

Field Trip Report – Oak Bay, July 12, 2018 & Marrowstone Point, July 13, 2018

By Bert Bartleson – All photographs by the author unless otherwise stated

Our two days of field trips began the day before on Wednesday, July 11th. Driving from Olympia on I-5 and on Highway 16 through Bremerton can always be tricky with delays happening frequently. All went smoothly so I arrived in Port Gamble with time to kill. I visited the Of Sea and Shore Shell Museum in the General Store. It's still there, like an old "touchstone", just without Tom Rice and his stories and a parrot to keep you company. I then drove to Kingston to pick up David McKay at the 5:20 PM ferry. We then had dinner in the new restaurant in Port Gamble in the west side of the General Store building. David wanted a hamburger but we found that while they have salads and burgers on the menu at lunchtime, which I had asked about and looked at, that's not so at dinnertime with a menu full of expensive entrees. In such cases, the fish and chips were good.

After dinner we drove across the Hood Canal Bridge and on towards Marrowstone Island. We stopped at the QFC store in Port Hadlock and got some supplies. We were staying in a cabin on the beach at "Beach Cottages". This small resort has nice cabins with electricity, refrigerators, microwaves, and hot showers. It's certainly a cut above Whiskey Creek Beach's accommodations. The owner's parents were both marine biologists, so we felt welcome. Bob Lemon and his wife, Annie Prevost, were staying in a separate cabin so the whole group was close by.

The view across the water to Mt. Rainier was beautiful at sunset and we fell asleep to the quiet that you find out in the country, a nice switch from the city noises I'm used to. We were awakened at dawn by some very noisy barn swallows that were nesting under the roof overhang. We had breakfast and got ready and left for Oak Bay County Park at 8:15 AM with Bob joining us since Annie was visiting a relative in Port Townsend and had their car. The tide was a minus 3.0 ft. at 10:21 AM.

Oak Bay

We hit the beach and noticed at once that the shape of the beach had changed. The saltwater lagoon behind the dunes has moved its outlet stream and another smaller lagoon has formed. We walked to the point of the breakwater. In this location we explored and spent several hours turning over rocks. (Fig. 1) One of the first things that we noticed, I'm



pleased to report, is that some of the sea stars that had disappeared from "sea star wasting syndrome" [SSWD] have rebounded with many healthy sea stars present on the rocks. The Ochre Sea Star, *Pisaster ochraceous* (Brandt, 1835) were especially numerous on the point. They were decimated in June 2014 when we visited this location



previously. However, no Sunflower Stars, *Pycnopodia helianthoides* (Brandt, 1835) were found. We did find a large Mottled Star, *Evasterias troschelii* (Stimpson, 1862) and several Six-legged Stars, *Leptasterias* cf. *hexactis* complex. (Fig. 2)

Continuing our search, we found a small Northwest Ugly Clam, *Entodesma navicula* (A. Adams & Reeve, 1850) under a rock. (Fig. 3) Also, under the rocks we found several Wrinkled Amphissa, *Amphissa columbiana* Dall, 1916, Blue Topsnails, *Calliostoma ligatum* (Gould, 1849) and Puppet Margarites, *Margarites pupillus* (Gould, 1849). We also found some nice Frilled Dogwinkles, *Nucella lamellosa* (Gmelin, 1791) but they were small, smooth, white, and without any frills.

Also, under the rocks were some very nice chitons. We stayed near the tip of the breakwater and found fewer numbers and species of chiton there. In 2014, we searched the more vertical rock faces of the breakwater, which is much more difficult to negotiate but we found a greater variety of chitons there. The most common chiton we found was the Lined Chiton, *Tonicella lineata*



(Wood, 1815). Also quite common were Smooth Chitons, *Mopalia vespertina* (Gould, 1852). (Fig. 4) We also found one Mossy Chiton, *Mopalia muscosa* (Gould, 1846). Under one rock we found about half a dozen Barnacle-Eating Nudibranchs, *Onchidoris bilamellata* (Linnaeus, 1767).

After the tide started to return we walked up the muddy beach to explore the newly formed lagoon. David had hoped to collect the Purple varnish Clam, *Nuttallia obscurata* (Reeve, 1857) and I knew about where to look. We started finding dead shells and dug in a sand bank and quickly found a few live shells. As we walked closer to the lower side of the newly formed, smaller lagoon we discovered that it was very soft, like quick sand. We changed course and detoured to the other side and it was stable there. In the lagoon was a luxurious growth of sea Lettuce, *Ulva* spp. [a recent study of these seaweeds showed that there are 11 separate species when they were studied by DNA analysis, instead of three]. On the *Ulva* were a few very nice White Bubble Shells, *Haminoea vesicula* Gould, 1855 and their eggs.

