

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

Trump's presidency should start with bridge-building

Friday it became official: Donald J. Trump historically was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States. No, he is not favored by a majority of Americans, but he won the election. The keys to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue have exchanged hands and the earth did not tilt off its axis. The country still stands, and the democratic transfer of power provided proof of the strength and resilience of the United States.

We've made clear our distrust of Trump, as many others have too. In our view, he has not proven to be a moral person, nor knowledgeable about the many problems this country faces. We're worried that his bag of tricks is filled only with platitudes and insults.

But worried is no way to go through life, nor a presidential term. Perhaps Trump will be similar to the 44 men before him, just one that likes to beat his own chest a little more than the rest.

We're happy to give him credit for each and every success he earns. And we hope those successes are plentiful and we really do get sick of winning, whatever that means.

But we know that Trump is even more divisive than Hillary Clinton, the opponent he bested back in November. His calls for unity are drowned by his continual jabs at whoever he chooses to fight with at the time — House Republicans, the media, civil rights legends or even Meryl Streep. A majority of Americans also see Trump as someone who is cavalier about freedoms that we all hold dearly.

Whether President Trump likes it or not, this will be a divided country. He gets to run it, we have to live in it.

So how do we make it better? How can we bridge the divide?

We can start with communication. We must work on stopping the political polarization, not just in Washington, D.C., but here at home as well, and that starts with each of us. We are not friends and foes, we are all Americans.

At The Daily Astorian, we consider our thoughts and write them down, send them to you to read and respond. We hope you do more of the latter — two-way conversation is the first brick toward bridge-building.

We can all say something, and we can all do something.

Protest peacefully, if you so choose. Donate to the charity of your choice. Volunteer with local organizations. Buy American products. Hire American workers. Read a newspaper. Be involved in local decisions. Make suggestions. Write your congressman and tell them how Obamacare affected you — if it saved your life or priced you out of house and home. Agree to disagree when necessary with those we interact with. We need knowledge, not rancor. Our politicians need it even more, and that's been evident thus far in the Senate confirmation hearings of Trump Cabinet nominees.

Donald Trump has his work cut out for him. We must no longer cheer his rock throwing — nor our own or from those who represent us — but instead implore him to build bridges and not walls.

Together we must work, against all threats both foreign and domestic, to Keep America Great.

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 350 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone numbers. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

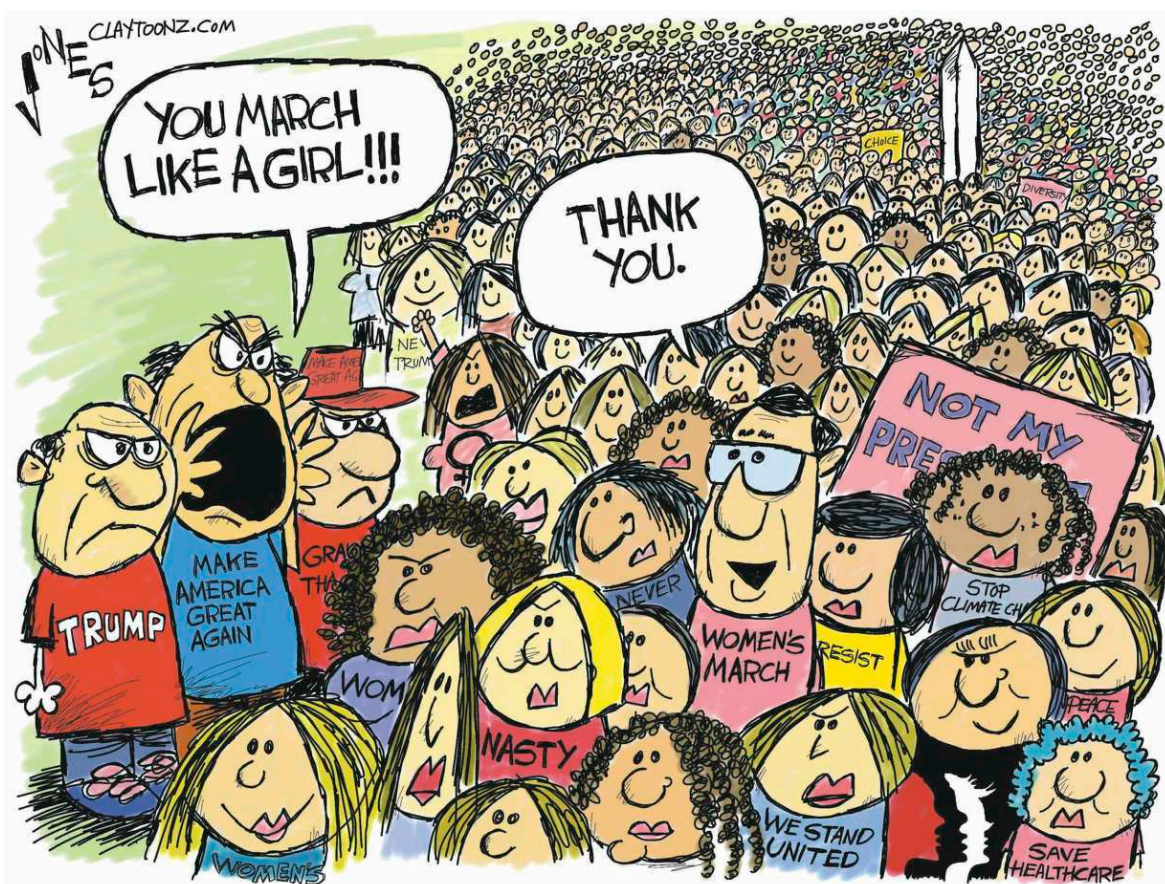
All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are printed each month.

Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than

mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner.

Submissions may be sent in any of these ways:

E-mail to editor@dailyastorian.com; online at www.dailyastorian.com; delivered to the Astorian offices at 949 Exchange St. and 1555 N. Roosevelt in Seaside or by mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103.



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

What lies beneath the sea

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

Some visitors to the North Coast describe them as “little fingers” on the beach. Others describe them as “plastic pickles.” Their

name in Greek means “fire body.” In Australia giant pyrosomes can grow to 90 feet and could consume a human being. In a sense they are like a Frankenstein monster of hundreds of animals coming together to make one organism.

“They’re all over this year for some reason,” Tiffany Boothe, administrative assistant at the Seaside Aquarium, said early this month. “As soon as I saw one I picked it up and put it in my bucket and brought it to the aquarium.”

“Pyro” is the Greek word for fire and “soma” means body, Boothe said, and are known for their brilliant bioluminescence — pink, yellow or bluish — and are not typically seen along Seaside beaches. Like jellyfish, they cannot survive when air gets in their lungs.

A field guide, “Tidepool and Reef,” by Rick M. Harbo, presents a fascinating array of sponges, mollusks, sea stars and tunicates. According to Harbo, tunicates are “encrusting colonies of distinct individuals in a stiff gelatin-like tunic.”

Orange social sea squirts — their real name — divide asexually to form numerous rounded individuals that often cover intertidal and subtidal rocks. Other species like the stalked hairy sea squirt, the sea peach and sea pork, are found encrusting rocks, barnacles and shells. Pyrosomes are classified as a colonial tunicate, a member of the only group of chordates — animals possessing a dorsal nerve chord — able to reproduce both sexually and asexually, with hundreds of animals coming together to make one organism.

While author Harbo writes that tunicates are not edible, Boothe said turtles and sunfish consider them a “delicacy.”

“It’s not necessarily something whales and dolphins are going to find delicious,” Boothe said. “I’ve heard dogs are eating them — that’s not a great thing, but they’re not poisonous.”

Like sea cucumbers, “When you squeeze them, water shoots out,” Boothe added. “They’re very confusing little creatures. I don’t like talking about them.”

