

# chuckanut news

## Annual Block Party

Sunday, July 22  
5 to 8 pm

El Tapatio Taco Truck

The Penny Stinkers Band  
Dance Music from the 70s, 80s, & 90s

Come join us in the parking lot of the Fire Hall -- or inside if it's raining. Enjoy some good Mexican food and a popular local band with your neighbors. All Chuckanut residents are invited.

## Chuckanut HAMs

Resident amateur radio operators -- popularly called "ham radio operators"—have established a radio station at the Fire Hall to support our CERT teams and the community in an emergency. The station, call sign KI7PRK, is an Auxiliary Communications Station (ACS), under the sponsorship of our Fire Chief and the County Sheriff's Dept. We meet every Tuesday morning for radio checks with other County emergency stations. Interested in joining? Email Steve Tuckerman: [tosteve@mac.com](mailto:tosteve@mac.com)

📷 Cover Photo by Bob Earl

## Paddle to Chuckanut Island

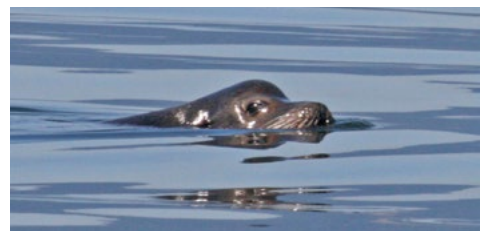
May 2010  
By Ned Brown

Having built a kayak from a Pygmy Kit, I went for a tryout and spring paddle to Chuckanut Island eight years ago. I was looking for wildlife and brought my camera.



📷 Ned Brown

The camera was expensive and certainly not waterproof, and the kayak a bit tippy, so there was worry. But all turned out well -- good wildlife and no dumping. The photo, by the way, is of a sea lion, not a seal.



📷 Sea lion, Harlequin Duck, and Oyster Catchers (top to bottom) photos by Ned Brown

# Quiet Zone Redux

**“I knew it was going to be good to have a Quiet Zone, but I didn’t realize until it happened just how big a difference it has made.”**

Now that we’ve had the Quiet Zone at the Yacht Club Road crossing for about a year, it’s worth assessing how it all came out. For those living close to the crossing, there seems to be universal satisfaction. It is such a pleasure not to have those blaring horns 20+ times a day. Indeed, most residents comment: “I knew it was going to be good to have a Quiet Zone, but I didn’t realize until it happened just how big a difference it has made.”

One explanation for this reaction may be that the increasingly loud rumble of an approaching train had conditioned us to involuntarily “brace” for the four 100+ decibel horn blasts that were shortly to follow. Mercifully, we don’t have to tense up anymore. Sure, the locomotives are still pretty loud, and the squealing wheels and banging cars are still annoying. But residents have very little they can do about that – beyond spending more money on sound proofing their homes. The horn blasts were something that residents could actually take action to affect.

There is, of course, the occasional violator of the Quiet Zone – a locomotive engineer who sounds the four horn blasts – two long, one short, and one long – as he or she approaches the crossing in spite of the QZ. Obviously, engineers are allowed (and encouraged) to sound their horns whenever they see an unsafe situation ahead – e.g., people or a deer on the track. That appropriate warning can be a single horn blast, or maybe two. It does NOT need the four blasts – two long, a short, and another long – that is required by federal regulation at crossings that are not designated as Quiet Zones.

Such horn violations don’t seem to be occurring all that often – perhaps one or two a week. However, they are quite “attention getting” since we have now become

so accustomed to their absence. We don’t know whether the engineer in such cases is new to the route and isn’t aware of the QZ, or is forgetful / negligent..., or possibly even malicious. (“I’m upset I’m awake at 3 am, so I’m going to make sure everyone else is also awake and just as angry as I am...”) The latter explanation is highly unlikely, although before the QZ was established, it was definitely a thought that occurred a few times, particularly when an engineer hung onto the “long” blasts an exceptionally long time. (The Federal Railway Administration (FRA) does not define “long” or “short” in the four-blast requirement for crossings.)

Residents have been reporting some of the QZ horn violations to the FRA, particularly when able to record the four-digit locomotive number of the train. (Harder to do at 3 am when it’s dark and you’ve just been awakened in bed.) The FRA has been responsive, and passes the information along to BNSF for their attention. If you have a QZ horn violation you’d like to report, CBCA is happy to compile and coordinate these, so that we don’t overwhelm the FRA with multiple individual complaints and risk losing the FRA’s willingness to be helpful.

One relatively minor frustration with the QZ has been the length of the median on the western side of the crossing. Trucks coming west have a hard time negotiating the left-hand turn onto Chuckanut Shore Road. Many have run over the last foot or so of the median, and that west-most yellow reflective panel has been crushed one too many times. (The County hauled it away.) Regular delivery trucks, such as the weekly garbage trucks, know how to avoid that issue by crossing over into the opposite lane of traffic as they cross the tracks, thereby eliminating the need to make the difficult left turn at the end of the median. If you have a large truck



making a delivery to your home along Chuckanut Shore Rd or Chuckanut Lane, you might make sure the driver is aware of the work-around procedure. If the County decides to cut off the last foot or so of the median, the problem will be largely eliminated.

At any rate, residents seem extremely pleased with the QZ, and the two-year effort to get it approved and installed was definitely worth it. We are grateful for the hard work of the residents who persistently pursued the frustrating bureaucratic initiative and for the financial contribution of residents who made it possible. Enjoy the QUIET.

P.S. Efforts are underway for approval of a QZ at the Cove Road crossing.

## CBCA Website



[www.chuckanutcommunity.org](http://www.chuckanutcommunity.org)

Registering on the website gives you access to more information—the Directory, bulletins, and meeting minutes.

