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TWO BEACH PROGRAMS OFFER HANDS-ON EXPLORATION AND FUN THIS SUMMER

Tiptoe through the Tidepools and Explore the Shore provide oceans of learning about sea animals



Tacoma, Wash. – Ever wonder what it’s like to run a finger over the back of a prickly pink sea star? Or hold the tiniest of ocean crabs in a hand? Or stroll along the beach at low tide, learning about the animals there and helping catalog them for scientific research?

The Tacoma Nature Center and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium will show children, adults and families how to do all of those things this summer in two programs aimed at helping them learn more about Puget Sound’s beaches and the creatures that live there.

The Nature Center’s Tiptoe through the Tidepools events are scheduled June 16, July 3 and Aug. 1 at Titlow Beach, 8425 Sixth Ave. The zoo’s Explore the Shore programs are set for June 15, July 2, July 15, July 31, Aug. 12 and Aug. 28 at Owen Beach in Point Defiance Park.

All are timed to take best advantage of the low minus tides that reveal many of Puget Sound’s most interesting shoreline creatures.

The events and programs are free and open to the public and reservations are not required. Bring sunscreen and wear shoes and clothing

appropriate for walking on rough beach terrain.

Here's a rundown on the programs:

Tiptoe through the Tidepools: Family fun as Tacoma Nature Center naturalists help participants learn about life on the beach. There will be touch tanks and lots of opportunity to ponder the creatures that live on the shoreline.

- June 16, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- July 3, 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Aug. 1, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Explore the Shore (for ages 5 and up): Zoo naturalists accompany participants on low tide beach walks, where kids and adults will learn to identify tide pool animals and record their presence and location for addition to the scientific NatureMapping database ([www. http://naturemappingfoundation.org](http://naturemappingfoundation.org)). Participants will learn about the biological diversity of local beaches and better understand how to protect them.

All programs have meet-up times so participants can get a brief introduction to the day before the walk begins. They're designed to last about one and a half hours, though people may want to explore the beach for a longer time.

- June 15, meet at 10 a.m.
- July 2, meet at 11 a.m.
- July 15, meet at 10:30 a.m.
- July 31, meet at 10:45 a.m.
- Aug. 12, meet at 9:30 a.m.
- Aug. 28, meet at 9:30 a.m.

Both programs showcase the commitment of Metro Parks Tacoma, the Tacoma Nature Center and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium to provide residents with exercise, education and outdoor-based entertainment.

For more information about Tiptoe through the Tidepools call 591-6439 or go to www.metroparkstacoma.org.

For more information about Explore the Shore, go to www.pdza.org.