

STAYING ALIVE ON THE WATER AND IN IT

WSG's sea-safety team helps tribal divers be prepared in a uniquely risky fishery.

Continuing education coordinator Sarah Fiskien and her colleagues on WSG's marine safety training team have conducted more than 100 classes

in first aid, at-sea rescue, and emergency response for fishermen who work on the water's surface. This summer Sara, Steve Harbell, and Eric Olsson dove deeper into the subject, bringing their training to about 35 Lummi tribal fishermen who dive more than 100 feet deep to harvest geoducks, sea cucumbers, and occasionally sea urchins for the export market, and 15 more who tend their comrades' air hoses and tethers.

"Since they started in the mid-'90s, the dive fisheries have really become important," says Lummi shellfish biologist and diving safety officer Karl Mueller. About two years ago the tribe began developing a diving safety program. Soon afterward, one tribal member perished in a diving accident, bringing home the importance of safety training. The tribe now requires it for all its dive fishermen, even though they're exempt from Coast Guard training requirements because they work inshore.



Lummi divers get hands-on practice with safety flares.

WSG's vessel-safety curriculum complements the dive-safety and first aid training the Lummi crews received earlier. WSG trainers helped the divers and tenders prepare for everything that can go wrong on the surface, with lessons and drills in firefighting, countering hypothermia, retrieving a distressed diver from the water, and using flares, mayday signals, and dewatering pumps.

"Commercial fishing is dangerous work and dive fisheries even more so," explains Mueller, "so we're trying to be proactive about safety." — ES

SEABIRDS: BEAUTIFUL WHEN THEY'RE ALIVE, USEFUL WHEN THEY'RE DEAD

COASST volunteers use beached birds and an innovative post-mortem guide to track changes in coastal ecosystems. Feet and feathers tell a tale when other evidence decomposes.

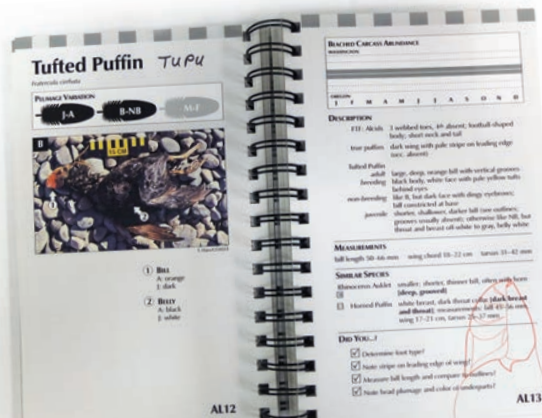
By Chelsea Kahn, Washington Sea Grant Science Writing Fellow

Imagine you're walking the wild shoreline of Second Beach on the outer Olympic Coast, admiring the knots of washed-up kelp, when you spot a beached shearwater amid the wrack. If you're a typical beach stroller, a dead bird is something to avoid. But if you're one of the 793 volunteers on the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST), that unlucky bird is exactly why you are on the beach.

Seabirds are the coalmine canaries of the coast, indicator species for environmental change. Coastal bird species' survival and reproductive success are closely tied to the health of their ecosystems, making them extremely useful in regional environmental studies. Where and when they die gives insight into the lives they lived, illuminating what COASST's Executive Director Julia Parrish, bird enthusiast and UW Biology and Fisheries professor, calls "the natural history of dead birds."

COASST was born in 1999 out of Parrish's vision and frustration. For 10 years she had surveyed bird populations on table-topped Tatoosh Island, just off Cape Flattery at the Olympic Peninsula's northwest corner. There she noticed fluctuations in the resident common murre population. She wondered if there might be a way to determine if the patterns she had observed on Tatoosh were recurring more widely up and down the coast.

Gathering such data on a broad scale is labor-intensive and costly. But many local residents care about seabirds, their fate, and the state of coastal ecosystems. In California, researchers had recruited them to be eyes in the field. Why not do the same here — muster an army of citizen observers to dig into the roots of bird mortality by monitoring beached birds and collecting baseline data on the health of the environment?





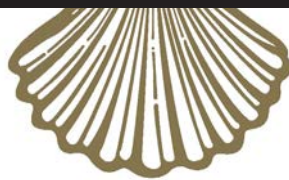
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SHELLFISH & ENVIRONMENT THE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

DECEMBER 8, 2014

WORTHINGTON CENTER, ST. MARTIN'S UNIVERSITY

Registration is at 8 a.m., conference is at 8:30 a.m.

The event is free. Participants need to pre-register at <https://catalyst.uw.edu/webq/survey/wsgcanal/252492>