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# The Invisible Slaughter: Local Sea Otter Hunters on the Oregon Coast

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# The Invisible Slaughter

*Local Sea Otter Hunters on the Oregon Coast*

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CAMERON LA FOLLETTE, RICHARD  
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AND RYAN TUCKER JONES

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**MOST HISTORIOGRAPHY** on Oregon's fur trade, both maritime and land-based, has focused on the few uniquely large and prominent actors of the early nineteenth century, including the Hudson's Bay Company and Pacific Fur Company — well-capitalized and well-documented institutions that generated an abundant written record, much of it now widely available to the academic world. Yet, as we demonstrate in the pages that follow, the ultimate extirpation of the sea otter occurred in a different setting and time altogether — largely by decentralized hunting operations, carried out by individuals, often unlettered and of limited means, who left very little written record of their activities for posterity.<sup>1</sup> Living in isolated places along the Oregon coast from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries and operating as part of household-scale cottage industries, these individuals appear to be among the most significant figures in the final chapter of sea otters' demise. This article therefore contributes to a growing literature addressing working-class experiences across the state in domains such as logging and fishing.<sup>2</sup>

Settlers began to populate much of the Oregon coast in the mid-nineteenth century in an uneven, and sometimes sporadic, pattern. As they clashed with and displaced Native peoples, federal authorities established and almost as quickly diminished the Coast (Siletz) Reservation.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, settlers began to occupy and learn the local landscape and how to live from it. With few people and few roads linking the coast to the wider world, their early farms struggled and adapted in unfamiliar environments with limited access to markets, while opportunities blossomed and collapsed in newly founded towns with tenuous local economies.<sup>4</sup> Cottage industries rose and fell fitfully in these years, and among them were many little fur-hunting operations, largely the initiative of coastal residents rather than distant companies, relying in part on the furs of Oregon's last sea otters. The history of



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**A SEA OTTER PELT** could reach five to six feet or more in length, as is evident in this 1892 photograph. While Oregon lacked a late local hunt on the scale of California or the south Alaska coast, archival sources contain clear indications of sea otter hunting through the mid to late nineteenth century, and even the first decade of the twentieth century, on the Oregon coast.

sea otters' final extirpation on the Oregon coast has remained a mystery, but we find answers in the few written records describing the labors of many part-time sea otter hunters, Native and non-Native — in newspaper accounts, occasional diaries and reminiscences, and other sources that sporadically chronicled these individuals' lives and work. Compiling the scant mentions of sea otters in these sources, this article shines faint but welcome light on the many local decisions and distant markets that had so great and final an effect on sea otters in Oregon and along the wider Northwest Coast.

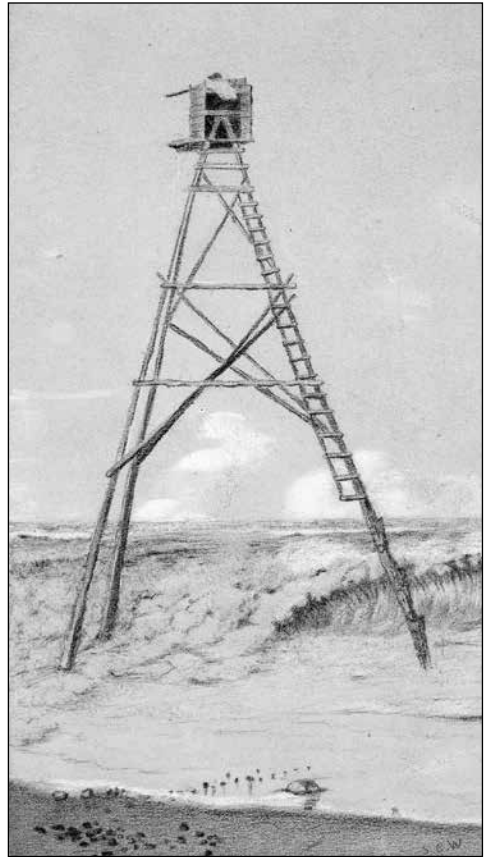
### **THE LATE LOCAL SEA OTTER HUNT ON THE WEST COAST OF THE UNITED STATES**

Hunting remnant populations of sea otters was fairly common — coordinated by resident hunters and decentralized relative to the peak commercial trade — and led to late-nineteenth-century extirpation in many locations along their native range. While Oregon lacked a late hunt on the scale of California or the south Alaska coast, the Oregon experience nonetheless should be understood in light of the broader circum-Pacific sea otter extirpation in the many places where modest remnant populations were eliminated through decentralized and small-scale hunting operations. The late California hunts were reported in numerous California newspapers and other eyewitness records, allowing modern scholars to chart this decline. The records of otter catches in post-Gold Rush Southern California also suggest a remarkable remnant population, which sustained organized hunting efforts for several decades, until the ultimate collapse of otter populations by the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Through the late nineteenth century, dozens of vessels out of ports such as Santa Barbara and San Diego pursued otters south of Point Conception, leading to the near extinction of the species in that portion of its range. During the 1880s, there were at least twenty-six reports of ships from Santa Barbara engaged in transporting sea otter hunters to the Channel Islands and other locations along the mainland coast. By the 1890s, the number was down to seventeen ships.<sup>6</sup>

Late-nineteenth-century sea otter depletions elsewhere, such as in the Aleutian and Kuril Islands, followed similar trajectories.<sup>7</sup> The state of Washington also had a robust cottage industry of late sea otter hunting, in the southwestern coastal region, from the Grays Harbor area north to Taholah Point. This area had a large population of sea otters, ranging, according to eyewitnesses, from many hundred to a thousand in group size.<sup>8</sup> The favored method of hunting there was with derricks: tall, three-legged towers with a shack on top to house a spotter and a rifleman (often the same man) to shoot sea otters in the surf or nearshore waters. The tallest derricks could be up to sixty feet high. Another partner scouted the beach to retrieve the carcass.

They were popular with both Quinault Indians and Euro-American settlers; Ralph Minard, grandson of a pioneer in the region, recalled seeing ten derricks on a ten-mile strip of beach between Copalis and Browns Point.<sup>9</sup> As elsewhere on the Northwest coast, local hunting declined precipitously about the turn of the twentieth century. Hunters in southwest Washington largely ended the hunt between 1900 and 1910, as there were not enough otters by then to make a commercial business viable.<sup>10</sup>

In Oregon, a variety of archival sources from the same period, reviewed systematically at collections along the full length of the Oregon coast, contain clear indications of sea otter hunting through the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and even the first decade of the twentieth century. This written evidence is fragmentary and sometimes anecdotal — as diffuse and evanescent as the many coastal towns that took shape during this pivotal period of Euro-American settlement. Very few of those settlers left detailed diaries or reminiscences, and even fewer of these discussed sea otters. Published oral history sources from Native residents of this tumultuous period are thin on sea otter details as well, although helpful references can sometimes be found. And while coastal newspapers occasionally (and usually briefly) mention sea otter hunts, their late founding dates present an obstacle to documenting a complete history. Even in coastal regions with a long history of Euro-American settlement, newspapers were relative latecomers, while several important coastal newspapers did not begin publication until the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> These sources not only post-dated the intensive commercial sea otter hunts by generations, they also missed many key events of the nineteenth century. In those newspaper accounts, we see



University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, PH Coll. 568.7 Sarah Cheney Willoughby Drawings

**DERRICKS** were tall, three-legged towers that hunters used to shoot sea otters in the surf. The tallest derricks could be up to sixty feet high. They were principally used on the Washington coast north of Grays Harbor.

glancing references to sea otter hunting at best; we learn only a little of nineteenth-century residents, Native and increasingly non-Native, who hunted the remaining sea otters of the Oregon coast, and little can be inferred of the total population of sea otters.

Nevertheless, in assembling the occasional sea otter facts and accounts found in early settler reminiscences and news articles from the coast, we find many threads and many voices consistently describing the species' population decline. These sources make it clear: by the end of the nineteenth century, sea otter populations on the Oregon coast had dwindled beyond repair. Catches were few, far between, and when successful at all, consisted of one or two otters at most. And these sources concur that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, sea otters were all but gone from the Oregon coast, the species falling victim to this final and largely unreported hunt.

