

# Elk: To stay safe, keep your dog on a leash, no elk selfies

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Everywhere there are elk, “people should have their dogs on leash,” naturalist and photographer Neal Maine said. “A modern-day dog really doesn’t understand an elk, and most people think the elk are going to run away from a dog. Elk can chase them, much like people take their dogs to the beach to chase birds around for exercise. Coyotes and wolves are two of their past enemies, so they’re all set up to take them out.”

The behavior may be brutal. Once they get a dog down, “they pound on them with their feet,” Maine said. “It’s part of their reaction to a predator.”

“If your dog is cornered — you wouldn’t want to intervene, unless you’re really foolhardy,” Maine added.

John Dudley has a home by Little Beach in Gearhart, ground zero for the elk population, where he chronicles the path of the elk with his camera. “The difference lately has been there have been calves in the herd, week-old calves,” Dudley



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Elk in a Gearhart driveway.

said. “It’s postpartum time for the cows.”

One “alpha bull,” recognizable by a small but visible scar on his right shoulder, in the herd is particularly aggressive, Dudley said.

Sometimes the bull becomes “rather agitated,” herding the others, corralling them, and fighting off young bulls who consider themselves “pretenders to the throne.”

Dudley said he witnessed an encounter when a kayaker in the estuary was pulled toward the shore by the tide. The kayakers drifted closer to the herd and they pulled out cellphones

to film the encounter.

“Suddenly something spooked the elk and en masse they galloped south,” Dudley said. “They could have just as easily stampeded over the kayakers.”

## Taking cues

Normally, Gearhart’s elk herd “kind of moseys,” Bowman said.

Hikers and visitors should take heed when “their heads come up from their feeding and they’re staring at you and they’re not turning,” he said. “Turn around and go back,” Bowman said. “They’ll leave you alone. They aren’t going



John Dudley/For The Daily Astorian

“Big Daddy” alpha bull keeps its eye on a kayaker in Little Beach. More photos of elk online at [DailyAstorian.com](http://DailyAstorian.com)

to chase you down. Their heads are going to go back down and they’ll continue eating.”

Elk eat 50 pounds a day — “and they don’t care if it’s your garden, off the golf course or through the woods,” Bowman said.

People should not attempt to approach the elk for cellphone pictures. “If they want to do photography, get a camera,” Maine said. “Elk photography with a cellphone is not productive.”

“The two times I’ve seen chase-downs, they’d been trying to get close enough to get a cellphone shot,” Maine said.

## Observing nature

Maine advised the best way to enjoy the elk is to appreciate “an amazing creature that’s been here for thousands of years.”

“We should learn to become observers of wildlife, he said, and take 15 minutes to watch the interaction between the cows and the calves and the spikes,”

Maine said. “Keep your distance and watch the phenomena of them moving, feeding, interacting, so you’re observing something, not just trying to get a picture. Watch their behavior and be intrigued and interested in that part of it. That gets missed by the drive-by folks.”

Prior to European settlement, more than 10 million elk roamed nearly all of the United States and parts of Canada, with about 1 million today.

Maine said at one point, less than a century ago, the elk were virtually extinct in Clatsop County from overhunting. Hunting was closed for about 10 years as elk were reintroduced into the area. “There are people who say their grandpa had a picture of elk being unloaded from a train in downtown Seaside to transplant here.”

To stay safe, keep your dog on a leash, no elk selfies and observe, don’t interfere, Maine said. “The reason this area is so rich and so beautiful and so wonderful is because there’s still wildlife in the habitat. So observe it, enjoy it and have it make your day richer.”

# Code violators: ‘I don’t need someone dying in Long Beach’

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Safety and fire issues are the primary concern, but livability and property values are also affected by owners that aren’t pulling their weight.

As the mayor drove slowly past a private residence in a Long Beach neighborhood of small lots and single-level homes, he didn’t have to point out the problem. Nearly a dozen cars, all of which appeared to be in some state of disrepair, were jammed together like massive jigsaw pieces on a lot overgrown with waist-high weeds.

