

AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

A starfish clings to a rock near Haystack Rock in July 2010 during low tide in Cannon Beach. Starfish are making a comeback on the West Coast, four years after a mysterious syndrome killed millions of them.

Starfish making comeback after syndrome killed millions

Associated Press

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — Starfish are making a comeback on the West Coast, four years after a mysterious syndrome killed millions of them.

From 2013 to 2014, Sea Star Wasting Syndrome hit sea stars from British Columbia to Mexico. The starfish would develop lesions and then disintegrate, their arms turning into blobs of goo.

The cause is unclear but researchers say it may be a virus.

But now, the species is rebounding. Sea stars are being spotted in Southern Califor-

nia tide pools and elsewhere, the Orange County Register reported Tuesday.

"They are coming back, big time," Darryl Deleske, aquarist for the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in Los Angeles, told the newspaper.

"It's a huge difference," Deleske said. "A couple of years ago, you wouldn't find any. I dove all the way as far as Canada, specifically looking for sea stars, and found not a single one."

Similar die-offs of starfish on the West Coast were reported in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, but the latest outbreak was far larger and more widespread, according to a report

by researchers at the University of Santa Cruz.

Beginning with ochre stars off Washington state, the disease spread, killing off mottled stars, leather stars, sunflower stars, rainbows and six-armed stars.

It hit Southern California by December 2013.

"When it did (arrive), you just started to see them melt everywhere," said Deleske. "You'd see an arm here, an arm there."

The recovery has been promising.

Four adult sea stars, each about 7 to 8 inches long, were spotted this month at Crystal Cove State Park in

Newport Beach.

"It's a treasure we always hope to find," said Kaitlin Magliano, education coordinator at the Crystal Cove Conservancy.

"We lost all of them," she said. "It's good to see we have some surviving and thriving. Maybe the next generation will be more resilient."

The stars aren't out of danger yet.

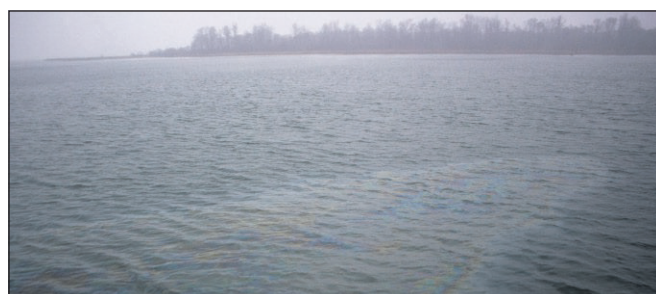
The wasting syndrome never completely disappeared in Northern and Central California and it has reappeared in the Salish Sea region of Washington state, according to a November report by the University of Santa Cruz.

Suspect: Spent about 20 minutes in icy water

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Officers did not follow Erofeeff when he drove onto a pier, but he continued and launched the pickup off the end into the Columbia before exiting the vehicle. He swam out a couple of hundred feet into the frigid river. The Coast Guard was called and prepared a helicopter to rescue him, but the mission was called off when he swam back.

The pier was too high for Erofeeff to be reached by responders, who passed him a life jacket and flotation ring. Fishermen on the nearby vessel Pacific Wind responded to rescue him. Employees from nearby shipwright WCT Marine & Construction Inc.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Only an oil and gas sheen was visible Wednesday where a suspect fleeing from police drove his truck off a dock into the Columbia River.

pulled him out of the water into a skiff and brought him to shore.

All told, Erofeeff spent about 20 minutes in the icy water.

"I'm thankful the men from WCT Marine and fishing vessel (Pacific Wind) were there

and willing to help," said Deputy Astoria Police Chief Eric Halverson. "Mr. Erofeeff should be thankful too."

Erofeeff was taken by Medix Ambulance Service to Columbia Memorial Hospital, treated for hypothermia and

released to an officer.

He was eventually lodged in the Clatsop County Jail on charges of second-degree criminal trespass, parole violation, interfering with a police officer, attempt to elude a police officer, reckless driving and third-degree escape. He has previous arrests in Clackamas County for burglary and Deschutes County for theft.

A fuel sheen was visible where Erofeeff entered the water. The police have been in contact with the Coast Guard about retrieving the vehicle, but have not formulated a plan yet, Halverson said. Divers were attempting to locate the vehicle Thursday.

"It's in the river for now," Halverson said.

Dogs: When leashes come off, the impulse control goes

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Oregon State Parks requires dogs be physically restrained while hiking on trails, unless the area is specifically designated as off-leash. That means an owner must be holding them, holding onto their collar, or have them on a leash no longer than six feet.

Aside from getting lost, leashing dogs also prevents them from tangling with wild animals or other people's pets, getting lost, ransacking campground garbage, damaging plant life or being hit by a car, Walkoski said.

While situations like this are rare, staff offer many off-leash warnings throughout all of the state parks, and after multiple warnings can issue a fine of at least \$110, Walkoski said.

"We want to see all visitors, including four-legged kind, in the same good shape they went out in," Walkoski said.

Stremming, a professional dog trainer at The Cognitive Canine in Seattle, chose to walk Felix off-leash on the hike, she said. If she were to go back, she'd invest in a GPS tracker that would have let her



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Felix the border collie was rescued Tuesday by the Seaside rope and rescue team.

know where he was sooner and done more research about the trail conditions.

"I knew there were outlooks, but I wasn't aware of how close sheer cliff faces were," she said. "Had I researched that more thoroughly, I would have kept him closer on a leash."

