

# Padilla Bay Newsletter

A Joint Publication of the Padilla Bay Foundation and Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Autumn 2008



**Padilla Bay**

National Estuarine Research Reserve

Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is managed by the Washington State Department of Ecology under the National Estuarine Research Reserve System established by NOAA.

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The Padilla Bay Foundation is a membership-based non-profit organization formed in 1987. Its mission is to help preserve the Padilla Bay estuary in Skagit County, Washington, through support of Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Padilla Bay Foundation  
PO Box 1305  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
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Publication No. 08-06-005

## Meet the Newest Member of Padilla Bay's Research Team, Heath Bohlmann

With his experience operating boats and monitoring water quality, Heath Bohlmann jumped right into the research position at Padilla Bay. Heath received his degree from Evergreen State College with a focus in Ecology and Field Biology. Since then he has built his skills and gained experience working in aquatics at Olympic, Crater Lake, Mt. Rainier, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, as well as with the USGS in the San Francisco Bay Estuary.

At Padilla Bay, Heath collects and processes nutrient samples as part of the System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP), a national program incorporating 27 reserves around the country. In addition, Heath is responsible for managing Padilla Bay's weather station located just a few miles south of the interpretive center. The information collected at the weather station is supplied real-time to a website that you can view online at [http://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/QueryPages/realtime.cfm?Station\\_Code=pdbpfmet](http://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/QueryPages/realtime.cfm?Station_Code=pdbpfmet). (You can also find this site from [www.padillabay.gov](http://www.padillabay.gov).) On the website you will find the current temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, light, and rainfall.

Heath operates and maintains Padilla Bay's fine fleet of vessels. Not only does he pilot the boats for SWMP sample collection, but he also assists the many visiting researchers who are drawn to Padilla Bay's amazing ecosystem. So far, he hasn't been stuck or stranded on the mud flat once.

Welcome, Heath!



# Padilla Bay Foundation Events

## Padilla Bay Foundation's Annual Meeting & Dinner

Join us at Padilla Bay for the Foundation's Annual Meeting & Dinner, to be held **Saturday, October 4th from 3:30 - 7:30PM**. The Board of Directors will organize a potluck and seafood feast to delight your palate. The guest speaker will be Eric Anderson, Ph.D. Candidate from the University of Wyoming Department of Zoology and Physiology. Eric was the recipient of a NERRS Research Fellowship which helped fund his studies of sea birds, particularly surf and black scoters. Some of his work over the past 2 years has looked at local populations of scoters and how they use Padilla Bay for winter foraging. Please RSVP by calling the Foundation office at (360) 757-3234 or register online at [www.padillabay.gov](http://www.padillabay.gov).



## Workshops

### New Climate Change Volunteer Program

If you're concerned about the effects of changing climate on our environment and our lives, and want to make positive change, here's a class for you. This fall, Padilla Bay Reserve is partnering with the Northwest Clean Air Agency and WSU Beachwatchers to create a new volunteer program called Climate Stewards. Volunteers will learn about the effects of climate change and more importantly what we can do about it. They then implement climate change education projects in their communities. Trainings will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9-1:30, September 15, 17, 22, 24. Please Call 428-1558 to register or see our website for more information.

### Nature Poetry Workshop

Each year, Padilla Bay offers the chance to explore nature poetry with a noted northwest poet. This full day workshop sharpens basic skills of poetry and applies them to a natural environment. The day includes lecture, discussion, outdoor experience, and time to write. This year's workshop will feature Washington poet and teacher, Holly Hughes. She has spent the past 28 summers working at sea in Alaska in a variety of capacities, from gillnet fishing for salmon to working as a naturalist on a cruise ship. She served as skipper for Crusader, a 65-foot wood schooner which offered seminars on art, writing, natural history and native culture in both Southeast Alaska and the San Juan Islands. For the past 19 years, she has taught writing at Edmonds Community College, serving as co-director of the Convergence Writer's Series and co-coordinator for the Sustainability Initiative. She lives in a log cabin built in the 1930s in Indianola. **Saturday, September 13, 9:00-5:00**. There is a \$20 fee for this workshop. Call the Center for a registration form, or download one from our website.