### **HOW WERE OREGON SEA OTTERS KILLED?**

Surveying nineteenth-century records also allows for reconstruction of the ways local hunters killed sea otters, which were notoriously difficult to catch. Hunters used two principal methods: hunting at sea from an open boat, and hunting from shore as otters swam in nearshore waves. Hunting methods seem to have changed as the population became scarcer, as an 1888 Portland article reported: "In former years otters were hunted in boats, the same as seals are at the present time, but they are now so rare that this style of hunting has ceased to be profitable. Occasionally the sealing boats come across an otter and secure him, but the majority of these animals are shot by hunters, from the beach."<sup>12</sup>

There is no known record for use of derricks to shoot otters, as was common on the Washington coast, in any Oregon coastal location. As a variant, some hunters, including in Oregon, fixed short ladders at intervals along the beach, high enough to see the ocean surface beyond the surf. There they perched for hours, watching for otters.<sup>13</sup> Occasionally, otter hunters used homemade methods that worked for them, but seem not to have caught otters on a large scale, such as watching for otters from seaside trees, as described for a late-nineteenth-century hunt in Curry County.<sup>14</sup> One hunter, reminiscing in Portland in 1885, described his contraption for otter hunting, probably in Washington, as he also mentioned having a farm on Neah Bay. He took three long, slim poles and set them up, tied together at the low water mark, and perched inside on a pallet of hay till the tide came in and sea otters swam within range.<sup>15</sup>

Ingenuity in otter hunting, strong markets, expectation of rich rewards, practiced marksmanship, years of skill, and more powerful guns all took

their toll. By the early twentieth century, the sea otter had vanished from the Oregon coast — and the Washington coast as well. Once both populations and markets collapsed, the sea otter tragedy was over, leaving its wreckage of drastically changed nearshore marine habitats, extirpated species, and the end of relationships with the sea otter, among both Native people and Euro-American settlers.

### **THE EARLY PERIOD OF OREGON'S RESIDENT HUNT: 1850s–1870s**

The most detailed references to sea otters in the period of Euro-American settlement, beginning about 1850, come from Curry County. Sea otter populations, when anecdotally mentioned, seem to have been larger on this remote and rocky stretch of Oregon's south coast than in other places during the period. The presence of sea otters and suitable otter habitat is fairly well documented in accounts of the period, as is a bustling local industry in sea otter hunting. Whether this reflects a relative abundance of otter habitat or a comparatively light footprint of the commercial fur trade in preceding decades remains unclear, pending further research.

A Curry County pioneer reminiscence from the early 1850s gives a revealing glimpse of otters in their nearshore habitat. Herman Francis Reinhart was a miner who moved north from gold diggings along the Rogue River, built a cabin along the trail at Mussel Creek (about ten miles south of Port Orford), and set up a small business selling food and overnight lodgings to travelers.<sup>16</sup> He also, beginning about 1854, homesteaded 320 acres of land in the Port Orford area, calling it Pacific Ranch. Apparently referring to this time, Reinhart wrote in his reminiscences:

*All along the coast sea otter were very plenty and some old hunters made it a business to kill them and send their furs to San Francisco, or if they had many choice furs of fine prime otter skins, would send them to Paris, France, or at St. Petersburg, Russia, where they got the highest prices for them, from \$50 to \$500 apiece for extra fine ones, and the common price here was from \$30 to \$80 apiece. Some hunters made fortunes of it. They were very hard to kill, and after they were killed or wounded their companions or mates would carry them out to sea. . . . I used to go down on the high rock in front of my ranch and see lots of otter, beaver and seal, but could not get to shoot them.<sup>17</sup>*

This account was corroborated by several others. Prominent Portland physician Rodney Glisan, who was stationed with the Port Orford army garrison in the 1850s, for example, wrote, “In the cove [in the environs of Port Orford] the sea otter is occasionally to be seen. In fact I wounded one there myself a few weeks ago. . . . The sea otter (*enhydra marina*) which abounds on the Pacific coast from California to Behring's Strait, is much

larger than the common otter found in Europe and the eastern part of North America. . . . Many persons follow hunting it as a profession on this coast."<sup>18</sup> Glisan also mentioned seeing sea otters in the surf at the mouth of the Rogue River and collected a specimen of an Oregon sea otter skull, later sent to the Smithsonian.<sup>19</sup>

Samuel Colt, an early explorer, settler, and miner on the south coast, also mentioned sea otter hunting in his recollection, later included by south coast historian Orvil Dodge in his *Pioneer History of Coos and Curry Counties*. Colt reported shooting a large sea otter just above the Three Sisters (near present-day Sisters Rock State Park), probably in the 1850s, and selling the skin in New York. Colt returned to Port Orford explicitly to hunt more otters, but found that "otter hunting was a failure, as during the four years of my absence they had been so much hunted as to be very scarce. I killed one, however, off Cape Blanco."<sup>20</sup>

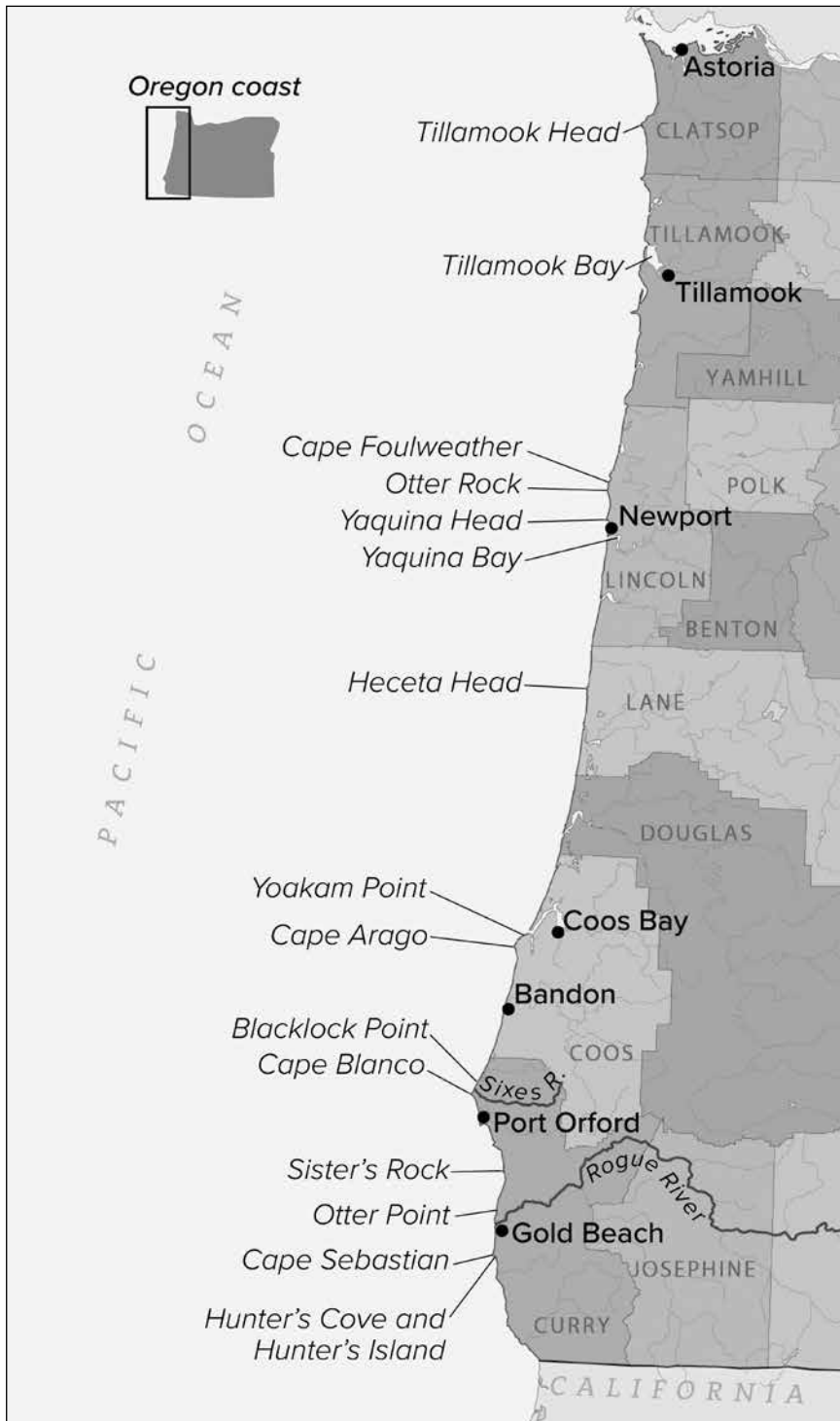
Colt's recollection of remnant sea otter populations and a successful hunt at the prominent headland of Cape Blanco agrees with an 1874 marine mammal textbook that described how otter hunters had their favorite hunting grounds and specifically noted Cape Blanco in Oregon as a choice place to pursue sea otters. Preeminent naturalist Charles Scammon portrayed sea otters there as rather common, describing the "considerable numbers . . . taken by whites and Indians" in northern grounds that included Cape Blanco as well as places in Washington state.<sup>21</sup> The 1860 *Natural History of Washington Territory and Oregon* claimed that sea otters were "abundant at Port Orford, Oregon, and a few are taken at the mouth of the Columbia." At the same time, that book's authors claimed that the sea otters were "leaving the coast" and reported that Hudson's Bay Company officials speculated that they were somehow fleeing for the Japanese or Russian coasts.<sup>22</sup>

