

Cormorants spared, but eggs will be taken

Agency won't shoot fish-eating birds this year

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers doesn't plan to shoot any double-crested cormorants at a breeding colony at the mouth of the Columbia River this year, but wants to take up to 500 eggs.

The Audubon Society of Portland has asked that nothing happen until both the Army Corps and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which issues the depredation permit, investigate why the birds abandoned Oregon's East Sand Island in 2016 and 2017.



Joshua Bessex/
The Daily Astorian

A double-crested cormorant.

The Corps has shot more than 5,000 adult double-crested cormorants and destroyed more than 6,000 nests at East Sand Island since passing a management plan three years ago in an attempt to control the massive colony. The birds prey on juvenile salmon and steelhead, some of which are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

The agency will not shoot double-crested cormorants this year because of nesting activity in 2017 when thousands of birds abandoned the island and nests full of eggs for much of the season. Summaries on the Corps' website and statements to the media indicated the presence of bald eagles could be to blame for the birds' dispersal. A similar situation occurred in 2016 as well.

"It is simply not credible for the agencies to ignore the fact that the 2016 colony collapse, in which more than 16,000 cormorants abandoned their nests in a single day, followed weeks of relentless shooting of adult birds and came days after federal agents initiated egg oiling and nest destruction activities in the colony," wrote Bob Sallinger, conservation director for the Audubon Society, in a letter sent to the agencies in March.

This year, the Corps will move into the second phase of its plan, which still includes the take of up to 500 double-crested cormorant eggs but focuses more on nonlethal hazing and restricting available nesting habitat.

The Corps' depredation permit application is under review and has not been approved yet.

East Sand Island's double-crested cormorant colony was set to be reduced from over 14,000 breeding pairs recorded in the 2015 management plan to no more than 5,380 to 5,939. There were approximately 5,000 to 6,000 individual double-crested cormorants on the island at the end of the nesting season last year, according to Army Corps spokesman Rick Hargrave.

The birds, one of three cormorant species typically seen on the North Coast, arrive at the island in late March and early April and leave in the fall. The colony on East Sand Island at one point was believed to account for more than 40 percent of the entire Western population of double-crested cormorants. The island is also home to a large Caspian tern colony that has been under a management plan to restrict nesting habitat since 2008.

Colony failure among the double-crested cormorants was one of the Audubon Society of Portland's chief concerns from the very beginning. In his letter, Sallinger also referenced concerns held by researchers who had spent years on

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VOICES OF A GENERATION

High school students in Astoria, across country, step into center of gun debate



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Elias Harold helps his fellow students from Astoria High School make signs for a rally on Saturday.

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Two days after organizing a walkout at Astoria High School against gun violence, freshman Elias Harold sat in English class. He had already shifted his attention to a school choir concert where he was tapped to sing a solo. But a text he received changed that. "So, would you want to go to D.C.?" Suzanne Harold, his mother, asked.

Motivated by the mass shooting that killed 17 people at a Florida high school in February, many middle and high school students have pressed for gun control in a movement referred to as "Never Again." The latest demonstration will come on Saturday in the March for Our Lives, a national protest in Washington, D.C., with companion rallies across the country, including one in Astoria.

After last week's school walkout, a local anonymous donor handed Astoria High School Principal Lynn Jackson \$1,000 in the hopes it would fund a student's trip to the nation's capital. Jackson gauged the Harold family's interest.

The mother and son decided to drive to Seattle right after the concert, stay in a hotel and fly out today.

'AS A KID, IT IS HARDER TO, SORT OF, BE RESPECTED SOMETIMES AND FOR OUR OPINIONS TO BE HEARD.'

Elias Harold | Astoria freshman who will participate in a national march in Washington, D.C.

"It was a little bit of a scramble a week in advance," Suzanne Harold said. "I'm excited and overwhelmed. It was kind of like I had drunk too much coffee."

Elias Harold said he hopes to make connections this weekend with other teenagers.

"If I manage to get any contact numbers or things like that, then I could see what their side of the country is doing. Knowing other people around the world and just, sort of, knowing what their life is like versus mine is always nice," he said. "I think the main end

goal is definitely getting gun control."

The Harolds' will march alongside survivors of the Florida high school shooting.

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College, land trust close in on South Tongue Point



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Clatsop Community College is trying to purchase the land it leases from the state for the Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station, its career-technical campus at South Tongue Point.

Purchases for conservation and living lab

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop Community College and the Columbia Land Trust are closing in on the acquisition of most of South Tongue Point.

The college in 1996 opened the Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station, a career-technical campus along Liberty Lane. The campus houses welding, auto-

motive, firefighting, maritime and historic preservation programs.

The land for the campus is leased from the Department of State Lands. A square plot of land and dock are owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The college moors its maritime sciences training vessel, the Forerunner, at the dock, and Clatsop County leases land for fish pens.

The college has contracted architectural and planning firm SRG Partnership for up to \$100,000 to create a master plan for the campus as it prepares for an appraisal in June on nearly 22 acres. The col-

lege's proposal to purchase the property could go before the State Land Board as early as October.

"I do believe we have sufficient funds," said JoAnn Zahn, the college's vice president of finance and operations.

The purchase would come out of the college's plant fund containing about \$2.5 million, she said, and would likely happen next school year.

The state recently awarded the college \$8.1 million in bonds to add a second floor onto the college's administrative and maritime sciences

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