



BRENNA VISSER/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Karen Emmerling and Alexis Butler have worked together for more than 11 years.

For Alexa Butler, a summer job turns into a life passion

Butler has worked at Beach Books in Seaside for more than 11 years

By Brenna Visser
Seaside Signal

Like many 15-year-olds, Alexa Butler was in search of a summer job.

That summer, she was drawn by the “help wanted” sign in the window at Beach Books in Seaside. She had always loved reading.

“I can get paid to talk to people about books that I love? What’s better than that?” Butler said.

What the 15-year-old Butler didn’t anticipate was that 11 years later the book store would become both her career and her home.

Anyone who has perused Beach Books in the past decade most likely has met Butler, greeting customers with a smile behind the front desk or shelving books at the store wedged at the corner of Holladay Drive and Broadway. She loves helping customers who wander into the store as a refuge, attempting to escape the chaos of the beach.

Tags with handwritten recommendations from Butler and other staff members hang from books on the shelf.

“There’s so much out there. I like young adult, fantasy,” Butler said. “But probably not sad, ‘The Notebook’-type books.”

When she’s not at the store, Butler likes to travel and, well, read more books.

But what has kept the

Seaside native at Beach Books for the long haul is not just her love of literature, but also for the woman who hired her.

Karen Emmerling, the owner of Beach Books, remembers having an instant connection with Butler, to the point where she trusted Butler to run the store alone on her first day.

“Her math teacher, who is a good friend of mine, recommended her,” Emmerling said. “And said that maybe she wasn’t all that good at math, but she was very responsible. I just trusted she was going to do it right.”

Over the years, the relationship slowly progressed from co-workers to friends, and then friends into family.

The two joked about keeping sleeping bags upstairs for long days worked during the summer rush. Their conversations behind the counter are laced with laughs and inside jokes.

One of Butler’s favorite memories was throwing Emmerling a surprise birthday party in the store.

“I had no idea that when I was in high school that I would be treated like a daughter,” Butler said.

Since then, Emmerling has entrusted her with more responsibilities. For the past few years, she has sent Butler to regional and national bookseller’s conventions and conferences to hone her skills and network with authors.

One day, she could see passing the baton to Butler.

“She knows books so well, and if she’s passionate about a book, you aren’t leaving without it,” Emmerling laughed. “She’s engaging and she’s going to make a great bookseller.”

Silverspot butterfly makes return to Saddle Mountain

Silverspot caterpillars are back

By Katie Frankowicz
The Daily Astorian

Rare butterfly caterpillars are back on the slopes of Saddle Mountain for the first time since they completely disappeared from the area years before.

Government and private partners released 500 Oregon silverspot caterpillars on the mountain’s rocky meadow slopes recently as part of an ongoing effort to rebuild the threatened butterfly’s population at key sites.

“It was a culmination of so much work and it was almost a celebration,” said Trevor Taylor, manager for the reintroduction project at the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Last year, teams reintroduced caterpillars at the Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge in southern Tillamook County with plans to release caterpillars at Saddle Mountain this year — a site Taylor describes as “prime real estate” for the red-orange butterflies marked with distinctive silver spots.

Elsewhere, the small butterfly’s decline has been linked to a decline in habitat but its disappearance from Saddle Mountain is more mysterious. There are several theories for the decline: past chemical spraying practices on surrounding timberland may have impacted the butterflies, or perhaps the butterflies were unable to weather especially rough winters. People who searched for silverspots on the mountain in the 1970s saw them; when people went looking again in the early 2000s, they were gone.

“We don’t know when the silverspots disappeared, we don’t know why they disappeared,” said Mike Patterson, a contractor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the reintroduction project. “We can only speculate about why they disappeared and that’s speculation — there’s no way to prove it.”

Saddle Mountain remains one of the few sites where the Oregon silverspot’s main source of food — another rare organism, the early blue violet — blooms in abundance. Other wildflowers also flourish there. The variety of blooms make the mountain a popular destination for hikers. For the butterflies, these flowers will provide additional sources of nectar, Taylor said.

Over the summer, many of the silverspots will die. Some will be eaten before they pupate, others will be eaten while they pupate or when they emerge as butterflies.



PHOTOS BY COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Kim McEuen holds up an Oregon silverspot butterfly in the lab at the Oregon Zoo. The conservation lab raised caterpillars that were released at Saddle Mountain.



