Changing Times

Let’s celebrate being open and continuing on! We had almost 16,000 visitors in 2021. This is not close to the usual visitation. Yet, we can certainly celebrate being open in a safe way through the end of the year and into 2022. We are very grateful for such an incredible group of volunteers and staff supporting what we do.

We have some changes with our Visitor Center staff. We are sad to announce that Simone Burton will be moving on to new opportunities. It has been a pleasure to work with her, and she will be missed. We are excited for her new adventures and hope that she comes back to visit us!

Here is a message to you all from Simone:

"I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and working with our wonderful volunteers. You all bring an amazing array of life experiences and knowledge that I have been lucky enough to hear about and learn from! I will miss you all, but I hope to see you again when visiting the VC! Wishing you all the best. -Simone"

New Staff Highlight

We have been in the recruiting process for multiple staff positions. We would like to welcome our new Museum Technician James Taylor and Education Project Assistant Taylor Brooks.
Taylor Brooks

Taylor is a Midwest transplant with a lifelong passion for marine biology. While studying zoology at Oklahoma State University, she grew to love research and science education. She has worked an array of biological positions, from studying marine mammals in Alaska to working on conservation projects for Oregon’s salmon fisheries. She is hoping to go on to graduate studies of intertidal ecology.

She fell in love with the Oregon coast after moving here in 2018 for her first seasonal job as a recent graduate and has been pulled back ever since. In her spare time, she can be found foraging for wild mushrooms, exploring hidden coves, and painting her favorite creatures. Taylor is looking forward to joining the Hatfield team and learning more about the exciting field of marine science!

James Taylor

James is our new Museum Technician, and he is looking forward to meeting you all over the coming weeks. He has been coming to the Visitor Center since he was a small child, so to be working at Hatfield is an amazing opportunity. Currently he is also working with Benton County on their Covid response. Many clinics to support and much outreach to do. This is all good work that continues to helps folks. He is also a member of the Corvallis CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) Leadership team.

Starpocalypse! Replacements of the Rockfish of the Deep
By Emily Bjornsgard

If you have been to the Visitor Center recently, you may have noticed that the school of Copper and Black Rockfish has been replaced (albeit temporarily) with a galaxy of Leather Stars. While the rockfish are behind the scenes completing the necessary medical treatments, the abundance of Leather Stars provides something new to present to the public.
Leather stars (*Dermasterias imbricata*) are a nearshore sea star species that can be found along the west coast, from central Alaska to northern Mexico. Unlike the Ochre stars, which are rough and structured, Leather stars are relatively smooth to the touch. However, this isn’t the only difference between the two species.

While both species can be found in the intertidal zone, Leather stars are typically in the very low intertidal, and around pilings and sea walls. Leathers have a relatively distinct pattern, with a gray edge and mottled reddish-orange spotting. They also have a prominent madreporite, or sieve plate for water regulation, that is tan, beige, or cream.

Leather stars have an interesting, varied diet. Whereas other sea stars prefer shelled mussels and clams, Leather stars prefer soft bodied organisms. Preferring sea anemones, they will also consume sea cucumbers, purple sea urchins, sponges, hydroids, sea pens and snails.

While it would be wonderful to be able to house these creatures in the touch pool, they would be incompatible in the current arrangement. Housed with the anemones, purple urchins, and sea cucumbers of Touch Pool 3 (also known as the Echinoderm pool), they could potentially consume most of their tankmates. So, for now, we can be content to watch them prowl the deep ocean until the rockfish return.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

The January volunteer meeting included a tour of the Aquatic Animal Husbandry Area. Volunteers also had the opportunity to participate in a Gyotaku workshop. Join us for the next volunteer meeting on February 15th at 10:00 a.m. This will be a virtual format. Here is the link: https://oregonstate.zoom.us/j/98430462781?pwd=Zk5wWmVrWjZ5eH15VU1xRmR5NVA4UT09