

## News of the week: Feb. 24, 2023

Dear Reader —

This week, [Nancy DeVaux](#) reports on what's next with Washington State Ferries runs between Anacortes and the San Juan Islands following recent years plagued by frequent delays and cancellations as the fleet has aged and crew numbers dwindled.

[Matt Benoit](#) looks into some of the challenges in rehabilitating wild animals who have lived too close to humans for too long: creatures as large as orca whales and as small as hummingbirds.

This is good information, accountable and well-researched ... just what's needed in the way of local news to help strengthen our communities, keep us informed and even help our democracy survive.

But what else is true and trustworthy, in the sea of information that surrounds us? How can you tell?

I invite you to join an important conversation on this very topic, on April 13, 7 p.m., when we bring two University of Washington educators and nationally acclaimed authors to help us sort that out, in our "Truth, Trust and the News" forum.

Carl Bergstrom and Jevin West, authors of "Calling Bullshit: The Art of Skepticism in a Data-Driven World," will speak at Heiner Auditorium at Whatcom Community College. The book — described by reviewers as a survival guide for a world awash in fake news and factual distortion — shares insights from the research behind their popular course on the topic.

The engaging, enlightening, sometimes startling work argues that social media has eroded the quality of our information and has led to a dangerous disregard for the truth.

By every measure, robust local journalism is vital for strong democracy and healthy communities. We all need media literacy and trustworthy news sources.

Please join us for this important conversation — [register now for your free ticket](#).

And a special thanks this month to all our supporters who have set up [recurring donations](#). It's a very good feeling to know we have your continued support, month after month. Thank you for donating, for reading and for sharing with your network. We're grateful for your support that enables us to keep bringing you original, local reporting and commentary, as a public service to our community.

—Amy Nelson, Publisher

**Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equity and healing for all people.**  
**#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter**  
**#NoJusticeNoPeace**

Want more environmental news? [Salish Sea News and Weather](#) is a weekday curated compilation of news from Salish Sea news sources. Free via email or on the web.

[Salish Sea News Week in Review Feb. 24, 2023](#): Twin Peaks Friday, pollution cap, Denman Island terminal, PSE renewables, starving orcas, B.C. fish farms, salmon lipids, forever chemicals, biosolids, Melanie Mark, Washington hydro.

## News from the *Salish Current*

### [Where's the ferry?](#)



*Riders on Washington State Ferries runs serving Anacortes and the San Juan Islands — including this stop in Friday Harbor — can continue to expect delays and cancellations, for now. For the future, 16 years out, new funding for hybrid vessels, full staffing and improved terminals could bring improvements.*

**By Nancy DeVaux:** Islanders will see more crew, upgraded terminal ... before new ferries. [Read more](#).

## Returning wildlife to the wild is a one-by-one effort



*Bald eagles are among creatures great and small that clinics and conservatories work to return to their wild ways and eventually into the wild after being rescued or living closely with humans.*

**By Matt Benoit:** From whales to baby songbirds, rehabilitation and release efforts play out daily for wild animals separated from their natural worlds. [Read more.](#)

## Letters to the Editor

- *Riveters Collective:* Support Traffic Safety for All bill

*Our policy: Salish Current welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address and daytime phone number. Those accepted for publication will focus on issues addressed in news articles or commentaries in Salish Current and be factual. No snark or put-downs will be acceptable; general nastiness will be rejected. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be edited for length and clarity. Salish Current will publish letters sent to the editor at its sole discretion.*

## **News from around the region**

(The links found here may have limited access for those who don't subscribe to the source publication. Sorry for any inconvenience!)

### **Health and Safety**

**Cannabis.** A bill [[ESSB 5123](#)] sponsored by Sen. Karen Keiser [D-Des Moines] that prohibits employers from discriminating against applicants for cannabis use outside of work passed the state Senate and moved to the House. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

## Education

**Blaine nature.** After a three-year hiatus, Garden of the Salish Sea Curriculum will take Blaine students on marine life field trips. ([The Northern light](#))

**Dismissal asked.** The attorneys for three Bellingham Public Schools administrators charged with failing to report a student's sexual assaults have asked the court to dismiss the cases, contending the state law requiring child abuse and neglect to be reported does not include conduct between two juveniles. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

**Mental health.** Northwest Educational Service District 189, which serves 35 school districts in Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties, has received an \$11.4 million grant to expand school-based mental health services. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

## Nature

**Saltgrass.** What do you know about *Distichlis spicata* and its value along the shores of Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay? ([The Northern Light](#))

**Padden Creek.** Watch the city of Bellingham's [video](#) on the Padden Creek restoration project and check out the city's restoration [project page](#) to learn more.

