

ALL WASHED UP — NOT



The 2011 Japanese tsunami is the gift that just can't seem to stop giving. The Hawaii Herald Tribune reports that tsunami debris is still washing ashore in Hawaii, even almost six years later, with no end in sight (<http://tinyurl.com/tsujunk>).

Not all debris is easy to categorize, or even figure out where it came from. But Japanese boats come in fairly often, even now, and one was spotted off Kona as recently as January. "We can track them back," Nikolai Maximenko, a researcher at the University of Hawaii who models ocean currents, said.

In the meantime, the International Pacific Research Center has been keeping tabs on what's been rolling in, and has created a debris catalog (<http://tinyurl.com/tsujunk1>). A photo of a Japanese fishing vessel, found last November, is shown. The IRPC is also collaborating with NASA to develop remote sensors in satellites that would track marine debris.

"It's hard to tell (how long tsunami debris will arrive) because this is kind of a unique experience," Maximenko observed. "Looking at trends ... it will continue for at least a decade."

BAD NEWS, GOOD NEWS



Another footnote from the 2011 Japanese disaster: The Fukushima nuclear power plant was badly damaged, and leaked radiation into the ocean. Many North Coasters worried the irradiated water would make it to Oregon, but as it turned out, the levels on this end were less than miniscule.

Now there's news from Fukushima that, on its surface, sounds downright alarming. ScienceAlert.com reports that the radiation levels in one of the reactors have climbed to an "unimaginable" 530 sieverts per hour (<http://tinyurl.com/fukurads>). What does that mean? Think of it this way: Just 10 sieverts will kill a person within three weeks.

No one is sure yet exactly what's causing the dramatic increase (melted nuclear fuel? melted fuel rod?) or how to stop it. Even remote control robots/cameras can't help find out what happened — they only last a couple of hours in that environment.

On the bright side the Tokyo Electric Power Company (who provided the photo shown) insists the radiation is "safely contained" within the reactor, "so there's no risk to the greater population." Feel better?

A LITTLE HANDFUL

"So tiny, so fierce, and now so free!" the Wildlife Center of the North Coast (www.coastwildlife.org) posted on its Facebook page Feb. 2, along with the photo shown. "This adorable little handful of saw-whet owl was cleared for release today, and was quite eager to leave!"

A few owl facts from AllAboutBirds.org (<http://tinyurl.com/aboutwhet>): This nocturnal bird got its name because its call (a high-pitched "too-too-too") sounds like a saw being sharpened on a whet stone. Only 7 to 8 inches long, with a 16 to 19-inch wing span, these little critters prey on mice (one lasts for two meals) and the occasional small bird or insect or two.

While nesting, the female stays with the eggs, while pop goes out hunting, but when the youngest chick is about 18 days old, she takes off and leaves pop in charge of the food supply.

"She originally was admitted after being found weak and unable to fly," the Wildlife Center's post continued, "but luckily made a beautiful full recovery. Saw-whet owls are native to this area, but they can be difficult to spot as they blend into their surroundings so well, and their tiny size helps them go unnoticed. Don't let that small size fool you though, they are mighty little hunters who are much tougher than they look!"



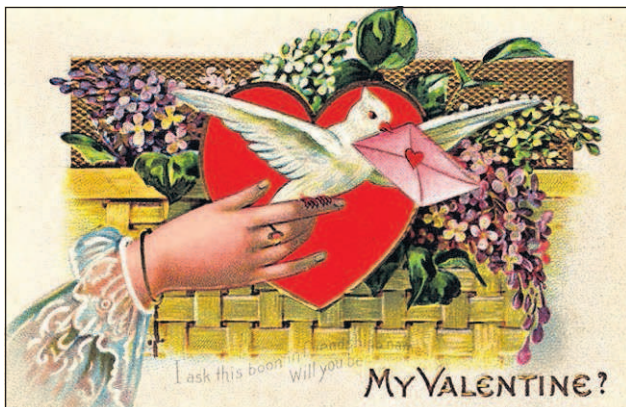
In One Ear



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BE MY VALENTINE



Since Valentine's Day is Tuesday, a reminder of how it came to be is apropos. However, the exact history is a bit muddy, according to History.com, <http://tinyurl.com/ValenTale>.

One legend contends that a priest, Valentine, imprisoned and sentenced to death by the Romans, wrote a letter to a young girl he loved signing it, "from your Valentine." The expression has stuck, and marked St. Valentine as a symbol of romance, as well as martyrdom. The date of his death (or burial), which was in mid-February, became his feast day.

