

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 18, 2023.

Friends of Fort Flagler issued this warning on Thursday, July 13: Avian Flu is in Jefferson County. An outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), commonly known as bird flu, has the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) closing public access to Rat Island near Fort Flagler State Park. Dozens of Caspian terns have died in the area and there are more that appear sick. Samples from bird carcasses were collected and have tested positive. The HPAI virus occurs naturally among wild aquatic birds worldwide and can infect poultry and other bird and animal species. The virus is contagious among birds through saliva, nasal secretions, feces, and contaminated surfaces.

WDFW is asking the public to avoid contact with sick or dead birds and/or seals as a preventative measure. Also, do not attempt to transport them to a veterinarian or a private property for treatment. Moving sick animals can spread the virus to areas where it did not exist before. Keep your dogs on leash and away from the shoreline and keep them away from bird carcasses or sick birds to avoid exposure to HPAI. Public access to Rat Island had recently been discouraged to reduce disturbance to the tern colony and harbor seal pups present there, and shellfish harvest is closed around the island, but extreme low tides have led to more foot traffic to the island from Fort Flagler State Park. Staff are posting "closed" signs and information on HPAI around the island, the campground, and the boat launch. Keeping humans out of the area is a preventative measure and helps prevent the spread of the virus. Please help spread the word about this closure and not touching sick or dead wildlife.

Friends of Fort Flagler has been working with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife to provide some protection to Rat Island during the Caspian Tern nesting and Harbor Seal pupping season which occurs during July and August. The goal of their Docent Program is to have docents posted at the end of the Fort Flagler spit, across from Rat Island during extremely low tides. There is signage discouraging folks from walking or kayaking on the island. For more information on becoming a member, donating, volunteering or future events, visit <https://friendsoffortflagler.org/>.

Lori Kaminester, 59, of Port Townsend was arrested last July for driving under the influence and hit-and-run driving after she allegedly hit a bicyclist on Highway 20 near Old Fort Townsend Road. As reported here on KPTZ News and in the *PT Leader*, Kaminester was driving east on Highway 20 just after 9:30am Sunday, July 17 of last year in a 1995 Ford Windstar when her vehicle drifted onto the shoulder and a mirror on the minivan hit a bicyclist and knocked her into a ditch beside the highway. The bicyclist, a 48-year-old Coupeville woman, was taken to St. Michael's Medical Center in Silverdale for treatment. The Washington State Patrol said Kaminester did not stop at the scene and her minivan was later found in the parking lot of the QFC by Port Townsend police. She was initially charged with hit-and-run from an injury accident and DUI. The charges were amended last September to hit-and-run from an injury accident and vehicular assault-DUI. Both charges are felonies.

Hit-and-run from an injury accident can result in a maximum prison sentence of five years upon conviction and a \$10,000 fine. Conviction of vehicular assault-DUI can result in a 10-year prison sentence and a \$20,000 fine. Attorneys in the vehicular assault case are continuing to seek a plea agreement that would resolve the felony case short of a trial. Negotiations on a plea agreement stretch back months, and a change of plea hearing was set for this past Friday, July 14 in Jefferson County Superior Court. Ms. Kaminester's case was not addressed on July 14. It was continued to September 15, 2023 for a Change of Plea and Sentencing.

Last night, July 17, at approximately 6:30pm, the driver of a 1983 Ford Ranger pickup was eastbound on US Highway 101 and, as he exited at River Road in Sequim, veered to the left, overreacted to the right and rolled the pickup several times. It came to rest upside down, blocking the exit. The driver, Cole Roberts, 26 of Port Hadlock was injured and airlifted to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. In the report, Washington State Patrol said Roberts was not wearing a seat belt. They found no evidence of intoxication, and he was charged with negligent driving in the second degree.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!