USGS-UCSC Cooperative Sea Otter Research

Organization/Agency: USGS-UCSC Cooperative Research

Supervisor/Sponsor: M. Tim Tinker

Supervisor/Sponsor Title: Adjunct Faculty

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Internship assignment: Research on sea otters is mandated by the U.S. Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. For California, this research is the responsibility of the USGS Western Ecological Research Center. The research program is headquartered at the Santa Cruz Field Station, whose offices are located at the Center for Ocean Health at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Interns will be trained to participate in radio tracking studies of sea otter behavior and population dynamics. Specific duties include visiting locations throughout the study area by vehicle in order to record the location and reproductive status of tagged study animals. Otters will be located using radio receivers attached to an antenna, and identified using high powered spotting telescopes. Interns will record the exact position of individual otters using GPS and rangefinders. Other data recorded will include number of other otters sighted with the study animal, reproductive status (whether or not females have pups), behavioral states, and environmental conditions. Resights for each study animal will be obtained each day, weather permitting. Interns may also assist with capture/tagging operations, and have opportunities for boat-based work.

Prerequisites:

1) Knowledge and/or experience such as attained through upper division coursework towards a Bachelor's Degree in Biology or related field (e.g. ecology, environmental science) or work as a qualified biological technician

2. Working knowledge of field equipment including binoculars, high-powered spotting scopes, and GPS

2. Experience with field data collection and data entry

3. Strong attention to detail and ability to work well independently and as part of a team

4. Excellent organizational and record-keeping skills

5. Ability to conduct strenuous outdoor work in a variety of weather conditions

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