Padilla Bay Foundation

## How You Can Help

Grassroots involvement is the core of Padilla Bay Foundation's commitment to protect Padilla Bay and support the Padilla Bay Reserve.

Membership in the Foundation means you are contributing directly to environmental education and research right here in Western Washington.

Categories of membership are:

Senior/Student	\$25
Individual	\$35
Family	\$50
School/Organization	\$50+
Supporting	\$75
Sustaining	\$100+
Small Business	\$100+
Sponsor	\$250
Patron	\$500
Steward	\$1000

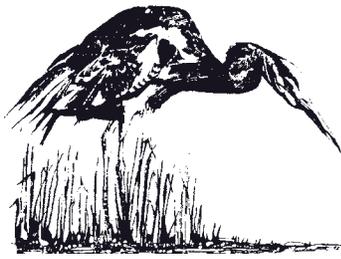
Send your contribution to:  
Padilla Bay Foundation  
PO Box 1305  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
(360) 757-3234  
a 501(c)(3) organization

## Foundation Board Members

President: Charlie O'Hara  
Vice-president: Tom Richards  
Secretary: Tim Manns  
Treasurer: Deb Canon  
Past-president: Gail Smith

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Cort Liddell  
Patsy Martin  
Don Sorensen  
Phil Teas

Terry Stevens - Advisory Member  
Kay Reinhardt - Administrator



# PADILLA BAY FOUNDATION NEWS

## The Padilla Bay Foundation Funds a New Research Buoy

Padilla Bay researchers are excited about a tough new buoy almost ready for duty. The deep ocean-grade buoy will hold water quality monitoring instruments used for the System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP). At four sites around the bay, battery operated YSI datasondes with an array of sensors take measurements every 15 minutes. One site, in particular, has seen more than its share of troubles, including an unexpected trip drifting across the strait to Port Townsend. The new buoy will be moored at that deep water site, and will hopefully make life much easier for Padilla Bay staff. The above water cage, visible in the photo above will hold a telemetry unit which can send real-time data to the reserve via radio signal. Purchase of the custom-made buoy was made possible in part through a generous Borman Family Foundation grant.



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The buoy will be moored to a 1250 lb. anchor. The last challenge now for Padilla Bay research staff is figuring out the best way to haul the buoy and anchor across the bay. Any barges for hire?

Name _____	Membership Category _____
Address _____	(see reverse)
City/State/Zip _____	Membership Amount \$ _____
E-mail address _____	Extra Donation \$ _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Check enclosed
	<input type="checkbox"/> Charge my card (VISA/Mastercard)
mail to: Padilla Bay Foundation P. O. Box 1305 Mount Vernon, WA 98273	Card # _____ Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

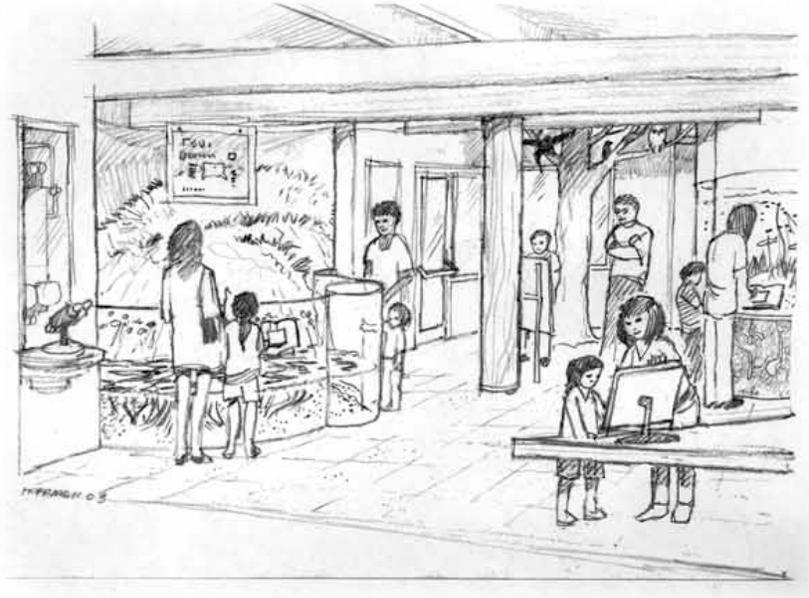


## Endowment Fund Challenge Update

Nearly a year ahead of schedule, the Padilla Bay Foundation has managed to meet its Endowment Fund Challenge of raising \$11,500! Interest from an initial \$25,000 investment will provide the Foundation with a steady income far into the future. The Foundation will continue to keep you posted as it works to increase the Fund, adding capital through special contributions and campaigns. A hearty thank you to all who have helped us reach our goal!

