Snapshot: A Dragon Rouses out of the Sea Spray

The violent breaking of waves is both visually spectacular and meteorologically impactful.

Photographer **Chris Elkinton** set off one windy December day to Cape Disappointment State Park in Washington, hoping to capture images of the rough, roiling seas and colliding waves during a "king tide." That's when the Moon's closest approach to Earth coincides with the biweekly alignment of the Sun, Earth, and the Moon. This photograph, which he titled Sea Dragon for the beast-like profile in the crashing wave, earned Elkinton second place in the American Meteorological Society's 2026 photograph contest [**1**]. The image illustrates an important meteorological phenomenon. The breaking of waves lofts salt-filled droplets high into the atmosphere, where they evaporate. The salty aerosols left behind nucleate cloud droplets and scatter solar radiation, influencing weather and climate.

Snapshot articles highlight eye-catching images from across physics.

—C.D.



Credit: © Chris Elkinton Photography

REFERENCES

1. AMS Headlines, **Framing the heavens: 2026 photo contest winners**, October 19, 2026.