

ON THE TRAIL

Happy as a clam at Bayshore Preserve

We had a pretty low tide last Sunday afternoon. Temperatures rose, the sun burst bright, blinking between big, puffy clouds. The clouds eased by slowly, shielding the sun from one moment to the next, their shadow edges rolling over the green grass along the shores of the newly reclaimed Bayshore Preserve.

A pair of killdeers screech their concern that I am getting near their nest. One hops ahead of me on the trail,



By **MARK WOYTOWICH**

faking that its wing is broken, flicking a flash of golden white feathers, as if helpless on its back. They nest in the open. A difficult start.

I clear their zone then pass a pair of huge Douglas fir trees, the largest with a trunk nearly six feet in diameter. They are unexpectedly huge. Still, I only grasp their size at the last moment, for they are absorbed easily into the wide open expanse of the preserve, an area that once served as a public golf course.

Not surprisingly, the trail seems to be perfectly suited for golf carts, wide and flat as it heads into the distance. It is a distance filled with tall, spring-time prairie grasses interspersed with young tree plantings, many thousands of them. A wide field that will someday be a forest.

The distance is further obscured by a line of large, leafy trees, massive



At Bayshore Preserve, oak admirers stretch tall to mimic the mighty trees, some estimated to be more than 400 years old.

Oregon white oaks. Somewhere behind them spread the tidelands. And behind them, silvery water. From the trailhead, you can barely see the thin horizon line of water in Oakland Bay.

IN THE SOUND

The tidelands are returning to a wilder, natural state. Long tidal channels, hollow like fingers of a glove, scoop deep into where a putting green used to be. At low tide the channels sit dry; they make resting slopes for sun-bleached logs and gnarled pieces of driftwood.

There's no trail to this part of the preserve. You have to tramp along, first through high, tough grasses, then the seaweed grass, a springy net of which spreads wide across the upper tidelands.

It's a workout moving through thick grass, like wearing ankle weights.

Finally, from the high tide berm, I get a glimpse of Twin Rivers Ranch, another large property under conservation at the head of Oakland Bay. And beside it, Oakland Bay County Park, with its hillside a veritable paradise of wild berries come summer and sufficient rain.

Here's something I've noticed while observing wide vistas from isolated points in Puget Sound: All noise, especially traffic sounds, seems to be sucked up to the sky by these vast distances. Sound disperses and is minimized because there's nothing to trap it, no high hills to bounce off like within Hood Canal.

I hear the chirp of birds and across the way, a weed whacker whining and grinding, but the sound stays low and distant. State Route 3 makes no sounds at all.

A young couple approaches, stopping to admire one of the giant oaks. Further inshore, a bird watcher tips her binoculars and the sun glints off the lenses.

GANGS OF DO-GOODERS

Bayshore is a surprisingly large tract, and so close to Shelton. I spend almost an hour on the tidelands, and still there is more to explore.

I return to the trailhead and get a hot bowl of manilla clam steamers in garlic and white wine, thanks to the attractive events coordinator — a former dirt farmer — at Taylor Shellfish.

It's Oakland Bay Day, an annual event hosted by Mason County ECO Net, an organization of like-minded groups and businesses with a stake

in maintaining clean water in Puget Sound.

It's sunny and warm and since 10 a.m. a little tent ECO village has been greeting visitors at the trailhead to Bayshore Preserve.

Taylor Shellfish is part of ECO Net, as is its industry association, the Squaxin Island Tribe, the Salmon Center in Belfair, the Mason Conservation District, and of course, Capitol Land Trust, the folks who played a key role in acquiring and preserving the old Bayshore Golf Course.

It's funny, but it does not surprise me anymore to see a little white tent for the Mason County Health Department near the blue-and-white tent of Taylor Shellfish. What they have in common is homeowners like me, who, despite the awareness generated by events like these, might still not know how his or her septic system, or lawn fertilizer, is equally involved in the fate of Puget Sound.

MEMORY CLAWING AT ME

I am old enough to play one of my Significant Memory Cards: Fifty-two years ago, I was a boy visiting my older brother Rick, who lived on Chesapeake Bay. We'd get on his little motorboat, head to his "secret" bay, where we'd take old, stinky chicken backs and put a few into a crab pot and toss it overboard.

