

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE ELK KIND

In a few short years they've become a symbol of Gearhart. Newcomers still greet the elk with amazement.

"It just is unbelievable," Gearhart's Ellie Ludy told reporter Brenna Visser. Having an elk herd wander through town is a bonus Ludy didn't expect when she moved to the coast about a year ago. "I knew there would be elk, but I didn't know they would come into your yard!"

But for others the elk have become more of a nuisance and even a threat. Golf course professionals, homeowners and landscapers have considered everything: gates, fences, trapping and transport, reintroducing natural predators — even birth control.

Now the city is chronicling elk-human encounters in an effort to quantify the extent of the problem, to provide safety for residents and limit damages to property owners. The comments are posted on the city's blog site and offer a stark and seemingly endless series of dangerous encounters.

"As we tried to pack up and leave last Monday afternoon, we found ourselves surrounded by elk who clearly did not mind our looking but did not want us encroaching on their space," a resident posted. "Five were on Ocean Avenue feet from the back of my jeep and 40 or more on our west lawn."

At the city's January City Council meeting, local resident and ham radio operator Dana Gandy told the city elk destroyed approximately \$1,000 worth of emergency communications and antennas and equipment in his backyard. An antenna mast approximately 45-feet tall was snapped in half; cabling and guy wires were destroyed.

Forrest Goodling, groundskeeper at Gearhart Golf Links, reported \$5,000 damage to a newly seeded putting green, in a Dec. 22 blog post. Goodling and area golf course crews have been struggling with damage — and potential risk — for years.

In July, golf course officials staged decoy coyotes — models of the predators intended to deter the elk — something of a last-ditch move to find a peaceful resolution to this hoofed invasion.

"We've been working on getting the elk removed, the herd size reduced for years now," golfer Russ

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



Earl said, recounting meetings with four different levels of the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

It's not just professionals who face big landscaping and repair costs.

Residents use picnic tables to protect plantings.

Gearhart's Gay Jacobsen told the city in a December blog post: "We were practically held captive for two days as a herd of 75 elk took over our street, backyard and front yard decimating vegetation, ruining turf and breaking our sprinkler heads. ... They had no fear of us and were huge."

Drivers and pedestrians alike find themselves surrounded by the herd, pets are threatened and their owners intimidated.

"I must leave the house with caution," wrote South Ocean resident Susan Workman.

In a blog post, Ian Goldspink said he was "real close to being in the herd" as he drove down Pacific Way.

"They certainly are majestic and exciting but they are a bit too fearless of us and too close," wrote Bill Bennetts of South Ocean Avenue. "They are starting to make seagulls seem attractive."

'Danger to both species'

It's easy to see the appeal of the elk, a rare creature in most places, recovered after near depletion by settlers depleted wolf populations to protect the diminishing herds from hunting, according to author and ecologist Kurt Jeffrey Jenkins.

From 1905 in the Peninsula, no elk were legally hunted until 1933. Aware of the elk situation, President Theodore Roosevelt set aside 615,000 acres as Mount Olympus National Monument in 1909 for the expressed purpose of providing a reserve for Roosevelt elk. A bounty was placed on cougars, elk's natural predator.

Today, Roosevelt elk proliferate without predators and in Gearhart are protected within the city limits from rifles or archers and natural predators are rare. They migrate near the estuary and on any given Sunday,



JOHN DUDLEY

This elk dines on some Gearhart shrubbery.

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Gearhart's Gay Jacobsen, to the city in a December blog post

depending on their grazing habits, out-of-towners can be seen parked along the roadway or by the high school for a glimpse.

"The elk are a pain, but the tourists love them," wrote Gearhart's John Green in a blog comment. "Maybe a little too much at times."

Over the summer, the city received reports of aggressive elk — bulls can weigh 900 pounds and

cows clear 800 pounds — along Pacific Way, G Street and beach trails. One report was of an unleashed dog that was grazed by the elk and the dog's owner charged. The dog was unharmed but the dog's owner and another person was understandably frightened, police said. Visitors were advised to keep dogs leashed during elk calving season.

Not only are people frightened,

A library card for everyone

Little Free Libraries have been popping up all over Clatsop County over the past four years, thanks to a program called Libraries Reading Outreach in Clatsop County. The goal is simple, providing library resources for all children in Clatsop County, through library cards, courier services between schools and a countywide summer reading program.

Due to the wonderful support of local community members and businesses who build the little libraries and donate them, the Libraries Reading Outreach annual fundraiser provides funding for the project by auctioning off at least eight little libraries each year. The best part is that community members then place the little libraries throughout our community. If you've never seen one, a little library is a cute little house, larger than a birdhouse but smaller than a doghouse. Smaller little libraries are perched on poles or placed on a stand, and larger little libraries usually sit on a bench. Inside each little library are books that the owner has placed there for people to take and exchange. The idea is to take a book, leave a book so everyone can enjoy reading.

