

Miller Bay Guardian

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Fall 2018

Paul's perspective

Miller Bay Needs Friends

Miller Bay and its many watersheds are exploding with growth. Houses and businesses are being constructed at a rapid pace. Forests are being harvested for the second or third time. We are rapidly altering the landscape of beautiful forests and diverse shoreline because it's such a great place to live.

Friends of Miller Bay is working to conserve Miller Bay's natural habitats and to preserve a portion of this beautiful natural environment for our enjoyment, future generations,

notable activities in 2018. This included helping GPC with a grant application to purchase 13.2 acres along Miller Bay Rd, working with Trout Unlimited for the third straight year at the Grovers Creek outmigration trap, partnering with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to reintroduce native Olympia oysters into Miller Bay, restarting a monthly count of Miller Bay marine birds, working with Clean Water Kitsap documenting aquatic insects in Cowling Creek, maintaining Cowling Creek Forest Preserve trails, conducting several weekend work parties to remove invasive vegetation, plant trees, and repair bridge crossings, conducting the first Miller Bay shoreline clean up, and finally presenting an

historical perspective of Miller Bay by Jerry Elfendahl at our annual meeting on November 15.

Please consider joining the Friends. Your support, financial and/or physical, helps protect this beautiful landscape we call home. Thank you from the FOMB Board.



Biotoxin Report

According to the Kitsap Public Health District (KPHD), biotoxins were notably absent from Miller Bay mussels throughout the summer. However, because high levels of PSP were measured in samples taken from Eagle Harbor and Kingston in September, shellfish harvest in Miller Bay was closed as

a precautionary measure. Check their [website](https://www.kitsappublichealth.org/environment/shellfish_advisories.php) for current closure information (https://www.kitsappublichealth.org/environment/shellfish_advisories.php). We thank FOMB member Bob Nichols for harvesting mussel samples for testing again this year.

Meanwhile, Kitsap Public Health District reports that it's periodic sampling for bacterial contamination continues to show reduced levels. They are optimistic that in the next few years they will be able recind the longstanding shellfish harvest closure for Miller Bay.



A starry night on upper Miller Bay.

Check out Joe's stunning photographs at: joekuneshphotography.com

and all the creatures that live here. Amazingly, salmon still swim in our streams, eagles soar overhead, and black bear cautiously avoid us. Our landscape supports a wealth of unseen fish and wildlife in the forests that remain.

FOMB supports habitat conservation efforts that protect native fish and wildlife, provides educational opportunities to involve citizens in this habitat, and helps maintain the quality of this place we call home.

With the help of our members, FOMB pursued many

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Learn about Miller Bay's history

FOMB Annual Meeting

Please join us for a special presentation at the House of Awakened Culture in Suquamish on Thursday, November 15th at 7pm. Our speaker will be local historian and writer, Jerry Elfendahl, who grew up exploring the beaches in Indianola and Miller Bay. His presentation is titled:

Miller Bay Folklore and History:

*Wander, wonder, and muses
among ebbs, flows, back eddies,
flotsam jetsam, and drift
without getting your feet wet, Part 1*

Invite your friends and family for a most interesting evening of history and lore about this beautiful and unique bay and its surroundings.

For more information, email info@friendsofmillerbay.org.



Old Plat Map, 1931 - Contributed by J. Elfendahl



Emma Saas on far left with her cousins about 2004
Photo contributed by Sharon Nichols

NOAA internship

Miller Bay Inspires Future Scientist

by Sharon Nichols

I would like to share with you part of an application my granddaughter, Emma Saas, wrote to the U.S. Department of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). From her application:

"Since birth, I've grown up on, in, under the water of Miller Bay, Washington. My cousins and I sink ourselves into the squishiest parts of the mud surrounded by clams and oysters when the tide is out and as the tide comes in. I am surprised by fish as they accidentally jump into my kayak while I paddle towards the fish hatchery. I get soaked as I row around the bay in the rain gathering junk after seeing Styrofoam float by.

My love for marine science is a mix of personal attachment to bodies of water, passion for the environment, and a fascination for what roams beneath the water's surface. I'm never happier than when I'm out on a boat, especially when helping with research which strives to keep the water and its life healthy. I've spent 20 years with a community that values the health of the ocean and had an internship that helped me firmly decide that marine science is what I want to devote my life to.

I have been enjoying the oceans and coastal waters for my whole life, and I've become quite determined to give back to it."

Emma's application was accepted and she will intern with NOAA next summer. Emma is determined to help protect our beautiful environment.



Purple Martins - Michelle Amicucci

Miller Bay Bird Survey, an Update

By Michelle Amicucci

It's hard to believe that the first Miller Bay bird survey was initiated eight years ago, in October 2010! There was a pause in the count from 2013 to 2016, but the survey kicked-back into gear in 2017 and will be on-going for the foreseeable future. The data gathered is intriguing, alarming and hopeful, all rolled into one.