The human and natural geographies of the southern coast prior to colonization were violently transformed by the arrival of miners, militias, and the U.S. military across southern Oregon during the 1850s. Within only a decade, as wars erupted throughout the region, the U.S. government forcibly removed Native people of this coastline to the distant Coast Reservation, and non-Native settlements expanded abruptly in their wake. These pushed the

**FACING PAGE:** Locations mentioned in this article include Oregon sites where sea otter hunting, or lack of hunting, are recorded during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Places with high concentrations of sea otter habitat included the mouth of the Columbia River, the headlands around Yaquina Bay in the Newport area, the reefs and rocky areas from Yoakam Point to Cape Arago near Coos Bay, and the nearshore waters of the rugged south coast, from Cape Blanco to south of the Rogue River.



## Sea Otter Hunting Sites, 1800s to 1900s



Jenny DuVander, created for the Oregon Historical Quarterly

few Native people who remained to the margins of society. Many historians have ably chronicled the rapid militarization of the coast, the displacement of the surviving people of Dene-speaking villages throughout Curry County, and the attendant transformation of human-natural relationships in the region.<sup>23</sup> The valuable trade in sea otter pelts is a subtle but consistent motif in the events of these years.

In June 1851, a non-Native party brought from Portland on the *Sea Gull* under Capt. William Tichenor arrived to establish a non-Native settlement at Port Orford. Conflict between the would-be settlers and local Native people of Tseriadun and neighboring villages culminated in the killing of more than seventeen local Native people at what came to be known as the Battle of Battle Rock. It was a decisive conflict that resulted in the militarization of the outer coast and the displacement of surviving Quatomah people.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, sea otter hunting persisted in myriad forms. A number of retrospectives, written years later and based on eyewitness accounts of the mid-nineteenth-century Curry County coast, mention the presence of sea otters and their pursuit by both Native and non-Native hunters during this tumultuous time. An 1886 newspaper article, recounting the events at Battle Rock in 1851, for example, mentioned that Tichenor brought potential settlers to Port Orford in that year. Tichenor later reported that the Tututni inhabitants there traded “at times valuable furs,” including sea otters.<sup>25</sup> Describing the scene as recalled by miners who disembarked from the *Sea Gull*, the article noted that “sea otter were seen in the water nearby.”<sup>26</sup> Likewise, an 1897 article in the *San Francisco Call* shared eyewitness accounts of the Rogue River Indian wars of the 1850s, including an interview with George W. Miller, who had been first lieutenant of the volunteer company raised at Port Orford to fight in the war and who said: “Sea otter were at that time plentiful and numbers were caught by the Indians. The usual price paid by the traders for a skin was three rifles.”<sup>27</sup>

A series of articles probably written by Marshfield attorney Gaines Webster for the Marshfield (later Coos Bay) *Coast Mail* described several incidents involving sea otters specifically linked to the events of the Rogue River wars. Webster reported on settlers’ preparations for an imminent strike on Port Orford by Native combatants in early 1856 while two Euro-American settlers, Dan Haywood and George Lount, were away catching sea otters and sea lions at Sisters Rock, about fifteen miles south of the town. Being away on this hunt, and warned of rising hostilities by a tribal member, the men were able to escape — jumping into a whale boat and sailing to Cape Blanco on news of the impending battle.<sup>28</sup> Webster later stated that sea otter hunting was the reason, or the ruse concocted as an excuse, for fighting to begin: “The winter of 1855–56 was a time to be remembered by

the settlers of Southern Oregon. . . . Ben Wright was the name of the agent in charge of the Indians in this region. . . . On the morning of February 23, he was near the Tootootan Ranch on the Rogue river, when he was told by an Indian messenger that a sea otter had come ashore a short distance away, and that the Indians and white men were fighting over it.”<sup>29</sup> Another contemporaneous sketch described these hostilities as beginning with Native combatants requesting a man named Warner to come out from the house of one J.C. Smith’s Rogue River ranch, where he was staying, “to look at an otter skin,” at which point he was killed.<sup>30</sup>

As part of an effort to trace sea otters in Oregon, these accounts are problematic, because they do not indicate whether actual sea otters were involved, or whether they simply provided a ruse for violence. Still, for our purposes, these accounts clearly suggest the importance of sea otters in the transformed local economies and emerging settler mythologies of the region, even in a time of bitter conflict. While Native participation in the late sea otter hunt is clear along portions of the coast, references to Native participation in the Curry County region largely ceased by the end of the war, as U.S. forces and militias relocated tribal communities to the distant Coast Reservation farther north.<sup>31</sup> As discussed later, a few individuals managed to return from the Coast (or Siletz) Reservation to their south coast homelands and were portrayed in local media as skilled otter hunters.

Curry County place names such as Otter Point and Hunter’s Cove still encode some of the early sea otter hunting history. Lewis A. MacArthur, in his magisterial *Oregon Geographic Names*, explained: “Hunters Cove is just southeast of Cape Sebastian, and Hunters Island is south of the cove. F.S. Moore, of Gold Beach, informs the compiler that in early days sea otter hunting was an important industry, and those engaged in the business used small boats for cruising along the coast, and in heavy weather sought protection in the cove. This cove finally took its name from these sea otter hunters. Hunters Island took its name from the cove.”<sup>32</sup>

North of Curry County, we find a thinner written record of sea otter hunting during this period, which may suggest less robust otter hunting economies. The most descriptive Coos County account comes from William V. Wells, who trekked to the Oregon Territory in 1856 and wrote up his experiences in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*. He participated in a sea otter hunting trip in the Coos Bay area, around the “South Heads,” which was probably the rocky headlands from Yoakam Point to Cape Arago — prime sea otter habitat, celebrated in Native oral tradition as a venue for hunting and other interactions with sea otters. Wells wrote: “This trade [in sea otter pelts] has already assumed an importance among the whites of Lower Oregon, who purchase these and other peltries of the Indians. . . . The Chinese in San

Francisco pay the highest price for them for shipment to the celestial regions, furs being a mark of dignity and power in China."<sup>33</sup> While the Chinese market still played a significant role in the sea otter pelt industry, it was reduced from the maritime fur trade era, with Chinese immigrant communities such as those in the San Francisco Bay Area sometimes participating in these business ventures.<sup>34</sup> Wells reported that his party saw two female otters, each with a young one, and killed two of the four while in the Coos Bay area.<sup>35</sup> Two females with young clearly indicate a persistent breeding population on the south coast. Wells also described the common way of killing sea otters in Oregon:

*On the smooth ocean beach the marksmen of Oregon sometimes shoot the otter through the surf. As the bank of water moves majestically toward the shore, the otter, who understands better than all other animals how to maneuver in the breakers, spreads himself flat on the outer or seaward side, and moves rapidly in to the land. His form is plainly visible through the thin water, as through a plate of glass. The hunter stands beyond the force of the surf, and when the game has been borne to within rifle shot, the unerring bullet cuts through the transparent element, and it is rarely that the shot is not rewarded with the much-coveted prize.*<sup>36</sup>

Armed with these novel techniques and tools, unavailable to prior generations of Native hunters, small-scale commercial hunters cleared the remaining sea otters of the south coast with new and ruthless efficiency.

