

How local high school teachers made a difference

Earth Day is a big deal in Cannon Beach.
I had no idea when I moved here last year the extent of the appreciation of the land, its preservation and maintenance. Where else does a parade take place celebrating Earth Day? Where else do residents celebrate it for 12 days — four days longer than Passover, which starts tonight?
Earth Day here is “a sacred celebration of our relation with this wonderful place,” District 5 County Commissioner Lianne Thompson commented in our office last week.

CANNON SHOTS
R.J. MARX



The celebration of Earth Day draws us in intellectually, and our hearts and souls, she said.
“We’re here together in this place, no matter how we get together crosswise, we’re together in this sacred place.
“The best of what we do is to come together and celebrate and pay attention. We have an awareness this is what it means to be here, it calls us and tells us to be responsible and careful in taking care of this land as we work here and play here. I love it.”

Of puffins and pinnipeds

Over the last year, on the Oregon Coast, I’ve learned to look around in ways I never had before.
When I first went for an outdoor run, I noticed a crow hovering above me on a tree. As I ran, it flew to the next tree, and then the next, keeping pace, before peeling off in another direction.
Now I always look up at the trees, especially at the top of the trees. It seems like there’s always something avian keeping an eye on you.
My first story for this newspaper upon arrival was on dune grading.
Homeowners spoke of the “Frankendunes” that swallowed up their view.
Other citizens feared long-term results of grading and setting a precedent for more grading, upsetting the beach’s natural order.
Subsequent stories brought an education in geology, marine life, archeology, forest management and seismology. The irony of the “Twelve Days of Earth Day” — as bounteous as it is — that it is only the tip of the iceberg (one of the few natural wonders Cannon Beach actually doesn’t have).
Local authors wax poetic about the prehistoric beauty of the region. With it come some prehistoric-looking creatures.
One of the fun parts of watching these shores is discovering wildlife we never knew existed. The many kinds of seals and sea lions. I learned the word “pinniped.”
I still haven’t seen an elephant seal, which came to Cannon Beach in 2007, but I hope to. Author Doug Deur said he saw one recently.
I can’t imagine the combination of an elephant and a seal, but it does stimulate the imagination.

‘Mr. Earth Day’

It’s hard to imagine the one-two punch of a Seaside High School science department in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s with Ed Johnson and Neal Maine, teachers worthy of a top-notch university.
Geologist and environmental consultant Tom Horning, a Seaside High School graduate, recalls a 1970s Earth Day assembly at the high school with a visit from none other than Gov. Tom McCall.
Johnson is Cannon Beach’s “Mr. Earth Day,” and he participated as he does every year at the “Twelve Days of Earth Day” potluck dinner last Friday night.



“Mr. Earth Day,” former Seaside High School teacher Ed Johnson.

Like Horning, he’s been celebrating the holiday since its inception.
Johnson’s grandparents moved to Cannon Beach in the 1940s, and he settled here after he got his master’s degree at Cornell. Johnson taught with the Seaside School District for 17 years, alongside another early adopter, Neal Maine, founder of the North Coast Land Conservancy, author, naturalist and philosopher.
Maine is still sharing his vision, whether it’s how to see a rain forest, saving a displaced osprey or a renewed appreciation of the sand on our beaches. His lecture, “Beaches: More than Sand,” was part of this year’s “Twelve Days” program.
Seaside’s High School science department in the 1980s “was so good, it had to end,” Johnson quipped last Friday at the Cannon Beach Earth Day Potluck at the Visitors’ Center.
“Ed Johnson was one of my all time favorite teachers,” Seaside High School grad Jeanne Braun said in an email. “Because of his passion for teaching and his wonderful sense of humor I remember always looking forward to being in his classroom.”
Neal Maine is the reason why Braun started volunteering for North Coast Land Conservancy more than 10 years ago, she said. “Neal is the kind of person who inspires you to look at nature in a whole new way — with your eyes and ears and mind wide open.”
Both Johnson and Maine continue to share with us their deep passion and knowledge of nature and the importance of taking care of our natural world, Braun said. “The impact that they both have made in our community and continue to make should inspire us all to be better stewards of this precious place that we call home (or as Neal would call it: paradise!).”
It wasn’t just naturalists who thrived at Seaside High School.
Horning remembered chemistry teacher Leo Sayles as having “more impact on me than any university professor.”
He was just a “really good instructor,” Horning said. “Anybody who took his class really enjoyed it.”
Horning became a chemistry major at Oregon State University because of experiences in Sayles’ class, he said.
“And I still rely on the things I learned his class than I did at OSU,” Horning said.
“It was something about the way we were immersed in it, whereas opposed to the university,



