



“Big Daddy” alpha bull keeps its eye on a kayaker in Little Beach.

## ‘Animal versus animal’ as elk, dogs clash in Gearhart

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

A pet whippet was trampled and killed by a herd of elk at the Reserve at Gearhart this month. In another incident reported to Gearhart Police, an elk kicked a dog and broke the dog’s legs. A Little Beach resident said he saw a herd menace kayakers this month when they approached too close to the shore.

“They will sometimes get aggressive,” Wildlife Communications Coordinator Michelle Dennehy of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said. “It can happen anytime. The advice for pets and people is to try to keep away.”

Oregon has two types of elk, Dennehy said, Roosevelt elk on the coast and Rocky Mountain elk in the Cascades. Roosevelt elk bulls typically weigh 900 pounds, and cows clear 600 pounds. Roosevelt elk in western Oregon have the larger body size, but typically Rocky Mountain elk — prevalent in Eastern Oregon — have larger antlers. “This makes sense when you think about how Roosevelt elk need to get through very thick brush,” she said.

With calving season, people and their pets are well-advised to steer clear of the herd, she said, which can reach 60 or more.

### Dogs no match

A sign posted by the dunes in Gearhart warns: “Keep clear of the elk. Elk will charge to defend calves.”

Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman said the risk increases at a time when elk cows are protective of newborn calves. “It all boils down to an animal versus animal, and the elk aren’t going to back down from a dog coming at them. They’ve got babies. If people are walking and not having their dogs on a leash, they’d better be looking for the elk.”

Everywhere there are elk, “people should have their dogs on leash,” naturalist and photographer Neal Maine said. “A modern-day dog really doesn’t understand an elk, and most people think the elk are going to run away from a dog. Elk can chase them, much like people take their dogs to the beach to chase birds around for exercise. Coyotes and wolves are two of their past enemies, so they’re all set up to take them out.”

The behavior may be brutal. Once they get a dog down, “they pound on them with their feet,” Maine said. “It’s part of their reaction to a predator.”

“If your dog is cornered — you wouldn’t want to intervene, unless you’re really foolhardy,” Maine added.

John Dudley has a home by Little Beach in Gearhart, ground zero for the elk population, where he chronicles the path of the elk with his camera.

“The difference lately has been there have been calves in the

herd, week-old calves,” Dudley said. “It’s postpartum time for the cows.”

One “alpha bull,” recognizable by a small but visible scar on his right shoulder, in the herd is particularly aggressive, Dudley said.

Sometimes the bull becomes “rather agitated,” herding the others, corralling them, and fighting off young bulls who consider themselves “pretenders to the throne.”

Dudley said he witnessed an encounter when a kayaker in the estuary was pulled toward the shore by the tide. The kayakers drifted closer to the herd and they pulled out cellphones to film the encounter.

“Suddenly something spooked the elk and en masse they galloped south,” Dudley said. “They could have just as easily stampeded over the kayakers.”

### Taking cues

Normally, Gearhart’s elk herd “kind of moseys,” Bowman said.

Hikers and visitors should take heed when “their heads come up from their feeding and they’re staring at you and they’re not turning,” he said. “Turn around and go back,” Bowman said. “They’ll leave you alone. They aren’t going to chase you down. Their heads are going to go back down and they’ll continue eating.”

Elk eat 50 pounds a day — “and they don’t care if it’s your garden, off the golf course or through the woods,” Bowman said.

People should not attempt to approach the elk for cellphone pictures. “If they want to do photography, get a camera,” Maine said. “Elk photography with a cellphone is not productive.”

“The two times I’ve seen chase-downs, they’d been trying to get close enough to get a cellphone shot,” Maine said.

### Observing nature

Maine advised the best way to enjoy the elk is to appreciate “an amazing creature that’s been here for thousands of years.”

“We should learn to become observers of wildlife, he said, and take 15 minutes to watch the interaction between the cows and the calves and the spikes,” Maine said. “Keep your distance and watch the phenomena of them moving, feeding, interacting, so you’re observing something, not just trying to get a picture. Watch their behavior and be intrigued and interested in that part of it. That gets missed by the drive-by folks.”

Prior to European settlement, more than 10 million elk roamed nearly all of the United States and parts of Canada, with about 1 million today.

Maine said at one point, less than a century ago, the elk were virtually extinct in Clatsop County from overhunting. Hunting was closed for about 10 years as elk were reintroduced into the area. “There are people who say their grandpa had a picture of elk being unloaded from a train in downtown Seaside to transplant here.”

To stay safe, keep your dog on a leash, no elk selfies and observe, don’t interfere, Maine said. “The reason this area is so rich and so beautiful and so wonderful is because there’s still wildlife in the habitat. So observe it, enjoy it and have it make your day richer.”

## Let’s brush up on our flag etiquette

My kids had some business at the Seaside Public Works office where they met Dale McDowell. He had a cool present for me. It was a small wooden box containing a chunk of the old sidewalk and another of the asphalt from the street by the Methodist Church (I think). Only one thing better would have been part of the 1914 date, but these pieces will always be special. Thanks, Dale!

SCENE & HEARD  
CLAIRE LOVELL



How did we reach Miss Oregon time without having had any publicity pictures beforehand? I was flabbergasted when my son said the Miss O contest was on at the convention center. Usually the papers are full of contestants’ pics and bios so a person can make an early choice. Saturday’s parade time was iffy, too. So I asked a police officer and we went to our vantage point on Broadway. A Boy Scout Troop with Colors led the parade, which went by almost before we realized what was going on. There were 15 or 25 beautiful girls riding in gorgeous convertibles. They wore lovely gowns though some of their titles were hard to read and some unfamiliar, too. Everything wound up with a 20th century fire truck elegantly babied by the department for these many years. A small town celebration with big values. Thanks, everyone!

