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SALES SERVICE RENTALS



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explore the shore

weird stuff you find at the beach

Words: Katie Frankowicz • Images: Our Coast archives

My dad always wanted to find one of those old Japanese glass fishing floats.

They were the kind of rare that was within our reach. Not as common as a sand dollar, sure, but as we walked the tide line, it was conceivable that the glimmer we saw up ahead was the sun glinting off the curved cheek of a blue-green float. It was only a matter of time.

One spring, we spent a night — six kids and two adults — crammed into a tiny cabin within walking distance of a narrow, rock-strewn beach outside Tillamook.

The next morning, despite the cold and the rain, we scattered across the beach, the kids pitching seaweed at each other while our parents made sure none of us drowned.

I don't remember who saw it first, but it felt like that moment in nature documentaries when herds of wild grass-eating beasts suddenly scent a predator and startle together.

Our heads snapped up at the same time. We all saw the glass gleaming. We knew instinctively that it wasn't just another puddle or a rain-filled shell. This was the real deal, the long-expected moment. The glass float. My dad started running.

The float was magnificent, more green than blue and enormous. It was also broken. We stood next to it for a long time, torn between victory and disappointment. Ultimately, we left it behind.

We never found another one.

The thought of finding a genuine glass fishing float washed up by the waves seems impossible now. You're more likely to find one for sale in an antique store. Fortunately, there are plenty of other oddities — especially living oddities — to find on the beaches in Clatsop County if you only take the time to look.

Crabs

You can keep your anemones and sea stars. You won't see these tiny guys until suddenly you do. Then you will spot their amethyst- and ruby-spotted claws everywhere, as they creep deeper into a rocky crevice or scuttle under an overhanging rock and eye you suspiciously from the shadows. Look for them among rocks around tide pools when you visit Indian Beach in Ecola State Park or in near-shore rocks when the tide is low.

Photos clockwise from top:

Sea stars at Haystack Rock in Cannon Beach have been hit particularly hard by a disease in recent years.

A purple shore crab hitches a ride back to the shelter of jetty rocks at Fort Stevens State Park near Hammond.

A Velella velella held aloft.