Continuing to look northward, Oregon's central coast around Lincoln County provides scant sea otter glimpses in this early period. The reminiscences of George Luther Boone, who settled on Yaquina Bay about nine miles above Newport around 1855–1856, discuss sea otters, and Eva Emery Dye later recorded some Boone family reminiscences from the period that mention otters.<sup>37</sup> Regrettably, these two principal sources occasionally confuse, or at least elide, river otters and sea otters. By combining the sources, however, one sees that sea otters were apparently present and likely occupied the brackish intertidal waters near the mouth of Yaquina Bay in the area of what is today Newport. In a thoroughly researched 1971 book on Boone family history, Philip Biddle claimed that, concerning the Luther Boone homestead on Yaquina Bay: "Sea otter and sea lions cavorted in the waters of the bay, right in the Boone dooryard."<sup>38</sup>

Continuing sea otter presence in this central part of the coast was confirmed by another account, which documented a period later than the Boone settlement and clearly indicated continuing tribal participation in the sea otter trade. Wallis Nash, an Englishman, wrote a book full of stories about the Oregon he explored around 1876 to 1878, followed by a second

book three years later, after having immigrated to Corvallis, Oregon, in 1879. In the second book, Nash describes his visit to Yaquina Bay and the fledgling town of Newport, in what had until recently been Coast Reservation lands: "'Say,' he [the general store proprietor at Newport] whispers in our ear, 'got a sea-otter skin today!' 'Where did you get it, Bush, and who from, and how much did you have to pay for it?' 'Got it from the Indians,' he says; 'they shot it away up by the Salmon River, beyond Foulweather, and had to give more dollars for it than I care to say.' 'Where did they get it?' 'Where they always do, away out in the kelp among the surf'."<sup>39</sup> Salmon River remained inside the Coast Reservation into the late nineteenth century, even as the U.S. government removed other portions of the coast from tribal control, allowing this area to remain an important hub of subsistence and settlement to tribal members on the reservation. The remaining settlement there sat close to fine sea otter habitat, apparently fostering continued Native participation in the otter fur economy through much of this period.

Despite a clear history of Native American otter hunting and trade in Tillamook tribal territory (encompassed significantly by modern Tillamook County), there are no available written accounts of sighting, hunting, killing, or even finding a sea otter associated with the period of Euro-American settlement for this part of the coast beginning in the 1850s. The last written mention of sea otters in Tillamook County encountered in our survey is also the first one: the account of Robert Gray's ill-fated excursion into Tillamook Bay in 1788, when Gray's crew traded with resident Tillamooks for sea otter pelts.<sup>40</sup> Tribal oral tradition recorded into the early twentieth century speaks of sea otters (see "House Full of Otters," this issue), but those oral traditions seem to speak largely of otters past rather than of any contemporaneous population.

Robert Kentta, Cultural Resources Director of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, offered one reason for the absence of a written record about the presence of the species in the mid to late nineteenth century: "It was (I must admit) primarily our Indian people, and some whites living or freely associating among us, and a few . . . coasting watercraft that were taking the dwindling remaining sea otters. . . . The presence of an also once-large, but dwindling Indian Reservation helped keep the record of ongoing sea otter hunting (by Indians) for both cultural and trade purposes — and nefarious hunting of them by non-Indians within the Reservation also — perhaps, fairly well Hidden."<sup>41</sup> As sea otter hunting took place within the boundaries of the reservation, on lands then occupied almost exclusively by tribal members, the practice was rarely documented in non-Native newspapers or reminiscences.



**HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE** ran an illustration of sea otter hunting from the shores near Coos Bay in its October 1856 issue. It was common to shoot otter from the shore as depicted here, although small boats were also used to spear, shoot, net, and snare the animals. The fur trade was no longer a dominant part of the region's economy by the mid-nineteenth century, but Native people and Euro-American settlers on the Oregon coast continued to supplement their income by selling furs to Chinese merchants in San Francisco, California.

### **THE LATE PERIOD OF THE HUNT: 1880S TO THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**

The remote, rock-studded south coast of Oregon seems to have retained both sea otters and a tradition of resident sea otter hunting the longest of regions in Oregon. It is clear from a handful of reports on regional sea otter hunters that, by the final two decades of the nineteenth century, the Curry County sea otter population had dwindled to nearly nothing. Local and regional newspapers noted at least seven sea otter hunters by name, however, indicating that a significant amount of local hunting was still occurring. Breeding populations of sea otters hung on in their south coast haunts into the early twentieth century, albeit in diminishing numbers. But a relentless culture of local hunting gave them no opportunity to replenish their num-

bers, and the local population died out — ironically, just as the international Fur Seal Treaty of 1911 was coming into force protecting sea otters, among other fur-bearing marine mammals.<sup>42</sup> The hunters' biographies reveal the nature of the hunt, its supplementary role in household economies, and its steadily diminishing returns.

Edward "Ned" Wilson came around Cape Horn in 1852 from Boston in the *Corsair* and homesteaded at the mouth of the Sixes River. In 1881, the Port Orford newspaper reported that Wilson "has devoted a considerable portion of his time first and last to taking sea otter, and has caught two hundred of these rare and valuable fur-bearing inhabitants of the deep. Otter skins average about \$50.00 each in the market."<sup>43</sup> Henry Colvin was born in Curry County in 1868 and apparently hunted the area somewhat later than Wilson. In 1932, Colvin told an interviewer that he used to hunt elk, deer, and sea otters and had killed some ten sea otters, getting between \$100 and \$150 for each pelt.<sup>44</sup> George Scott was noted for having killed a sea otter over nine feet long in, or in the vicinity of, the Rogue River in March 1882.<sup>45</sup> As the average male sea otter is four to five feet long, this would have been an outsize animal — if indeed it was a sea otter rather than a seal or sea lion.

In 1884, the *Daily Morning Astorian* quoted an otter hunter of Gray's Harbor, Washington, who mentioned that there was an otter range near Port Orford, which is confirmed by snippets from Oregon newspapers that frequently mention sea otters in the area. A Eugene article of 1883 reported that two sealing schooners had killed more than 600 sea lions in the Port Orford area, and also some fur seals and otters — but without providing numbers for the latter. The following year, a local paper reported: "French Ned, while coming up from the beach the other morning from his spacious bachelor quarters, was so fortunate as to secure a very fine otter which had been wounded. Ned values the result of his morning's exercise at \$50."<sup>46</sup>

One detailed source makes the efficient and zealous hunting of sea otters much clearer than the brief and scattered references of the day: the 1893 Pacific Fisheries Report, compiled by the US Commission of Fish and Fisheries. Generally, the commission's reports only tracked fisheries; however, the 1893 report noted that sea otter hunting had recently experienced a brief surge on Oregon's south coast. To quote this rare account in full:

*Sea-otter hunting. — In 1891 the high price of sea-otter pelts led to the formation of two bands of hunters in Curry County. Twelve men, armed with rifles and using two sail and three row boats, skirted the coast from Cape Blanco to Rogue River, weather permitting, during March and April and August and September. At night the men camp at some desirable point. Some of their camping stations are located near high bluffs that have a fringe of timber along the ridge overlooking*

*the sea. Such a spot near the feeding-grounds of the otter is a favorite place for a camp, for in the branches of some tall pine the hunter has his lookout station. A few boughs are chopped off and made into a comfortable resting-place up among the branches, and here some of the hunters will lie for hours, concealed by the thick foliage from view or shore or sea animal. His lofty location gives him an uninterrupted sea view for miles. His boat is close at hand. In case a sea otter shows up within range of a rifle, it is shot, and the hunter or one of his companions in hiding is quickly in the boat and going for the game. While some of the men are thus engaged, others may be miles away sailing along the coast with a sharp lookout for otters.*

*The number of otters killed is small, but they are of large size and have very fine fur, the pelts bringing from \$150 to \$200 each, and in some cases much more. During 1891, 20 otters were secured, and in one week in September, 1892, when the writer visited one of these unique tree-top stations, 8 otters were killed, the total catch for the year being 13, valued at \$133 each. In 1893 the number taken was 17, having an average value of \$157.<sup>47</sup>*

Four years later, a writer for *The Oregon Naturalist* gave a “very rough estimate” of more than fifty schooners hunting sea otters along the Oregon and Washington coasts, three-fifths of which were in Puget Sound.<sup>48</sup> That would leave, at the most, twenty ships pursuing sea otters in Oregon waters around the start of the twentieth century, but newspaper references from the period do not describe organized sea otter hunts on Oregon’s south coast, instead focusing on individual successes.

