

For Immediate Release

June 28th, 2024

Chanel Hason, Director of Outreach and Community Relations Elakha Alliance
chanel@elakhaalliance.org, 626-696-9563 (cell)
www.elakhaalliance.org



RARE SIGHTING: Two Sea Otters Spotted in Cannon Beach, Oregon

The Elakha Alliance is excited to report the sighting of two sea otters at Ecola Point, Cannon Beach. This is a significant event as there has been no established population of sea otters along the Oregon coast since they were hunted to local extinction for their fur by the early 1900s.

A team of local volunteers made the initial sighting which was confirmed by Chanel Hason, a marine biologist and Director of Outreach and Community Relations for the Elakha Alliance, who observed the two sea otters swimming and foraging in the waters near Ecola Point. Experts believe these animals most likely swam south from the Olympic coast of Washington where approximately 2000 sea otters live. Sea otters are not a migratory species, which explains why they have not naturally re-established a population on the Oregon coast during the past century of their absence.

“We are thrilled about this rare and wonderful sighting,” said Jane Bacchieri, Executive Director of the Elakha Alliance. “It highlights the resilience of sea otters and the potential for their return to the Oregon coast. This event also underscores the importance of ongoing conservation efforts for our nearshore marine ecosystems.”

Seeing live sea otters along the Oregon coast is uncommon. Annually, five to six sea otters typically wash up along the coast, and these are usually found in a state of decomposition. Today’s sighting of two healthy, live sea otters is a hopeful sign and a reminder of the historical presence of these animals in the region.

Sea otters are a keystone species, critical for maintaining the health of coastal ecosystems. By regulating sea urchin populations, they enable the growth of kelp forests, which provide habitat and food for a variety of marine life. The return of sea otters could bring profound ecological benefits to Oregon’s coastal waters.

The Elakha Alliance, a non-profit organization committed to the restoration and conservation of sea otters, has been actively engaging with scientists, government agencies, and local communities to facilitate the return of this keystone species. Our

comprehensive restoration plan includes habitat assessment, public education, and collaborative research initiatives.

The Elakha Alliance encourages the public to report any sea otter sightings to aid ongoing efforts. Please visit our website (www.elakhaalliance.org) or contact us directly via email with any information (info@elakhaalliance.org).

###