While Stremming was aware of the rule, she stressed the importance of what walking a dog off-leash can do for their mental health, she said.

"The fact is, every other

dog I saw on the trail wasn't on a leash. Most don't observe the rule. They all happened to be okay," Stremming said. "I know what people want to hear me say is I'm going to keep my dog religiously on leash. But I will continue to (go off-leash)."

She recognizes the resources that were spent to conduct the search and rescue mission, and plans to make "big donations" to Seaside Fire and Rescue as well as the Hamlet Fire Department

for contributing the drone that helped locate her dog on the rock face, she said.

"I know it wasn't a safe operation, and that's why I plan to give back," she said.

To avoid similar situations, Cati Foss of Arnicadia Dog Training said hikers should practice recalling with their dogs and to check in more often the usual. She also suggested checking trail terrain and weather conditions to know what type of hazards to expect.

"If you know there are cliffs, check in more frequently, so you aren't running into issues where they get intent on smelling something and get into situations where they get stuck," Foss said.

Foss recommends both on-leash and off-leash training. Dogs are allowed to be off-leash on Oregon beaches as long as owners can exercise "direct control," according to the Oregon State Parks website.

"It's an important skill set to be able to maintain control and also walk on a leash politely. A lot of dogs go on their own when leash comes off, and the impulse control goes," she said.

Court says Sweet Cakes must pay fine for refusing to bake

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's Court of Appeals has upheld a decision to require the owners of a Gresham bakery to pay a lesbian couple \$135,000 in damages for refusing to make them a wedding cake.

Sweet Cakes owners Aaron and Melissa Klein's refusal to bake the cake for Rachel and Laurel Bowman-Cryer in January 2013 made national headlines and prompted Bureau of Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian to award the damages to for emotional distress.

Today, the court affirmed BOLI's conclusion that the Kleins violated the civil rights of the couple and Oregon's law that businesses not discriminate based on sexual orientation, as well as the associated damages.

"For the past 10 years, the Oregon Equality Act of 2007 has protected Oregonians from unlawful discrimination in housing, employment and public places," Avakian said in a statement. "Today's ruling sends a strong signal that Oregon remains open to all."

"Within Oregon's public accommodations law is the basic principle of human decency that every person, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, has the freedom to fully participate in society."

The court found that "the record of the complainants' emotional distress from the denial of service was ade-

quate to support the damages award and that the award was not inconsistent with awards in other BOLI enforcement actions."

The court overturned Avakian's conclusion that there was sufficient evidence to show the Kleins planned to continue the discrimination, but the commissioner had awarded no damages for that specific violation.

The Kleins had appealed the BOLI commissioner's decision, arguing that it violated their constitutional right to free expression. It was unclear Thursday morning whether the Kleins plan to appeal the decision to the Oregon Supreme Court.

The unanimous decision of the Court of Appeals was written by Judge Chris Garrett and joined by Judges Joel DeVore and Bronson James.

The First Liberty Institute, which wrote a brief in support of the Kleins, was disappointed by the ruling.

"Freedom of expression for ourselves should require freedom of expression for others. Today, the Oregon Court of Appeals decided that Aaron and Melissa Klein are not entitled to the Constitution's promises of religious liberty and free speech," Kelly Shackelford, President and CEO of First Liberty Institute, says. "In a diverse and pluralistic society, people of good will should be able to peacefully coexist with different beliefs. We are disappointed that the court ruled against the Kleins."

Family: Settled in Long Beach because of slim housing options in Astoria

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the whole reason we moved here is because the Goonies house was closed."

Mitch and Alethea, both 32, made the final decision in July and have lived in the area since September with their three children — Ari, 8, Robin, 8, and Griffin, 3 — and two dogs. Due to the slim housing pickings for a large family in Astoria, they instead settled in Long Beach, Washington — for now.

The half-hour commute did not stop them from continuing to explore Astoria, though. When they first arrived, the Eckhardts caught a glimpse of the city in the summertime and early fall. The Texas natives immediately noticed how many people in town, sporting smiles and offering plenty of welcomes, wanted to take advantage of the warm weather by wandering about town.

"You have so many businesses close together that you can just walk to each one on the sidewalk," Alethea said.

Mitch spends much of his free time taking photographs and making videos for Refuge Media, a company he started a few years back. He launched a family blog after his brother was incarcerated a couple years ago so he could eventually catch him up on his family's lives. Mitch has taken photographs of locals and attached a brief

story of them in an Instagram project called tellme.astoria.

"It's been a really fun way to get to know the people that I photograph," he said.

Continuing a hobby he enjoyed in Texas, Mitch is also by far the youngest member of the Astoria Lion's Club, which he hopes to promote over the years.

"I was surprised to see that our club was as small as it is," he said. "I want to be here with dozens of people keeping this club going."

Alethea, meanwhile, plans to recapture her artistic side. Since the move, she has dabbled in calligraphy by crafting hand signs for her children's schools.

"The artistic side of this community has inspired me to branch out a little more," she said.

Mitch is a financial consultant at Thrivent Financial in Astoria, and Alethea will soon work at Windermere Real Estate as a client relations specialist. They would like to move across the Columbia River within five years.

"Eventually the goal is to move closer to town where we don't have to commute as much," Alethea said.

Later in their working lives, they hope to find a home in the area with a view.

"I want us to be the grandma and grandpa that has that big house everyone comes to for dinner," Mitch said.



The Eckhardt family.