



## PUFFINS RETURN

### Kindergartners celebrate return of tufted puffins

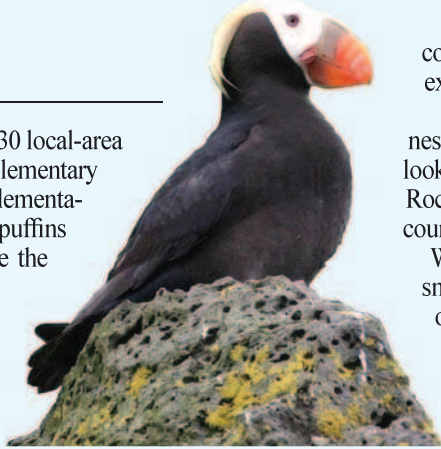
By Lyra Fontaine  
Cannon Beach Gazette

**E**xcitement abounded as about 130 local-area kindergartners from Gearhart Elementary School and Seaside Heights Elementary School welcomed the tufted puffins back to Haystack Rock, where the colorful birds will nest until August.

The Haystack Rock Awareness Program led kindergarten classes organized into groups like “Black Oystercatchers” and “Hermit Crabs” through lively activity stations that involved learning about bird ecology and intertidal species. Each class visited a different station for 15 to 20 minutes before rotating.

The April 11 event kicked off the “12 Days of Earth Day” festivities and had many more students and activities than last year’s Puffin Welcome.

“This year, we really wanted to make a big effort to invite all of our local kindergartners,” HRAP program



LISA SHEFFIELD PHOTO

coordinator Melissa Keyser said. “They’re so excited.”

Puffins were “out and about,” digging deep nests into the rock called burrows, which might look like a hole or tiny cave at first, Keyser said. Rocky Shore interpreter Frances Holtman said she counted 12 to 14 puffins in just a few minutes.

While murrens have a white belly, puffins are small black, football-shaped birds with a bright orange beak. They eat small fish like smelt and herring, Keyser said.

Students took turns spotting the puffins by the rock through scopes and binoculars, with assistance from volunteers Barb Knop and Jan Siebert-Wahrmund.

At another station, volunteers engaged kindergartners in the “puffin parent relay” game. The “puffins” (students) ran gleefully across the sand to get “fish” (sticks) without getting caught by an “eagle,” played by energetic Rocky Shore Interpreters donning wings or a puppet.

Children gathered around mini-aquarium tanks at the “aquarium investigation station,” led by HRAP education coordinator Lisa Habecker. Students were able to see and learn about hermit crabs, mussels, barnacles and nudibranchs (sea slugs).

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#### SCOPING THEM OUT

The students played, learned and viewed the puffins at Haystack Rock through telescopes.

PHOTO LYRA FONTAINE/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

## Fire board narrows field for new chief

### Five candidates will be interviewed

By Lyra Fontaine  
Cannon Beach Gazette

The Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District has selected five top candidates for the fire chief position out of 20 applications received, interim Fire Chief Jim Stearns announced at the Monday, April 11 board meeting.

The five candidates will come to Cannon Beach on April 23 for interviews, and will be narrowed down to three finalists. Community members are welcome to meet with the final three candidates, expected from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Cannon Beach fire station.

Stearns said he hopes the board will reach a hiring decision by May so that the chief can begin working in June.

The district seeks an experienced fire chief who will be “an active, involved part of the community, work effectively with the five-member board of directors, demonstrate strong fiscal accountability and provide fair, honest, effective leadership to the paid staff and 26 volunteers,” the job description states.

Salary for the chief’s job is \$67,500 to \$75,000, depending on qualifications.

Stearns suggested that the board help to create and implement a strategic plan.

“I think it’s really important to have a strategic plan that we all buy into,” he said. “As we look at hiring people, it’s nice for them to be able to walk into the organization and say, organizationally, this is what the values are, this is where we’re going.”

The board is seeking to replace former Fire Chief Mike Balzer, who was fired in October. Balzer has since filed a lawsuit against the fire district claiming wrongful dismissal.

Community member Mary Peterson commented that with the lawsuit pending, hiring a new chief was a mistake.

The lawsuit could bring his reinstatement.

It would be “fiscally irresponsible for this board to gamble with citizens’ money to have to buy out a new chief’s contract, if in fact Mike Balzer is successful in his lawsuit,” she

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## Flaws detected in city’s short-term rental program

### Staff suggests bringing building official on board for more frequent inspections

By Lyra Fontaine  
Cannon Beach Gazette

Cannon Beach’s short-term rental system has been held out as a model for other cities in the South County, including Gearhart, which is wres-

ting with its own rule-making process.

But problems surfacing in Cannon Beach indicate flaws to the short-term rental system, which includes a lottery, limitation on short-term rental properties, infrequent inspections and limited enforcement. In addition, too many such rentals could be inhibiting the city’s long-term housing stock and even further diminishing work-force and affordable housing.

“If 60 percent of housing market is essentially off the market, then that 40 percent has to serve all the people

who want to live here,” City Manager Brant Kucera said at an April 12 City Council work session. “That is essentially one of the major issues driving affordability and availability.”

#### New inspections sought

A shorter inspection cycle and other changes may come to Cannon Beach’s short-term rental program, which encompasses about 194 dwellings or more than 10 percent of the city’s 1,800 housing units.

City staff recommended more frequent inspections than the current five-year cycle to minimize the

number of code violations and allow infractions to be fixed sooner.

“We’re finding that the five-year loop is enough time for a lot of little changes to come in and add up to a problem,” city planner Mark Barnes said, recommending that inspections shift to a shorter interval until the city is up-to-date on violations. “There’s a higher standard of safety associated with transient rentals.”

The city uncovers violations in periodical “batches,” mostly from five-year inspections or audits. The 2014 audit uncovered a large number of violations, which could include uneven

stairs, missing railings, smoke detectors or carbon monoxide monitors needing repair, or locks not working.

“These are safety things that people can get hurt on and cities can get sued on,” Barnes said. “It just takes so long to actually chase these down. I’d like to think there is a more efficient way of doing that.”

#### Inspector needed

Hiring an in-house building official would make the violation correction process smoother, he said.

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## A rare glimpse of North Coast salmon

### Showing of local films captivates Manzanita crowd

By Dave Fisher  
For Cannon Beach Gazette

Interesting. Fascinating. Insightful. Those were just a few of the superlatives bandied about following a special screening April 14 in Manzanita of two locally produced documentaries. For the first time members of the public got a firsthand look at Oregon’s signature anadromous fish species in their natural coastal habitat during the screening orchestrated by the Lower Nehalem Watershed Council.

Filed and produced by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife research biologist Derek Wiley, the films were unique in that the footage was shot, as Wiley puts it, “in our own backyard” along streams and tributaries in Tillamook and Clatsop counties.

“I’m not a professional,” Wiley said of his first-time efforts, “but they came out pretty well.”

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

A still photo of a male and female coho paired up for spawning from a clip in Journey’s End.



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