I was from Ohio and had never been on salt water before, let alone gone crabbing.

I remember my astonishment at all the Maryland Blue crabs, the rock crabs, the endless feast that night, my first taste of fresh crab, my fingers dripping butter.

That's gone now.

Chesapeake is a sad, brown water bay, practically lifeless if you are expecting to catch and eat anything local.

What's at stake? Perhaps we dread a form of complicity.

We don't want to be that Mason County man or woman who has to start off a story with, "Back in the day when you could get clams on the beach ..."

■ *Mark Woytowich is a writer, photographer and video producer who lives in Potlatch. He can be reached at Woytowichdesign.com.*

Your Local Tides

for the week of June 8 through June 16, 2017

ALLYN | Case Inlet

8	12:08am 6.8	9	12:50am 5.9	10	1:30am 7.3	11	2:09am 7.4
Thu	4:58am 3.1	Fri	5:29am 14.9	Sat	6:02am 12.5	Sun	6:37am 12.1
	12:08pm -1.1		12:39pm -3.4		1:11pm -1.6		1:46pm -1.6
	7:25pm 13.6		7:57pm 15.2		8:28pm 14.3		9:00pm 14.5
12	2:49am 7.3	13	3:32am 7.2	14	4:18am 6.9	15	5:09am 6.4
Mon	7:15am 11.7	Tue	7:56am 11.3	Wed	8:42am 10.8	Thu	9:37am 10.2
	2:23pm -1.4		3:03pm -1.1		3:44pm -0.5		4:28pm 0.3
	9:34pm 14.6		10:11pm 14.7		10:51pm 14.7		11:32pm 14.6

SHELTON | Oakland Bay

8	1:14am 5.9	9	1:56am 6.1	10	2:36am 6.3	11	3:15am 6.4
Thu	5:36am 13.1	Fri	6:07am 12.8	Sat	6:40am 12.5	Sun	7:15am 12.1
	1:14pm -0.9		1:45pm -1.2		2:17pm -1.3		2:52pm -1.1
	8:03pm 13.6		8:35pm 14.0		9:06pm 14.3		9:38pm 14.5
12	3:55am 6.3	13	4:38am 6.2	14	5:24am 5.9	15	6:15am 5.5
Mon	7:53am 11.7	Tue	8:34am 11.3	Wed	9:20am 10.8	Thu	10:15am 10.2
	3:29pm -1.2		4:09pm -0.9		4:50pm -0.5		5:34pm 0.3
	10:12pm 14.6		10:49pm 14.7		11:29pm 14.7		

UNION | Hood Canal

8	3:55am 10.9	9	4:22am 10.6	10	12:15am 7.0	11	1:01am 7.1
Thu	11:00am -1.1	Fri	11:35am -1.3	Sat	4:48am 10.3	Sun	5:15am 10.0
	6:15pm 11.6		6:55pm 12.0		12:10pm -1.4		12:45am -1.2
	11:28pm 6.9				7:34pm 12.3		8:14pm 12.4
12	1:49am 7.1	13	2:40am 7.1	14	3:33am 6.8	15	4:27am 6.3
Mon	5:45am 9.5	Tue	6:19am 9.0	Wed	6:59am 8.4	Thu	7:51am 7.8
	1:19am -0.9		1:55pm -0.4		2:32am 0.2		3:12pm 1.0
	8:55pm 12.4		9:34pm 12.3		10:13pm 12.1		10:50pm 12.0

THE SUN and THE MOON

	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Sunrise	4:17am	4:17am	4:16am	4:16am	4:16am	4:16am	4:16am	4:16am
Sunset	8:06pm	8:07pm	8:08pm	8:08pm	8:09pm	8:09pm	8:10pm	8:10pm
Moonrise	7:16pm	8:10pm	9:00pm	9:46pm	10:26pm	11:03pm	11:35pm	
Moonset	4:11am	4:48am	5:31am	6:18am	7:11am	8:09am	9:10am	10:13am

Full moon June 9

Weekly Tide Tables
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Tidal Information courtesy NOAA | Astronomical Data courtesy U.S. Naval Observatory