

Navy Conducts Wildlife Survey on Naval Magazine Indian Island

Survey Provides Vital Natural Resources Planning Information

NAVAL MAGAZINE (NAVMAG) Indian Island personnel recently completed a survey to help them balance the needs of resident wildlife with the demands of completing the Navy's vital mission on the installation.

Most of NAVMAG Indian Island's 2,700 acres is untouched, pristine habitat. Because of the untrammelled nature of the island, there is an abundance of wildlife. So Navy natural resource managers wanted to conduct a wildlife survey using motion detection trail cameras to document the existence of various species of

manager said. "The cameras aren't out on the trails just for fun."

The cameras have photographed cougars, deer, coyotes, otters, raccoons and hummingbirds on the island. Even a bear has been sighted on the north side of the island although the cameras have yet to capture a picture of the bear. Street particularly enjoys a close-up photo of a curious hummingbird recorded by one of the cameras. "Hummingbirds are so fast and so small, I didn't expect the camera to capture one," Street said. "I think the hummingbird was attracted to the

as some animals rely on others for their food.

"We are looking at the health of the animals on the island," Street said. "We are looking at where they congregate. We also like to keep track of the cougar's travels in particular."

There are two cougars that frequent the island—a male and a female. The cougars have been seen jumping over the fence at NAVMAG or sometimes swimming across Kilisut Harbor to Marrowstone Island and back. There is even a photo of a cougar walking casually through the front gate.

The cameras provide evidence of the various species present on the island.

animals on the island. This survey will provide those managers with the necessary documentation and then plan accordingly.

"The trail cameras provide scientific data about wildlife on Indian Island," Sara Street, NAVMAG natural resources

red lens cover on the infrared flash."

The cameras provide evidence of the species present on the island. The large animal survey uses this evidence to determine the ratio of various species on the island. The cameras also show the "circle of life,"

The wildlife survey provides valuable information to support the installation's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP). The INRMP guides policy makers as they attempt to manage the island's natural resources. Natural resource managers also use the INRMP to

advise leadership as building projects are proposed on Indian Island.

Most recently, a contract to build power lines for shore-based power to the pier at NAVMAG was completed. The alignment of the power poles as part of that contract was considered in the INRMP. As part of the consideration, the power lines were moved around wetlands to protect a critical natural area.

The INRMP also maintains habitat for animals and directs planners to avoid the 10 known bald eagle nesting sites on the island.

The cameras have shown a dramatic reduction in the coyote population on Indian Island in the past year. The coyotes appear healthy in photos from the trail cameras, but there are reduced numbers of these animals. “We haven’t determined causation yet,” Street said. “A year ago, people who work here were saying that the coyotes were becoming too bold.”

At the time, coyotes were reportedly peering into office windows, but with the population decline, those reports have become less frequent. “I used to see groups of four coyotes in the cameras,” Street explained. “The ratio used to be about one coyote for every four deer photographed. Today, it’s about 30 deer to one coyote.”

An elk was also seen on the island several years ago. It stayed for about a week and then left. Security and ordnance workers have also seen a bear wandering around the island. The animals haven’t acted aggressively towards people. They tend to scamper away if people get too close. “The cougars are more curious than anything else,” Street said. “The female occasionally watches people. I think she just wants to see what is going on.”

Before working in natural resources, Street served active duty in the Navy from 2001–2005 as an Aviation Electronics Technician at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island. She worked on the P-3 Orion aircraft radar system. After her Navy service, she attended college and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology.

Street thought she would go to work for a state fish and wildlife department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



NAVMAG Indian Island’s natural resource managers are using motion detection trail cameras to conduct a wildlife survey.



There are two cougars that currently frequent the island—a male and a female. The cougars have been seen jumping over the installation’s 12-foot-high fence or sometimes swimming across Kilisut Harbor to Marrowstone Island and back. There is even a photo of a cougar walking casually through the front gate of the base.



Sara Street sits behind a scale model of Indian Island where she is currently completing a wildlife survey using motion detection trail cameras to document various wildlife species present on the island and their respective ratios.

MCS1 Jeffry Willadsen



The large animal survey helps to determine the ratio of species on NAVMAG Indian Island. The cameras also show the “circle of life” as some animals rely on others for their dinner. Island cameras have photographed cougars, deer, coyotes, otters, raccoons and hummingbirds.

(USFWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). She didn’t imagine that she would return to work for the Navy but is glad she did.

Street was accepted in 2011 for the Navy’s Professional Development Career internship. Her first rotation was at Indian Island where she worked on inspection and compliance issues. One rotation took her back to NAS Whidbey Island, and another took her to Naval Base Kitsap–Bremerton.

NAVMAG’s environmental office is a two-person team which includes Street and Bill Kalina, environmental site manager. They are responsible for eight environmental programs each and like to refer to themselves as a “one-person band.”

“We are never bored,” Street said. “Everybody knows everyone else on the island so we help each other get things done.”

“I count on my natural resource managers to help me make the right decisions,” said CMDR Nick Vande Griend, NAVMAG Indian Island commander. “This means the Navy can complete its mission and take care of the environment at the same time.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

The Basics About Naval Magazine Indian Island

NAVMAG Indian Island is the U.S. Navy's only deep-water ammunition port and the largest ordnance storage site on the west coast. The command is aligned under Commander, Navy Region Northwest located at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor. NAVMAG's mission is to provide the full range of conventional ordnance logistics support to Pacific Fleet vessels and activities, U.S. Marine Corps units, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) ships stationed in the Puget Sound, Army and Air Force activities in the Pacific Theater and allied partners. NAVMAG recently celebrated its 75th year of operation tracing its heritage back to May 10, 1941.