And, paying your annual membership contribution (\$35) supports CBCA with its many activities in support of community welfare and safety.

If you haven’t yet made your 2018 membership contribution, please mail a check for \$35 to:

**CBCA, PO Box 4403,  
Bellingham, WA 98227**

# Chuckanut Gray Whale Sightings

For a couple of days in mid- May, many Chuckanut residents were able to view a rare sight in Chuckanut Bay. A California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) was observed along the east coast of Governors Point near the mouth of Pleasant Bay. The whale would (presumably) feed for about five minutes, come up for air, blowing (spouting) about two or three times, then hump over and dive again to resume feeding. This behavior would last for several hours. Gray whales migrate up from Baja California to Alaska and have one of the longest annual migrations of any mammal, traveling about 10,000 miles round-trip. As long a trip as it is, they usually don't feed during the migration. I guess our little Chuckanut mud shrimp were just too tempting for this one. Some residents got a good view of the whale (see photos).



## CERT Training

The local Chuckanut Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) conducted an exercise at the Fire Hall on 19 April. The exercise tested the “worst case” that we might expect here along Chuckanut – a Magnitude 8 or 9 earthquake along the Cascadia Fault, that isolates our community with landslides on Chuckanut Drive both north and south of us, and the loss of all electricity and cell phone functionality.

Teams were dispatched north and south on Chuckanut Drive to identify exercise land slides and other damage and casualties and report by ham radio to the Fire Hall. A casualty reception center was set up at the Fire Hall. And our ham radio station at the Fire Hall reported to the Whatcom County Emergency Ops Center.

We intend to conduct a similar exercise on Thursday, October 18th. Time to be determined, but likely to last two to three hours. Residents are invited to come observe all or part of the exercise and/or to participate either as a volunteer assisting at the Fire Hall or as a mock “victim” to be processed through our reception center at the Fire Hall.

If you would like to observe or participate in one of these roles, please call Bob Earl at 517-296-0184 or email him at [bobearl@aol.com](mailto:bobearl@aol.com)

## In Memory of Dorothy Gonsalves

Chuckanut residents lost an old friend on May 18th. Dorothy Gonsalves passed away at 90 years old. A long time resident on Chuckanut Drive, Dorothy was a member of many Bellingham area organizations including the Chuckanut Community & Firefighters Association, the predecessor to CBCA. She will be missed by her many friends and neighbors. Memorial donations may be made to CBCA.

### CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALES QUICK FACTS

**Weight:** up to 80,000 pounds (35,000 kg)

**Length:** up to 50 feet (15 m) long

**Appearance:** mottled (white areas are where barnacles and lice have attached themselves to the whales - they carry over 400 pounds of barnacles and whale lice!) gray body, with small eyes; they have a “dorsal hump” (not a dorsal fin) with a series of 8-14 small bumps, known as “knuckles”.

**Lifespan:** unknown, but may be as long as 80 years; sexually mature at around 8 years old.

**Diet:** Gray whales are bottom feeders, and suck sediment and the benthic amphipods (small ghost shrimp are a favorite) that are their prey from the sea floor. To do this, they roll on their sides and swim slowly along, filtering their food through coarse baleen plates. In doing so, they often leave long trails of mud behind them, and “feeding pits” in the sea floor.

**Behavior:** traveling alone or in small, unstable groups

**Threats:** entanglement in fishing and crabbing gear, vessel strikes, man-made ocean noise, disturbance from whale watching activities, climate change

From the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/gray-whale>

# chuckanut news

Chuckanut Bay Community Association  
PO Box 4403  
Bellingham, WA 98227-4403

## CBCA General Meeting Wednesday, October 3rd

On Wednesday evening, October 3rd, CBCA will conduct the second of its two annual member meetings. We will be electing new board members and officers for the association. If you are interested in serving in one of these positions, please contact the CBCA President, Bob Earl, at 571-296-0184 or at [bobearl@aol.com](mailto:bobearl@aol.com).

### Chuckanut Chili Cookoff

We will also be holding the third annual Chuckanut Chili Cookoff. Residents will be serving their favorite homemade chili, and the “best chili” will be awarded a prize. Last year the firemen in our local fire district won the contest with their six-alarm chili. If you are interested in bringing a chili to the contest, contact Linda Earl at [booksareus@aol.com](mailto:booksareus@aol.com)

### Chuckanut Safety Concerns

Finally, we are exploring having as guest speakers at this meeting, representatives from the state Department of Transportation – and possibly also from the local State Patrol detachment. The speakers



### Winners of last years Chili Cookoff

will address safety issues along Chuckanut Drive, a state highway. They will answer our questions about what measures might be possible to “calm traffic” and increase safety along our increasingly busy “main street.”

The issues of an increasing number of speeders (cars and motorcycles), vehicles passing other vehicles in spite of the double yellow lines, and the hazards posed by and to bicyclists on a winding road with little to no shoulders, etc. are all fair game for discussion.

We are making clear to the DOT and state police reps, however, that the community is NOT interested in lowering the

speed limit or in installing speed bumps. The posted speed limit of 40 mph is not unsafe, and we do not want to needlessly inconvenience residents who drive this road every day with bone-jarring and vehicle-damaging speed bumps.

More practical and realistic measures that might be considered include increased presence by the State Patrol and installation of a couple of permanent radar cameras that take a picture of vehicles driving more than 15 mph over the speed limit, particularly those dangerously passing other vehicles in spite of the double yellow lines.

## CBCA Board Members

Bob Earl, President  
Jennie Tuckerman, Vice President  
Karen Ekdahl, Treasurer  
Gale Gropp, Secretary  
Henry Chu, Board Member  
Nick Zana, Board Member  
Julie Carpenter, Board Member