July 2, we went to the Putter Room for perhaps the first breakfast buffet from the new owners. It was great with plenty to eat and lots of choices. Out the window were early golfers and many birds — residential starlings, robins, sparrows and others, darting all over and enjoying the greens. Everyone was very nice, even the customers.

July 3, a friend took me to the patriotic concert of the North Coast Symphonic Band at the Liberty Theater. Although we were asked to stand for the National Anthem, I wonder if the audience would have done so without the request. Again, though, they seemed to like joining in the singing. With the advancement of the Colors, however, I didn’t see anyone salute the flag. I believe it’s time for the American Legion to publish some basic information about flag etiquette because people don’t seem to know about it or care about it anymore. Deplorable.

As usual, conductor Dave Becker gave a fine performance with some favorite Sousa marches, colonial airs and special songs by John Williams and Lee Greenwood. There were guest vocals by Rachel and Andy Becker, son and daughter-in-law of Dave. They also did a jitterbug dance, which was really cute. Johnny Barker, an Astoria High School student did a terrific snare drum solo in “Field Ayres.” This was one of two numbers conducted by John Hammond, retired Warrenton music teacher. It was a wonderfully varied program played to a full house. I give everyone credit (without their names) for a bravissimo performance.

Things have come to a pretty pass when I have to use pliers to open a carton of half and half. I’ve hated the plastic rings ever since they came into existence. Ring-topped cans are hard, too, but I can manage them. Brave new world, indeed.

### Laugh Line

A couple went to their pastor’s office seeking counseling for a floundering marriage. “It’s so boring,” they both exclaimed.

The pastor went around his desk, took the man’s wife in his arms and kissed her passionately on the mouth. “That’s what your wife needs,” he said, “at least two times a week.”

“Good,” responded the husband. “I’ll bring her by on Tuesday and Friday.”

P.S. The three phases of marriage are lust, rust and dust. (Courtesy of John Hagee.)

## Jewelry, juggling and more at the Seaside Public Library

It is summer time in Seaside, and that means summer reading is in full swing for all ages at the Seaside Public Library. As part of the countywide summer reading program, this year we are challenging readers in Warrenton and Astoria to see who can read the most this summer! Can Seaside out-read both Warrenton and Astoria combined? We sure think so! For more on the community reading challenge, go to the Seaside Public Library’s Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/seasidepubliclibrary](http://www.facebook.com/seasidepubliclibrary).

In addition to the summer reading challenge, which is open to children, teens, and adults, the Library is also offers events, activities, and performers all summer long!

BETWEEN  
THE COVERS  
ESTHER MOBERG



For kids, Juggler Charlie Brown will be providing fascinating tricks and entertainment on July 28 at 10:30 a.m. at the Astoria Library, 1:30 p.m. at the Seaside Library, and 3:30 p.m. in Warrenton. Other events during summer reading at the Seaside Library include an Olympic Games themed event, Lego club, and weekly preschool age story times. The kid’s events in June and early July have already been spectacular

with such fare as a cowboy show, craft days, and a comedian.

For teens, upcoming events include an obstacle course, creative jewelry crafts, and a summer movie. All teen summer reading events are held on Tuesdays at 3 p.m. at the library. So far Seaside teens have already learned how to make picnic food (and enjoyed a picnic afterward), had a ping-pong competition, and created beautiful sand art. The teen space of the library has had some updates this summer with the addition of a new teen reading bench and display area.

Adults can join in the fun too, and turn in reading logs for a chance to win prizes as well as attend great

events at the library including a jewelry appraisal on Saturday, July 30, at 1 p.m., hosted by the Friends of the Seaside Library. Registered Gemologist Danuta Hackett will join us for a fun filled afternoon of antique jewelry appraisal. If you have an old piece of jewelry that’s tucked away in the back of your junk drawer bring it in to have a registered gemologist put it under the microscope. Danuta Hackett will take us on an adventurous history lesson and treasure hunt that may shed some light on the origins and values of your antique and vintage jewelry. Hackett will be giving her opinions only on the value of pieces and no purchasing of any items will

take place. Adults can also join the monthly trivia tournament typically held the second Wednesday of the month in the library community room. Teams compete for bragging rights of being the “Know-it-alls” in the room.

If you are into the new Pokemon-Go game that is all the rage this summer, stop by the library to recharge and see if there are any Pokemon’s hiding around the library! Who knows if there may be a rattata or bulbasaur lurking nearby?

Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway. For more information call 503-738-6742 or visit [www.seasidepubliclibrary.org](http://www.seasidepubliclibrary.org) or our Facebook page.

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PUBLISHER  
Steve Forrester

EDITOR  
R.J. Marx

ADVERTISING  
MANAGER  
Betty Smith

CIRCULATION  
MANAGER  
Heather Ramsdell

PRODUCTION  
MANAGER  
John D. Bruijn

SYSTEMS  
MANAGER  
Carl Earl

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SALES  
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CONTRIBUTING  
WRITERS  
Katherine Lacaze  
Claire Lovell  
Eve Marx  
Esther Moberg  
Jon Rahl  
Susan Romersa

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