Reports of the final few years of sea otter hunting on the south coast suggest a rapidly dwindling population as the value of pelts continued to rise. An 1892 article reported that Charles Crew of Port Orford — evidently a well-known local otter hunter and trader — killed a fine sea otter, and an 1894 article noted that William B. Carey had a “fine sea otter skin” that was owned jointly by himself and Joe Steve and sold to Crew for \$180.<sup>49</sup> In May 1906, an article reported that Crew had killed a beautiful otter near Cape Blanco, supposed to be worth three hundred dollars. But, the article continued, “these animals, once so plentiful along this coast, are now very scarce.”<sup>50</sup> Again in 1908, Crew shot a large sea otter near Cape Blanco during a southwester and was lauded as “our most noted otter hunter.” The paper laid out clearly the prevailing attitude toward sea otters, at least among the hunters: “No hunter’s trophy equals a sea otter, and a thrill of getting one by a good shot is the acme of a hunter’s exaltation.”<sup>51</sup>

As late as 1910, brief newspaper articles — the last known written records of otter hunting in Oregon — provide occasional information about sea otter killing on Oregon’s southernmost coast. Sea otters were by this time so rare that every bit of action related to them was news: “Capt. John Swing and



George Forty have returned from Curry county. . . . They got in all forty sea lions and one sea otter. The latter is highly valuable as the skin is worth \$300 to \$500. This particular sea otter is a fine specimen. It is about six feet long and the fur is black, tipped with silvery gray. There is a general impression that a sea otter will sink when shot in the water, but in this case the animal floated and was recovered.”<sup>52</sup> Nearly a month later, the newspaper reported that Forty had brought the pelt to be judged by S.C. Brown, who, the paper noted, once caught as many as three otters in a day — back when they were plentiful.<sup>53</sup>

More and more reports indicated that — despite rising pelt prices — sea otter hunting had become so difficult that it was no longer lucrative and was at best a sideline. In 1886, the Gold Beach newspaper noted hopefully that “Captain Strahan” had a “fine otter boat” and would “engage to some extent in otter hunting.”<sup>54</sup> An 1897 article mentioned Strahan’s captaining *Dauntless*, a schooner outfitted for sea otter and sea lion hunting at Cape Blanco and the Rogue River reefs but had not caught anything.<sup>55</sup> In 1900, Strahan was mentioned as the co-owner of a fishing smack bringing a haul of deep-sea fish to Port Orford. The paper noted he and his co-owner did quite a business in deep-sea fishing and sea-otter hunting along the Curry Coast but did not inform its readers how much of their fine business was fish rather than otters.<sup>56</sup>

In 1911, a Coos Bay article reported on “Jo Steve, the otter hunter,” who was planning to go to the Rogue River to secure a boat and crew and hunt more otter in the area. Clearly, as otters dwindled away in the early twentieth century, successful hunts required greater skill, while the price of the pelts skyrocketed: “Jo is a famous shot, and has killed many otter in the past from open boats dancing on the seas — requiring a skill in marksmanship unequalled in any other kind of hunting. A good sea otter skin is now worth from eight to nine hundred dollars.”<sup>57</sup> Steve was the child of Long Prairie John, originally from Sixes River, and Port Orford Polly. He had extensive family connections in the Siletz Reservation community but had secured an off-reservation allotment in coastal Curry County, on Euchre Creek.<sup>58</sup> Steve was not alone among Native sea otter hunters of the region in that era. Siletz elder Ada Collins (Euchre Creek Dee-ni) indicated that her relatives had used firearms to kill south coast otters and recalled to anthropologist John P. Harrington that “Cousin Joe killed 16 sea otters off the Cape Blanco vicinity coast & sold them for \$300 each.”<sup>59</sup> Collins almost certainly refers to Steve here, as both Collins and Steve had Sixes tribal background, and the prices indicate late nineteenth or early twentieth century hunting. Steve’s particular hunting prowess was therefore known in Native and Euro-American communities alike.

The eulogy for sea otters in Curry County might be Lans Leneve’s write-up in 1954, noting that, forty years ago, the sea otter was “quite numerous at

many spots along the Oregon and northern California shoreline, but today none at all exist at their once favorite haunts.” His cousin in those long-ago days, Leneve recalled, drew a bead on two sea otters surfacing at Blacklock Point — and missed.<sup>60</sup>

To the north of Curry County, the trajectories of the late sea otter hunt were quite similar but involved fewer sea otters and fewer hunters. An 1885 news article informed readers that local Coos County hunting included the catch of the occasional sea otter, whose pelt brought between \$40 and \$150 on the market.<sup>61</sup> In 1904, George Schroeder, while walking an unnamed beach, probably in the Coos Bay area, caught an eighteen-inch-long sea otter pup lying helpless on the sand. A man in North Bend was planning to raise it in captivity.<sup>62</sup> Three years later, William Hite of Bandon found the body of a large silver-tipped sea otter killed by the surf among the rocks. The otter weighed about sixty pounds and had a pelt of some six and a half feet. The article noted that this sea otter was the third to wash ashore on Bandon Beach in the past few years; the year before, a much smaller otter had been found, which sold for \$1,000.<sup>63</sup> Coos tribal members who had grown up in the region reported to anthropologists in the 1930s that they used to capture sea otters at “South Bay” (presumably the southern reaches of Coos Bay, near its entrance). On occasion, they used sea otter hides to line their canoes, although beaver hides were more common. Sea otter pelts still were considered “very valuable,” and Coos Indians would swim out to catch the animals sleeping on the kelp.<sup>64</sup>

In Lincoln County on the central coast was Otter Rock, a hamlet that took its name from a large haystack offshore, some three miles north of Yaquina Head, along with another large rock a mile farther north. Observers reported that sea otters congregated around these rocks into the period of early Euro-American settlement — a fact substantiated by tribal oral tradition relating to preceding periods as well (see “The House Full of Otters,” this issue).<sup>65</sup> An unpublished Lincoln County Historical Society manuscript by Ben F. Jones elaborates on this vague, but enticing, information: “After the Indians were allotted lands in 1895, this plateau under the Cape was bought from an old Indian who had lived there many years and the land had been surveyed into a townsite and called Otter Rock. The Indian during his residence here killed many fur sea otter from Otter rock, a long reef of rocks that extend parallel with the coast and about one half mile at sea.”<sup>66</sup>

Siletz men who obtained allotments on Cape Foulweather or directly south of it include James Watts, Charles Johnson, Charles Fairchild, Chetco Charley, Aleck Spencer, Buford Spencer, Dope Spencer, and John Spencer.<sup>67</sup> Tribal people could thus continue to hunt sea otters with firearms on the central coast from their properties.<sup>68</sup> John P. Harrington’s 1942 notes from

Siletz elder Spencer Scott include his recollection of a skilled and patient sea otter hunter “named dúp” who would wait for “sometimes 2 or 3 days” near Yaquina Head lighthouse for a sleeping otter to “drift in ashore asleep belly up” and might have to wait an additional day or two for the shot otter to wash ashore. Scott recollected that the man “lived somewhere there by that lighthouse” and that “he once showed to Scott a sea-otter skin that he had at his shack & which he told Scott was worth ca. 150.00.”<sup>69</sup> That would be a price of perhaps \$5,000 in 2023 dollars. This appears to be referring to allottee Dope Spencer, the same hunter recalled by Jones.

