

# SCRATCHPAD

## All about seagulls

By **LISSA BREWER**  
COAST WEEKEND EDITOR

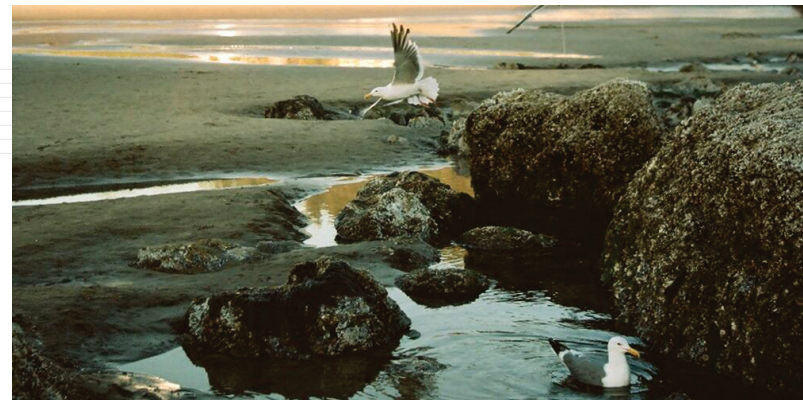
The sounds of seagulls remind me of home. Soaring above high cliffs and wading in flocks through reflective tide pools, these gray and white birds, while sometimes obnoxious, are undeniably coastal icons. Their calls can be heard year-round along local streets and shores. And the gulls of the Pacific Northwest are a unique variety.

Western gulls, the region's most abundant residents, are distinctive as the only species which nests along rocky, rugged shorelines. They love to be near the sea, but sometimes venture as much as 100 miles inland. Like other regional varieties, Western gulls may take up to four years to

reach an adult plumage pattern, changing in appearance with age.

Because of this, telling them apart from other gulls may be difficult, especially because some are hybrid species. Because the Columbia-Pacific is home to large colonies of both Western and glaucous-winged gulls, it's not uncommon to spot a hybrid between the two, called an Olympic gull. Other varieties you might spot, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, include the ring-billed gull, mew gull, Thayer's gull, and Sabine's gull.

While a gull's diet mostly consists of fish and marine invertebrates like jellyfish, they may be better known for their more adventurous eating habits. These birds aren't shy. While they may take flight when approached by a camera, they're infamous



**Adult Western gulls congregate around a tide pool in Cannon Beach.**

Lissa Brewer

for mingling with oceanfront diners, following fishing vessels and stealing sandy snacks. But be warned, feeding the gulls isn't a good idea. They're highly intelligent birds, and learning to be bold can harm them.

With a dwindling fear of cars, many are now getting hit on U.S. Highway 101, and

others are depending on an unhealthy diet. Coastal residents are also affected by water quality issues resulting from the birds' eating habits. So let the gulls eat gourmet — that is, their own wild caught Northwest seafood.

*Coast Weekend editor*

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