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ONE DOLLAR



FOR SNOWY PLOVERS, A FRAGILE, FLUFFY KIND OF HOPE

HATCHED

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

Wildlife biologists discovered another western snowy plover nest at Nehalem Bay State Park over the Memorial Day weekend.

It's been a week of good news for the tiny, threatened shorebird. Last Wednesday, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department announced the first hatchling in 50 years in that area. Several days later three chicks hatched at the Sitka Sedge Natural Area near Pacific City.

They've come a long way since 2015 when the first nest at Nehalem Bay State Park after conservation efforts began in earnest there failed. When that happened, wildlife biologist Vanessa Blackstone cried on beach.

It was like a scene from a movie, she says. You know: "Nooooooooooooo!"

Though plover conservation efforts have been underway along the southern and central portions of the Oregon Coast since the 1990s, managed North Coast sites like Nehalem Bay are relatively new. Biologists hoped that as plover populations rebounded elsewhere, the birds would begin to search farther afield for new habitat and return to traditional sites up north. Now — with an estimated 518 birds statewide and recent successes at Nehalem Bay — they can say with certainty that this is beginning to happen.

The odds are stacked against the Nehalem Bay chick, and any others that follow it. The hatchling is roughly the size of two cotton balls or a golf ball, though getting bigger every day — a small bird



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

ABOVE: Signs clearly mark areas where shorebirds, like the threatened western snowy plover, might be nesting in Nehalem Bay State Park. Wildlife biologist Vanessa Blackstone, left, scans the beach looking for nests. **TOP:** A western snowy plover leaves tracks in the sand on the beaches of Nehalem Bay State Park as wildlife biologist Vanessa Blackstone, in the background, searches for more evidence of the birds' presence.

on a large beach. But even if it doesn't survive, for Blackstone and others who have worked to restore snowy plover populations on the West Coast, it is a fragile, fast-moving, fluffy kind of hope.

"It means Oregon remains at the forefront of recovery for this bird!" Blackstone, who works for the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation, wrote in an email after news of the plover chick broke.

It means, she said, that "not only did

we pick the right locations when selecting nesting areas in the (state's habitat conservation plan), it also means our management is working."

Field work

A few days before the Memorial Day weekend, Blackstone set out to locate the hatchling.

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Merkley talks health care at town hall

Democrat urges people to use national pressure

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — "How many folks here are concerned about health care?" U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley asked the crowd filling the stands at Warrenton High School's gym Sunday.

Almost everyone in attendance raised their hands to an issue that has dominated town halls across the country as Republicans attempt to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

Merkley was in Warrenton as part of his 306th town hall since taking office in 2009. Before taking questions, the Oregon Democrat awarded a U.S. flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol to retired U.S. Navy Capt. Steve Gibson of the American Legion in honor of fellow veteran Bill Thomas, one of the region's last Pearl Harbor survivors, who died in December.

See **MERKLEY**, Page 7A

Muslims thankful for support after attack

Anti-Muslim rant before Portland murders

By **GILLIAN FLACCUS**
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Muslims in Portland thanked the community for its support and said they were raising money for the families of two men who were killed when they came to the defense of two young women — one wearing a hijab — who were targeted by an anti-Muslim rant.

"I am very thankful as a Muslim, I am very thankful as a Portlander ... that we stand together here as one," Muhammad A. Najieb, an imam at the Muslim Community Center, said Saturday.

The two young women "could have been the victims, but three heroes jumped in and supported them," he said.

A fundraising page launched by his group for the families of the dead men, a surviving victim and the two young women had raised more than \$300,000 by Sunday evening.

Police said they'll examine what appears to be the extremist ideology of suspect Jeremy Joseph Christian, 35, who is accused of killing the two men Friday. Christian's social media postings indicate an affinity for Nazis and political violence.

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Volunteers tackle invasive Scotch broom plants

'What lovely yellow blooms'

While a crowd in Cannon Beach celebrated the 50-year anniversary of the bill that preserved Oregon's beaches for the public, John Rippey killed plants.

"That took a lot of hard work to stand up to bad interests," he said about Oregon's landmark 1967 Beach Bill as he methodically cut away at invasive Scotch broom plants along Ecola Creek earlier this month. "And I figure, rather than be part of a parade, I should continue the hard work, and you

EVERYDAY people

can't do that by having bonfires. You do that by getting rid of invasive species."

Or, at least, the Cannon Beach resident says with some self-deprecation, that's the work he's chosen for this particular day.

A former lifeguard in Cannon Beach, Rippey is well-acquainted with efforts to protect and preserve this stretch of sand — as well as the people who

flock here in droves to enjoy it. But this was his first time volunteering with the North Coast Watershed Association, which has organized Scotch broom removal efforts around the creek for several years.

Their work around the creek and in nearby Les Shirley Park has started to pay off. Rippey is tearing up young plants; he doesn't have to tackle the older, established bushes that confronted volunteers in past efforts. Watershed coordinator Brooke Stanley points to wild rose that has started to take over areas along a sandy beach



Katie Frankowicz/The Daily Astorian

Cannon Beach resident John Rippey volunteers to help pull invasive Scotch broom near Ecola Creek.

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