

# Talking stranded whales and sea lions with PSU professor

## Close encounters of the marine mammal kind

By Lyra Fontaine  
EO Media Group

The humpback whale stranded in Seaside in January may have become entangled or struck by a boat, according to Dr. Debbie Duffield.

More than 30 people gathered for an engaging lecture, "Marine Mammals, the Marine Mammal Stranding Network and Marine Reserves," on Wednesday, Feb. 10, at the Cannon Beach Library.

The topic was particularly timely. In the past few weeks, a humpback whale washed ashore in Seaside, and a harbor porpoise and two striped dolphins were found on the North Coast. Experts are still waiting on necropsy results for the whale to see whether it was infected or if it had an accident.

The humpback has bruising that could have been from entanglement or a boat strike, Duffield said. It also carried a fairly heavy parasite load for a whale not more than two years old.

The presentation — a partnership between Duffield, Portland State University biology professor, and Keith Chandler, Seaside Aquarium general manager — was part of Haystack Rock Awareness Program's lecture series.

The Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network, which Duffield and Chandler belong to, responds to mammal strandings from Tillamook to Long Beach, Washington. They see 149 stranded animals per year on average. The most common animals include California sea lions, harbor seals and Steller sea lions.

Strandings allow researchers to evaluate otherwise inaccessible animals, and necropsies tell scientists vital physiological and biological information. Marine mammals' tissues are sampled and used for studies on ocean pollution, biotoxins and other environmental changes.

Once they evaluate a stranded animal, researchers take samples back to the university to study it in a controlled area and test for infections. After they finish the necropsies, they might prepare the bones for students to articulate.



Seaside Aquarium employees Mollie Schmidt and Tiffany Boothe with Dr. Debbie Duffield and aquarium general manager Keith Chandler.

"Every once in awhile we have species that, because of their charismatic value, are of great interest to everybody," Duffield said.

For example, a killer whale was stranded in Long Beach several years ago, drawing veterinarians, researchers and onlookers alike.

Duffield also recalls when a Baird's beaked whale came in live in Seaside during a volleyball tournament. "Luckily, people weren't around it when it started to die and thrash, because it could have killed somebody," she said.

Why do these animals appear on shores? Seals, sea lions, whales, dolphins and porpoises are primarily stranded due to human interaction, such as gunshots, fisheries interaction and net entanglement. Bacterial disease, cancer and infections also cause strandings.

Sometimes the human-related interactions are extreme. Duffield displayed a jarring photo of a California sea lion that had part of its face destroyed by an explosive device.

She also showed a picture of plastics and debris on the Seaside beach. Sea lions get entangled in plastic bands, but since they bite, it's difficult for humans to help them remove bands and recover from wounds. In 2010, a dead whale stranded on Puget Sound beach had 50 gallons of material in stomach that was mostly algae

**'It's easy to feed and rescue the pups but what do you do with them next? Let them go out into the same area they couldn't get food out in the first place?'**

Debbie Duffield,  
Biology professor,  
Portland State University

but also human debris such as sweatpants, plastic bags, duct tape and towels.

The Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network works to improve treatment and disentangle marine mammals from debris and fishery gear.

Duffield said that the animals are resilient. Seals and sea lions often carry worms in their stomach that can form ulcers. "They just live with that. Their parasite loads are tremendous."

The strandings may also point to larger forces at work. The El Nino climate pattern that's increasing coastal temperatures, along with the warm "blob" of water in the north Pacific Ocean, affect the animals' prey.

"We're at the apex of these changes that we can actually follow annually," Duffield said. "It's a fascinating change that we're living through."

Last year, in California, increasing water tempera-

tures affected sea lions and their pups in California. The animals normally feed on anchovies and sardines, which disappeared to another location due to warming water. The remaining fish may not have had adequate nutrition, leading females to leave their pups earlier, which resulted in more than 2,000 young sea lions starving on California beaches.

Rehabilitating the animals raises a question, Duffield said. "It's easy to feed and rescue the pups but what do you do with them next? Let them go out into the same area they couldn't get food out in the first place?"

Several in the crowd asked why we don't let nature dictate the animals' lives.

Rehabilitation efforts have been in California, while the Northwest does not rehabilitate seals and sea lions, Duffield responded. Oregon state policy aims to minimize disturbance from humans and let nature take its course.