Oregon silverspot caterpillars seen through the viewfinder of a microscope.



Kim McEuen works with Oregon silverspot caterpillars at the Oregon Zoo. The conservation lab raised caterpillars that were released at Saddle Mountain.

At the Nestucca site, Patterson could account for only 9 percent of the nearly 1,000 caterpillars released along his survey route. It was a number that concerned others involved, but not Patterson.

“Being able to account for only 9 percent doesn’t mean only 9 percent became butterflies,” he said.

And he feels confident about the caterpillars’ success on Saddle Mountain.

“My guess is we’ll see butterflies,” he said. “The habitat is certainly ripe for them up there.”

Of the 500 caterpillars now chomping away at plants on Saddle Mountain, 280 larvae came from the Oregon Zoo’s butterfly conservation program, which raises as many as 10,000 Oregon silverspot and Taylor’s checkerspots in its lab at any given time to supplement wild populations. Larvae also come from labs at Seattle’s Woodland Park Zoo, the children of wild female silverspots collected from Mount Hebo in the Siuslaw National Forest in Tillamook County.

“Numbers are dictated year to year by (the Fish and Wildlife Service) but it is highly likely we will continue to operate at or near capacity over the next several seasons at least,” said Travis Koons, who oversees the Oregon Zoo’s butterfly conservation program. “We will continue to release high numbers of larvae at the various sites.”

The silverspot caterpillars were placed on early blue violets in three different

areas on Saddle Mountain. Over the next few weeks and throughout the summer, Patterson and others will check different survey points, counting any adults they see. Though Patterson is confident this first reintroduction will find some degree of success, he said, “At the same, it’s not a one-time quick fix kind of deal. This is just the first of probably quite a few efforts to go up there and release more caterpillars.”

New firm takes over local land surveying

By Edward Stratton
The Daily Astorian

Dale Barrett, a land surveyor who joined HLB & Associates in 1986, has amassed a treasure trove of maps, plans and institutional knowledge from countless North Coast projects dating back to the 1970s.

As he approaches retirement, Barrett is helping transition HLB’s operations to S&F Land Services, a Portland-based firm that has taken on his team of coastal surveyors.

HLB was originally founded in Manzanita by Colin Handforth and Ron Larson in 1975 as Handforth and Larson Surveying and Engineering.

Barrett, previously a county surveyor, joined the two in 1986, creating HLB & Associates. In 2006, the company merged with Portland-based design, planning and engineering firm Otak Inc. to form HLB Otak.

Otak recently gave HLB notice that it would be pulling out of the partnership, Barrett said.



EDWARD STRATTON/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Dale Barrett, left, is helping Chris Sherby, co-owner of S&F Land Services, take over his landsurveying on the North Coast.

“They were just not that interested in the coastal market,” he said. “They want big-city stuff. Their primary focus is Denver, Portland, Seattle.”

Otak reached out to S&F, an emerging small business formed in 2016 by Christopher Sherby and Matthew Faulkner, a former employee of HLB, about taking over the surveying team. This month, S&F took over all of HLB’s accounts.

The company’s survey projects range in size from

small residential property line disputes and municipal contracts to large commercial projects and the reconstruction of the system of jetties at the mouth of the Columbia River. S&F is able to provide cost-effective surveying locally because of the copious records and institutional knowledge from HLB’s 43-year history, Sherby said. Former employees of HLB have also taken up many positions with local municipalities.

“Dale’s been taking me around to introduce me to all the agencies, and everywhere we go, it’s usually someone who’s worked for Dale,” Sherby said.

HLB had more than 50 employees and offices in Manzanita, Gearhart and Long Beach, Washington, when the merger with Otak occurred in 2006. But during the Great Recession, Otak cut the staff down to fewer than 10 and closed the offices in Long Beach and Manzanita, Barrett said.

“All the work is still here,” he said. “The possibility of growth is really good. The struggle is to find the staff.”

With a staff of around seven, the company has been inundated with work so far and is looking to add more surveyors on the coast, Sherby said. Like others, it faces a lack of affordable housing that makes it difficult to bring in new people. But for those who join, Sherby said, S&F provides a high-quality, family wage position.

“We’re trying to provide a full, lifetime career,” he said.

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