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summer,” she said, “but I’ve worked with them in the past because I worked with the Forest Service, and we collaborated on different projects.”

In addition to her internship with the Siuslaw National Forest, Lemhouse spent a year in Alaska for an internship that prepared her a great deal for her experiences as a marine life educator.

At this point, the Marine Reserve’s ambassador programs have been quite popular and the scheduled tours are full, although tour guides are generally in the area of the tours from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m. to answer questions and speak with visitors.

“So far, I’d say it’s a success and it’s a lot of fun,” Lemhouse said.

Tours began in May, and although the sign-up rate was slow to start, it filled up fast.

“At the beginning, nothing,” she said. “Then, as soon as we did our first couple of tours, everyone heard about it, and they [filled right up]!”

As far as planning the curriculum, tour guides get to use their expertise and knowledge to tailor classes to each group on the day of the tour. Each guided tour will differ with every visit, so participants will experience something new each time.

“Once we get hired on or we find volunteers, we do a day training,” said Lemhouse. “We did a Zoom training this year, and then we go out in the field and kind of learn as we go. And we plan the curriculum on our own. We come out here and decide whatever we want to do that day.”

The tour at Bob Creek State Park allows visitors to experience spectacular tide pool reserves. In winter when the tides are highest, the majority of the beach at the park is covered by the ocean all the way up to the parking lot. However, in the summer when the tides are lowest, visitors can experience a vast expanse of marine life in their unique habitats.

One of the most breathtaking sights is the massive number of ochre sea stars in the area, many of which perished during the sea star wasting disease back in 2014.

According to Lemhouse, “Ochre sea stars are starting to rebound somewhat from the sea star Wasting Disease, so it’s great to see them back up and around.”

The ochre sea stars are more readily found at Bob Creek than further north at the Yachats State Park.

“In Yachats, unless the tides are really low, you don’t see a lot at that location, so it depends where the tides are,” said DuBois. “But we do our sea star survey out of Yachats State Park during the summer, and this summer we’ve actually noticed some mild wasting disease at our spots that we monitor every time.”

They will have to keep a vigilant watch to ensure the wasting disease doesn’t spread, but for now, at Bob Creek, the sea stars are plentiful.

“Ochre sea stars are the most prevalent ones in the tide pools,” DuBois added.

The ochre sea stars can be recognized from a distance due to their vibrant orange and purple colors.

“Their color is genetic, so it just depends on who their mom and dad were,” said Lemhouse.

At the tide pools, you can even catch them eating the local California mussels from the rocks.

“They’ll wrap around



Cape Perpetua Marine Reserve Collaborative Tour Guide Liz Lemhouse finishes her Tidepool Ambassador Tour as visitors explore the area.

the mussel and pry open the shell, then they insert themselves and eat the mussel,” Lemhouse said.

“Their mouth is at the bottom,” continued DuBois, “and they’ll take their mouth out and put it inside of the animal. They have an acidic digestive system, so it liquefies the meat.”

The ochre sea stars are quite resilient and will regenerate if part of them breaks off, which happens often when sea birds manage to grab them and eat part of their bodies. Unfortunately, if a sea star gets stuck on its back, it is less autonomous.

“If the sea star is on a rock, it is easier to propel itself and flip back over, but if it’s stuck in the sand, all of their feet are on the bottom, so they get stuck,” said Lemhouse. “That’s why we flip them over as we see them.”

Visitors to the tidepools can assist the prone ochre sea stars by gently turning them over so their many tube feet can access the rocks or sand, but they should not hold or play with the sea stars for any longer than it takes to carefully place them back on their feet.

In addition to the ochre sea stars, there is an abundance of green sea anemones in the tide pools, as

well as California and blue mussels. Because there are so many California mussels, visitors are allowed to harvest them, but they are the only animal that may be harvested at the reserve.

“The reserve is a no-take zone with the exception of mussels,” said Lemhouse.

So, although people may find red rock and several other types of crab in the tidepools, they are off limits.

“You can gently hold or touch them, but you have to put them back,” she said.

The tidepools also feature various nudibranchs, including sea lemons and frosted tip nudibranchs, as well as limpets, barnacles and tidepool sculpin.

“Sculpin broadcast spawn, so they release their [reproductive matter] into the water,” said Lemhouse. “They will adapt to their surroundings, so they change color depending on that; they blend in with whatever is near them.”

Along the tour, you will also see various seaweeds, including, but not limited to, feather boa kelp, sea palm seaweed, flat leaf kelp and hairy seaweed. You might also happen upon the sea squirt, whose color varies from white and yellow to orange and red, as well as the chiton, a nocturnal mollusk.

“During the day they don’t move,” said Lemhouse, “and at night when it’s dark, they’ll feed so the birds don’t find them; it’s too easy for the seagulls to find them during the day.”

Visitors may also see tube worms and various sponges, in addition to beautiful black turban snails, who have black bodies and purple shells, as well as purple sea urchins.

“We have an overabundance of sea urchins, but they’re all in the kelp forest, so they’re killing all of the kelp right now,” said Lemhouse. “And we don’t have the sea otters to help out.”

In addition to the abundant sea life, visitors can explore the secret caves at Bob Creek when the tides are low, just walk south on the beach and the caves are accessible.

With respect to safety at the tide pools, remember never to turn your back on the ocean and step slowly and lightly as it is a fragile and slippery area. Visitors should try to step on bare spots and not on plants or animals, or in the pools. Animals can be easily injured, so try not to remove

them from the rocks.

In addition, if you are

unable to attend the ambassador tours on the scheduled days, the CPM-RC has other programs to participate in this summer to enjoy the tide pools and Cape Perpetua Marine Reserve.

“We also just launched a Marine Reserve Ambassador Program out of Smelt Sands up in Yachats on the weekends,” said DuBois. “We set up a table and chat with folks that come by and share information about the marine reserve and the culture, and answer questions.”

“It’s happening now through August, and anyone can show up and folks are always going to be there at the table.”

The Collaborative is also sponsoring beach clean-up days at Cape Cove, the next of which will be on Wednesday, Aug. 11.

For information on event dates and times, visit the CPMRC’s events calendar at capeperpetuacollaborative.org/events/. For more information on supporting the Collective, and to learn about what’s coming up in the fall, visit capeperpetuacollaborative.org/

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New Location: Community Baptist Church, 4590 Hwy. 101, Florence (Across from Fred Meyer)

Oregon Coast Humane Society

relies heavily on volunteers. There are many opportunities to volunteer and a variety of skills and talents are always in need. Volunteer interest forms may be found online, at the shelter and at our Thrift Shop on Bay Street.
www.oregoncoasthumanesociety.org/volunteer/

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