The Coast Reservation, established in 1855, encompassed about a third of the coast. The U.S. federal government, responding to pressure from Euro-American settlers, continually shrank the reservation, yet until 1894, it still contained the area north of Yaquina Head up to the Salmon River. Kentta reported that one location in that part of the former reservation, at Otter Rock, became one of the last sea otter refugia of record.<sup>70</sup> He explained that:

*we have what seem to be mention of sea otters present in Yaquina Bay when that part of our Reservation was opened to settlement, and then no more. I think we are talking about small (at least by that time) and particularly vulnerable, and perhaps very isolated (by that time) sea otter populations — which quickly folded under pressure of increased hunting. Our coastline does not have vast or small out-of-the-way/refugia-type habitats such as infrequently traveled inlets and rugged unnavigable shallow water stretches . . . where sea otters could hide out. . . . Even the roughest of our coastal stretches had tribally made and maintained trails . . . and the whole stretch is not wildly undulating, but fairly — to extremely — accessible by canoes, small and larger vessels.<sup>71</sup>*

On these relatively isolated and inaccessible rocky headlands, in places far from major human settlements and with the seascape dotted with complex offshore rocks and kelp beds, sea otters made their last stand on what is now the coast of Oregon.

A smattering of reminiscences gives us a blurred picture of sea otter presence in the area, including 1890s newspaper reports of a lighthouse keeper at Cape Foulweather having killed a silver-gray sea otter — presumably in the Yaquina Head area where the keeper lived at the lighthouse. In 1896, the same paper happily announced that the constable, Cory Smith, “expects to embark on a sea otter hunt soon. May success attend you Cory.”<sup>72</sup> The last known sea otter killed in Lincoln County fell in June 1902 to the gun of Joseph Briggs, a Siletz hunter who shot it just off Otter Rock north of Newport while it played in the surf some 200 or 300 yards from the shore. Seven feet tip to tip, the pelt was thought to be worth \$600. The article waxed on enthusiastically about lucrative sea otter hunting

opportunities, noting that another sea otter had been killed at the same spot five years earlier and that a small boat had been built several years before at Yaquina Bay specifically to hunt sea otter at Otter Rock and along the coast, although no sea otters had been sighted.<sup>73</sup>

Records of local sighting or hunting of sea otters on Oregon's northernmost coast do not appear in the known record between the end of the fur-fort era, about 1849, and the final two decades of the nineteenth century, when the few mentions of sea otters were all elegiac. In March 1887, the *Daily Morning Astorian* reported that the fur trade was minimal, mostly consisting of beaver and land otter (river otter); the few sea otter skins sold for between \$60 and \$125 — far more than “land otter” pelts, which sold for \$5 each. In October, the paper pegged the beginning of the industrial fur trade to the Russians, baldly predicting the likely outcome, all along the Pacific coast, of decades of over-hunting: “Sea otter is growing scarcer and scarcer. When the Russians arrived on the Aleutian islands they found the natives commonly wearing sea otter cloaks. Thousands of skins, even tens of thousands, were secured under the impulse of Russian competition, but the number rapidly fell off until a few hundreds were all the Russians could show. . . . The final extermination of the animal seems certain.”<sup>74</sup> Two years later, in 1889, the paper could only repeat itself, stating that sea otter had almost disappeared; the only furs received locally were beaver and river otter.<sup>75</sup>

Although there does not appear to have been an estimate of sea otter populations in the area, activities of the early maritime fur traders — who regularly navigated the Columbia River's treacherous bar to trade for sea otter pelts and other furs with Native people and wintered their ships in the estuary as well — make it clear that sea otter wealth had been important on this part of the coast. Sometime, probably from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, the sea otter haunts of the north coast such as Tillamook Head and other places near the Columbia River mouth — celebrated in Native oral tradition — were hunted out. This area was ground zero for the maritime and later fort-based fur trade, and as a result, these habitats were perhaps among the first places on the Oregon coast to witness the complete extirpation of sea otters.

## **THE SORRY TALE OF A SCHOONER AND ITS OTTER HUNTS**

The steam schooner *Kate and Anna* provides an instructive tale of the fate of sea otter hunting, as well as sealing, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Because it traveled much of the Northwest coast, both in Oregon and to the north and south, this schooner's journeys provide a unique glimpse of a late attempt at maritime sea mammal hunting, decades after the commercial maritime trade had collapsed. The forty-five-foot-long schooner was built



**THE STEAM SCHOONER** *Kate and Anna* provides a glimpse of maritime sea-mammal hunting decades after the commercial maritime trade had collapsed. Built on Yaquina Bay in 1879, the ship's crew hunted seals and sea otters along the North Pacific Rim from California to Japan, including much of the Oregon coast, and Oregon newspapers followed its journeys. The *Kate and Anna* was lost during a storm off San Miguel Island, California, in 1902, when its anchor chain broke and the ship beached ashore. This image captures a group standing on the wrecked ship in 1903.

## OVER SIX HUNDRED SKINS

### Captured by Sealing Schooner *Kate and Anna*—Notes of the Voyage.

Captain Charles Lutgens, who has gained considerable distinction of late on account of his connection with the schooner, *Kate and Anna*, which was held last week at Astoria by custom officials and about which a sensational article appeared in the *Oregonian* last Saturday, was a bay-bound passenger on Tuesday's train. He was seen at the depot by a *GAZETTE* reporter, who plied him with questions until the departure of the train and learned that the captain had just returned from a nine-months' sealing cruise on the Japan coast.

The schooner carries fourteen men, who have to their credit 608 skins that will sell for from \$10 to \$15 each. The trip was exceedingly rough throughout and on several occasions such severe weather was encountered that all that saved the *Kate and Anna* from going to the bottom was the dispatch with which the crew executed the orders.

Captain Lutgens reports that the story regarding the loss of the *Louise Olsen*, Rufus Guilliams, master, is a canard. The schooner, however, lost two of her hunting boats one night in the fog but they were subsequently picked up by

on Yaquina Bay in 1879.<sup>76</sup> Beginning in the early 1880s, this little ship had sailed along the North Pacific Rim from California to Japan, and Oregon newspapers — both on the coast and in the Willamette Valley — followed its journeys for more than a decade. Newspapers generally described the boat as a sealing schooner but occasionally mentioned sea otters as well. The *Daily Morning Astorian* noted in August 1894, for example, that the schooner had lately returned from Japan with a cargo of sealskins and would now cruise down the Oregon coast, hunting for otters.<sup>77</sup> Several articles appeared through the following spring, noting continuation of the search.<sup>78</sup> By the end of June 1895, however, they had very little success in the Cape Foulweather and Otter Rock areas, although the *Kate and Anna* crew killed sixteen sea otters in Gray's Harbor, Washington, expecting to realize from them some \$4,700 when sold.<sup>79</sup> In July 1896, papers reported that hunters on the *Kate and Anna* had killed ten sea otters (and 600 seals) since January 1, although the reports do not say where the otters were hunted.<sup>80</sup>

In 1898, an Alaska gold-seeker and taxidermist wrote from Tillamook to a friend in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, about meeting up with the crew of the *Kate and Anna*, anchored off Heceta Head, and learning some details of sea otter hunting: "they took us aboard and showed their otter skins. They only had three skins but had been out only a short time. Sea Otter are valued as high as \$1200.00 but theirs would bring perhaps five hundred each. There were five hunters. They use a 20 ft. klinker boat for hunting, two pullers

**OREGON NEWSPAPERS** followed the adventures of the seal- and otter-hunting schooner *Kate and Anna*. This August 10, 1894, article published in the *Corvallis Gazette-Times* reported the ship's return to Astoria after nine months of hunting off Japan's coast with 608 pelts that were estimated to sell for \$10 to \$15 each.

and one hunter to the boat.”<sup>81</sup> Those aboard the *Kate and Anna* continued sealing — and occasionally hunting sea otters — in Alaska and California, along with participating in the coastal trade in southern California until the ship’s life ended. It was lost in a gale on April 9, 1902, off San Miguel Island, California, when the anchor chain parted; the six crew members survived.<sup>82</sup>

## **SEA OTTERS: THE END OF THE OREGON POPULATION**

A systematic review of local history documentation of the nineteenth-century sea otter hunt, scanty as it is, makes certain points abundantly clear. Oregon’s sea otter population remained somewhat robust along significant portions of the coast in the 1850s and 1860s, especially the far south coast in what today is Curry County. Somehow, along these relatively remote rocky shorelines, far from historical epicenters of the maritime fur trade, sea otters had survived the intensive commercial hunts. Those otters continued to survive and to breed in remote places for decades to come. While the peak commercial trade of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries became a distant memory, the populations were not safe from further predation. Demands for sea otter furs remained vigorous far overseas. The number of otters may not have been large, but the persistent demand and rising prices for sea otter pelts incentivized resident hunting of those that remained. Within a few generations, local hunting by Native hunters and Euro-American settlers decimated these remaining otter populations beyond recovery.