To each side of the mess, manicured lawns and spotless lots were the norm.

“If I went to sell my house next to him, what do you think I’d get?” asked the mayor rhetorically.

The owner has been contacted and fined, but there’s been little improvement to the property.

Phillips admits that some ordinances may need to be revised and made more specific about what’s allowed and what isn’t. Some residents, the mayor said, are taking advantage of “loopholes.”

## Somebody’s gotta do it

Phillips says problematic properties can strain staff and financial resources. When owners don’t comply and the city is forced to step in, taxpayer money ends up being diverted for cleanup costs and legal fees.

Plus, a small staff and a limited budget mean everyone has to do what they can with what they have. That includes the mayor.

Phillips says lingering code enforcement issues can grow into serious hazards to public safety. He’s worried that kids playing or transients crashing overnight are all at risk.

“I don’t need someone dying in Long Beach,” said the mayor, who isn’t afraid to make a few house calls to make sure that doesn’t happen on his watch.

“Sometimes being the mayor and coming up and talking to them can help,” Phillips said.

The mayor refuses to call code enforcement a challenge. Instead, he prefers to keep his eye on the prize even if resolution sometimes takes years, or even decades to accomplish.

“It’s just a big opportunity,” he said.

## Sometimes a success

The Gray Parrot, an abandoned and failed brew pub, had steadily devolved into a health hazard and a haven for drug users and transient activity.

The property and main structure front Pacific Avenue, while the deep lot retreats hundreds of feet back from the road. Abandoned cars, rusting mobile homes and several outbuildings added to a scene of mounting violations and lawlessness.

The owner was uncooperative, the mayor said. The bank finally took it over, and the city finally had its opportunity.

A neighboring propane business was eager to see the site cleaned up and also needed room to expand. The city helped arrange a deal that saw

Active Enterprises purchase the property.

The cars and trailers have all been removed and the once cluttered site has been cleared of brush and its most immediate hazards.

A bill for \$10,000 in dump fees alone highlights the challenges that face buyers of long-neglected lots.

Phillips says the whole project, nearly five years in the making, still has plenty left to be done. Still, he considers it a success, and commends Active Enterprises for seeing the investment as an opportunity.

Almost always, resolution comes in stages.

In another case, the city was successful in achieving authorization to demolish an abandoned gas station that loomed for years at the corner of Sid

Snyder and Pacific Avenues.

The tanks were drained and the lot was cleared. The site now boasts signage for the city and local businesses, as well as a bright red buoy.

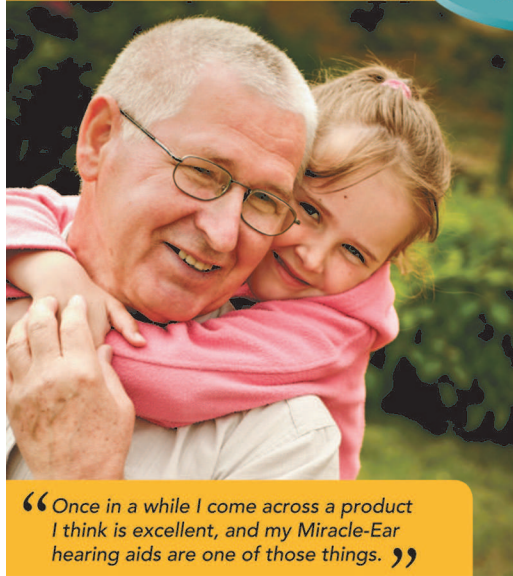
“The eyesore is gone,” Phillips said.

But the problem isn’t, entirely. Facing the potential of growing health and environmental issues, the city took out a lien on the property and had to invest nearly \$100,000 for the cleanup.

Phillips hopes to see that money back in city coffers when, and if, the property ultimately sells.

“The biggest issue is trying to get people to take ownership and pride in their property, or business they have, and to stand up and do the right thing,” Phillips said.

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