The (science) beat goes on: Three of Seaside High School’s Associated Student Body officers give a presentation on the group’s Don’t Catch This Wave tsunami awareness and fundraising campaign during a January school board meeting.

where you could only carve off a little bit of time. Ultimately it turned out to be really relevant to being an exploration geologist in geochemistry.”
On location
The landscape that is celebrated in film, from “Goonies” to the latest production, “Seaside” currently being shot at Hug Point and Arch Cape, is filled with “dangerous beauty,” in the words of filmmaker Sam Zalutsky, who grew up in Portland spending summers on the coast.
It is that dangerous beauty that is our most tangible reminder of the environmental responsibilities in this fragile land.
“People moved to Cannon Beach for its aesthetic beauty and they did everything they could to protect it,” Horning said.
Cannon Beach is proactive, Horning said, acting in a sustainable manner, taking care of trees, watershed and expanding watershed protection.
“They’re always ahead of the curve,” he said. “The important thing is to hold the line. It’s death by a thousand pinpricks that sets back a community. If you don’t draw the line and set a standard, you wonder where everything went.”
If you were to say anything to the city of Cannon Beach about Earth Day, we asked, what would it be?
“Keep up the good work,” Horning said.
We would add: and start with a good science teacher.

Top teams at the annual birdathon

Most of my birding is done alone, but teaming up with my BFF (best friend forever) Mitzi adds a certain delight! And that pretty much describes the day we had during the Fourth Annual North Coast Birdathon.

BIRD NOTES
SUSAN BOAC



Our pace was different this year and I haven’t figured out why, but I want to emulate it every year in the future. Although the official start time is 7 a.m., Mitzi works until midnight and is very sleepy if we get that early a start, as was apparent one year, when she fell sound asleep in the dunes while watching a flock of mixed shorebirds. This year, we started at the civilized hour of 9 a.m.
Our first stop was Haystack Rock, where we ticked off nine species, including our beloved tufted puffins. We saw three! Also spotted were all three scoter species, two cormorant species, murre, guillemots and Harlequin ducks. Luckily, no eagles at the Rock this time scaring off the other birds.
We kept to the ocean and scanned the Cove in Seaside, walked the trail around the Mill Ponds and took a quick look in the Necanicum estuary. It was early afternoon and we had listed 60 species. After a quick stop to get coffee, we drove straight to Brownsmead and Bug Hole Road, eating our PB&J’s on the way.
The day ended on Logan Road, the back road between Seaside and Astoria. Excellent birder, Linda Perkins had seen an American dipper there earlier in the day, so we stopped, Ran to the river’s edge and ticked off our last bird at 6:58 p.m.

