

Ghostly gathering comes to Seaside

Occult fans bring conference to Seaside

By Eve Marx
For Seaside Signal

You don't have to be a believer in spooks and spirits to enjoy the Oregon Ghost Conference, coming to the Seaside Civic and Convention Center April 1-3.

The event, now in its fifth year, got its start in Oregon City, but grew so large, its organizer, Rocky Smith, had to secure a bigger venue.

It didn't hurt that Seaside had a rich occult history.

Seaside, Smith allowed, is known to be haunted.

"For the past year I've been researching Seaside," he said. "There are a couple of places people talk about being haunted. I had to weed through the old stories to find out what's accurate. After talking to various business owners and coming back here for research a few times, I've learned some new ghostly stories."

There's a strong connection between Oregon City and Seaside, through the industrialist and larger-than-life character Ben Holladay, Smith said.

Smith is a local historian and paranormal investigator, featured on local radio and television. In 2006 he combined his love of history and knowledge of the paranormal founding Northwest Ghost Tours offering paranormal tours in Oregon City and Portland.

"Oregon City has a lot of the Oregon Trail and it was the first capital in the state of Oregon," Smith said. "I grew up there learning the local history; I worked at the local museums, which were in historic houses."

Smith worked at Ermatinger House, built by Francis Ermatinger in 1845, the oldest house in Clackamas County. "I believe the City of Portland was named there," Smith said.

Numerous stories are associated with that house, he said. One is about a little girl who loved ribbons. Her spir-



SUBMITTED PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Vendors at the 2015 Oregon Ghost Conference.

it is believed to still be in the house. People visiting find little pieces of ribbon hidden in various places.

Smith leads ghost tours in Oregon City, which he has been doing for about 15 years. Through his involvement, he met different paranormal groups and took part in several events around the Portland area, smaller conferences and conventions.

"This tour started in 2012 and I did it for four years in Oregon City," he said. "I really didn't want to move it. Then the Seaside Convention Center approached me, asking if we'd like to move our convention to Seaside. So this is our new home."

General admission is \$5, which affords access to the vendor area and all conference speakers and panel presentations throughout the weekend.

Conference speakers will delve into the scientific study of paranormal phenomenon; past lives; what it's like to live in a haunted house, and more. Celebrated speakers from previous conferences include Jay Verburg from the Syfy show, "Ghost Mine," animal communicator Karen Anderson; Aaron Collins of "Paranormal Crossings," and Nicole Strickland from the San Diego Paranormal Research Society.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Conference Director Rocky Smith leads a ghost tour.

Ghost hunters

The 2016 Oregon Ghost Conference, presented by PartyLite by Tina Ford, is the Northwest's largest paranormal convention. Featuring guest speakers, authors, and paranormal investigators from throughout the West, special events include ghost tours, main stage entertainment, paranormal investigations, classes, live radio shows, social events, and more. For more information about the conference, visit oregonghost-conference.com.



JOHN DUDLEY/SEASIDE SIGNAL

An injured male bald eagle looks forlorn and droopy on a small log after a fight with another eagle Friday, March 18, in Gearhart.

Eagle dies after attack by mating rival

Despite efforts, rescuers can't save injured bird

By Lyra Fontaine
and R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

A bald eagle injured in a fight with another eagle did not survive the weekend.

The fight, possibly over a mate, took place at Gearhart's Necanicum Estuary Friday morning, March 18.

"Sadly, the eagle didn't make it through his first night with us," Josh Saranpaa, director of the Wildlife Center of the North Coast said Saturday. At about 11:30 a.m. Friday, Gearhart resident John Dudley was washing the windows of his Little Beach home when neighbor Brian Fennerty called out, "Are you watching this?"

Dudley, a photographer, followed Fennerty toward the shore where two adult eagles were brawling. "One was attacking the other on the ground," Dudley said.

The fight began in the shallow water of the channel, he said. The injured eagle attempted to find safety on the sand, but the attack

continued. When Fennerty and Dudley approached, the attacking bird "peeled off and left the other one," Dudley said. The injured eagle "really looked in bad shape."

Through binoculars and the long lens of his camera, Dudley could see the injured eagle sitting on the sand. Its wings were listless and hanging on his side and his head was down.

"He was in bad shape," Dudley said. "He looked dirty, waterlogged and bloody." Fennerty called the Wildlife Center of the North Coast. Josh Saranpaa, the center's director, headed to Gearhart.

In the intervening time, Dudley and Fennerty screened the injured eagle from gawkers and dogs.

"In the space of an hour, the eagle did seem to recover," Dudley said. "It started walking up toward the bank, and then it took a few short flights, so we could tell that the wings were apparently all right." A necropsy performed on the eagle by Saranpaa and veterinarian Lisa Lewis of Bayshore Animal Hospital in Warrenton was inconclusive.



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