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ONE DOLLAR

A whale of a mystery

Marine experts seek answers in death of humpback

By KYLE SPURR and KATHERINE LACAZE
The Daily Astorian and EO Media Group

SEASIDE — The dead 24-foot humpback whale that washed ashore on the north end of Seaside's beach Sunday caused quite a stir.

A couple of dozen onlookers stopped to watch Tuesday as a team of marine experts from Portland State University and Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network volunteers performed a necropsy on the animal, which had been moved slightly inland and north on the beach. Some came to town specifically to see the whale.

The team collected biological samples that will be used to help determine a cause of death. If there are no "smoking guns," such as bullet holes or something stuck in the mammal's throat, then it can take days or weeks to determine a cause of death, said Keith Chandler, the general manager of Seaside Aquarium.

It was clear the animal did not die from old age, as it was only about a year old, Chandler said. He said it is not unusual to see a whale wash ashore on the North Coast, but they tend to be gray whales. Humpbacks are rare — Chandler said he has only seen a few in his 20 years with the stranding network — but the species was spotted in nearby waters recently.

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Jason Hussa, left, Mollie Schmidt, center, and Melinda Essig, right, volunteers with the Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network, perform a necropsy of the whale while bystanders watch Tuesday. More photos at www.dailyastorian.com



LEFT: A volunteer makes a measurement near the eye of the whale carcass during a necropsy Tuesday.

BELOW: Volunteers and researchers with the Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network and Portland State University make measurements of the whale carcass during a necropsy Tuesday.



Hopes fade in search for man

Resources 'exhausted,' police chief says

By LYRA FONTAINE
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — After a search that brought in crews from throughout the state, officials announced they will curtail major efforts in Cannon Beach to find Raymond Hickman, the 87-year-old Haystack Heights man who was reported missing Saturday morning.

"As the fourth day ends, we've exhausted all different outlets that we could go to and that we could access, as well as just exhausted our resources," Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn said at Tuesday's Cannon Beach City Council meeting. Throughout the week, rescue teams from Clatsop, Washington, Tillamook, Multnomah and Clackamas counties and Mountain Wave Search and Rescue scoured the coastline, highways and trails.

About 75 people helped with the search, using four-wheel-drive vehicles, horses, and a drone from a Hamlet resident that flew over areas they couldn't access and took photos that were extensively reviewed, Schermerhorn said.

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Alliance wants tobacco off limits until 21

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A coalition of 20 health organizations has launched a campaign to combat a sobering trend: About seven kids every day become new smokers in Oregon.

The coalition wants state lawmakers to raise the legal age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21 in an effort to keep it out of high schools.

The Institute of Medicine projects that law change would reduce smoking by about 25 percent among 15- to 17-year-olds.

Hawaii in December 2015 became the first state to pass such a law, and the idea is gaining traction in more than 100 municipalities around the country, from New York City to Kansas City, Mo. California and New Jersey had similar proposals in its legislatures earlier this year.

In Oregon, a couple of lawmakers have already tried to pitch the idea. Most recently, Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, moved legislation in 2015. The bill stalled in the Senate Judiciary Committee as other issues took priority.

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Hold the pickles for this sport

Seaside rec district offers pickleball for all skills, ages

By KATHERINE LACAZE
EO Media Group

SEASIDE — Pickleball doesn't have a lot, or really anything, to do with pickles. It's a simple volley game, similar to a slow-moving version of tennis that uses shorter paddles, a light perforated plastic ball and a badminton-sized court.

Community members on the North Coast can learn more about the game, thanks to a new program being offered through a partnership of the USA Pickleball Association and the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District.

The program, held at the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center gymnasium, started in January with demonstrations and instructions. It's not too late to get in on the fun, though. The group is meeting every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. through Feb. 20.

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Katherine Lacaze/EO Media Group
Lauren Fisher, of Seaside, got her first taste of pickleball during a session at the Camp Rilea gymnasium in Warrenton.



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