

Beach Report

Night walk, Nov 23, 2007, 8:30-10:30 pm, low of -2.5 ft

Doug Stark

As forecasted, the stars were out in many types and sizes for the first Beach Naturalist night walk of the season.

The sky was clear (a first historically for this annual event) and the temperature was super cold – below freezing – but over 65 people turned out for a glimpse at what would be revealed by the naturalists and the -2.5 ft low tide.

Thankfully we had 9 naturalists/experts that dressed warmly to brave the cold. Thanks to Ken Carrasco, Mike Massey, Diane Mirro, Rachel Garcia, Connie Clement, Susie Davis, Trish Hildebrandt, Kristine Penrod for joining me!



“Check out this commensal scaleworm on the mottled star.!” says Rachel Garcia, Beach Naturalist Volunteer extraordinaire.

Commensalism is a kind of symbiosis, but only one party benefits - the worm. Maybe the seastar benefits too by the worm eating leftovers stuck between the feet - that'd be more 'mutualistic'... like her boyfriend's mother here holding her cup while Rachel shares her wealth of knowledge. Thanks!
Doug Stark photo

highlights:

Many stars were out:

- ∞ sunflower stars – dozens from less than two inches to over 2 feet in diameter
- ∞ mottled stars – small ones everywhere under rocks, many with commensal scale worms (see photo caption).
- ∞ small Ochre sea stars – our common star but numerous in uncommon size!
- ∞ Giant Pink Sea Stars – some over 2 feet wide! some smaller



Also

- ∞ a small green sea urchin (rarely seen here intertidally)
- ∞ A small C-O sole (2 in)
- ∞ A few sea lemon nudibranch
- ∞ a lions-mane nudibranch caught in action trying to catch plankton.
- ∞ Sand dollars in abundance in their usual bed.
- ∞ Horse clams squirting our behinds
- ∞ many various anemones, crabs, shrimp, marine worms and more!

It was a bit disconcerting hearing crunches beneath our feet. The damage was usually just empty shells. Nevertheless, the rarity of such night-time low tide explorations is likely one more reason so much life can be seen on the beach at this time of year. Hopefully the small, few, but painful sacrifices made were offset by increased appreciation of shoreline life and conservation tips.

Join our next night beach walk:

Saturday, January 19th, 8 pm-10 pm at Larrabee State Park's Wildcat cove

The event is free, though donation appreciated to support the volunteer program.

Registration is requested. Please contact Doug Stark dougs@re-sources.org or 733-8307.

Note: Although the walk to the beach is short, rocks can be wet and slippery so the event is recommended for sure-footed adults and older children accompanied by adults.

The Beach Naturalist Program is made possible by volunteers and the North Sound Baykeeper, a project of RE Sources for Sustainable Communities, with partial funding from REI (www.rei.com).

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