HMSC Newsletter

OSU at HMSC, Newport, Oregon

Hatfield Marine Science Center Newsletter

December 1999 Pam Rogers, Editor

Annual HMSC Holiday Feast

Mark your calendars for noon, Thursday, December 16, for the annual all-HMSC holiday feast and get-together. It will be held in the Public Meeting Room and you and your spouse are cordially invited to attend. The sign-up sheets will be in the mailroom, EPA, ODFW, Ship Support, NOAA, NMFS, and USFWS. Please let us know what dish you will be bringing and the number of guests. This is your chance to find out who those good-looking strangers are in the halls.

We will feature Dr. Weber's BBQ tuna and roast ham, and beverages will be provided. Bring your decadent, delicious contributions and enjoy expanding your circle of friends.

Bookstore Holiday Party and Sale

for Staff and Volunteers

Wednesday, December 8 from 4:00 to 7:00 pm

HMSC Visitor Center

Family and friends welcome

Lots of New Merchandise!

20% discount in every department

Even greater savings on selected items

Serving Punch and Hot Spiced Cider

Homemade Delicacies made by our Volunteer Staff

Newport USFWS Becomes Independent Refuge Office

On November 1, 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced a decision to change the administration of the National Wildlife Refuges throughout western Oregon. As part of that decision, the six National Wildlife Refuges along the Oregon coast and the Newport office have been elevated to Refuge Complex status. Under the previous arrangement the coastal refuges were under the administration of the Corvallis office with the Newport office serving as a sub-office.

The Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex will be administered out of the Newport office located at the HMSC. Roy Lowe is the acting Project Leader pending permanent appointment. This change will streamline management and the decision- making process. Additional base funding will be provided and the office will begin recruiting an Administrative Support Assistant (GS-303-6) immediately. This position will involve financial

tracking, purchasing, time and attendance, property management and a variety of other administrative and clerical duties. For additional information contact Roy Lowe or Eric Nelson at 867-4550.

Tsunami Steering Group Meets at HMSC

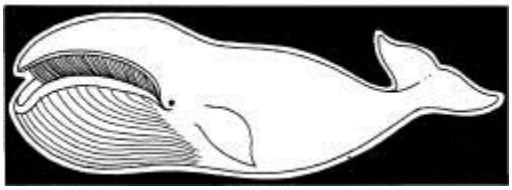
The U.S. National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) held its semi-annual steering group meeting at HMSC October 5-7, 1999. The NTHMP is a federal/state partnership involving NOAA, FEMS, USGS, and the States of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii. The meetings brought together researchers and emergency managers working in the areas of tsunami warnings, improving seismic networks, real-time

tsunami detection, inundation mapping, hazard mitigation programs, public education,

and state/federal coordination.

The meetings concluded with a field trip of the Newport tsunami inundation zone. Detailed inundation mapping for the Yaquina Bay area was completed in 1997 (published as DOGAMI IMS-2; available at the Guin Library). The steering group members toured the area with City of Newport Fire Chief Rick Crook and discussed some of the difficult evacuation issues and geologic hazards. They also visited the tsunami information sign at Beverly Beach state park which marks the site where four children lost their lives during the 1964 Alaskan tsunami. An evacuation flyer for Newport is in the works, and signs marking the inundation zone and evacuation routes are just starting to be posted around town.

For more information on the national program, visit:http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/tsunami-hazard/



Month of the Whale

December will be the "Month of the Whale" in the HMSC Visitor Center. As the winter migration of the gray whales begins, the Visitor Center will offer some special activities about whales and other marine mammals.

On the first two Mondays and Fridays of the month, December 6, 10, 13 and 17, Bill Hanshumaker, Marine Education Specialist, and HMSC staff and volunteers will assemble the skeleton of a California sea lion. The articulation will take place in the Visitor Center and visitors can drop in any time between 10-4.

Last spring, Hanshumaker and volunteers performed a public dissection of this 650 lb. animal that washed up on a local beach. The bones were cleaned, coated with glue and water for preservation and now they are ready to be assembled back into the actual shape of the skeleton. Once completed, this skeleton will be displayed in the Visitor Center.

