

# Trespassing, other disturbances are down at Haystack Rock

Drones are a growing issue for seabirds

By **BRENNA VISSER**  
*The Daily Astorian*

CANNON BEACH — Keeping people from climbing Haystack Rock can be a challenge.

But thanks to an increase in staffing and education, the Haystack Rock Awareness Program has seen a decrease in trespassing and other disturbances to wildlife, program director Melissa Keyser said.

“We’ve really tried to make a transition from enforcement to education,” she said. “I would say 90 percent of visitors aren’t aware of the regulations that protect this area.”

For 32 years, the Haystack Rock Awareness Program has been a city-funded group which promotes stewardship of the environment and prevents ecosystem degradation through outreach and education.

A team of about 15 interpreters work as educators and enforcers on the beach to help preserve Oregon’s most-Instagrammed landmark.

## Rules of the Rock

Haystack Rock was incorporated as a national wildlife refuge in 1968 and became a marine garden refuge in 1991. The refuge includes everything above the high tide line and goes all the way up to 500 feet above the rock, and anything past that point can’t be climbed on or walked on, Keyser said.

Multiple signs are posted informing visitors to keep out of sensitive areas that are



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

**A nesting seabird can be seen through a scope used by the Haystack Rock Awareness Program to monitor the population of puffins and other species.**

home to a variety of nesting seabirds, sea stars, anemones and other wildlife.

Despite the warnings, Keyser said once a week interpreters will find people attempting to climb the rock or snag animals from the tidepools. But compared with the 98,000 contacts her interpreters have made in the past nine months, Keyser said it’s an improvement from when she started as director four years ago.

Expanding the work on the beach from four months to nine months and doubling the number of interpreters on staff play a large role in this decline, Keyser said.

“There used to be a lot more disturbances that required police resources at the rock,” Keyser said. “In the past, interpreters were more like enforcers, and we got negative feedback. You don’t have a good opportunity to educate with that approach because they are already embarrassed.”

Interpreter Briana Ortega

has been working for the awareness program since April, and said many of the violations she sees are people not understanding they are walking through tidepools.

“We’re out here to help,” she said. “The people who ask questions about what they are doing wrong instead of getting mad are usually happier in the long run.”

Some of their work has resulted in small, environmental victories. This year was the first in many where the black oystercatcher seabird successfully gave birth to three chicks in an intertidal zone, Keyser said — an area that often is disturbed by human interference.

## Enforcement

Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn said he has also noticed a general decline in the number of trespassing calls his officers receive about Haystack Rock. He said officers are only getting about four calls a year to

intervene instead of multiple calls in just the summer like in previous years.

“When we do go down it is usually an educational opportunity,” Schermerhorn said. “Having the interpreters down there has been a great help.”

Rarely do his officers have to issue trespassing citations, he said, but if they do a violator could face a \$500 fine with the city. Most violations of the wildlife laws and regulations are class A misdemeanors.

## New problem

While disturbances from people seem to be on the decline, awareness program interpreters are facing a new kind of trespasser: drones.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, operating drones on refuges like Haystack Rock is illegal without special permits. But Keyser said her interpreters have talked with more than 100 drone operators just this year, and each one said they weren’t aware it was illegal.

“Flying drones is causing these birds to flush, leaving their eggs behind,” Keyser said. “It’s disrupting our seabird populations. Birds don’t know how to react to this new predator.”



U.S. Coast Guard

**The 42-foot commercial fishing vessel Perwyn sank Wednesday in Washington’s Hoquiam River, leaving an oily sheen on the water.**

# Fishing boat sinks on Hoquiam River

*The Daily Astorian*

HOQUIAM, Wash. — The U.S. Coast Guard responded to a 42-foot commercial fishing vessel that sank while moored in the Hoquiam River near Grays Harbor Wednesday.

Coast Guard watchstanders in Warrenton received a report at 3:40 p.m. Wednesday from Hoquiam Police Department that the vessel Perwyn, with a potential 800 gallons of diesel aboard, had sunk and left a sheen on the water.

The Coast Guard’s Incident Management Division opened the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund for up to \$50,000 and contracted Global Diving and Salvage marine casualty responders for cleanup purposes.

Global Diving and Salvage personnel placed a containment boom around the sunken vessel and removed an estimated 200 gallons of marine diesel from the fuel tanks Thursday morning. An absorbent boom has been left in place as the state monitors the site.

# Fulton raised \$3,880 for Port campaign

By **EDWARD STRATTON**  
*The Daily Astorian*

Former Port of Astoria Commissioner Stephen Fulton raised \$3,880 in contributions for his unsuccessful election campaign in May.

The contributions, reported online with the Secretary of State’s Office in late May, included \$1,000 from Portland-based attorney Tom Knutsen, \$500 from Pacific Seafood Group, \$200 from Ryan Osburn Plumbing and several contributions from current and former longshoremen.

Commissioner James Campbell, who defeated Fulton, reported \$4,554 in contributions this year. They included \$1,000 from Bornstein Seafoods, \$500 from marine contractor John E. McAmis, \$350 from marine contracting firm Bergerson Construction and \$250 from state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose.

Pat O’Grady, who lost an open seat on the Port Commission to Frank Spence, ultimately recorded \$3,799 in contributions, largely from current and former longshoremen. Spence did not have a candidate committee.

Former Warrenton City Commissioner Dick Hellberg, who lost to Dirk Rohne, recorded \$1,750 in contributions, mostly from current and former longshoremen. Rohne raised \$4,395, including \$2,445 in miscellaneous contributions of less than \$100 each, \$1,000 from Bornstein Seafoods, \$500 from Bergerson Construction and \$250 from Johnson.

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