Davidson Current

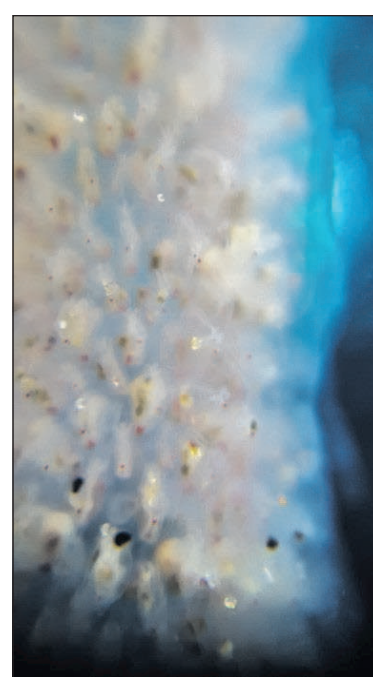
Visitors to our beaches in winter never know what they might find, whether it be a sea lion, bloated gray whale or even a salp, a transparent invertebrate that looks like aspic. “In the summer we have a current that comes down from the north that cools our water down,” Boothe said. “In the winter, the Davidson Current comes up and warms our water up a little bit, so we tend to stay at the same temperature all year round.”

According to the Oregon Coastal Management Program, the Davidson Current begins 600 feet below the surface in Baja California. In winter, southwesterly storms drive the Davidson Current’s warmer, saltier flow northward along the coastline 6 to 12 miles per day, displacing currents offshore, even at the surface.

If winds change, warm weather animals may be stranded in cold water.



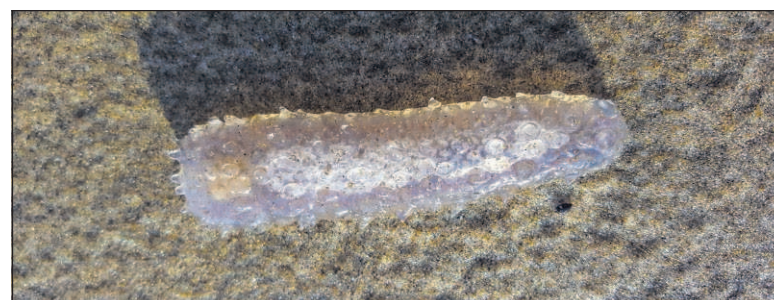
Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium
 A pyrosome is categorized as a marine tunicate.



Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium
 Close-up of a pyrosome.



Submitted Photo
 Thunder, an olive ridley turtle, receives care after washing ashore in Gearhart last December.



Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium
 Some visitors say the pyrosomes look like “little fingers.”

Results are apparent on our beaches. Over the past year and a half, at least five sea turtles washed to shore dead on arrival.

Last winter two olive ridleys, Thunder, which washed ashore in Gearhart, and Lightning, in Pacific City, were malnourished, hypothermic and comatose — but still alive.

A U.S. Coast Guard escort and rehabilitation team transported the turtles to San Diego’s SeaWorld. Sadly, Thunder was discovered floating in her rehabilitation pool a few weeks later, but Lightning continues to receive care.

Curator of fishes Mike Price said Lightning remains in SeaWorld’s care, rehabilitating in a 12-foot deep, 90,000-gallon holding pool along with two other rescued olive ridley turtles.

Sea turtles — olive ridleys, green turtles and leatherbacks — may continue to wash to Seaside’s sand beaches this winter, putting the aquarium on “sea turtle watch.”

“They don’t have to die,” Boothe said. “They can just get stressed out.”

‘Marvel!’

Like the western snowy plover, which leaves its subtle nest among 19 acres of Gearhart dunes, the message may be to pay close attention to the world under our feet,

what Seaside naturalist and photographer Neal Maine calls “a carpet of living phenomena.”

“These are living, dynamic systems,” Maine said at a December lecture celebrating Haystack Rock. “They’re just not as conspicuous as some systems like fish in the stream or elk coming across the meadow.”

In a year dedicated to the 50-year anniversary of Oregon’s Beach Bill, Maine said he hopes to help recast Oregon beaches as an ecosystem and “reconnect the beaches to the landscape.” He suggested citizen-level efforts to expand the discussion on beaches.

With General Manager Keith Chandler, Boothe is among those leading that effort as the Seaside Aquarium continues to foster education and awareness.

While she’s yet to collect any live pyrosomes, she goes exploring every day so visitors “know what we’re finding on the beach and talking about.”

And if you’re lucky enough to find a pyrosome, what should you do?

“Marvel!” Boothe said. “They’re kind of cool!”

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian’s* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.