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TUFTED PUFFINS RETURN TO THE COAST

A tufted puffin, seen in the water near Haystack Rock in Cannon Beach.

Tiffany Boothe

Beloved seabirds will soon return to Cannon Beach

BY LINDA HOARD

With its brightly colored beak, yellow eyebrow tufts and orange webbed feet, the tufted puffin is an unofficial mascot of Cannon Beach.

The steep cliffs and grassy ledges of Haystack Rock provide an ideal nesting habitat for the hundreds of annually returning puffins. Pairs often mate for life, returning to the same dirt burrow near the top

of the rock each April to lay a single egg. Adult puffins fly back and forth to feed fish to their young for up to 7 weeks before hatchlings fledge and the adult birds return to the open ocean, usually in July.

Puffins are swift flyers, efficient divers and fast swimmers. Their beaks are adapted to carry about a dozen small fish at a time to feed their young. Look for their stocky bodies flapping furiously around Haystack Rock or resting on grassy rocks hundreds

of feet above. They are easiest to spot in the mornings from 7 to 10 a.m.

While the tufted puffin may be one of the more well known seabirds of Haystack Rock, there are several other species who nest there as well. Varieties of seagulls, cormorants, common murres, and black oystercatchers whose bright red bills are adapted to chisel sea creatures from rocky outcroppings make their home on the sea stack. Colorful harlequin ducks can be seen bobbing among the waves. Predatory bald

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