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Port invests in dredging

Project could help reduce waiting list

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Port of Astoria Budget Committee has approved spending \$150,000 on dredging at the West Mooring Basin, where the agency faces slips filling in with silt and boats bottoming out.

The west side marina has a waiting list of more than 100. But the marina has not been effectively dredged in more than a decade. Some slips go dry at low tide, leaving boats exposed.

Tom Brownson, an Astoria city councilor and member of the Astoria Yacht Club, said members provide between \$40,000 and \$50,000 to the Port through moorage, the lease for their clubhouse in the Chinook Building and other boat work.

"The tenants that are using this, we need it dredged," he said. "We need a place that is serviceable. I've been to other small ports up and down the coast, and most of them are in pretty good shape."

A recent partnership between Astoria and the Port of Ilwaco, Washington, removed half of the expected sediment and opened less than a third of the intended slips, requiring private mediation to avoid a lawsuit.

The Port still has to find a firm capable of dredging the marina.

"If we're looking purely at the numbers, it makes sense if we're going to make an investment, to make it into the west basin," said Will Isom, the Port's finance director. "It's been I think one of the success stories of the Port since I've been here."

The Port collects \$460,000 in annual moorages at the marina, nearly breaking even despite having \$320,000 a year in debt payments related to its development, Isom said.

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Val Winstanley



Francine Reingold

Group plans endowment to fund library cards

A path to reading

By EDWARD STRATTON
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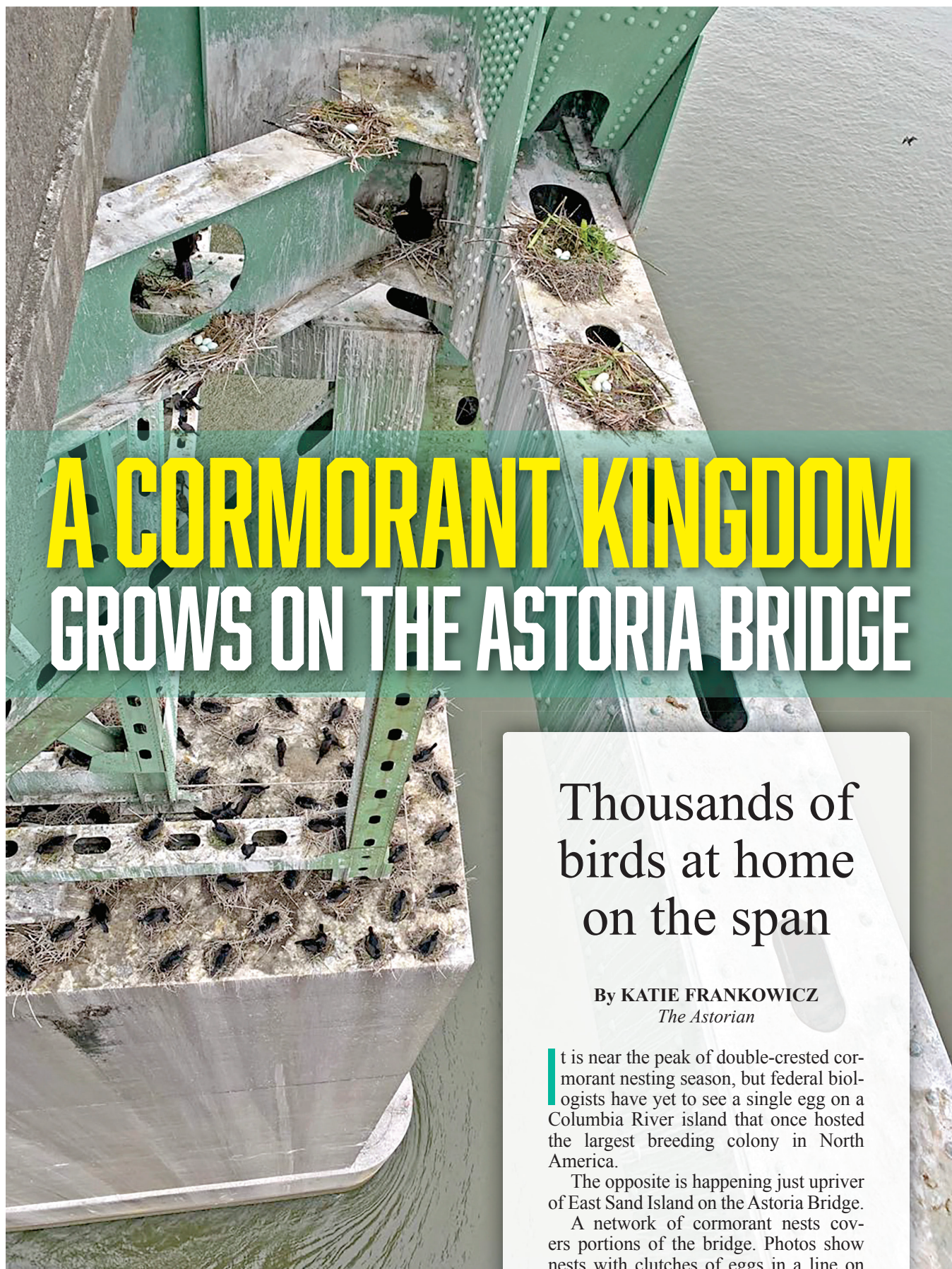
A local library outreach group needs help starting an endowment covering library cards for kids outside Astoria, Warrenton and Seaside.

