

THE VIP VOICE

FEBRUARY 2000

THE NEWSLETTER OF
TIDEPOOL VOLUNTEERS

Dear Volunteers:

As we put the second issue of the VIP Voice together, I am heartened by the response we have received and the number of special people who have jumped in to offer their help. As I said in the first issue, this is your newsletter and it will be a really good one if lots of you jump in and give us a hand. How about suggestions? Can any of you do artwork that we can use? Are there tide pool

critters you'd especially like to see featured? Which volunteers do you think

deserve special attention with a feature article right away? How can we make our newsletter better? Drop suggestions in my VIP folder or give me a call at (619) 222-6171. Making a suggestion does not mean we will pounce on you and make you follow it up. We understand people have time constraints and the object of this whole thing is not to trap someone into doing something they don't want to do. We want input and for those that can help, we will accept it gratefully.

For those of you who helped us with this issue, we are in your debt. Krista Pease has written a wonderful and enlightening article about The Pisaster Disaster or the Ochre seastar. If you ever wonder why we're here, sometimes in the wind and rain, this article will make it entirely clear. We need to understand what is happening and protect what is here, and then we need to make a safe habitat where other creatures can feel safe. Thank you, Krista.

If you wonder why the newsletter looks about 100% better this month, we have George Herring to thank for his help in setting up a new format with the software Adobe Pagemaker. He has been incredibly generous with his off-time and

ideas. If you can actually see the pictures this month, you have him to thank as well. The poor man has not been allowed an uninterrupted lunch time or break for the better part of this month. George, we are in your debt.

Then we have Ramona Lester, a very special new VIP, who offered to do a word search on her computer and put together a puzzle for our fun and entertainment. I genuinely hope she will offer again, because I have had such fun finding the words and I know you will too. She is also very busy with a full time job as are all the folks mentioned above. Thanks Ramona, and please do it again when you can find the time.

At this point, we need to actually get the newsletter out before March. We look forward to hearing from you with suggestions, concerns, opinions and the like. Do remember to keep your eyes open in the tide pools for Ochre seastars and report them immediately. Please remember that you are appreciated beyond imagination.

Your work is important and worthwhile, and we hope, gratifying. Thanks for who you are and all you do.

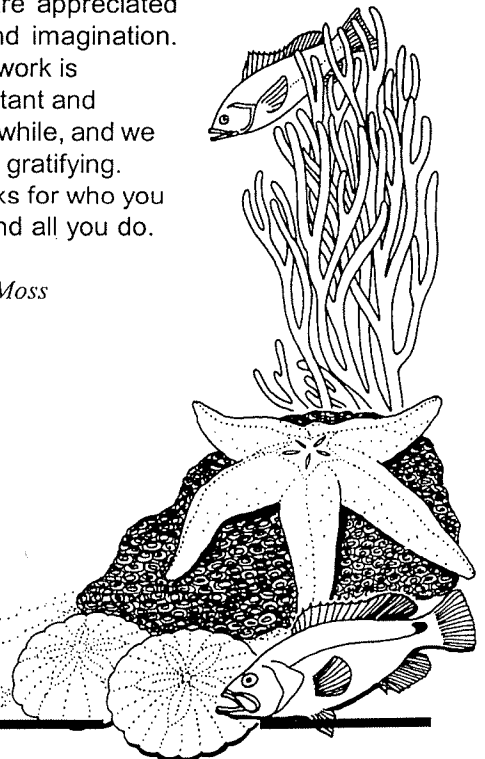
Lynn Moss

Ochre Seastar Edition

With A Little Help
From Our Friends

IN THIS ISSUE

Pisaster Disaster.....	2
Musings From MBV..	3
VIP of the Month.....	4
Tidepool Puzzle.....	5
Tidepool Tidbits.....	6



The Pisaster Disaster

by Krista Pease

Remember to keep your eyes open in the tide pools for Ochre seastars and report them immediately.

Ocher Seastars:
Colors range from yellows, reds and purples. The rows of spines forms a distinct small pentagon on the central disc.