As expected in the Puget Sound area, the majority of the birds we saw were winter migrants, once again affirming that Miller Bay is a valuable resource for many species, particularly for migratory birds like the Osprey but also for our year-long residents like Eagles, Great Blue Herons and Belted Kingfishers. There were 13 species of ducks observed, American Wigeons made up the majority of the ducks present, followed in numbers by the Buffleheads, Mallards and Red-breasted Mergansers.

Both Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes were noted with the latter being more numerous. In 2010/2011 Common Mergansers were observed in only two substantial groups on two separate occasions and essentially absent the rest of the time until the 2017/2018 survey noted their presence more frequently. Hooded Merganser numbers have increased and Bufflehead counts have declined. During the summer months there were an increased number of Canada Geese counted, and although past survey's reflected resident Mallards, none were counted in June or July 2018.

Horned and Western Grebes were on the bay in in-



GreaterYellow Legs - Michelle Amicucci

creased numbers through the fall and winter and Cormorant numbers have steadily increased. The shore-birds were represented by Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs and Sandpipers.

I'm an enthusiastic birder, by no stretch an expert (I'm learning a LOT from Don McPherson) but eager to encourage and welcome all sorts of birds to our property and this was a banner year for my family and me...we had a clutch of Hooded Mergansers hatch near our pond (although not observed on a count day, unfortunately!). And Purple Martins! Well, we FINALLY had Purple Martins nest in our gourds after hanging them over 4 years ago. Every year we would see the martins scouting, only to be chased away by the nesting Violet-green Swallows. This year a pair persisted, and we saw at least two little heads peering out of the gourd.

We counted many more Purple Martins in 2018 than previous years, and on our April count day there were too many zooming around to get an accurate count, but there were many! In August we counted 35! So if you've been discouraged in the past in trying to attract martins, try again! New gourd designs also make them less likely to be taken over by European Starlings, giving our martin friends a well-deserved advantage. If you are interested in joining us on our birding days (no experience necessary!) please email your contact information to info@friendsofmillerbay.org.



Bufflehead - Michelle Amicucci

Thank you, Brian Kenward

FOMB would like to thank Brian Kenward, our recent live-in docent at the Cowling Creek Center. Brian logged hundreds of hours clearing trails, feeding fish, leading tours, cleaning raceways, hosting meeting groups, keeping the CCC clean, and providing onsite security for the Center. He assisted Paul Dorn with the myriad tasks associated with helping the salmon get through the culverts to their spawning area.

We wish Brian well in his future adventures and we welcome and congratulate him for becoming a FOMB boardmember.



Skate held by Sunny Anderson
Contributed by Aimie Anderson Svarthumle

Octopus story #2 circa 2017

Giant Octopus

By Lynn Anderson

My husband, Brian, and I love to watch all of the action on Miller Bay: Herons stalking their prey, Osprey diving for lunch, King Fisher beating their catch into submission on the horizontal dead tree across the bay from us, river otters frolicking, harbor seals creating their wake as they hunt, Bald Eagles effortlessly soaring on unseen currents and all the other wildlife the bay has to offer.

When the salmon are running we sit outside and give them Olympic style scores for their jumps (I think the record is 5 jumps in a row which, I'm sure you'd agree, gets a 10!) and we cheer the salmon on when the tide is out and they are struggling to make it to the hatchery and their final resting place. We've stopped trying to think of ways to help the seemingly trapped salmon make it to the hatchery (yes, that was Brian yelling and waving frantically at a Bald Eagle who was just trying to enjoy a nice peaceful meal at his favorite Miller Bay "restaurant"). We now know and accept that this is the circle of life on our bay.

Last year when the salmon were running and the tide was out Brian called me to the kitchen window, pointing out to the trickle of water in the middle of the bay and asked "How big do you think that salmon is?" I said, "I'm not sure, but it looks huge from here--I'm going with 30 pounds!" On came the mud boots and Brian was off to check out the size and report back. Much to our surprise, it wasn't a salmon at all, but a huge octopus.

It is such a gift to live on Miller Bay where you never know what you're going to get--kind of like a box of chocolates!

Editors Note - The Anderson families who contributed these stories are not related.



Octopus - Brian Anderson

Octopus story #1 circa 1987

Fond Memories of Miller Bay

by John Anderson & Aimee Anderson Svarthumle

Our parents moved to Miller Bay in 1980, and when I was 12 (about 1987), BJ Ueda and I took our Sears game fisher boat out rowing in the bay. We found a dead octopus about 8 feet long! We were so excited and wanted to show it to everyone. We went back to BJ's and put his dad's outboard on the boat. It didn't quite fit, but we figured that with a rock wedged between the boat and the motor screw, it would stay on.