According to Wikipedia, the first little free library was built in 2009 by Todd Bol of Hudson, Wisconsin. He built a little library that looked like a schoolhouse to honor his mother who was a teacher and loved to read. The original idea behind little free libraries was to create more little libraries than the number of libraries founded by Andrew Carnegie. A Scottish businessman and philanthropist, Carnegie founded 2,509 libraries between 1883 and 1929. In 2016 it was believed that there were well over 50,000 little free libraries worldwide and that number continues to grow each year.

BETWEEN THE COVERS
ESTHER MOBERG



Libraries Reading Outreach in Clatsop County will be raising money on March 31 at the Seaside Convention center. This is the main fundraiser for the year for the program. This year's fundraiser will be even better than previous years because Libraries Reading Outreach, a countywide group representing the libraries of Astoria, Seaside and Warrenton, is joining forces with the Seaside Public Library Foundation. This year's fundraiser will have an additional author event as part of the fundraiser. There will be at least eight little libraries up for auction and perhaps you will get to bring one home to place in your yard or business.

Some examples of little libraries around Seaside include one at Sea Star Gelato that was built by Vintage Hardware of Astoria, A little library built by Bill Moberg located across the street from Seaside High School near the mini-mart, and a little Snoopy library inside State Farm Insurance. There are many more little libraries out there and it's fun to try and find them all.

There will be nine local authors at the upcoming event and the fundraiser will allow for chances to get your name into a short story collection they are writing.

In the next two months, we will be sharing some excerpts from the authors who will be at the event. The authors will be sharing shorter pieces of their stories written for the event and will be sharing them here in the Seaside Signal as a teaser in my next two articles.

Eating out is like a vacation

I was joking around with a friend how I live to eat out.

"We don't take vacations. We don't have a boat. We don't play golf," I said. "Food is our recreation."

Most nights I like to wind down after a hard day by cooking Mr. Sax and myself a nice dinner. After 30 years of marriage I like to say my husband married me for my cooking and I'm not lying when I say my culinary creations are as good as almost anything we could eat out. I love playing with local ingredients, including fresh seafood, which is abundant and very good in these parts.

We like to go out for dinner about once a week. On occasion, instead of going out, I take a break from cooking by getting take out. Right now my favorite meal to have at home that I didn't have to cook is from Avenue Q Pizza in Seaside. Thanks to The Mouth, the food writer whose discoveries and thumbs up or thumbs down appear in Coast Weekend, quite a few of my friends have become fans of this spot. In my humble opinion, Avenue Q has the best thin crust pizza on the North Coast. The crust is so amazing, I would just eat the crust. Angelina's does a good thick crust pizza, and I've only heard good things about the deep-dish pizza they're doing in Cannon Beach at Surfcrest Market in Tolovana Park, but right now Avenue Q Pizza is rockin' it for me. Luckily, it's close to home.

In my immediate neighborhood, the Osprey Café is pretty much everything a person could want in



EVE MARX/FOR SEASIDE SIGNAL

The chef's signature pork chop at the Pacific Way Café and Bakery is super juicy and delicious.

a local eatery. Open for breakfast and lunch now seven days a week, they don't do dinner. The portions are large and the food hearty with a distinctly geographically eclectic menu featuring traditional South American fare like huevos rancheros and arepas, as well as East Asia dishes like Nasi Goreng, an Indonesian rice dish made with vegetables, wild caught shrimp, and chicken, topped off with a sunny side up egg. There are the more expected breakfast/lunch/brunch options including salads, omelettes and pancakes, and they do a big, juicy Koji burger and a pork belly banh mi. I am personally partial to the Hungarian mushroom soup and the house made granola. The Osprey has a full liquor license and they make a mean cocktail. The bacon bloody mary is practically a meal in itself. I had one with their signature avocado toast last Friday; it was a great, if boozy way, to kick off the weekend.

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



For an abbreviated meal, I love the clams steamed in their own broth at the U Street Pub, which also has a great selection of craft beer on tap. We also love the oyster shooters at Screw and Brew in Cannon Beach.

When we're in the mood for finer dining, i.e., a white tablecloth experience, our go-to place is the Pacific Way Café and Bakery in Gearhart. They've got a new chef and he's got a way with meat, which is good news for carnivores. The chef's signature pork chop brought me to my knees. Old favorites like Dungeness crab ravioli remain on the menu, as does the cioppino, but there's a new halibut risotto I'd like to try, as well as a new salmon dish glazed with cranberries. The bakery makes all the restaurant's bread. If you haven't had the molasses bread you haven't really lived. Should you be lucky enough to get there early when the bakery side is open, as you're oohing over the perfection of your apple turnover or your almond croissant, you may be treated to the glorious aroma of roasting garlic wafting over from the kitchen as the chef gets the soup on.

I may not get to Mexico or Hawaii this year, but I can still treat my palate with the sensational local fare.

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