## Water Quality Exhibit

Stop by the Interpretive Center this fall and check out our newest exhibit. The Swinomish and Upper Skagit Tribal Communities, Taylor Shellfish and the Skagit Marine Resource Committee worked with the Padilla Bay Foundation to fund the project. It demonstrates the importance of clean water to estuary bivalves, and the importance of shellfish to our local economy and culture. BIOS, a world-known aquarium design company from Bainbridge Island, designed and built the interactive kiosk. This is the first step in a series of the Aquarium Room renovations, so the foundation is continuing to fund-raise. Donations to this project qualify for the 2.3 to 1 federal match, so for example, \$200 of donations add up to \$660—a great value!



## Padilla Bay Foundation Membership

Grassroots involvement is the core of Padilla Bay Foundation's commitment to protecting our estuaries and supporting the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Members of the Padilla Bay Foundation contribute directly to environmental education and research at Washington State's only Estuarine Research Reserve.

Memberships can be for multiple years. Please consider payment of 2 or 3 years at a time, as this will save the Foundation considerable labor and mailing costs and insure that your dues work harder supporting the programs you care about.

Please fill out the reverse side of this form and join today.

### Membership Categories

Senior/Student	\$25
Individual	\$35
Family	\$50
School/Organization	\$50
Supporting	\$75
Sustaining	\$100
Small Business	\$100
Sponsor	\$250
Patron	\$500
Steward	\$1000
Benefactor	\$2000

Hand cast brass critters, mounted at the Interpretive Center, are available to donors of \$1000 and above who would like to be acknowledged in this way.



**Padilla Bay**

National Estuarine Research Reserve

# Autumn Events

Presentations for September, October and November



## Birding the Autumn Migration

The equinox is an exciting time of transition; time to focus on newly arrived migrants and those persistent locals that stay through the winter. Join naturalist, Libby Mills, for a morning of watching and listening for birds around Padilla Bay. Wear warm, outdoor clothing, and pack binoculars, field guides, and snack or lunch. Each class limited to 15 participants. Please call or register online. **Friday, September 19 and Sunday, September 21, 8:00-12:00.**

## Finding Wild Edible Plants in Autumn

Naturalist Marlee Osterbauer will once again share her extensive knowledge of plant uses and folklore—this time during the fall season. Join her on a delightful foray into the meadows and forests at the Padilla Bay Reserve in search of wild edible plants. **Sunday, September 21, 2:00-4:00.** Please register online or call the Interpretive Center.



## Seabird and Seaduck Declines in the Puget Sound

Of the 125 or so birds that depend upon the marine waters of the Salish Sea, 24 are listed as threatened or endangered or are candidates for listing. Marine birds are charismatic top-level predators that tell us a lot about the health of the ecosystem. So why are so few people aware of their declines? Joe Gaydos, Wildlife Veterinarian and Regional Director of the SeaDoc Society will discuss what we know and don't know about marine bird declines in the region. Learn how scientists track mobile bird populations, some of the causes for declines and what people can do to help. **Friday, November 7, 7:00-8:30PM.** Please register online or call the Interpretive Center.

## Owls Outback

To some cultures they are symbols of wisdom, while to others they are harbingers of doom and death. Join wildlife biologist David Drummond for a close look at these exceptional birds. This slide presentation will explore the cultural mythology, biology, ecology, field identification, and calls of local owls. **Saturday, November 22, 1:00-2:30.** Please call or register online.



The Breazeale Interpretive Center is open to the public Wednesday-Sunday, 10:00-5:00.

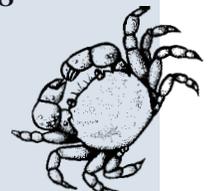
Staff are available 7 days a week.

**Closed November 27 & 28**

Register online or by phone.