On Sunday, December 12 at 12:30, a representative from the Whale Museum in Friday Harbor, Washington will help visitors assemble a skeleton of a gray whale, while learning about natural history of whales. The skeleton is that of a young gray whale that washed up on the shores of Orcas Island in 1995 and Whale Museum staff will share information about how volunteers and local school children helped with the preparation of the skeleton.

The official Whale Watch week is December 26-January 2. The Visitor Center will be open 10:00 a.m. 4:00 p.m. each day during this week. Displays, hands-on exhibits and films will focus on whales and other marine mammals.

At 1:00 daily, families are invited to join HMSC educators to learn more about marine mammals in an hour-long laboratory session. Skulls, teeth, baleen, pelts, and other mammal artifacts will be used to show how these animals live.

At 2:30 a storyteller will share stories about whales and other sea creatures.

Special exhibits in the Visitor Center will focus on the research of Bruce Mate. Samples of the satellite tracking tags Argos and Discovery, used by Bruce to track whale migrations, will be on display, as will diagrams of the satellite tracking systems, and the migration routes of large whales.

What is the RIDGE Program?

Ocean scientists from the U.S. and overseas gathered at the HMSC in late September in a conference called RIDGE 2000 to plan a new decade of research into the geology, chemistry and biology of the Earth's mid-ocean ridge system. The globe-encircling ridge system is responsible for swarms of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions off the Oregon coast.

At Oregon State University's Hatfield Marine Science Center, about 130 researchers were hosted by OSU's Ridge Interdisciplinary Global Experiments (RIDGE) Program Office, which is funded by the National Science Foundation.

The RIDGE Program began a decade ago when scientists meeting on the Oregon Coast formally recognized a need for organized, interdisciplinary research into the volcanic, hydrothermal, and biological processes along the mid-ocean ridge system. Since that time, more than 10,000 miles of previously unknown ridge have been explored, and discoveries have increased knowledge of deep-ocean hydrothermal vents, their relationships to the organisms that are nourished by them, and the volcanic and magmic systems in the Earth beneath them.

The RIDGE Program has been at OSU since 1998, when David Christie, an associate professor in the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences, was elected chair of the program steering committee.
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The mid-ocean ridge system marks the boundary along which Earth's major plates form. The nearest examples to the U.S. are the Gorda and the Juan de Fuca Ridges off Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, where monitoring of earthquakes at the NOAA Vents Laboratory in Newport revealed several active eruptions in recent years. The ridge system as a whole can be considered as a single 35,000 mile-long volcano transferring massive amounts of heat and material from the Earth's deep mantle to the ocean floor and the oceans themselves.

"More than 70% of the Earth's present surface, almost the entire ocean floor, has been created along this volcanic system in only the last 100 million years," Christie said. "If we think of the Earth as only 100 days old, more than 70% of it has been resurfaced in only the last four days. The deep water hot vents, black smokers, and exotic fauna are featured on many television documentaries. The vents' ability to support abundant and diverse life forms, in the total absence of sunlight, is ripe for further investigation, Christie said. At the lowest levels of this ecosystem are abundant microbial populations that are among the most primitive life forms on the planet. Recognition of these forms has prompted speculation that there are other parts of the solar system, especially the moons of Jupiter, that are capable of supporting similar life forms.

Scientists at the conference identified opportunities and priorities for multi-disciplinary research in the next 5-10 years, building on recent successes and taking advantage of new and emerging technological developments.

The RIDGE Program formally advises the National Science Foundation on priorities for mid-ocean ridge research and promotes communication among scientists in diverse disciplines through conferences, meetings, a newsletter and a website (http://ridge.oce.orst.edu).

Library Notes

Renewing Library Books:

For those of you who are OSU faculty members, you've received a

notice about library items that you have checked out. Whenever you checkout

items, they have a due date of June 15 or December 15, depending on the

time of year. You can renew items once and then you need to return them to

the library. If no one else wants them at that time, the library staff will

check them in and then back out to you.

For all library users, you should be able to renew your books

through the Web. Go to Http://oasis.orst.edu and select the "View your circulation record" from the sidebar. If items have a fine on them, you will not be able to renew them. Some people have had problems due to messy university id numbers (usually you social security number). If you have any problems or questions, call or email the library staff for help (70249 or HMSC.Library@orst.edu).