

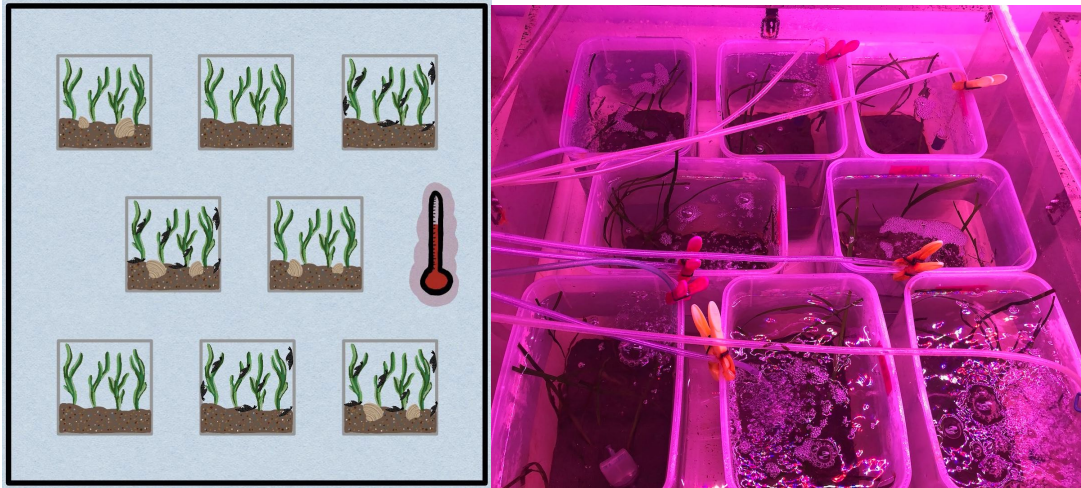
One of my biggest passions in life is my love for biology and wildlife. I am a senior at San Diego State University who is currently studying biology-zoology. As an aspiring veterinarian, I wanted to spend one of my last summers before veterinary school doing research or completing an internship that involved working with wildlife. When I came across the Coastal Marine Institute Laboratory's summer research program, I was very intrigued and almost immediately applied. I was initially very nervous to begin my internship here. I knew that my career goals were quite different from the other interns and I wondered if I would feel out of place. My fears were quickly washed away upon meeting everyone. I was warmly welcomed by all of the other interns at the laboratory. The friendly and laid-back environment encouraged me and further excited me to branch out from my comfort zone and learn about an entirely new group of wildlife. My initial fascination began with the touch tank located inside the wet lab. It was amazing to see such intricate organisms and I was shocked to see just how many things were actually moving inside the tank!



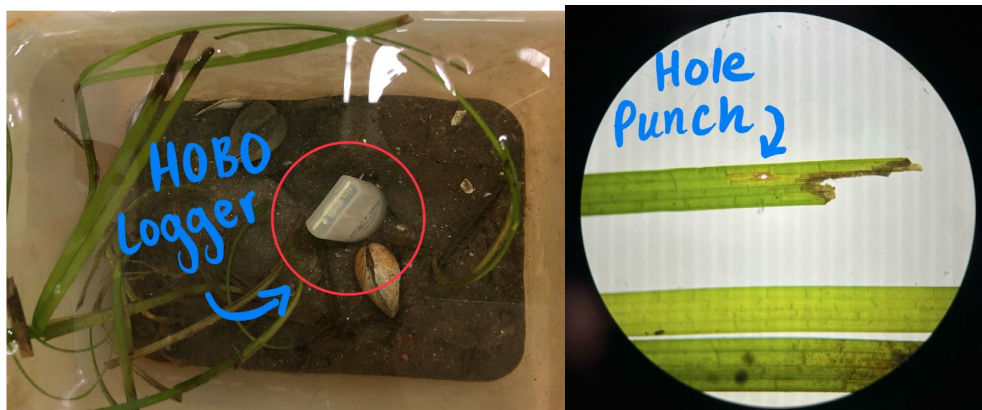
On my very first day in the laboratory, I was invited to tag along with others to a field site in San Diego Bay. I watched as CMIL scientists sifted through the water with giant nets and helped to sort out the tiny organisms they wanted to collect for their own experiment. I got to learn about the numerous tiny creatures that live in our ocean waters and it was amazing to see how well they had each adapted to their environments.



I spent my summer working with my fellow intern, Charli Seyler, a student at San Diego Mesa College, and our mentor, Jessica Griffin, a PhD student at San Diego State University researching at CMIL. Jessica planned for us to carry out a month-long experiment studying the relationships of snails and bivalves with seagrass. These species naturally coexist in the coastal regions of San Diego, but little is known about the nature of their interactions. We collected the majority of our materials locally at Shelter Island in San Diego Bay. Our mesocosm experiment involved 32 small tanks, each planted with 8 shoots of seagrass into a bed of sand and mud. The tanks were assigned a treatment group of control, bivalves only, snails only, and both bivalves and snails together. Each of these treatment groups were replicated 4 times. We placed the smaller tanks, 8 each, into 4 larger tanks. Two of these large tanks were supplied with a heat source, while the others were left at an ambient temperature.



When replicating a natural habitat, there are many details to be considered. We added a source of oxygen using airstones to promote circulation, UV full spectrum grow lights on timers to replicate the sun and promote growth, and even tracked exact temperatures using HOBO loggers. When conducting this experiment, I learned about various scientific methods and even new technologies such as R studio. One of the most fascinating methods we learned about was the hole punch method. Our mentor carefully punched a tiny hole into each seagrass shoot, which we used to measure growth later on.



Interning at the Coastal Marine Institute Laboratory has been extremely exciting and educational. I became great friends with my group and even got the chance to network with various individuals inside and outside of the program. My professional skills grew along with my preparation for graduate school. I learned how to read scientific literature with a better understanding, identify and differentiate between species of clams and snails, and even discovered the multitude of career opportunities within the field of marine biology. I am beyond

grateful to have gotten this opportunity and am excited to see how I will incorporate my newfound knowledge into my future career path and choices!