Hunting activity is reported consistently during the period up to extirpation in the first decade of the twentieth century, although most of these accounts specifically reference Curry County — where available sources not only mention occasional quantities and prices of the sea otter take but also name and provide biographies of several sea otter hunters. A question that likely cannot be answered with the historical data available to modern scholars is whether this indicates that the largest otter population at that time, or of the era before the fur trade, was centered in Curry County; such diverse fields as archaeology and biology might yet yield clues. The south coast’s distance from the major hubs of activity, from navigable harbors for large ocean-going ships and fur trade forts north and south, and its rugged, rock-studded coastline abounding in suitable sea otter habitat — all of these factors may have contributed to otters’ holding on longer along this part of the Oregon coastline. These qualities also allowed sea otter hunting to remain a cottage industry and a source of income, for Native and non-Native families alike, through the last half of the nineteenth century. This late hunt was unregulated and left little formal written record. Yet it should not be dismissed as an inconsequential footnote in the history of human-otter interaction. It was this late hunt, carried

out by rural working people who left only sketchy accounts from the 1850s through the opening years of the twentieth century, that sealed the sea otter's fate and eliminated the species completely from Oregon's shores.

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## NOTES

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1. The economic and educational profile of many early south coast settlers can be gleaned from sources such as: Nathan Douthit, *A Guide to Oregon South Coast History* (Coos Bay, Ore.: River West Books, 1986); Orville Dodge, *Pioneer History of Coos and Curry Counties, Or: Heroic Deeds and Thrilling Adventures of the Early Settlers* (Salem, Ore.: Capital Printing and Coos County Pioneer and Historical Association, 1898); A.G. Walling, *History of Southern Oregon, Comprising Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry and Coos Counties* (Portland Ore.: A.G. Walling, 1884); and Stephen Dow Beckham *Land of the Umpqua: A History of Douglas County, Oregon* (Roseburg, Ore.: Douglas County Commissioners, 1986).

2. Examples are too numerous to include here, but waypoints might include William G. Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise: Coos Bay, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Katrine Barber "Stories Worth Recording: Martha McKeown and the Documentation of Pacific Northwest Life," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110:4 (2009): 546–69; David Arnold, *The Fisherman's Frontier: People and Salmon in Southeast Alaska* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Lawrence M. Lipin, *Workers and the Wild: Conservation, Consumerism, and Labor in Oregon, 1910–30* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Irene Martin, *Legacy and Testament: The Story of Columbia River Gillnetters* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995); and Courtland Smith, *Salmon Fishers on the Columbia* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1980).

3. The shrinking boundaries of the Oregon coastal lands initially set aside as an Indian reservation on November 9, 1855, led to shifting naming conventions in the nineteenth century,

which have been the subject of disagreement among scholars. Briefly, contemporaneous sources generally use Coast Reservation up to when an 1865 executive order struck out the middle, dividing it into two non-contiguous tracts. By 1875, when Congress reduced the lands further, it refers to the whole as the "Alsea and Siletz Indian reservation" after the Agency and Sub-Agency on each respective parcel. See Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 157. Thereafter the remnant is generally referred to as the Siletz Reservation. The authors have strived to use the term current to the events discussed. Among many worthwhile treatments, see E.A. Schwartz, "Sick Hearts: Indian Removal on the Oregon Coast, 1875-81" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 92:3 (Fall 1991): 228–64; and David G. Lewis and Robert Kentta, "Western Oregon Reservations: Two Perspectives on Place," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111:4 (Winter 2010): 476–85.

4. William Eugene Kent, *The Siletz Indian Reservation, 1855–1900* (Newport, Ore.: Lincoln County Historical Society, 1977); E.A. Schwartz "Sick Hearts: Indian Removal on the Oregon Coast, 1875–1881." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 92:3 (Fall 1991): 129–64; Charles Wilkinson, *The People are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe in Western Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010); Joseph E. Taylor III, *Persistent Callings: Seasons of Work and Identity on the Oregon Coast* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2019); Samuel Dicken, *Pioneer Trails on the Oregon Coast* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1978); Stephen Dow Beckham, *Coos Bay: The Pioneer Period, 1851–1890*. (Coos Bay Ore.: Arago Books, 1973); Oliver H. Heintzelman "The



Evolution of an Industry: The Dairy Economy of Tillamook County, Oregon," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 49:2 (1958): 77–81.

5. Richard Ravalli and Michael C. McGrann, "Sea Otter Hunting and Conservation in Southern California Since the Gold Rush," *Southern California Quarterly* 101:3 (2019): 275–76.

6. *Ibid.*, 272.

7. See Richard Ravalli, "The Near Extinction and Reemergence of the Pacific Sea Otter, 1850–1938," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 100:4 (Fall 2009): 181–91.

8. P.H. Roundtree, "Autobiography of P.H. Roundtree, Lewis County, 1852" in *Told by the Pioneers: Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Washington*, Volume 2, 1938, Olympia, Washington, WPA Project No. 5841, p. 104.

9. Victor B. Scheffer, "The Sea Otter on the Washington Coast," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 31:4 (October 1940): 384–87.

10. *Ibid.*, 386–87

11. *Ibid.* The *Astorian* began publication in 1873. The *Coos Bay World* followed on its heels, in 1878. The *Coquille Valley Sentinel* and *Newport News-Times* opened their doors in 1882, the *Tillamook Headlight-Herald* in 1888, and the *Siuslaw News* of Florence in 1890. The *Seaside Signal* opened in 1905, and the *Curry County Reporter* of Gold Beach in 1914.

12. "Sea Otter Hunting," *West Shore*, November 1, 1888, p. 593.

13. "Pacific Slopers," *Albany Register*, May 28, 1875.

14. William A. Wilcox, "The Fisheries of the Pacific Coast," *United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 233–34.

15. "How He Killed Sea Otter," *Coast Mail*, October 29, 1885, p. 3.

16. Douthit, *A Guide to Oregon South Coast History*, 36.

17. Doyce B. Nunis, ed., *The Golden Frontier: The recollections of Herman Francis Reinhart 1851–1869* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 87.

18. R. Glisan, *Journal of Army Life* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Company, 1874), 279–80.

19. *Ibid.*, 307; J.G. Cooper and George Suckley, *The Natural History of Washington Territory and Oregon with Much Relating to Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Utah, and California: Between the Thirty-Sixth and Forty-Ninth Parallels of Latitude, Being those Parts of the Final Reports on the Survey of the Northern Pacific Railroad Route, Relating to the Natural History of the Regions Explored, with Full Catalogues and Descriptions of the Plants and Animals Collect from 1853 to 1860* (United States: Ballière Brothers, 1860), 116.

20. Orvil Dodge, *Pioneer History of Coos and Curry Counties* (Bandon Ore.: Western World Publishers, Second Ed., 1969), 324–25.

21. Charles M. Scammon, *The Marine Mammals of the North-western Coast of North America Described and Illustrated* (San Francisco: John H. Carmany and Company, and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1874), 169.

22. Cooper and Suckley, *The Natural History of Washington Territory and Oregon*, 115–16.

23. For a fuller explanation of these historical circumstances, see Wilkinson, *The People Are Dancing Again*; E.A. Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath, 1850–1980* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); and Gray H. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee: U.S. Empire and the Transformation of an Indigenous World, 1792–1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

24. Dodge, *Pioneer History of Coos and Curry Counties*, 20–50; Stephen Dow Beckham, *Requiem for a People: The Rogue Indians and the Frontiersmen* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1996), 53–59, 63–65; Amie Cohen and Mark Tveskov, *The Tseriadun Site: Prehistoric and Historic Period Archaeology on the Southern Oregon Coast*, SOULA Research Report 2008-3, 2008, Ashland, Oregon, 13–19; Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War*, 33–36.

