

## Fall Festivities in the Visitor Center

Volunteers and staff carved pumpkins for fall festivities in the Visitor Center. The pumpkins were a fun addition for visitors to see as they explored the exhibits. Along with visitor enhancement, the pumpkins provided enrichment for a variety of aquaria animals from the octopus to urchins, lumpsuckers, and tetras.



## Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers had the opportunity to tour the Aquarium Science Building last month to learn about the AQS program and take a look at their aquarium systems. The tour was led by the Director of the program Larry Boles and AQS Aquarist Emily Bjornsgard. The variety of animals they have onsite was quite impressive. For more information about the AQS program: <https://oregoncoast.edu/aquarium-science-program/> Larry offered to schedule another tour in the future for those that were unable to attend. Stay tuned for some potential curriculum and classes specifically for our volunteers.

## California Sea Cucumber

By Emily Bjornsgard

California Sea Cucumbers (*Apostichopus californicus*) are one of the highlights in the touch pools. Bright red and covered in orange “spines”, they are a formidable looking creature. Visitors are often delighted to know that behind their tough appearance is a soft, squishy creature (that should never actually be squished by little fingers). However, the interesting characteristics of the California Sea Cucumber are not just skin deep.

These Sea Cucumbers actually do “vacuum” with their mouths. While Sea Cucumbers don’t have a traditional head, they do have a mouth, with sweeping tentacles that move back and forth across the benthic surface (sea floor) looking for detritus. Here, this California Sea Cucumber is holding on to the acrylic window with its tube feet, with its feeding tentacles in full view in the lower left.



Everything needs nutrients, and eventually they need to release waste. At the opposite end of the mouth, the California Sea Cucumber releases their waste in tube-shaped fecal pellets. Here is one caught in the act in the touch pool, spotted by Volunteer Sally. While California Sea Cucumbers break down detritus, their waste is typically removed by the animal care staff. Occasionally, visitors will comment, “What is that brown stuff?” It is digested material from the California Sea Cucumber. In other words, poop.

Between the feeding tentacles and the waste deposit, there are plenty of fun facts about the California Sea Cucumber. If it gets stressed out, it will expel its internal organs in an attempt to distract a would-be predator and hurry away, regenerating those organs in time. During times of regeneration, studies have found that California Sea Cucumbers can take in nutrients and proteins from the water along with oxygen using “respiratory trees” (lung or gill equivalent). No matter how you look at it, the California Sea Cucumber is an incredibly interesting animal to study.

## Volunteer Highlight

### Rebecca Forney



Hi everyone! My name is Rebecca Forney, and I am a new volunteer at the Hatfield Marine Science Center. I moved to Corvallis from Los Angeles this summer with the hopes of going to graduate school at Oregon State University next fall. I have a degree in Wildlife Biology with a minor in Philosophy from Humboldt State University. My passions lie within the marine environment and its inhabitants, specifically seabirds! I have worked with a variety of seabirds both in the field on remote islands as well as in a rehabilitation center. I have also worked as a marine laboratory research assistant studying marine food webs through fish otoliths, fish scales, and zooplankton identification.

I just recently spent four consecutive months on Southeast Farallon Island off the coast of San Francisco, California studying and monitoring breeding seabirds and pinniped populations. While on the Farallons, I conducted a pilot study for my graduate work tagging Brandt's cormorants with biologging tags that capture GPS locations as well as oceanographic data as the cormorant forages. I am currently applying for grants/scholarships to continue and expand this project at OSU. I am super excited to be part of the HMSC volunteer team and have thoroughly enjoyed my first couple of volunteer shifts. I look forward to meeting all of you!

## Blue Heart: Beauty and Change Along America's Western Shoreline

Blue Heart is a featured art exhibit featuring the traditional Japanese folk art style of gyotaku, or fish rubbing, is now on display in the Gladys Valley Marine Studies Building at HMSC. The collection by artists Dwight Hwang and Duncan Berry reflects the power and beauty of the Pacific Ocean as well as the deep and lasting climate-driven changes occurring along the western shoreline.

Blue Heart and other artwork in the Marine Studies Building can be viewed Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

<https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/'blue-heart'-exhibit>



### What's Next?

Volunteer Meeting November 16<sup>th</sup> @ 10:00 a.m.

ODFW Marine Fishery Research Project Leader Leif Rasmuson

Biology and ecology of the Deacon Rockfish presentation via Zoom

