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DELIVERABLE FOR TASK NO: 4

PROGRESS REPORT: []

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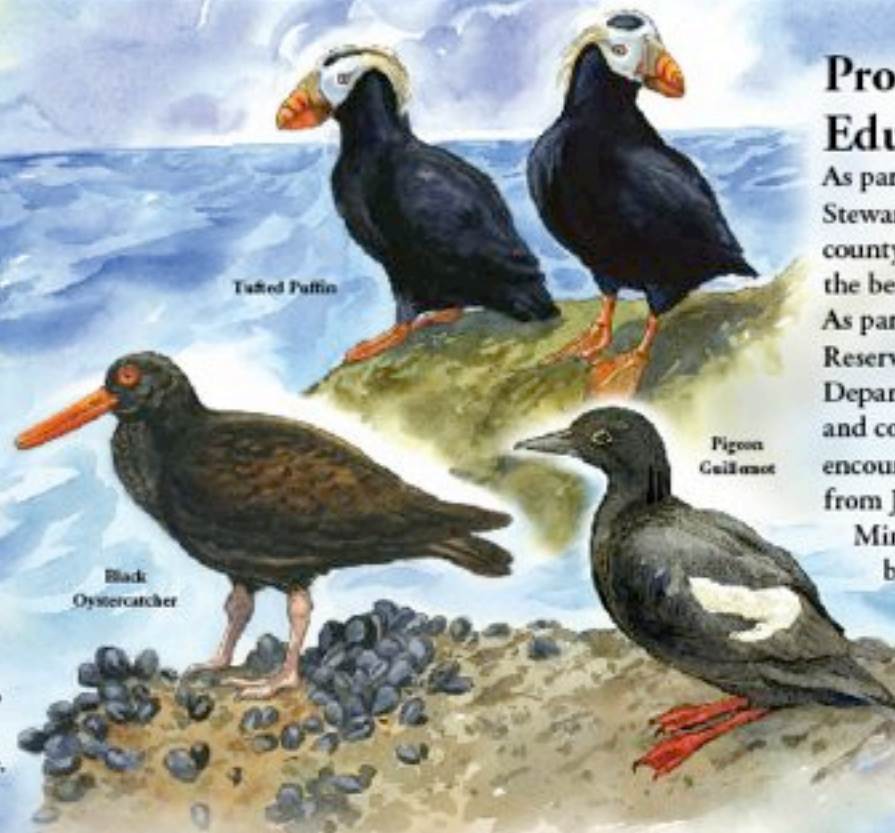
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West Beach – Abundant Life!

The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever. - Jacques Yves Cousteau

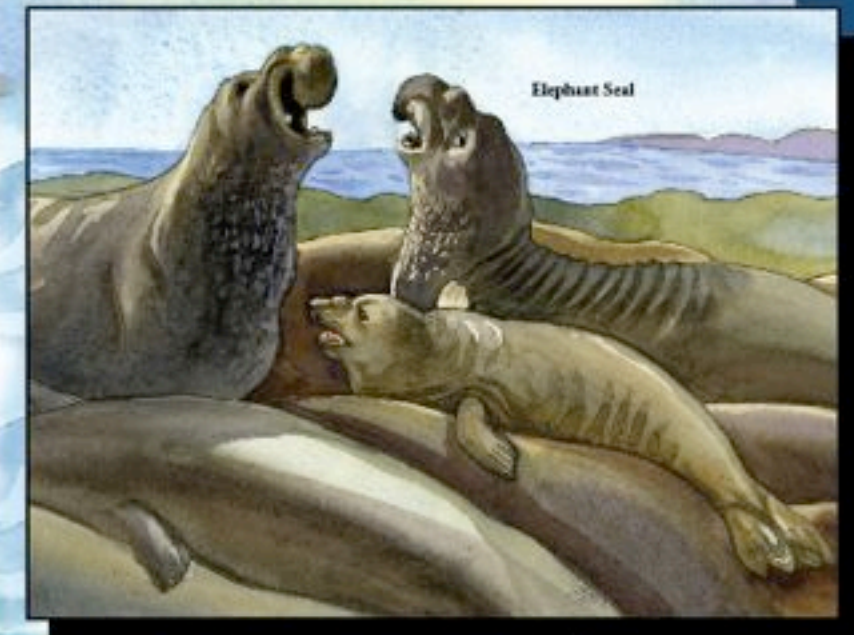
Life on the Wild West Side

Welcome to West Beach, where life thrives in our cold, wind-whipped, oxygen-rich waters. Just below the surface, the largest bull kelp forest in Washington sways with the currents and tides. Salmon, harbor seals, surf smelt, otters, seabirds and other creatures find food and shelter here. The Pigeon Guillemot, the only seabird to regularly breed on Whidbey Island, lays its eggs in burrows in the high bluff to the south. Clams, crabs, shrimps and Geoducks live on or within the sea-floor. Macro-algae of all colors form extensive beds in the lower intertidal and subtidal areas. Eelgrass, a key aquatic plant for juvenile salmon and Pacific Herring, grows in the shoreline shallows. Juvenile salmon prowl our shore, looking for fresh-water influences such as the outlet from Swan Lake.



Protected for Enjoyment, Education and Research

As part of the Admiralty Inlet Marine Stewardship Area, this area is the focus of county efforts to teach residents and visitors the best practices of shoreline stewardship. As part of the Smith & Minor Islands Aquatic Reserve, the seafloor is managed by the state Department of Natural Resources to protect and conserve extraordinary resources and encourage more research. The reserve extends from Joseph Whidbey State Park to Smith & Minor Islands, and then south to just beyond Fort Ebey State Park.



Smith & Minor Islands – a Seabird Paradise

Did you know that right offshore are Smith and Minor islands, a largely undisturbed paradise for seabirds and marine mammals? Minor Island is the home of our state's only known ground-nest of Bald Eagles. Glaucous-winged Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, Black Oystercatchers, Rhinoceros Auklets and several Tufted Puffins nest on the islands, which are protected from human activity as part of the San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Harbor seals sun themselves during low-tides. Elephant seals use Minor Island for haul-out and nursery habitat. Steller and California sea lions also visit.



www.islandcountymrc.org



This signage by Island County Marine Resources Committee is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), CZM 310 agreement 10000002. Text: Dan Pedersen, whidbeywriter.com. Design and illustration: Kris Wilne, kriswilne.com.