However, in cases like Astoria, sea lions are crowding ports, perhaps drawn to food like smelt fish in the Columbia River.

"We've gone from having a few sea lions to having a lot ... from 100 or 200 sea lions to over 2,000 last year," she said as the crowd murmured in agreement. "It will be interesting to see if their numbers get quite as high this year, and they should."

# Montero leaves SDDA

Montero from Page 1A

"She put a lot of time into this. We just feel it's only fair that we allow her to gain some of that time back in the next couple of week," Swenson said. "When she came to us with this, it was easy enough for us to say, 'Let us make it easy for you. You've done so many things for us.'"

Swenson said Montero "still has that commitment to Seaside and SDDA and all of the other things she does."

During her year as executive director, Montero helped make the Hot Rod Classic Charity Golf Tournament and Auction Dinner in September a big success for the association.

"She left us in a great position," Swenson said. "She established building blocks that will make it a very successful year for SDDA."

Keith Chandler, the board treasurer, agreed.

"We'll be fine," he said. "Everything works out."

The association is working on its downtown walking maps and planning for the upcoming Spring Wine Walk in May. This year, the association plans to bring back its Halloween Happenins event.

When searching for a replacement, Chandler said, the board is seeking "someone who has a lot of time" and "someone who can network with businesses well."

Mespelt, who now coordinates the association's two car shows, also offered to help during the transition, along with several other community members, Swenson said.

"It's been a great community, to wrap its arms around us and say, 'If you need help, we're there for you,'" she said.

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# Images of nature from Janet Bland



Paintings by Janet Bland are on exhibit at the Seaside Public Library.

The Seaside Public Library is exhibiting work by local artist Janet Bland through Feb. 29. The title of the show is "Presence" and the art will hang in the Community Room and the foyer.

On the north coast of Oregon, just south of the Columbia River, Bland paints and draws. Her work features the beautiful and lush coastal

landscape of the area. Bland's work is a personal response to nature and to the experience of painting. She emphasizes color, gesture and the tactile qualities of paint. Her painting encourages looking at ourselves and at our surroundings.

Bland is a graduate of Stanford University and has studied in California, Oregon,

and at the New York Studio School. Her work is in collections in the United States and Canada. She is represented by the Cannon Beach Gallery and the Rental Sales Gallery of the Portland Art Museum.

The Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway. For more information call 503-738-6742 or visit seasidelibrary.org.

# Join the 'Better Breather's Club' at Providence Seaside

Providence Seaside Hospital, in conjunction with the American Lung Association, is offering a monthly Better Breathers Club to senior members of the community who have difficulty breathing. Attendees will meet in the education center of the hospital from 1:30 to 3 p.m. There is

no charge to attend, but registration is encouraged.

These sessions will provide an opportunity to learn ways to cope with COPD, asthma, pulmonary fibrosis and other respiratory issues while getting the support of others who share the same struggles.

The Better Breathers

Club's monthly meetings will feature educational presentations on a variety of relevant topics including breathing techniques, exercise, medications, home healthcare, lung transplants, pollution, smoking and more. Caregivers are also welcome to attend all meetings.

Monthly meetings for 2016 will be held March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14, Aug. 11, Sept. 8, Oct. 13, Nov. 10 and Dec. 8.

To register for one or more sessions, call 800-562-8964. Providence Seaside Hospital is located at 725 S. Wahanna Road.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Monday, Feb. 22**  
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Tuesday, March 1**  
Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., 1225 Avenue A.
- Seaside Library Board**, 4:30 p.m., at the library, 1131 Broadway.
- Seaside Planning Commission**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Wednesday, March 2**  
Seaside Improvement Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989

- Broadway.
- Gearhart City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.
- Thursday, March 3**  
Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Thursday, March 10**  
Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 1225 Avenue A.
- Gearhart Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

- Monday, March 14**  
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Tuesday, March 15**  
Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin St.
- Wednesday, March 16**  
Sunset Empire Parks and Rec District, 5 p.m., 1225 Ave. A, Seaside.
- Thursday, March 17**  
Seaside Tree Board, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

- Thursday, March 22**  
Seaside Airport Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Monday, March 28**  
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Tuesday, April 5**  
Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Wednesday, April 6**  
Seaside Improvement Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Gearhart City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.