A more cynical view of how the St. Valentine's Day date was picked is that the church was actually trying to distract its members from the Roman fertility festival of Luperca-lia, celebrated on the ides of February (Feb. 15). The priests would sacrifice a goat, cut the hide into strips, dunk them in the blood, then slap the women and fields with the bloody strips to boost fertility. Then there would be a lottery, during which the single men would pick a woman's name and then stay with her for a year.

Needless to say, the church frowned on these antics, calling the festival "un-Christian" in the late 400s, when a pope declared Feb. 14 as the official St. Valentine's Day. It was a date that, coincidentally, both the French and English believed to be the start of bird-mating season. There was just no getting away from associating St. Valentine with love in the air.

Valentine greetings were popular in the Middle Ages, but apparently the oldest known written Valentine was a poem written by Charles, Duke of Orleans, in 1415, while he was locked up in the Tower of London (again, that prison connection).

Presently, according to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are sent every year. On that note, Happy Valentine's Day, gentle reader.

LOCAL BREVITIES



Local brevities from *The Daily Morning Astorian*, Tuesday, Feb. 14, 1888:

- This is St. Valentine's day. Sometime this used to be a nice, sentimental, romantic sort of a day, when young people sent tender effusions to each other, and conveyed by post intimation of the love that filled their hearts.

- Now-a-days it is a day when cowards send anonymous insults, and curs used the post office to annoy respectable women with indecent doggerel. Malice loves a shining mark, and many a pure minded girl has had her soul sullied by forced contact with the mire in perverted observance of St. Valentine's Day.

- Rescue No. 2's team was hitched up to the Silsby (fire engine) yesterday and the outfit took a spin around the block. After they get curried a little and get some city feed into them, they'll look better. At present the engine looks a good deal slicker than the horses.

- The wind blew in puffs from the south and with great force about noon last Sunday. The chimneys, etc., around town got considerable of a shaking up, and some little damage was done here and there. Over on Youngs' River, the Grangers' hall was picked up bodily and carried about eight feet, and parties from that vicinity report seeing a two-story house, 18x24, come floating down, and, sliding by the island across the tideland, apparently none the worse for its trip.

THE ELK WHISPERER



North Coast resident Lorinne had what she calls a "Harry Potter moment" Tuesday morning. An elk wandered into her backyard, literally close enough to touch. And she did. Her mother, Pauline, took a photo of the meeting.

"It was so magical," Lorinne recalled. "Lots of friends warning me he could have hurt you, blah, blah, blah. He was hurt, and just wanted love. I bowed to him, he bowed to me, let me pet him, then followed me and stuck his nose in for one more love. It was just like that scene in Harry Potter, but I didn't get a ride."

Her mother wasn't worried, either. "Animals love Lorinne!" Pauline declared. Which is true enough, as the Ear has heard from several sources.

"He is so majestic," Lorinne noted. "Poor guy has an injured back leg. ... He had a round hole in his leg. I'm thinking someone shot him."

The elk encounter made Lorinne's day. "It was definitely bucket list worthy!" she declared.

INVISIBLE INDUSTRY



Joanne Rideout and her radio show on KMUN, the *Ship Report*, were featured on a recent episode of OPB's "Oregon Field Guide." She is pictured, in a screen shot from the show. If you haven't seen it, you can catch it online at <http://tinyurl.com/opb-rideout>

Joanne, who moved here from the desert Southwest 15 years ago, is fascinated by all things maritime, and especially the Columbia River ship traffic. She shares her enthusiasm on her show. "Most of the houses face the water," she told OPB. "People are always looking at the river, one way or another, and I think I'm just sort of tapping into that sort of curiosity that people have."

Bar Pilot Capt. Robert Johnson has become her mentor over the years, and she's been out on the pilot boat with him many times. "When I get on a boat I just light up," she said. "I'm one of those people. I'm in my happy place when I'm on something that's floating."

"The thing I find quite fascinating about the maritime industry in general is that it's so invisible," she added. "... Most of these folks really operate in obscurity. That's part of what I love to bring to it, is to help people realize that even though you don't know it, those folks play a big role in your life."