We then went to the sand dune area and looked briefly for land snails. We found several dead shells of the introduced Brown Garden Snail, *Cornu aspersum* (Muller, 1774) and the native Pacific Sideband, *Monadenia fidelis* (Gray, 1834) on the surface but even with turning over large drift wood logs and digging at the base of surf grass roots we were unable to find any live land snails as we have during past trips. I would guess that the recent dry, very warm weather caused the snails to dig deeper to escape the drying heat.

We packed up our gear and returned to the "Beach Cottages". Steve, the owner, mentioned that he had a dissecting microscope we could use to sort our shells. Both David and I had collected seaweed samples from the point area where we had spent much of our time. We both collected 100's of tiny snails but unfortunately all were common, a mixture of: the Northern Lacuna, *Lacuna vincta*, (Montagu, 1803), Variegated Lacuna, *Lacuna variegata* Carpenter, 1864, or the Carinate Dove Shell, *Alia carinata* (Hinds, 1844). The scope made the job of sorting our tiny snails much easier. Bob was especially concentrating on seaweeds and he managed to find some interesting species as well.

We decided to go to dinner in Port Townsend where the selection of restaurants is much greater. We were able to get a table at the Alchemy Bistro. Each of us ordered different dishes and the conversation and the food were both excellent.



Marrowstone Point

We were again awakened by the birds and the bright sunshine the next day. We had breakfast and packed up the car and drove to Marrowstone Point for the Friday field trip. (Fig. 5) We met



PNWSC member, Nancy Elder, who works at the Marine Station there and she was our excellent guide and companion. (Fig. 6) We walked to the west down the beach and were soon on a boulder field covered by large seaweeds. (Fig. 7,8,9) We



L - R Nancy Elder, Bob Lemon, Annie Prevost, David McKay, Bert Bartleson



started turning over rocks and looking in hiding places and found many interesting critters. Bob found a spot and went to work seeking more, different seaweeds.



David collected several root holdfasts of the seaweed *Laminaria* spp. (Fig. 10) which dominated the lower intertidal on this beach. He found a tiny crustacean in one that had two equal sized claws and looked like a miniature lobster, but was less than an inch long. Greg Jensen, PNWSC member and expert on crabs and shrimp, identified the tiny guy as the Fuzzy Hooded Shrimp, *Betaeus setosus* Hart, 1964. (Fig. 11) Later David identified some very interesting mollusks as well from the same location: Smooth Velvet Snail, *Limneria prolongata* (Carpenter, 1864) [he found two]; Compact Alvania, *Alvania compacta* (Carpenter, 1864) [he found ten]; *Onoba carpenteri* (Weinkauff, 1885)[he only found one] and Purple Dwarf Venus, *Nutricula tantilla* (Gould, 1853) [he found three]. I guess I'm going to have to collect some of those holdfasts next time myself.



There were some differences from the chitons that we found at Oak Bay. There were several fully-grown Giant Gumboot Chitons, *Cryptochiton stelleri* (Middendorff, 1847) which we didn't find at Oak Bay. (Fig. 12) In addition we found two Black Katy chitons, *Katherina tunicata* (Wood, 1815) and ten or more Woody Chitons, *Mopalia lignosa* (Gould, 1846). (Fig. 13) In addition, we found ten or more Lined Chitons, *Tonicella lineata* (Wood, 1815) as well as one small, pretty Mossy Chiton, *Mopalia muscosa* (Gould, 1846). (Fig. 14)



Near the end of the field trip we examined a large boulder. On the back side, in a protected crevice, we found two species of *Nucella*. The Frilled Dogwinkle, *N. lamellosa* (Gmelin, 1791) were quite common. In addition, there were three very colorful Channeled Dogwinkle, *N. canaliculata* (Duclos, 1832). (Fig. 15)

We left the beach tired but happy from another day of pleasure exploring the magic of the rocky intertidal beaches we have in the Pacific Northwest. We had lunch and then I took David to return via the Keystone Ferry across Puget Sound. I then headed south and got a dose of Friday afternoon traffic first from the ferry, then through Bremerton and Belfair (really!). Three hours later I was home.

