

Hello, my name is Seth Sparks, I am a student at San Diego Mesa College, and I had a wonderful experience working at the SDSU CMIL this summer. For my first couple of semesters of college, I pondered what I should choose for my major. I always knew I loved the ocean and marine biology, but I was hesitant. I was unsure if I would be cut out for the academics involved with becoming a marine biologist. With encouragement from my professor, I decided to apply to this internship and it has made me more confident in pursuing marine biology.

My mentor, Sara Rosenblatt, helped me with the project we worked on, and I gained more confidence in the lab and during field work. Since Sara wasn't currently working on a project of her own, we got to come up with our own ideas of what to work on. We decided to work on two main projects, while also helping out around the lab.

The first project we worked on involved going out in the field and measuring the abundance and diversity of opisthobranchs, using a transect. For this, we went to the tide pools early in the morning and searched for these organisms within our transect. We went to two different tide pool locations, Bird Rock and Ocean Beach.

The second project we pursued was testing the Navanax's feeding preferences. To do this, we brought a navanax, some opalescent nudibranchs, some sorcerer's doris nudibranchs, and a bubble snail into the lab. We made sure the Navanax did not feed for a period of time, then we placed the bubble snail and both types of nudibranchs into its enclosure at a somewhat equal distance. The Navanax seemed to enjoy the nudibranchs more, however our test was only done with one Navanax, and was too small of a sample size to know what Navanax as a whole would prefer.

During this internship I learned a lot of new skills. During the workshops that I attended, I started to learn how there is a difference between hypotheses, predictions, and theories. At the lab, I learned how to care for the organisms that were being kept there, through cleaning and feeding. Through our field work at the tide pools, and through a plankton tow we did on the boat, I learned more about doing science out in the world. The people that were at the lab were very supportive and provided a great environment for me to learn and grow.