Former Astoria and Seaside library directors Jane Tucker and Reita Fackerell formed a partnership in 2009 with school districts to ensure every child in Clatsop County had access to books. Their efforts focused on kids in unincorporated inland areas, away from the three public libraries on the northwestern edge.

The Libraries Reading Outreach in Clatsop County, formed in 2015 out of the partnership, now provides library cards to around 1,300 kids out of an estimated 2,900 living in unincorporated areas.

The group relies on donations, but has an opportunity to create the Francine Reingold & Val Winstanley Endowment under the Oregon Community Foundation, named for a late reading teacher and the wife of the Seaside city manager.

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A CORMORANT KINGDOM GROWS ON THE ASTORIA BRIDGE

Thousands of birds at home on the span

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

It is near the peak of double-crested cormorant nesting season, but federal biologists have yet to see a single egg on a Columbia River island that once hosted the largest breeding colony in North America.

The opposite is happening just upriver of East Sand Island on the Astoria Bridge.

A network of cormorant nests covers portions of the bridge. Photos show nests with clutches of eggs in a line on bridge struts and tucked into corners of the span's vast understructure.

In mid-May, James Lawonn, aviation predation biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, recorded as many as 10,000 cormorants on the bridge — a major jump from the 3,400 the state counted last year.

"That doesn't tell us the full story," Lawonn said.

Not all of the birds are nesting, he said, and from his post to the west of the bridge, Lawonn can only count the birds he sees on one side.

A more complete count will soon be undertaken by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contractors, who will work by boat to count active nests on both sides of the bridge and on the understructure.

However, without any confirmed breeding by double-crested cormorants on East Sand Island so far this year, Lawonn's counts are still a significant data point in trying to understand where the birds are nesting in the estuary.

"We're coming up on the time when we would expect to see peak cormorant numbers," Lawonn said. "That there's no breeding activity on East Sand Island is extraordinary."

No eggs

Around 2,500 double-crested cormorants have been seen on East Sand Island this year, according to Jeffrey Henon, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The agency manages the island located at the mouth of the Columbia River, as well as the Caspian tern and double-crested cormorant colonies that nest there seasonally.

"The cormorants have begun constructing their nests, but we haven't observed any eggs yet," Henon said.

The agency began hazing and shooting double-crested cormorants and destroying eggs and nests on the island in 2015 to control the colony's numbers. Cormorants dine on fish, in particular young salmon species. The Army Corps determined it was necessary to reduce the number of breeding pairs on East Sand

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Photos by Rex Ziak
Cormorants nest underneath the Astoria Bridge.



A cormorant guards a nest under the Astoria Bridge.



Eggs occupy birds' nests under the Astoria Bridge.



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