Mitzi and I tallied 93 species that day (my new record for one day), but more importantly we raised nearly \$4,000 for the Wildlife Center of the North Coast. That makes a great day birding all the sweeter.
Please consider joining us next year for the Fifth Annual NOC Birdathon. We will be celebrating five years by extending the hours from 12 to a full 24-hour cycle! (Can you say owls?) Put the date on your calendar — April 8, 2017.
Join the growing group for birding adventures in the Cannon Beach area. We meet the first Sunday of the month at the Lagoon Trail parking lot on Second Street at 9 a.m. As a group, we decide where the best birding is and bird until about 11. Bring binoculars and wear appropriate clothing. Everyone is welcome!
Susan has spent her life enjoying the great outdoors from the lakes and woods of Northern Minnesota, Mount Adams in Washington and now the Oregon beach environs. After spending many pleasurable hours driving her avid birder parents around, she has taken up birding as a passion, to the mixed emotions of her husband Scott. The Boacs reside on the Neawanna Creek in Seaside where their backyard is a birder’s paradise.

Tale of the mysterious Highway 101 ‘Bandage Man’

It’s been one of those months. Perhaps, it’s just been one of those years. 2016 is all about and politics, local and national, with April specifically focused on taxes. It’s all a bit, well, serious. As a fun respite, let’s blur the line between fact and fiction for a minute. With weather gradually improving (April showers not withstanding), and campfires becoming a more common occurrence, having a few good ghost stories in your back pocket can only help matters.
So in an effort to make April more eerie, I went hunting for some haunted local legends. Here’s what I dug up.
Built in 1881, the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse was a solitary steward of the night, guiding ships along the tempestuous Oregon coastline to and from the mouth of the Columbia River. Over a mile offshore and just a little dispirited nowadays days, the

REFLECTIONS
ELAINE TRUCKE



lighthouse seems the best candidate for a good ghost tale. Heck, at one time after being decommissioned it was an official columbarium — a sacred place to inter human ashes. Sounds promising so far, right? The lighthouse seems the idyllic location to spend eternity. In fact, that was the name of the business: Eternity at Sea. You just have to cross the water to get there. Anybody remember the fable of the River Styx? But is it haunted? As a historian, and *not* a ghost hunter, I think it is unlikely.
The next uncanny Cannon Beach location is the former home of Governor Oswald West. Since the governor’s passing the home has become

an icon of the beach town. With fame comes gossip. The house sits perched on a basalt precipice with hands-down one of the best views of Haystack Rock. It is said that it was the time spent constructing his home that inspired Governor West to protect Oregon’s public beaches.
Disappointed? Not scary enough? Let’s move on.
The only local ghost story to consistently crop up during research is that of the tale of the Bandage Man. It is a decades old tale, and most coastal natives are familiar with a variation of it. The origin story is always a bit different, depending on who tells it. The Bandage Man is supposedly a reanimated logger who was gravely injured (from landslide, or sawmill accident) and now haunts the section of Highway 101 from Cannon Beach south to Arch Cape, although the area often expands and

contracts to include Cannon Beach proper. With his rotten flesh covered in bloody gauze, the Bandage Man has been blamed for everything from missing dogs, which he dines on, to gruesome car accidents, which he causes by patiently hiding in the back seats of unlocked cars, only to appear in the driver’s rearview mirror seconds before the misfortune occurs. He has been reported to haunt courageous campers with all manner of nefarious pranks. Not always the sneaky sort, this Oregon mummy enjoys jumping out on the roadside at night to scare unsuspecting motorists, often causing horrific accidents. Now this is the stuff of campfire lore! Walking away from the group, on their way to use the bathroom, a young camper might hear warnings from the older generation to “watch out for the Bandage Man!”
As oral tradition proves, a good,

spooky story can live for decades, even if it is never properly written down. Or perhaps it was just a practical joke to play on unsuspecting tourists? It might have been in the same vein as the elusive Cannon Beach headless horseman, who rode through town carrying a paper-mâché head under one arm and riding a black horse. What a sight! But that’s another story for another bonfire.
So what’s your verdict on this local lore? Are our small coastal hamlets haunted or not? As an historian, I have no qualms admitting that I love a juicy ghost story. Like a good movie, I find it entertaining, whether or not it is based on a true story. Even during these serious times, sometimes blurring the lines between fact and fiction has its merits.
Hey, watch out! You’re gonna burn your marshmallow.

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