, local photographer and biologist Neal Maine, who had been trying to capture the same photo for several years.



Submitted photo by Neal Maine

Photographer Neal Maine captured a preening egret on a local North Coast stream. Maine and his grandson, Michael Wing, have a mission to show residents and visitors the variety of wildlife offered in their own backyard.

a wood duck to take flight. On beach days, there may be birds of prey or whales to capture.

“We just go wherever our minds wander,” Wing said. “We have a basic area — as far as Cannon Beach south and as far as the Warrenton-As-toria area heading north.”

At first, Wing asked his grandfather to rate his photos from one to 10, with 10 being the best. It took



Submitted photo by Michael Wing

This shot of a simple icicle is Michael Wing’s “finest picture of all,” according to his grandfather, Neal Maine.

many tries, until he started shooting eights and nines steadily. Then, finally, there was the triumphant 10 — the photo of the coho swimming upstream — a shot Maine had found elusive.

“I’d been working on it for years, and then he goes and gets it! I wasn’t mad at him, but, at the same time, that was the picture I was trying to

Continued on page 9