LEGO MY GOONIES



OK, Goonie/Lego fans, you don't have to wait much longer. Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment has finally revealed that the long-awaited new, and highly collectible Goonie expansion packs for *Lego Dimensions* (pictured courtesy of Warner Bros.) will be available May 9, according to Newsarama.com (<http://tinyurl.com/goonleg>). The minifigures in the pack also have a Toy Tag to unlock a free play Adventure World, and a Battle Arena (reached through Vorton, the main hub world of *Lego Dimensions*) unique to the world of the character that unlocks it.

Here's a tiny description: "... Players can help Sloth and Chunk escape the Fratelli hideout and join the rest of the Goonies on their search for One Eyed Willy's treasure. Players can use Sloth's Super Strength to smash through walls or play as Chunk and use his infamous Truffle Shuffle. The rebuildable One-Eyed Willy's Pirate Ship will sail on water and can also be built into the Fanged Fortune and the Inferno Cannon ..."

No doubt there will be rejoicing in the Goonie universe in May.

COMMUNITY NOTES

SATURDAY

Lower Columbia R/C Society — 8:30 a.m., back room at Uptown Cafe, 1639 S.E. Ensign Lane, Warrenton. Local Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) chartered radio control model aircraft club meets for breakfast and business. All model aircraft enthusiasts are welcome. For information, call 503-458-5196 or 503-325-0608.

Chinook Indian Nation Council Meeting — 11 a.m., Chinook Tribal Office, 3 Park St., in Bay Center, Washington. Open to all tribal members. Attendees are reminded to bring a potluck item.

Sit and Stitch Group — 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Custom Threads, 1282 Commercial St. Knitting, crocheting and needle work. For information, call 503-325-7780.

Columbia Northwestern Model Railroad Club — 1 p.m., in Hammond. Group runs trains on HO-scale layout. For information, call Don Carter at 503-325-0757.

Spinning Circle — 1 to 3 p.m., Astoria Fiber Arts Academy, 1296 Duane St. Bring a spinning wheel. For information, call 503-325-5598 or go to <http://astoriafiberarts.com>

SUNDAY

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Support Group — 2 to 3:30 p.m., Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway. Family to Family Support Group, for anyone with friend or loved one suffering from a serious brain (mental) illness. For information, contact Myra Kero at 503-738-6165, or k7erowood@com, or go to www.nami.org

Pacific Green Party, Clatsop County Chapter — 4 p.m., Room 101, Art Building, Clatsop Community College, 1651 Lexington Ave. Discussing endorsement of candidates for upcoming Clatsop County special elections in May.

Line Dancing — 5:30 to 8 p.m., Seaside American Legion, 1315 Broadway. For information, call 503-738-5111. No cost; suggested \$5 tip to the instructor.

MONDAY

Chair Exercises for Seniors — 9 to 9:45 a.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Scandinavian Workshop — 10 a.m., First Lutheran Church, 725 33rd St. Needlework, hardanger, knitting, crocheting, embroidery

and quilting. All are welcome. For information, call 503-325-1364 or 503-325-7960.

Mothers of Preschoolers — 10 to 11:30 a.m., Crossroads Community Church, 40618 Old Highway 30, Svensen. MOPS group is a time for moms to relax and enjoy each others' company. For information, call Tracy Wilson at 727-514-1611.

Astoria High School Class of 1970 — 11 a.m., Koffee Klatch at Rod's Bar and Grill, 45 N.E. Skipanon Drive, Warrenton. For information, call ShawnAnn Hope at 503-791-1231.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation \$3 for those older than 60;

\$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Michelle Lewis at 503-861-4200.

Columbia Senior Diners — 11:30 a.m., 1111 Exchange St. Cost is \$6. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Warrenton Senior Lunch Program — noon, Warrenton Community Center, 170 S.W. Third St. Suggested donation of \$5 for seniors and \$7 for those younger than 60. For information, or to volunteer, call 503-861-3502 Monday or Thursday.

Astoria Rotary Club — noon, second floor of the Astoria Elks Lodge, 453 11th St. Guests always welcome. For information, go to www.AstoriaRotary.org

Parkinson's Support Group — 1 p.m., Peace Lutheran Church library, 565 12th St. For information, call 503-440-1970 or 503-440-1985.

Peninsula Quilt Guild — 1 p.m., Peninsula Church Center, 5000 N. Place, Seaview, Wash. Newcomers welcome. Bring nonperishable food donation. For information, call Janet King at 360-665-3005.

Knochlers Pinochle Group — 1 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Cost is \$1 per regular session per person. Players with highest and second highest scores split the prize. Game is designed for players 55 and older, but all ages are welcome.

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