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Seabird App Takes Flight at Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge

New Game-Based App Brings Seabird Education and Fun to Haystack Rock

Cannon Beach, OR – Ushering in an era of digital engagement and fun for the millions of smartdevice-carrying visitors to Oregon’s spectacular coast, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with the Friends of Haystack Rock and the Haystack Rock Awareness Program, is launching an interactive, place-based game app. The public is invited to attend a launch party at Haystack Rock at 9 AM on Saturday, June 20 in conjunction with the Cannon Beach Sandcastle Contest. Called “Discover Haystack”, the game based app will teach visitors about the diverse seabirds, marine mammals, rocky shore habitats and creatures that make the Oregon Coast such a vibrant and wondrous ecological system.

Developed by Discover Nature Apps, an award winning mission-driven app developer, the “Discover Haystack” game includes a GPS-guided nature-based scavenger hunt; the ability for users to post and view field tips and photographs; and the opportunity to share their experiences on social media. The app is free; simply search for “Discover Nature Apps” on iTunes or Google Play Store.

To play the “Discover Haystack” game, users must be at Haystack Rock in Cannon Beach. People visiting as a group can compete against one another, or families can opt to work as a team. Beyond the game, the app offers opportunities for users to capture photos of their discoveries including field notes such as where they are seeing Tufted Puffins or Sunflower Sea Stars. The discoveries, notes and photos are viewable in a digital photo gallery that will be accessible worldwide.

“With this app, we can reach exponentially more coastal visitors and residents with a fun and interactive experience that leaves them with a greater awareness and appreciation of Oregon Coast’s seabirds and their habitats,” said Dawn Harris, Visitor Services Manager for the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. “Until now, we’ve been limited in the ways we can deliver the information we know they’ll value in a way that’s both compelling and entertaining.”

“There’s nothing like this on the Oregon Coast, and it will serve as a powerful tool for us to engage the public and enlist their support for marine conservation,” said Samantha Ferber, Coordinator for the Haystack Rock Awareness Program. “While nothing beats a personal interpreter, this app fills a vital gap giving people of all ages another avenue to learning through technology.”

To participate in the launch party, visit the Cannon Beach Sandcastle Contest Information Booth and pick up information on how to download the app. Then walk over to Haystack Rock to play the game with others from 9 AM – 1:30 PM on June 20.

Funding for this smartphone “app” came from a special fund created to benefit seabird species that suffered in the aftermath of the *New Carissa* oil spill near Coos Bay, Oregon, in February 1999. The freighter ran aground, broke apart and spilled between 70,000 and 140,000 gallons of heavy fuel oil, killing an estimated 2,465 seabirds and waterfowl along the coast.

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*The mission of the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.*

*The **Haystack Rock Awareness Program (HRAP)** is a stewardship and environmental education program whose mission is to protect, through education, the intertidal and bird ecology of the Marine Garden and Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge at Haystack Rock. Since its modest beginnings in 1985, HRAP has educated and inspired over one hundred thousand adults and children to learn about the natural resources at Haystack Rock and in other places on our Earth.*

*The **Friends of Haystack Rock** supports the Haystack Rock Awareness Program in cooperation with the City of Cannon Beach, promoting the preservation and protection of the intertidal life and birds that inhabit the Marine Garden and the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge at Haystack Rock.*