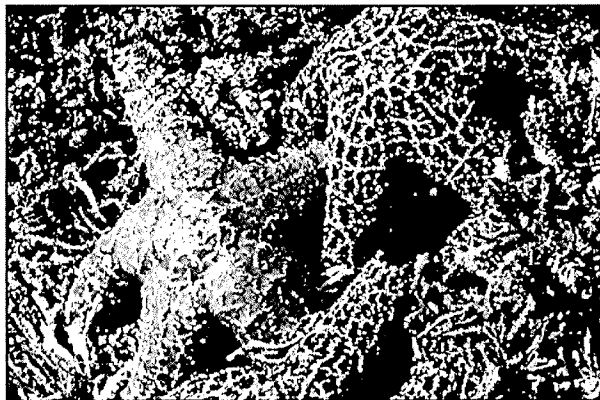
An important and unique member of the rocky intertidal community is *Pisaster ochraceus*, (pronounced Pie-zaster o-kray-shus), commonly called the Ochre seastar. It is an echinoderm, which literally means "spiny-skinned," and possesses a body with radial symmetry. Echinoderms have calcareous plates (made of calcium) covered by thin skin, and two unique organs: the water vascular system and the pedicellariae. More information about Echinoderms and an explanation of these organs can be found in Life Between the Tides, Between Pacific Tides or any biology textbook. Specifically, *Pisaster ochraceus* has five radially symmetric arms, and ranges in color from bright yellow, orange and brown to red and purple. The skin surface is covered with short, almost white spines in rows that form a pentagon in the center. *P. ochraceus* lives in a range along the Pacific coast that extends from Prince William Sound, Alaska to at least Ensenada. Feeding occurs during high tide, when *P. ochraceus* can remain submerged, and is more frequent in summer. At low tide, it is less active. The favored food is mussels, but when mussels are not abundant, it eats mostly barnacles, snails, limpets and chitons. The spawning of *P. ochraceus* occurs in spring and early summer. The estimated life span is 20 years. So, where's the disaster? Well, in the

past 20 years, Cabrillo National Monument has received only two confirmed sightings of *P. ochraceus*. I have taken the challenge to explore more of our San Diego coast in the past few months and have found *P. ochraceus* in La Jolla, Pacific Beach and Ocean Beach. Here's the enigma: Why are they not found in our tidepool area? Numerous possible explanations have been offered up by both experienced and non-experienced sources. Perhaps the water temperature has risen along our Cabrillo coast and they have moved north. Studies have found that the mean ocean temperature has risen in southern California by 0.75°C in the past 60 years. Temperature can be very influential for sensitive ocean dwellers. Some informal reports suggest an echinoderm disease may have killed many animals in the past 2 decades. There might have been a loss of habitat over the years. Or, there might not be enough food to sustain a group of adult *Pisaster ochraceus*. In any case, there is much need for a more in-depth study of our lack of *P. ochraceus* in Cabrillo National Monument.

The take-home message for all Tidepool VIPs and staff is this: please be on the constant lookout for an Ochre seastar. Refer to pictures and descriptions to refresh your memory of their characteristics. To see a living example of these beautiful creatures, head to the pilings of Crystal Pier in Pacific Beach...they're covered in *P. ochraceus*! Tell visitors our story and ask them to help us search. After all, the more investigators we recruit, the better. Most importantly, report any possible sightings **immediately** to Bonnie, Samantha or me for record keeping.

Sources:

Life Between the Tides by J. Brandon and F. Rokop, Between Pacific Tides by E. Ricketts, J. Calvin, J. Hedgpeth and D. Phillips, journal articles by Barry, Mauzey and Robles.



Musings From Mary Beth

I want to thank all the volunteers that helped out with Whale Watch Weekend 2000!

First, I want to thank all the volunteers who helped out with Whale Watch Weekend 2000! It was a great success this year with 10,896 visitors attending. Many more people in San Diego now appreciate and understand gray whales. They also know what a great place Cabrillo National Monument is to learn about gray whales. The weekend was a success primarily because of the hard work of volunteers like you. Special kudos to Beth and Kevin (and their terrific crew) for another entertaining puppet show. The staff and I appreciate all your help in making it a whale of a weekend. I have a couple reminders that I hope will make all our jobs easier.

