

## Cormorants: Volunteers ranged from teenagers to 70-something retirees

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### Citizen science

The Cape Falcon Marine Reserve, located between the Falcon Cove natural area and Manzanita, was set aside for conservation and scientific research in 2012. It is one of five marine reserves in Oregon. They are, as the Friends of Cape Falcon Marine Reserve have described them, “underwater parks,” or “living laboratories,” in the words of Chrissy Smith, coordinator for the Friends of Cape Falcon Marine Reserve.

The Cape Falcon site is Oregon’s northernmost marine reserve. Three of the area’s five cormorant colonies are easily visible from where Sappington would sit above Devil’s Cauldron, a cove surrounded by steep cliffs where ocean swells turn the water below turquoise and milk-white with froth.

For the past two summers, the Audubon Society of Portland and Fish and Wildlife Service, in collaboration with Friends of Cape Falcon Marine Reserve and the Haystack Rock Awareness Program, have trained volunteers to monitor seabird nesting success. Volunteers also watch colonies at sites in the Cape Perpetua Marine Reserve farther south.

Volunteer scientists are also called “citizen scientists” and they could be anyone — that’s the point. This summer, Smith said volunteers ranged from teenagers to 70-something retirees. They came from all backgrounds with varying skills and experiences.

“Citizen science, you can do a lot with it,” said Liebezeit. But, he added, simplicity is key.

The cormorants are monitored as an indicator species, said Shawn Stephensen, wildlife biologist with Fish and Wildlife, “helping us understand ocean conditions and food availability for many different seabirds.” But, given the citizen science component, cormorants were also chosen because they are commonly found off the Oregon Coast, they are easy to

spot, difficult to confuse with other sea birds and they build distinct, separate nests that volunteers can peer into with their spotting scopes and binoculars.

For Liebezeit there are several main reasons for community science in this project: “To get good info, and involve citizens who live on the coast so they feel like they are part of the environment they live in, to develop a connection with wildlife and nature, and to contribute.”

The volunteers also serve an important function as educators. They explain the monitoring work and the role of marine reserves and pass out brochures to tourists or curious locals who stop to see what they’re doing.

### Peaceful pace

Above all, a Cape Falcon volunteer needs patience.

Patience to find a nest. Patience to watch it, and watch it and watch it, waiting for a moment when the bird sitting on it gets up or trades spots with its mate.

“Right at that moment you have to look into the nest and see how many eggs there are,” Liebezeit said.

This summer, volunteers monitored 46 cormorant nests at Cape Falcon and 66 at Cape Perpetua. They saw 114 chicks successfully fledge.

Liebezeit hopes the monitoring can continue for a minimum of five years, but it depends on funding. Already, he has some money for next year, and will likely need more to ensure both Cape Falcon and Cape Perpetua have a biologist on hand to answer questions and help with quality control in data collection. Fish and Wildlife provides thousands of dollars worth of in-kind support.

Monitoring the cormorants is an activity Sappington and other volunteers say they find to be very peaceful. The normal pace of his life slows, Sappington said. At the same time, though, the birds he has been watching seem to grow up overnight.

“All of the sudden what once was an egg is now a bird and it’s getting ready to leave the nest.”

## Gearhart: Reports of loud parties and overcrowding drew greater calls for action

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rentals in residential zones can negatively affect the atmosphere and livability.

At the time, the taxing ordinance for short-term rental properties provided exemption for the approximately 50 single-family homes rented out under the city’s guidelines. The owners were required to pay Oregon’s 1 percent lodging tax but did not have to pay Gearhart’s 7 percent lodging tax, through an exemption that had been put in place in the 1990s so those dwellings could be rented without paying taxes.

Gearhart City Administrator Chad Sweet estimated that the city was losing about \$95,000 a year because of the exemption.

That exemption was removed in 2016 and short-term renters were required to pay the city’s 7 percent lodging tax.

Another challenge for the city was the absence of an ordinance requiring inspections or spelling out occupancy limits for vacation rentals.

An acute countywide housing shortage also drove the conversation.

Increased online rental activity and reports of loud parties, overcrowding and blocked roadways drew greater calls for action.

By 2015, an increase in online bookings led to more than a doubling of bookings in Gearhart, through companies like Vacasa, HomeAway and Airbnb. Complaints that out-of-town management was unable to promptly reply to public safety concerns led to an increased call for regulation, particularly a provision requiring 24-hour owner contact information.

After a series of hearings, including standing-room-only public workshops in the Gearhart Fire Hall, the Planning Commission crafted rules in May 2016 detailing occupancy limits, parking rules and property management contact information.

According to rules, rental properties must maintain a “residential appearance,” and provide weekly garbage service. Homes are required to conduct fire and safety inspections, and post a tsunami evacuation map in the dwelling.

The proposed regulation capped registration to existing short-term rental properties



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Ballot box at Gearhart City Hall.

### MEASURE 4-188

**Question:** Shall Gearhart’s vacation rental dwellings ordinance be repealed and replaced?

**Summary:** If approved, the ordinance would:

- Require \$600 annual permit fees dedicated to police and fire departments;
- Permit transfers to new dwelling unit owners;
- Change maximum occupancy from two persons over 2 years old per bedroom to two persons over 12 years old per bedroom, plus three additional people over 12 per dwelling unit, no limit on children under 12;
- Repeal ordinances imposing special regulations on vacation rental dwellings related to off street parking, residential appearance, garbage service, septic sewer capacity inspections and cesspool prohibitions.
- Require compliance with Gearhart city ordinances that apply generally to all residential dwelling units;
- Eliminate requirement that a 24-hour representative be able to physically respond to the site within 30 minutes;
- Allow safety inspections to be conducted by any licensed home inspector;
- Make dwelling unit owners responsible for self-reporting inspection issues, and provide a six month cure period, for any deficiencies;
- Remove current limitation on the number of vacation rentals;
- Require public vote for amendment of the vacation rental ordinance or any subsequent ordinance relating to vacation rentals.

and established a \$600 permit fee.

