

Island educator launches native-species learning adventure

By Chris Fitzgerald
KP News

A 10-minute ferry ride carries passengers to a uniquely rural, platted community of fewer than 100 residents, in off-season, on tiny Herron Island. In February, island resident Nancy Broege began a three-part presentation on deer to Herron Island Booster Club members.

Broege's first love is marine life. She has received naturalist training at the Whale Museum in Friday Harbor, where she created a "whale bingo" game, and aquatic fact sheets. She also completed an "instructor training program" with the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, and volunteered there as a guide, newsletter editor, and special events assistant.

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She says Pacific white-sided dolphins, which she has observed both in Elliot Bay and the San Juans, as well as Dall's

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-Nancy Broege,
Herron Island resident

porpoises and harbor porpoises, swim in Puget Sound waters. Orcas are the largest member of the dolphin family and are also called killer whales.

"I love teaching," Broege says. Although committed to her career at Weyerhaeuser, she wanted to share her appreciation for nature with others. She volunteered at a local school, developed a class involving dolphin information for Junior Achievement seventh-graders, and found it satisfying.

"Why not teach about dolphins and porpoises on cruise ships?" she wondered. Investigating this venue, she was invited to submit a proposal, and did so last October. Then she realized



Nancy Broege on Herron Island.

Photo by Chris Fitzgerald

she lacked adult audience experience, and contacted the booster club. Broege chose deer as a first topic because they are tame and plentiful as pets on Herron Island, and she thought learning about them would interest her neighbors. She admitted going outside her "comfort zone" in giving a nature talk to her own small community, but her motivation to develop a strong presentation about wildlife propelled her forward. She challenges herself by using a variety of learning techniques, including PowerPoint presentations, audience participation, and handouts.

"I know a lot about dolphins, porpoises and marine mammals — and now deer," she says, "but it's the teaching I'm after, really."

A seminar she attended several years ago showed Broege the volatile side of naturalist conservation. She realized there that, while she respected and appreciated marine life, she wasn't willing to go to jail to protect it. She was encouraged to learn that educators were needed, too. "The more information people have, the better decisions they will make, whatever that may be for them," Broege says. "That's where I can help."



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