

FROM NEAR EXTINCTION TO A PLACE IN ART

Beaver Tales art exhibition opens in Seaside May 6

By EVE MARX
FOR THE DAILY ASTORIAN

SEASIDE — Named the “state animal” in 1969, the American beaver builds the dams and wetlands that serve as habitat for Oregon salmon, steelhead, birds, amphibians and insects.

Beavers are nature’s hydrologists, “Beaver Tales: A Celebration of Beaver Art” curator Sara Vickerman, a Gearhart resident, said.

“Beaver Tales” originated as a traveling art show featuring beaver-themed images and art. Presentations and workshops highlighted relevant research from multiple academic disciplines at its February Oregon State University debut, asking, “How many ways can you see a beaver?”

The exhibit inspired a month of local beaver-related events in Seaside.

Defender of wildlife

Vickerman retired after 37 years from Defenders of Wildlife, where her job was the conservation of wild animals in functioning ecosystems. She holds degrees in art, anthropology, biology, geography and education.

Denise Fairweather, of Fairweather House and Gallery in Seaside, said Vickerman is a gallery patron.

“She visited a lot during our art walk events for several years,” Fairweather said. “Little by little, she shared with me what her work is. She asked if I had artists who paint beavers, and I said yes.”

Fairweather artists Paul Brent, Mike Brown, Susan



Sue Kramer, “Chewy,” Beaver sculpted from pine needles.



Mike Brown, Beaver Silhouette Porthole Vase, hand-crafted of myrtle wood and other woods.



Mariana Mace, “Coat of Arms, Tail, Tracks and Teeth,” cedar weaving.

Curington, Agnes Field, Jo Pomeroy Crockett, Neal Maine and Denise Joy McFadden created new original work for this show.

Back from the brink

The beaver is a natural ally in conserving Oregon’s wetlands and restoring natural systems, Vickerman said. Beavers play a central role in re-suscitating stream habitats and are worthy of a state-wide beaver conservation vision. The Oregon beaver was nearly exterminated

by trappers by 1900.

Art exhibits, Vickerman said, are a way to raise the profile of the beaver and wetlands and Oregon artists. “There is limited art depicting beavers and their wetlands and stream habitats,” Vickerman said.

The artwork exhibited in the traveling show includes photographs, paintings, prints, cards and quilts. Some of the work is realistic, some abstract; some of it is whimsical, three-dimensional, wood, fiber art and ceramic.

The exhibition at Oregon State University, which closed March 1, was viewed by thousands of people. Of 125 pieces representing about 80 artists, 17 were sold for more than \$5,600 total.

Benefits from the sale of the art support the Wetlands Conservancy, the Necanicum Watershed Council and the North Coast Land Conservancy. Local conservation groups will host educational workshops throughout May.



Beavers and their contributions to the environment are the topic of lectures and exhibits in coming months.



Rene Eisenbart, “Busy Beaver,” watercolor of beaver in its natural habitat.



Bill McIntire, “Beaver Dam in Teton Mountains,” photograph.

On display

Beaver Tales will be on display in Seaside through May, kicking off 5 to 7 p.m. May 6 as the focus of Seaside Art Walk.

Author Frances Backhouse will be at Beach Books talking about her beaver-themed book, “Once They Were Hats,” from 1 to 2 p.m. Beach Books also hosts author and illustrator Margo Greeve 1 to 3 p.m. May 7.

The North Coast Land Conservancy presents

“Stewardship at Beaver Creek” 10 a.m. to noon May 6.

Seaside Brewing Co. will show the film “Leave It to Beavers” 6 to 9 p.m. May 11, and Neil Maine will lecture on “Beaver Ecology” at the Fairweather Gallery (612 Broadway St.) in Seaside 7 p.m. Thursday, May 25.

After Seaside, the exhibit heads to other areas of the state, including Astoria, before finishing up at the Oregon Zoo in September.