

## **Descriptions of 2020 Dog Encounters by Tabea Goossen, Volunteer Black Oystercatcher Monitor at Chapman Point for Portland Audubon and Cannon Beach Resident**

On May 15, 2020, I was walking on the beach on the north end of Chapman Point. An off leash dog chased after me, barking aggressively. He was just about to bite me when the owners finally took control of him and took him away. What if I was a small child?

On May 16, 2020, I was checking an oystercatcher nest. I was looking through a spotting scope when an off leash puppy knocked over the tripod and damaged the scope. The owners apologized and paid for repairs.

On June 10, 2020, I was checking an oystercatcher nest. As I walked up, I heard the parent stress calling in response to a dog and his owner that were too close to the nest. The owner intentionally RELEASED his dog to chase the oystercatcher! The dog chased up the rock near the nest and through the waves to try to get the bird. That bird and nest would likely have been destroyed had I not been there.

On June 11, 2020, I asked dog owners to leash their dog that was chasing a nesting oystercatcher and other wildlife on the beach.

On June 28, 2020, a puppy was running up and down the beach, stopping periodically and howling, looking for his owner. The tide was coming in, and another couple and I were concerned about his welfare, uneasy that he'd be alone and trapped on Crescent Beach. The dog had no tags or collar. I was eventually able to locate the owner, who wasn't concerned about this little frantic guy.

Throughout the past summer, I have on numerous occasions asked people that are too close to nests to come down off rocks, away from a parent trying to protect its nest. I see many dogs without tags or collars and without owners in evidence.

I hear the same stories from others on the beach. These events occurred during Covid-19 times when there were far fewer people on the beach. I could continue with many far worse stories based on my personal experience over the years, unfortunately, including the puffin chick who wound up at the Wildlife Center after a dog came within seconds of grabbing him on the beach; the mama and nine of her eleven chicks killed by a dog (I helped treat the other two, who barely survived); the birds with internal organs hanging out of their abdomens, injured by dogs; the dog owners who think it's funny when their dog chases wildlife; the dog owner who tells his dog to "get them"; and dogs chasing wildlife on the beach who have no owner until I say I'll take the dog to the pound, when suddenly the dog is leashed.

What makes my stomach churn is the bird who suffered for days on the beach, dying slowly after having his wings brutally ripped off by a dog. This was before I learned that the Wildlife Center would euthanize animals rather than letting them suffer. I walked past this bird for three days, seeing him look up at me every time I walked by, before I changed my path so that I wouldn't have to see him suffering. I can't forget that image.

When I volunteered at the Wildlife Center, it was clearly understood that an animal brought in or killed because of a dog came from Cannon Beach. It is disturbing that this predominantly environmentally conscious town that cares about trees and dunes is the recipient of this gruesome award. We aren't allowed to **FEED** wildlife, but we are allowed to **KILL** and harm them. I can't understand that logic.

Current laws and codes related to wildlife harassment and dog behavior on the beach are ineffective and are not enforced. The language of "must be under voice control" calls for the operation of an owner's mind, and is meaningless to the dog owner that continually tells me his dog won't hurt that puffin or black oystercatcher chick on the beach that is unable to fly. Wildlife is stressed by the proximity of dogs, leashed or unleashed. The majority of dog owners don't hear me when I speak up. Park personnel have told me that their geographic responsibility is too large, and they have to physically witness an event to resolve it. They prefer to be uninvolved in managing these types of issues, and are only able to handle high priority issues. I am powerless to effect change by myself, and I can no longer silently look the other way. We are responsible for the harm to wildlife.

Puffin populations in Oregon are in a precipitous decline, and black oystercatchers are a species of concern. The Rocky Habitat Management Plan is presently under review – now is the time for us to prepare for changes in classifications that will require us to be more responsible.

Several options to resolve this:

- Provide a designated unleashed dog section on the beach, away from rocks, nests, and chicks on the beach unable to fly
- Utilize an empowered volunteer work force during peak seasons to enforce appropriate leash requirements
- Provide a couple summer interns during weekends, holidays, and low tides, to ticket misbehaving off leash dogs
- Implement an awareness type contest; several come to mind, but perhaps giving dog owners of leashed dogs a card to qualify for an end of summer or monthly prize of perhaps a dinner or overnight stay in Cannon Beach
- Implement the proposed dog park at the former Cannon Beach grade school
- Change the code to require dog leashing on the beach, as is customary throughout the country

I now carry dog repellent with me on the beach. Please let me know how I can help support a beach that is safe and free of wildlife and human harassment.