1) Please remember that when you became a tidepool VIP, your commitment was for the entire season, two and preferably three shifts a month so that all low tides can be properly covered. If you have signed up and can't work at the last moment, YOU need to call someone to replace you. If you cannot find someone to replace you, please call the park number (619) 557-5450 and tell TAPS, the Administrative Assistant, or another person that you'll be unable to work. You

need to talk to someone in person.

PLEASE NOTE: a new tidepool volunteer list that will include the actual days people can work such as Monday through Friday, weekends, anytime and the like, is in your mail slots.

2) Remember to check the tidepool reservation book (a black binder) at the education desk before you go down to the tidepools. First, it allows you to know how many groups to expect that day. All groups of 10 or more need a permit. The purpose of the permit is to ensure that we don't have too many people at a time in the tidepools. Thus we ask groups to have a permit. Look for the green stamp (seal) and leave the permit with them. If the group does not have a permit, we need to ask them to go up to the Visitor's Center to get one. They won't like it, but be kind and elicit their cooperation.

Remember, we read your comments and suggestions in the white binder and attempt to remedy any difficulties, so please write a line or two if you have something to say before you leave the park. We also love to hear the good things that you've seen on your shift, so let us know of those as well. Again — thanks for all your efforts. You're terrific!

Mary Beth Vygrala
Volunteer Coordinator

*Please Do Not
accidentally take
the blue, bird-
visitor count
backpack!*

ANNOUNCEMENT

The VIP's conducting Bird and Visitor Counts during every negative low tide (between 10 AM and 4 PM) will be storing our blue backpack and blue folder in the Tidepool VIP locker. PLEASE DO NOT accidentally take the bird count backpack with you instead of one of the tidepool backpacks. There is enough space if we all respect and share it!

If any VIP's are interested in participating in Bird Counts, please contact me at (858) 642-6909. We could use more help, and the training is provided. Thanks for all your cooperation.

Krista Pease
VIP and Bird Count Coordinator

Darrel Sims
February VIP

As a relatively new volunteer in the tidepools I have been learning lots, and my education continued when I interviewed Darrel Sims last week. I found that his approach to volunteering is unique and one of the most thorough and systematic that I have encountered thus far. I also have to say that trying to catch Darrel to gather information about him and take his picture for the newsletter is a lot like trying to catch a gazelle in full flight. He offered every reason in the book for not being the February VIP. "I really haven't done anything special," "the young volunteers deserve it more" and on and on. Rangers and long-time volunteers however, disagreed, and he finally acceded to my pleadings and downright threats. Darrel became a volunteer four years ago when he saw a program on television about the VIP Program. Since that time he has immersed himself in his subject. Each time he worked in the tidepools, he would choose one creature or shell to study IN DEPTH. He started to acquire a "tidepool" library. He read, studied, asked questions and cut out pictures of the tidepool inhabitants and descriptions

of their lifestyles as well as interesting and educational information he could share with the public. He assembled this information in small binders of like creatures, vegetation and shells. Over the four years, he has amassed an amazing amount of information. He also carries stamped postcards given by the Cabrillo Park Rangers so that on the unusual occasion when someone asks a question he can't answer, he has that person address the postcard, finds the information and drops it in the mail. It is clear that he loves his subject, and learning about all kinds of things. During his stint at Cabrillo National Monument, he has even become involved in the study of native plant growth and vegetation monitoring. It certainly isn't unusual to see Darrel at the park, very often filling in for someone who can't work or giving someone a hand. Lots of folks count on him, and from what I've seen, he enjoys every minute of his time there.

He was born in Decatur, Illinois, and did every possible kind of farmwork until he was 17 years of age. He liked the work and he loved the time off so he could hunt and fish. He fished for trout and bass in streams and lakes, using a catch and release method. To this day he enjoys hunting with a twist. He will track a large buck, for example, get him in his gun sights and NOT pull the trigger. He looks at hunting as man and beast outsmarting each other. If the beast wins, good for him, and if he outsmarts the animal, Darrel is quite satisfied with that as well.

