

UCSC Sea Otter Research Internship



USGS-UCSC Cooperative Research
Principal Investigator: M. Tim Tinker
Center for Ocean Health, Tinker/Estes Lab
100 Shaffer Rd, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
werc@ucsc.edu

Internship Assignment: We are looking for enthusiastic and motivated individuals to assist staff with field observations and data collection of wild sea otters around the Monterey Peninsula in California. Study of sea otters, a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, is the responsibility of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) housed 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. The purpose of the current sea otter research is to determine whether sea otters will control rapid growth in the sea urchin populations. In 2015, along the West Coast of North America the sea star population plunged from sea star wasting disease. Historically, growth in the sea urchin population was kept in check by sea stars and sea otters, their natural predators.

Role of the Intern: Specific duties include visiting locations throughout the study area by vehicle in order to record details in location, behavior, and reproductive status of tagged study animals. Otters will be located using VHF radio receivers attached to an antenna, and identified using high-powered spotting telescopes. Interns will record the exact position and behavior of the study animals (a re-sight). Re-sights and observational forage data will be obtained seven days a week, weather permitting. Opportunities for internship projects are available and encouraged.

Desired Skills:

1. Previous coursework/work experience in biology, ecology, environmental science or related fields
2. Work well independently and as part of a team
3. Ability to conduct strenuous outdoor work in a variety of weather conditions
4. Strong attention to detail and excellent record-keeping skills
5. Working knowledge of field equipment including radio telemetry, binoculars, compass, high-powered spotting scopes, and GPS
6. Experience with field data collection and data entry
7. Interns must possess a valid driver's license, cell phone and car. Vehicles may be available for research purposes from time to time.

Time Commitment: Internships last 6 months. 12-24 hour commitment each week. Internships from January-June or June- December. Project runs from June 2016-June 2019.

Please send a cover letter and resume/CV to werc@ucsc.edu. Contact Sarah Espinosa at smespino@ucsc.edu with specific questions.