25. "Statement of Captain William Tichenor," in University of Oregon Special Collections CB435, William Tichenor Reminiscences, Eugene, Oregon.

26. S.A. Clarke, "Thrilling Adventures of the First Port Orford Settlers," *Willamette Farmer* (Salem, Ore.), October 15, 1886, p. 1.

27. "The Rogue River Outbreak," *San Francisco Call*, April 11, 1897, p. 19.
28. "Historical Sketches of Oregon's Southern Coast. Number VIII. Port Orford – The Close of the Rogue River War," *Coast Mail*, (Marshfield, Oregon), February 28, 1880, p. 1.
29. "Historical Sketches of Oregon's Southern Coast, Number III. Opening of the Rogue River War on the Coast—Murder of Ben Wright, Etc.," *Coast Mail* (Marshfield, Oregon), January 17, 1880, p. 1.
30. "Letter From Port Orford," March 8, 1856, *Daily Alta California*, March 20, 1856, p. 2.
31. Wilkinson, *The People are Dancing Again*, 140–170; Beckham, *Requiem for a People*, 187–91.
32. Lewis A. MacArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1928), 170.
33. William Wells, "Wild Life in Oregon," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, October 1856, 599–600.
34. Records of nineteenth century sea otter pelt purchases and sales by small-scale fur export companies, especially those owned and operated by Chinese immigrants on the West Coast, may point towards avenues for further study, if adequate records exist of these often short-lived and ephemeral businesses.
35. Wells, "Wild Life in Oregon," 599–600
36. *Ibid.*
37. Eva Emery Dye, "Boone Family Reminiscences as Told to Mrs. Dye," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 42:3 (September 1941): 227.
38. Philip C. Biddle, *The Oregon Trace*, private publication, 1971, Lincoln County Historical Society, Newport, Oregon.
39. Wallis Nash, *Two Years in Oregon* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882), 87. See also Wallis Nash, *Oregon: There and Back in 1877* (New York: Nabu Press, 2011).
40. T.C. Elliott, "Captain Robert Gray's First Visit to Oregon" *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 29:2 (June 1928), 172–177.
41. Robert Kentta, email to Cameron La Follette, December 4, 2019.
42. U.S. State Department, *Protocols of the International Fur Seal Conference*, 1911 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. State Dept., 1911); Kurkpatrick Dorsey, *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 92; Kurkpatrick Dorsey, "Putting a Ceiling on Sealing: Conservation and Cooperation in the International Arena, 1909–1911," *Environmental History Review* 15:3 (Autumn 1991): 43–44.
43. "Two Hundred," *Port Orford Post* (Oregon), March 17, 1881, n.p.
44. Brainerd Index card file on Henry (Sam) Colvin Sr. and Henry Colvin Jr. Card file, Curry County Historical Society, Gold Beach, Oregon [hereafter Curry Count Historical Society].
45. Genealogical card file on the Scott family, Curry County Historical Society.
46. "Sea Otter Hunting," *Daily Morning Astorian*, May 15, 1884, p. 4; "Oregon and Washington," *Eugene City Guard*, August 11, 1883, p. 8; "Port Orford Notes," *Southwest Oregon Recorder*, December 30, 1884, p. 1.
47. Wilcox, "The Fisheries of the Pacific Coast," 233–34.
48. Bernard J. Bretherton, *Oregon Naturalist* 2:4 (April 1895): 43.
49. "Occidental Melange," *Condon Globe*, August 26, 1892, p. 1; "State and Coast," *The Lebanon Express*, August 10, 1894, p. 1.
50. "Port Orford Tribune," *Coquille Herald*, May 9, 1906, p. 4.
51. "Port Orford Pointers," *Coos Bay Times*, February 6, 1908, p. 4.
52. "Killed Fine Sea Otter," *Coos Bay Times Evening Edition*, July 12, 1910, p. 1.
53. "Got Sea Otter," *Coos Bay Times Evening Edition*, July 26, 1910, p. 3.
54. Quoting *Gold Beach Gazette* "Local Items," *Coquille City Herald*, August 10, 1886, p 3.
55. "Over the State," *Hillsboro Independent*, June 18, 1897, p. 1.
56. *Coquille City Herald*, July 31, 1900, p. 3.
57. "Curry County News," *Coos Bay Times Evening Edition*, June 17, 1911, p. 3.
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60. Lans Leneve, *Hello Sportsman* (Unknown location: Pageant Press, 1954), 117.

61. "Fish and Fishing," *Coquille City Herald*, May 19, 1885, p. 4.

62. "Young Sea Otter," *Weekly Coast Mail*, March 12, 1904, p. 6.

63. "Sea Casts Up Valuable Skin," *East Oregonian Daily Evening Edition*, December 27, 1907, p. 5.

64. Phillip Drucker, "Oregon Coast — Notebook," p. 26, 46, MS 4516, item 78, National Anthropological Archives.

65. MacArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 268.

66. Ben F. Jones, "Legend of Otter Rock or The Branding of the First Elk," unpublished manuscript, Lincoln County Historical Society, Newport, Oregon.

67. Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, "Original Allotments 1892," Reservation Maps, <https://www.ctsi.nsn.us/reservation-maps/> (accessed October 3, 2021).

68. Leonard Whitlow Jr., *Siletz Tribal Reference* (Tigard, Ore.: Blackberry Publishing, 2009), 837.

69. John P. Harrington, "Alaska/Northwest Coast: Alsea/Siuslaw/Coos, reel 24, p. 773–75, Harrington Papers, National Anthropological Archives.

70. Robert Kentta, email to Cameron La Follette, December 4, 2019.

71. *Ibid.*

72. "Local Notes," *Lincoln County Leader*, January 11, 1894, p. 4 (presumably killed in the Yaquina Head area where the keeper lived at the lighthouse, although the article does not specify); "From Tidewater," *Lincoln County Leader*, April 30, 1896, p. 1 (no documentation exists as to whether the hunt was successful).

73. "Worth Six Hundred: May be More—The Skin of a Sea Otter—Was Killed Near

Newport," *Corvallis Times*, June 25, 1902, p. 3. Much later, Biologist Karl W. Kenyon published an excerpt from a 1965 letter from a Mrs. F.V. Martin, who reported that her correspondent, C. Jones, had written that "the last otter" taken at Newport had been killed by Frank Priest and Joe Biggs in 1906. Because Priest's life is well documented in local news coverage but this hunt was not and because "Joe Biggs" likely was the aforementioned Joseph Briggs, this hunt was likely a recollection of the 1902 events. See Karl V. Kenyon, *The Sea Otter in the Eastern Pacific Ocean* (New York: Dover, 1980), 185.

74. *Daily Morning Astorian*, March 3, 1887, p.1; "Extermination of the Sea Otter," *Daily Morning Astorian*, October 25, 1887, p. 11.

75. *Daily Morning Astorian*, April 16, 1889, p. 3.

76. "Kate and Anna," *Islapedia: The California Islands, Saving Their History—Telling their Stories*, [https://www.islapedia.com/index.php?title=Kate\\_and\\_Ann](https://www.islapedia.com/index.php?title=Kate_and_Ann) (accessed August 17, 2023). The timeline of the *Kate and Anna* (or *Kate and Ann*) is here told chronologically via newspaper quotations, beginning however in 1892, and does not represent a comprehensive listing of news articles concerning the ship. The chronology ends with the ship's wreck in April 1902.

77. *Daily Morning Astorian*, August 16, 1894, p. 4.

78. "Local Notes," *Lincoln County Leader*, November 8, 1894, p. 4; "Along the Water Front," *Daily Morning Astorian*, May 10, 1895, p. 4; [Untitled], *Lincoln County Leader*, May 16, 1895.

79. "Along the Water Front," *Daily Morning Astorian*, June 28, 1895, p. 4; *Daily Morning Astorian*, September 12, 1895, p. 3, quoting the *Yaquina News*.

80. "Local Notes," *Lincoln County Leader*, July 23, 1896, p. 3. See also *Daily Morning Astorian*, May 7, 1897.

81. Letter from J. Russell Moore to G.H. Burge, October 13, 1898, reprinted in *Curry County Echoes*, October 1988, Gold Beach, Oregon.

82. "Kate and Anna," *Islapedia*.