Provisions included permit transfer only by inheritance, not sale. Applicants had to show proof of having paid the lodging tax in 2016.

In early September 2016,

after what City Planner Carole Connell said were “30 meetings and eight draft reports,” the City Council passed Ordinance 901 unanimously without discussion.

Property owners who met the conditions faced a Dec. 16

permit application deadline.

As of Oct. 1, 81 vacation rental dwelling permits have been issued, 57 of which are complete and processed, six pending parking plans, 15 working on upgrades after inspection and three awaiting initial inspection, according to the city administrator.

### Appeals, petition

After the new regulations were adopted, two separate groups sought to overturn the rules in the state’s Land Use Board of Appeals.

They said they were not against some aspects of the rules, but opposed what they said were plans to eliminate short-term rentals altogether.

They cited inconsistencies in how the city defined “residential character,” among other issues.

Before a decision was rendered, property owners David Townsend, Joy Sigler, Brian Sigler and Sarah Nebeker in March filed a challenge seeking a ballot initiative that would repeal and replace the ordinance. Nebeker serves on the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.

Their proposed 15-point ordinance sought to “assure that the interests of vacation homeowners and permanent residents remain in a sustainable balance that is good for the community, that every property owner’s rights are fairly protected and that no property owner is economically harmed by excessive rules and regulations.”

A city summary of the ballot initiative was changed as a result of a decision issued by Circuit Court Judge Dawn McIntosh in May.

Their ballot petition received more than 200 signatures, bringing the matter to voters.

On May 30, the Land Use Board of Appeals upheld provisions of the ordinance.

Vigorous campaigning, including lawn signs, newspaper and radio debates and door-to-door outreach, have marked the election so far.

## Port: ‘I will fight this thing to the end’

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### ‘Back in line’

“I think Jim’s been very busy getting this thing back in line,” Campbell said.

After running through the many ways he thinks Knight has improved the Port, Campbell made the motion to extend the executive director’s contract.

Thinking back to his time with the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners and Clatsop Community College Board, the agency’s leaders did not have multiyear contracts, Rohne said. He instead preferred a rolling contract of an indefinite time period, considered each year after a performance review by

the Port Commission.

“I feel very strongly about that,” Rohne said. “As a ... board member from the general public, this is, I believe, our responsibility to keep tabs on our sole employee, which is the manager of the Port.”

Hunsinger went through his own reasons why Knight’s performance did not warrant a contract extension. Despite being advised by Spence, the commission’s president, not to talk about the Riverwalk Inn lawsuit on instructions from Port counsel, Hunsinger went into the verdict form showing where the jury had found Knight culpable and claimed he had broken his contract with the Port.

“I will fight this thing to

the end, because Jim Knight does not deserve to be there,” Hunsinger said, pointing at the executive director’s seat.

Stevens gave Knight credit for hiring the right staff to put the Port on better financial footing. He called Rohne’s proposal a double-edged sword that while providing accountability, could also suggest the agency changes directors.

Spence, a former city manager, said he saw chaos and instability during his three years on the Port Budget Committee and sought stability in his campaign for a seat on the Port Commission. The CEO of any organization needs to feel confident in the backing of the governing board and in their contract, Spence said.

## Waldorf: Apartments will cost between \$450 and \$850

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Housing worked out prospective purchaser agreement with the Department of Environmental Quality that will solidify the amount of remediation needed and limit the group’s liability on environmental cleanup of the site.

During the tests, the group also found soupy soil and groundwater within 1 foot of the building’s floor, Garver said, a good thing considering water preserves the wooden pilings the building likely rests on.

### New apartments

The apartments Innovative Housing wants to create inside

the former hotel will range between 250 and 500 square feet, each with a kitchen and bathroom, and cost between \$450 and \$850 a month, Garver said. Along with apartments will be a ground-floor retailer in the space of a former cigar store.

“I think we’re pretty open to retail uses that are going to enhance the downtown and benefit the community,” she said.

To fit all the apartments into the historic building with operative windows in each unit, Innovative Housing will extend existing light wells on either side of the building to the basement. A staircase will be built in one

of the light wells for a second exit.

Silco Commercial Construction Inc., the firm that oversaw the construction of the Yacht Club Apartments, will be the general contractor at the Waldorf. Under the best-case scenario, Garver said, construction would start next fall.

The Waldorf, also known as the Merwyn Hotel, was targeted for demolition as part of the city’s plans to expand the Astoria Library. But preservationists urged the City Council to save the historic hotel, and an expansion of the library fell apart because of high costs. The city opted to renovate the library.

Collaboration

Jennifer Lycette, MD  
Oncologist

As a medical oncologist, I work closely with my colleagues in the CMH-OHSU Knight Cancer Collaborative and at OHSU to develop comprehensive treatment plans that are specific to the person and their particular cancer.

With their input, I can give my patients the best chance possible of surviving cancer. All without my patients having to physically travel to Portland. Geography is no longer a barrier in the digital age of medicine.

### Medical Excellence without the Miles

columbiamemorial.org/cancer-care

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