[www.padillabay.gov](http://www.padillabay.gov)

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## Volunteers and Kids Needed: Puget Sound Kids Day September 27

Since 1992 Padilla Bay has been helping kids and parents celebrate Puget Sound with its annual Kids Day

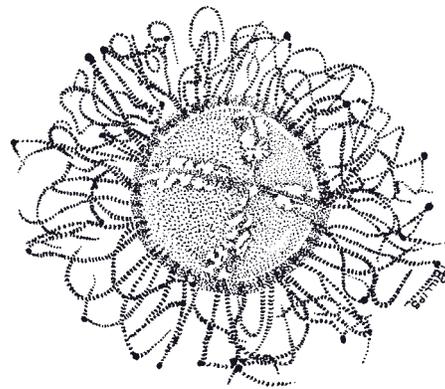
celebration. The event has been a favorite from the start, and each year a wonderful group of energetic volunteers and staff brings activities, songs, door prizes, treats, and t-shirt printing to over 100 children.

Padilla Bay will be celebrating Kids Day on **September 27 from 1:00-3:00**. We need adult and high school volunteers to make it all happen, so call the Interpretive Center to help out, invite your friends and family, bring a T-shirt to decorate, and come celebrate this great Puget Sound.

Kids Day is a program of People for Puget Sound, a non-profit citizens' group working to protect and restore the health of Puget Sound and the Northwest Straits through education and action. Their vision is a clean and healthy Sound, teeming with fish and wildlife, cared for by people who live here.

## Videos: Sundays at 1:00 & 4:00

- |       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
| Sept. | 7  | Planet Earth: Shallow Seas (60 min)                              |
|       | 14 | The Box of Daylight (Tlingit Myth) (9 min)                       |
|       | 21 | Finding Solutions-Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project (13 min) |
|       | 28 | Spirit of the Sound (60 min)                                     |
| Oct.  | 5  | The Living Sea (40 min)  |
|       | 12 | Owls Up Close (55 min)   |
|       | 19 | Planet Earth: Deep Oceans (60 min)                               |
|       | 26 | Incredible Suckers (60 min)                                      |
| Nov.  | 2  | Wild Northwest (45 min)  |
|       | 9  | Padilla Bay (20 min)   |
|       | 16 | Jellies & Other Ocean Drifters (35 m)                            |
|       | 23 | The Story of Stuff (55 min)                                      |
|       | 30 | Estuary! (15 min)  |



## Monthly Youth Programs Offer Fun Learning

**Mini Explorers** are the 3-5 year old learners. We look at a new topic each month, with stories, games, hands-on observations, art projects, and plenty of action. Call the Interpretive Center to register or register online.

### September 10 & 11, 10:00 & 1:00

**Amazing Amphipods-** Often called *beach hoppers* or *sand fleas*, these common critters can certainly hop in the sand. Let's go collecting and see how important the little things are.



### October 22 & 23, 10:00 & 1:00

**Cider Pressing-** Turn the crank and enjoy a fall day in the Breazeale family orchard. Don't forget warm clothes!

### November 19 & 20, 10:00 & 1:00

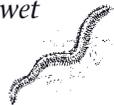
**Cnidarians!**-What's that, you say? We will learn about these transparent, pulsating, gelatinous jellies, anemones, and corals. We may even have some to touch!



**Junior Ecologists** are 6-9 year olds who have fun exploring the estuary. Excursions to the beach, science experiments, games, art projects, and studying life in the bay-this program is guaranteed fun! Call the Interpretive Center or register online.

### September 12 & 13, 10:30-12:00

**Living Down Under (the mud!)-**We'll use microscopes, games, and an excursion to the beach to find out how animals survive in the dark, wet world under the mud. Bring boots or old shoes and a jacket.

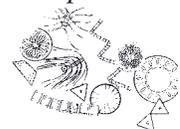


### October 17 & 18, 10:30-12:00

**Cider Pressing-**Spend a fall afternoon out in the orchard, and learn about the Breazeale family farm.

### November 21 & 22, 10:30-12:00

**Plankton-**The tiniest critters in the estuary are also the most important. Dive into the microscopic water world of Padilla Bay.