## Business

**Sunk tug.** A 45-foot tugboat carrying 400 gallons of diesel fuel that sank off the Lopez ferry terminal Wednesday morning was raised but left a sheen of oil on surrounding waters. ([KGMI](#)) See also: ([Washington Dept. of Ecology](#))

**Fare hike.** Skagit County proposes to raise Guemes Island ferry fares by 71% to free money for county road repairs. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

**Climate plan.** The Port of Skagit has decided to develop a climate action plan. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

## Community

**Library bond.** The city of Mount Vernon approved a \$21 million stopgap bond to continue work on the city's \$53

million library complex until a \$25 million federal grant is received. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

**Gun measures.** Bills to regulate firearms moved forward last week. The bills would prohibit the sale or transfer of most semiautomatic rifles, mandate gun-safety training through a permit-to-purchase program and hold the firearms industry responsible in some cases of harm. ([Crosscut](#))

**Flood damage.** The flooding in Skagit County last December did not reach a threshold that qualified those suffering loss to apply for emergency federal reimbursement. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) See: "Surprising channel flood leaves La Conner planning for future" ([Salish Current February 9, 2023](#))

**Children's Fund.** Whatcom County is considering spending its \$10 million annual Healthy Children's Fund to assist early learning and child care centers and to support vulnerable children, in addition to support administrative cost. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

**More housing.** "The Manning," a 170-unit development with retail space, is scheduled for construction by Mercy Housing Northwest on the former site of the YMCA Early Learning Center and near its recently completed Trailview Apartments in Bellingham's Barkley Village. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

**Lights out.** The former site of Lighthouse Mission in Bellingham's Old Town will be demolished in early March to make room for a new 300-bed shelter. ([CDN/paywall](#))

### **Commentary**

**Downtown parking.** Austin Wu reflects on the high cost of parking in downtown Bellingham. ([The Urbanist](#))

**What's 'Indigenous'?** Manvir Singh writes: "Many groups who identify as Indigenous don't claim to be first peoples; many who did come first don't claim to be Indigenous. Can the concept escape its colonial past?" ([The New Yorker](#))

### **Arts and Leisure**

**Glass art.** Lopez Island artist Raven Skyriver transforms sea creatures into glass. ([Crosscut](#))

**Poetry contest.** The Sue C. Boynton Poetry Contest is open to Whatcom County poets March 1 for a month. [Details here.](#)

**Whatcom READS.** Jess Walter, author of "The Cold Millions," will be at county events March 2–4. For info and to register, [go here.](#)

**Showtime.** The photography exhibit, "Vintage Vaudevillians," promoting early vaudeville act in Bellingham, returns to the Lightcatcher in partnership with Whatcom READS. [Info.](#)

**Murder.** City Club of Bellingham's Feb. 22 talk, "A Nicer Kind of Murder: The Evolution of Crime Fiction" with author Matthew Sullivan, is available online until March 4. [Watch here.](#)

**Early music.** The Salish Sea Early Music Festival presents the Viennese Biedermeier Serenade (1815-1835) • with Oleg Timofeyev (guitar), Lindsey Strand-Polyak (viola) and Jeffrey Cohan (8-keyed flute). Feb. 24 Bellingham First Presbyterian Church, 7 p.m.; Feb. 25 San Juan Brickworks, 12:30 p.m.; Feb. 25 Lopez Grace Church, 6 p.m. By donation.