History

Indian Island was the ancestral home of the Chemakum Tribe and was later occupied by members of the S'Klallam Tribe. In 1792, an expedition led by English Captain George Vancouver came ashore calling it "Indian Island" after finding the remnants of the Chemakum village site. European immigrants settled the island beginning in the 1860s conducting logging, farming and raising livestock. The Navy purchased the land from the homestead families in 1939 and established NAVMAG Indian Island to carry out multiple missions including munitions storage, mine assembly and anti-submarine net manufacturing.

At the height of World War II (WWII), manning reached 350 military and 200 civilians to support ordnance operations that ran seven days a week—at times loading two ships per day. As work levels dropped off following the end of the Korean War, the island was placed in a reduced operating status in 1959. With construction of the Trident Submarine Base at Bangor, the conventional ammunition mission shifted back to Indian Island with completion of a new ammunition wharf in 1978. After Operation Desert Storm (in 1991), NAVMAG was selected as one of two west coast ports to

be upgraded for the efficient transshipment of containerized ammunition. One of the infrastructure improvements included installation of the DoD's largest container crane at the Indian Island ammunition wharf in 1999. Known by Indian Island personnel as "Big Blue," this massive crane is used for the island's strategic mission in support of Pacific theater joint force operations.

Stewardship

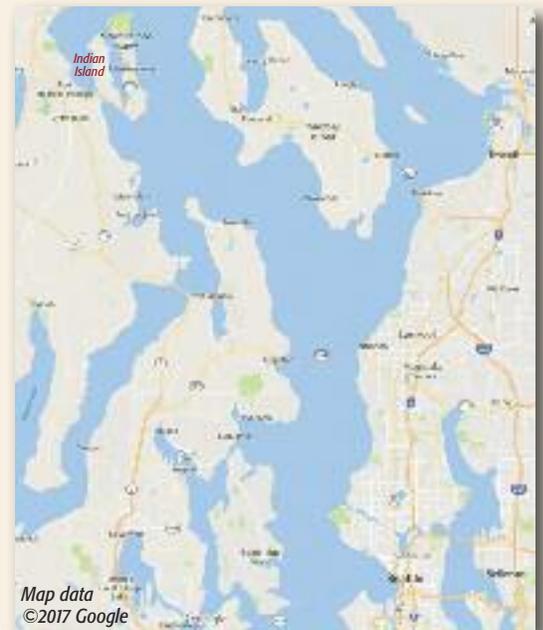
The 2,716-acre island hosts a wealth of cultural and natural resources, including 14 documented Native-American archeological sites, historic pioneer homesteads, over 2,100 acres of forest land and WWII-era buildings that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The island is also home to a diversity of wildlife species, including 10 active bald eagle nest territories, a resident herd of over 300 black-tailed deer, coyotes, river otters, harbor seals and occasional black bears and cougars. In 2005, NAVMAG Indian Island became the third base (first on the west coast) in naval history to be delisted from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List. A full-time environmental staff works closely with the U.S. Geological Survey, USFWS, NMFS, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, North Olympic Salmon Coalition and Washington Department of Ecology to provide protection and conservation of the natural resources under the Navy's stewardship.

NAVMAG has established an aggressive energy reduction program lowering its energy use 61 percent since 2003. As a result, NAVMAG received its fifth consecutive Platinum-level Secretary of the Navy Energy and Water Management Award in October 2016. In 2017, NAVMAG completed the transition to permanent shore-based power at the ammunition wharf eliminating the requirement for diesel powered generators and reducing the Island's carbon footprint. (For more details, see our article "NAVMAG Indian Island Turns to Clean, Reliable Electricity to Power Visiting

Submarines" on page 20 of this issue of *Currents*.)

NAVMAG by the Numbers

- 160:** Number of personnel who work on the island each day
- 18:** Military personnel
- 95:** Civilians
- 56:** Contractors
- 109:** Reservists



NAVMAG Fun Facts

1. Only deep-water ordnance facility on the west coast with no access restrictions.
2. Averages 230 berth days/year by aircraft carriers, ammunition ships, guided missile destroyers and submarines, USCG patrol boats, commercial barges and container ships.
3. Pier is 1,650 feet long with 55 feet of draft available at mean-low tide.
4. "Big Blue" self-sustained diesel-electric rail crane can lift 89,000 pounds.
5. Largest throughput of any Navy weapons facility on the west coast.
6. Nobody lives on NAVMAG Indian Island.



Natural resource managers are conducting a wildlife survey on NAVMAG Indian Island which provides valuable information to support the installation's INRMP. The INRMP helps natural resource managers properly advise leadership as building projects are proposed on the island.

I count on my natural resource managers
to help me make the right decisions.

—CMDR Nick Vande Griend

For More Information

FOR MORE INFORMATION about Navy Region Northwest, call 360-396-1630 or visit www.homeportnorthwest.wordpress.com, www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnrnw.html and/or www.facebook.com/CNRNW.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

While the nation's military provides protection for America and her allies, the Department of Defense (DoD) likewise maintains a strong conservation effort at all its locations. So much so that creatures of all kinds congregate on the vast holdings of U.S. military installations. In fact, the DoD manages and protects 400 threatened and endangered species on 25 million acres of land across 420 military installations. The Defense Department now manages more species per acre than any other federal agency, including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and USFWS. ↴

Note: All wildlife photos were all taken using stand-alone trail cameras.

Phil Guerrero
Navy Region Northwest
360-396-4955
DSN: 744-4955
phillip.guerrero@navy.mil