## Back to School Thoughts

By Emily Mendell



It's probably on your mind: In a few days, kids and teachers will be forced from parks, hammocks, and Slip 'n Slides to rooms filled with metal desks and concrete floors. Even if you're not directly attached to the school calendar, you are probably still aware of the ensuing event. It is, after all, the best time of year to get a great deal on #2 pencils.



At Padilla Bay, back to school means the return of muddy footprints, excited voices, and exhausted chaperones. Each fall and spring, we host thousands of students from regional public and private schools who spend the day visiting the interpretive center, learning how to make "estuary soup," searching for plants and animals at the beach, and viewing life under a microscope.

As we prepare for the upcoming flood, I have taken some time to reflect on my past 10 months here. What can I do better? What will I change about how I teach? What has this job taught me?



I can't remember a day at Padilla Bay that I didn't learn something from a kid. Sometimes, really important things like, "A starfish's face is also its butt." And, "Detritus looks weird." I've picked up subtler information from observing how students act and react when exposed to new things. For example, I've learned that a group of fourth-graders inherently sees more in a mudflat than a group of adults. Perhaps because they are closer to the ground; perhaps because they aren't afraid to touch, smell, and discover. I've learned that kids identified in the classroom as 'the trouble makers' are often the most engaged at the beach. And I've learned that a lot of students who grow up in Western Washington have never had the opportunity to dig up a clam or describe how a sea anemone feels.



Of course, I've also learned from my mistakes: Never ask a preschooler how old he is—unless I have 10 minutes to spare. Telling students to avoid patches of soft, squishy mud is interpreted as a challenge to seek out the softest, squishiest patch of mud. And if crabs are in sight, trying to get kids to focus on birds, or tides, or anything else is futile.



In the true spirit of reflection, I have also been thinking about what a kid takes away from our programs. As well intentioned as we are, we spend less than a day with these groups. When time's up, did we actually make a difference? I think so.

If there is one element prevalent in all effective environmental education, it's experience. In his book *The Thunder Tree: Lessons from an Urban Wildland*, Robert Michael Pyle writes, "So it goes, on and on, the extinction of experience sucking the life from the land, the intimacy from our connections." Pyle argues that kids have fewer and fewer opportunities to wonder about and draw excitement from the natural world. We have parks and playgrounds, but these public places are intended for picnics and strolls along short gravel trails. Although these are both good activities, neither encourages intimate connections. They don't

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necessarily require involvement or discovery. Sometimes, a kid needs to dig a hole, hold a critter, or watch a fish die before the abstract idea of nature becomes real. There are times when observing PowerPoint presentations, doing Internet research, and watching nature documentaries are appropriate. But in many cases, these secondhand activities have robbed us of genuine experience. And lack of experience breeds apathy.

When we take groups of kids to the mudflat, we supply them with shovels, jars, trays, and a very specific job: Find as many different types of plants and animals as possible. Our goal is not for the students to be able to identify everything they collect or remember what each animal eats and how long it lives—we could do that in a windowless classroom. While digging through the mud, we hope they will discover something new and interesting. Something surprising and question-raising. Something that sparks their curiosity to explore their own backyard or schoolyard or the vacant lot down the street. Students do not comb the beach casually here; they are encouraged to (literally) dig in. With the tickle of a polychaete worm, the quick encounter with the mud monster, the sting of salt water in a cut, students are building connections to and finding joy in this place...their place...without being told by an adult what to think. I'm not sure how long a kid remembers the facts that we spew at them (like "plankton provide 50% of the oxygen we breath," but I am certain that the experience (and other ones like it) has a long-term impact.

David Sobel, author of *Beyond Ecophobia*, wrote, "What's important is that children have an opportunity to bond with the natural world, to learn to love it, before being asked to heal its wounds." An intimate connection to place translates to respect and appreciation for that place, which will grow to respect and appreciation for all places. Where connections are made, Band-Aids will follow.

I've learned a lot in the past 10 months. I've learned about tides, and the importance of eelgrass, and the life cycle of a barnacle. Perhaps most importantly, I've learned that a fieldtrip to Padilla Bay is more than just a day spent digging in the mudflat. And that working here is more than just putting on a pair of hip boots and a smile. We are training our kids to be compassionate, responsible citizens. We are helping to build a sense of community and connectedness to the natural world...one muddy, wet foot at a time.



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*Padilla Bay*