

I have always been passionate about exploring the environment and the world around me, and this past summer, I had the fantastic opportunity to be a part of an amazing program that introduced me to the world of marine science! I learned so much valuable information and gained experience that will follow me throughout my career and life! I got the opportunity to conduct proper scientific research in a lab facility, to learn about marine ecosystems, and to connect with many great people who made this summer one to remember!

I was part of a team with another undergraduate intern, Lia, and our mentor, Jessica Weidenfield. Together, we studied sea urchins, and how different diets affect them and the worms that live on them that consume their biological waste. Before diving into Jessica's project, I didn't know that these worms existed, and definitely did not know their favorite food was sea urchin poop! There's still a whole lot we don't know about them as a species, so this project was even more exciting to tackle!



Urchins were collected from the San Diego Bay, then we inspected them for worms to remove. After feeding the urchins different diets, (which were natural giant kelp and artificial urchin feed,) we gave the urchin feces to the worms to eat. Then we measured them and documented any changes! Jessica, Lia and I did multiple sea urchin inspections and multiple feedings for the worms and the urchins. We were able to better understand both species and how they interact with each other. Even though the summer is over, there's still a long way to go to fully understand these species!

I learned that these worms, and the urchins, are part of something larger than them, part of an ecosystem where every little creature and organism is valued and has an important role.

Having this experience has shown me the importance of marine ecosystems, and the value in working to protect them. Marine ecosystems are imperative to preserve, and now with the growing threat of climate change, they are at risk around the world. This experience, in addition to my background in environmental studies and geography, has equipped me with the research, communication, and problem solving skills that will follow me along throughout my career and strengthen my knowledge and passion for environmental conservation and protection.

Being at CMIL has surrounded me with the tools, knowledge, and people to help me not only conduct and understand research, but succeed in my academic career as well. Everybody goes above and beyond to make sure everyone feels comfortable and is equipped with everything needed to succeed. It's overall a great atmosphere!

I am extremely grateful to have been a part of such a great program! I cannot express enough how much I appreciate this experience, and how much this experience has shown me. I want to express my gratitude to Jessica W, and everyone else involved in bringing this program to life, and I encourage those who are interested to take part in this experience!

