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This summer, I had the opportunity to work at the Coastal Marine Institute Laboratory, assisting graduate student Lily Jorrick with her research on how climate change may influence the predatory behavior of fish in eelgrass ecosystems. The project focused on ocean warming and ocean acidification and their potential effects on bay pipefish and juvenile giant kelpfish. This experience gave me valuable exposure to both the hands-on and analytical sides of marine science.

When I joined the project, the juvenile giant kelpfish behavioral trials were beginning. I helped acclimate fish to four experimental treatments: ambient conditions, ocean warming, ocean acidification, and a combination of warming and acidification. I also helped with daily maintenance and collected water-quality data, including temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen. These responsibilities showed me how much preparation, consistency, and attention to detail are required to successfully conduct an experiment.



I also participated in fieldwork to collect fish for the study. Bringing fish back to the laboratory and preparing them for the experiment gave me firsthand experience with one of the many ways marine scientists conduct field research.

Once the fish were acclimated, I helped prepare behavioral trials using an artificial seagrass habitat with amphipods as prey. The kelpfish were allowed to forage while their behavior was recorded. Later in the summer, I analyzed these videos and recorded behaviors such as activity, attempted strikes, and successful prey captures. This taught me the importance of clearly defining behaviors and consistently recording observations so that results can accurately be compared between treatments.



Another major part of my experience was working with research data in RStudio. I helped organize, clean, analyze, and visualize both behavioral and temperature logger data. Before this internship, I had limited experience working with data from an actual research project, so learning how to turn observations into meaningful results was especially valuable.

Throughout the summer, I also attended several workshops, particularly those focused on careers in marine science. These introduced me to career paths I had not previously considered and helped me better understand the variety of opportunities within the field.

Overall, this internship gave me a much greater appreciation for the research process, from fieldwork and experimental preparation to behavioral observation and data analysis. I developed valuable skills in RStudio, data analysis, fieldwork, and scientific research while gaining a clearer understanding of marine science as a career. I am very grateful to Lily for her mentorship and for creating an environment where I felt comfortable asking questions and learning new skills. This experience strengthened my interest in marine science, and I would highly encourage other students interested in the field to pursue similar research opportunities.