We tied the octopus to the back of the motor and went around the bay to show off our exciting find. All was going great until the rock fell out and octopus and motor went to the bottom of the bay. The next day at low tide we went out to retrieve the motor. We took it back to BJ's, cleaned it up and got it running again before his dad ever found out.

We also owned a Hobie Cat together. We'd race with another Hobie on the bay with kneeboarders tied to the stern.

For all the kids in our family and around the bay, growing up on Miller Bay was an adventure. There would be paddles up the bay with the spawning salmon. We'd make caravans of rubber rafts and dinghies filled with kids, buckets, and shovels and head out to clam island. There would be "treasure hunts" on the beach after a king tide and seafood feasts of steamer clams, rock crab, and if you were lucky, a dungeness. We'd walk the creek barefoot at low tide stepping on flounder, catch perch for dinner, and at the end of hot summer days we'd swim with the phosphorescence. Growing up was filled with endless summer days of sailing, windsurfing, boating, and playing on the mudflats at low tide. For us it was a magical childhood!

Join Friends of Miller Bay!

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Tel. _____

FOMB Memberships (Make check to FOMB)

- I include \$25 for a one year membership.
- I include \$100 for a one year Conserving membership.
- I include a \$ _____ gift.
- Put me on the email list for program notifications and work party notices.

Please mail this form and your check to Friends of Miller Bay
PO Box 37, Suquamish, WA 98392

Can you dig it?

Olympia Oysters in Miller Bay

While digging in the mud by Miller Bay a few years ago Paul Dorn unearthed an implement that, after some research, he determined to be an oyster rake. Long ago, this tool was probably used to harvest Olympia oysters in the Bay. Olympia oysters are the native oyster species in Puget Sound, but are now rarely found except in a few areas. Pacific oysters, an introduced species, are now predominant.

Paul thought it would be a good idea to reintroduce Olympias to Miller Bay. The idea caught on and this year 20,000 young oysters were planted in the bay north of the Nooschkum sand spit with the hopes of creating an oyster reef. They were planted in 20 mesh bags (1,000 per bag) on a substrate of Pacific oyster shells and anchored to the bottom of the bay in an area that is exposed at minus tides. Paul has been tending them to prevent silt from building up a suffocating layer over them.

Although the female mature Olympia oyster produces a brood of 250,000-300,000 larvae and that times 10,000 (half are males?) makes 2,500,000,000 or so potential new oysters each year, the success of this project is not assured. Silt, pollution, frosty winter nights and the Japanese Oyster Drill are all conspiring against them.

The oysters planted in Miller Bay were made available, and installed with assistance from Betsy Peabody, who

works on the Puget Sound Restoration Fund's 10-year, 100-acre goal to restore Olympia oyster habitat.



Mike Murray and his son Silas plant Olympia oysters in mesh bags on a substrate of Pacific oyster shells in an area that is exposed at minus tides. - Paul Dorn



PO Box 37
SUQUAMISH, WA 98392

Check out our new website!
FRIENDSOFMILLERBAY.ORG

FOMB Special Presentation: *Miller Bay Folklore and History*

By Jerry Elfendahl

Suquamish House of Awakened Culture - Thursday, November 15, 2018 7:00 PM

Beach Cleanup a Big Success

This past June 2nd, Friends of Miller Bay sponsored a cleanup of the bay on what turned out to be a lovely summer evening. The effort was timed to coordinate with the high tide so that beaches could be accessed by boat. (The idea of walking the bay at low tide was not considered feasible when we thought about the acres of boot sucking mud that would have to be negotiated!)

The goal was to remove as much garbage - styro-foam blocks, plastic bottles, tires, and treated wood moved to the shore by tide and wind, as possible. With the aid of a half dozen skiffs and a dozen or so enthusiastic volunteers, the effort was a success. Folks around the bay were notified and many assisted in the effort by cleaning their own and neighboring beaches and leaving the litter in the brightly colored garbage bags that were provided by the county. The county also assisted by waiving all fees for the bagged litter at the transfer station.

Because the accumulated junk piles were removed to the dump over several days, we don't know exactly how much was picked up except that it was a lot! We are very grateful to Matt Mattson for generously allowing us to use his marina facilities for launching boats and hauling out the garbage.

With the success of this first cleanup, we have al-

ready started making plans for next year. We will schedule it for the weekend of July 13th: after the 4th of July so that the debris from fireworks can also be cleaned up. We will have the special garbage bags available for several weeks before the cleanup. Check the Friends of Miller Bay [website](#) for updates on this and other events.



FOMB Miller Bay cleanup - Crew from left: Nancy & Dick D'Archangel, Stafford Smith, Yvonne Bishop, & Janine Moss