**Textile dyeing.** The Whatcom Museum presents Katazome Today, contemporary visions of a unique and historically significant Japanese textile-dyeing process. Through June 11. [Information.](#)

### **Jump in!**

**Work party.** Join Skagit Land Trust at the Samish Island work party to plant native shrubs and trees. Feb. 25, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. [Register here.](#)

**Raptors.** North Cascades Audubon Society's Feb. 28 program features Veracruz River of Raptors with Sue Cottrell who will share her trip she co-led to Veracruz, Mexico, this past October to experience the Rio de Rapaces. 7 p.m., Whatcom Museum Old City Hall Rotunda. [Info.](#)

**Expo.** Come to the seventh annual Whatcom Farm Expo March 4 in the WECU Expo Building at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. [\(The Northern Light\)](#)

## **Government, for the people**

### **Washington State Legislature Bill information.**

#### **[HB 1389](#)**

[Passed out to Appropriations.] Concerning residential rent increases under the residential landlord-tenant act and the manufactured/mobile home landlord-tenant act. [Ramel, Lekanoff]

#### **[HB 1363](#)**

[Passed out to Transportation.] Concerning vehicular pursuits. [Rule, Timmons, Lekanoff]

#### **[HB1340](#)**

[Placed on floor calendar.] Concerning actions by health professions disciplining authorities against license applicants and license holders. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

#### **[HB 1337](#)**

[Placed on floor calendar.] Expanding housing options by easing barriers to the construction and use of accessory dwelling units. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

#### **[HB 1110](#)**

[Passed out to Appropriations.] Increasing middle housing in areas traditionally dedicated to single-family detached housing. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

#### **[SB 5371](#)**

[Second reading in Rules.] Protecting Southern Resident orcas from vessels. [Lovelett, Shewmake]

## **San Juan County**

Observer Corps meeting reports may be found at [LWVSJ](#): County Council, Feb. 7; Port Commission Feb. 8.

## **City of Bellingham**

The council will meet on Feb. 27. [Agenda items](#) include:

### **Public Works and Natural Resources:**

- Report from Lake Whatcom Policy Group meeting. [Report.](#)
- Single stream recycling and organic materials collection resolution. [Staff memo.](#)

### **Community and Economic Development Committee:**

- Western Washington University's Small Business Development Center. [Quarterly report.](#)

### **Parks and Recreation Committee:**

- Greenways annual report. [Report.](#)

#### Committee of the Whole:

- Rental agreement regulations ordinance. [Staff memo.](#)
- Rental protection measures work session. [Staff memo.](#)
- Fire department overtime issues. [Staff memo.](#)

#### **Whatcom County**

The council met on Feb. 21. [Agenda items](#) included:

#### Criminal Justice and Safety Committee:

- Failed to pass (Elenbaas yea; Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Frazey and Galloway nay; Kershner abstain) ordinance repealing Whatcom County Code 1.28, Standards for Correctional Facilities, in its entirety. [Sheriff memo.](#)

#### Planning and Development Committee:

- Passed (6 aye, Elenbaas nay) resolution docketing Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation amendments. [Staff memo.](#)

The council will next meet on March 7.

#### **Port of Bellingham**

The commission met on Feb. 21. [Agenda items](#) included:

#### Public comment:

- Resident Bert Weber spoke about the Snow Goose education program and about eliminating leaded aviation fuel from planes flying over residences. [\(YouTube 4:21-16:43\)](#)  
[Port staff will report back on developing a communications/education plan directed at the general aviation community regarding leaded and unleaded fuel.]

#### Consent agenda:

- Authorized consent agenda items including authorizing the Executive Director to execute [Amendment No. 1](#) to the Personal Services Agreement with DH Environmental, Inc. to support the Port's 2023 Environmental Compliance Assessment Program. The contract will be extended to December 31, 2023, at a cost of \$35,172.04, an increase of the total contract to \$65,171.88. Priority will be given to highest risk properties developed by port staff.

Presentations:

- Port of Bellingham EDA Revolving Loan Program Update [[YouTube 20:50-36:40](#)]
- SeaFeast Update [[YouTube 37:10-52:20](#)]

Other business:

ABC Recycling's ship is scheduled to arrive at the port the weekend of Feb. 25.

The commission will next meet on March 7.

**Like this newsletter? Share it. And it's easy to subscribe by reply mail. Your email address will never be shared and you can unsubscribe at any time. — Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

*Salish Current* is a nonprofit online newsroom serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Founded in 2020, *Salish Current* exists to protect and improve democratic governance by reporting and curating local news — freely accessible to all — with independence and strict journalistic integrity.

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