In Illinois he worked in the oilfields with farmers doing erosion control and conservation and spent 5 years with the Department of Wildlife Resources at Carlisle Lake. He is retired military, with 10 years in the Navy and 10 years in the Air Force. In the Navy, he spent 10 years in the Pacific Theater, 8 of those at sea. At that



Darrel considers the prospect of sea stars learning to talk ...Darrel regularly astounds and entertains visitors with his revelations!

Darrel Sims

February VIP
 Continued ...

point, he joined the Air Force where he spent five years in Roswell, New Mexico, three years in Germany and two years in Washington state.

He lives with his wife, Ruth, at their home in Casa de Ora, an area of Spring Valley. He has a sense of humor that makes him lots of fun to be with and is a wonderful storyteller as well as having an approach to life that would clearly classify him as a "thinker." Want to talk history, religion, science and lots of other things and you'll find he has a considered opinion on each. It didn't take him a minute, when I asked him what advice he would give a new

tidepool VIP. He said: 1) enjoy yourself, 2) be curious, 3) ask questions, 4) like people — talk to them and make yourself available to them and 5) involve the public in the process. That's not bad advice for most things in life. My advice to everyone that hasn't already met Darrel Sims is to seek him out. He's a wonderful person to know. Additionally, he can answer your questions knowledgeably, and he can make you laugh at the same time. He has even volunteered to find out information about some of our creatures and give it to us for the newsletter. I hope lots of you will follow his lead.

by Lynn Moss

Puzzle

Tidepool
 Word Search

Each of the words in the left hand column can be found in the table of letters. See how many you can check off. Have fun!

ARMS	S	B	A	T	S	T	A	R	P	C	T
BAT STAR	U	L	E	S	S	U	M	B	L	O	Y
BLUE	N	U	O	C	H	E	R	R	A	L	Z
BRITTLESTAR	F	E	N	W	D	O	W	I	N	O	K
COLORS	L	R	S	E	A	W	A	T	E	R	E
CURL	O	Y	P	Q	R	X	R	T	L	S	Y
FEET	W	B	D	R	M	G	O	L	U	F	N
FIVE	E	B	S	P	S	O	L	E	R	B	D
FOOT	R	O	C	K	S	P	U	S	Q	U	E
KNOBBY	S	N	A	F	O	O	T	T	I	J	C
MOUTH	T	K	L	I	V	G	E	A	H	Z	Y
MUSSEL	A	X	Y	V	L	S	E	R	A	Y	E
OCEAN-FLOOR	R	O	C	E	A	N	F	L	O	O	R
OCHER											
RAY											
ROCKS											
SCALY											
SEA WATER											
SIZE											
SLOW											
SUNFLOWER STAR											
TUBE											

Rearrange the following letters to identify one of our tidepool critters.

ASE TRASS

with thanks to RAMONA LESTER, VIP

Tidepool Tidbits

by
Bonnie Becker

Even though it seems like it was just yesterday that we finished our fall sampling, we are now gearing up for our spring sampling period! We will be out there from March 2 to 6 and March 18 to 20. Let me know if you are interested in participating .

Everyone can help us by doing the following:

1. When you see us out there, please try to talk to visitors and tell them what we are doing (ask me if you don't know). We are happy to speak with people, but sometimes when we are sampling, the number of questions we are asked can be distracting.

2. If you see a bolt or some rockweed with some colored tape on it, please don't remove it. We use the tape to find our plots more easily. Also, please try not to let anyone disturb rocks with tape on them — they are our sample plots and we might not have sampled them yet. After we are finished (end of March), go ahead and remove any tape you find. We try to collect it all, but sometimes we miss some of it.

3. People who are working on sampling will be wearing yellow, red or orange vests. If you see someone in a vest going into Zone III, don't worry — they are working for us.

Keep up the good work everyone! I'll see you in the tidepools.

Cheers,
Bonnie

Spring Sampling:
March 2 to 6 and
March 18 to 20!

What notes, questions or ideas do you have?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Put Your Thoughts in
Lynn Moss' VIP Folder.

