

#27 TIDAL POOL EXPLORATION SAFETY



Photographs Courtesy of Sonoma County 4-H Wildlife Project

A variety of marine plants and animals may be encountered when exploring tidal pools along the California coastline. Palm kelp, red algae, surf grass, anemones, barnacles, mussels, crabs, limpets, sea urchins, sea stars, and snails are among the types of marine plants and animals that may be observed in California tidal pools.

Major risks for injuries during tidal pool exploration are to slip and fall onto rocks and be caught unaware by waves and thrown into rocks or knocked down and swept offshore by currents. Typical injuries include lacerations and contusions.

- Always listen to and follow the volunteer leader's instructions about tidal pools and tidal pool plants and animals. Do not touch plants and animals unless the volunteer leader has given permission.
- After examining a tidal pool inhabitant, return it to the place where it was found. Collecting from tidal pools is generally prohibited. If you turn over a rock, carefully replace it.
- Stay with your tidal pool exploration group and volunteer leader. Do not wander off on your own.
- Be alert and face toward incoming waves when exploring the tidal pool. Identify an adult who is the official wave watcher, though all participants should be constantly aware of the waves and tidal surge. Caution learned early will remain for a life time.
- Tidal pool explorers that are young, non-swimmers, and poor swimmers should always wear a personal flotation device (PFD) or life preserver.
- Wear personal protective equipment appropriate to tidal pool weather conditions: jackets or windbreakers during cool weather, and light clothing, sunscreen, sun glasses, and a hat during warm weather. Wear slip resistant shoes or rubber boots.
- Remain on the beach access trail or path when walking to the tidal pool. Step carefully when hiking on a steep trail or path to the beach.
- When exploring tidal pools, pay attention to local tide cycles and changes in wave height and intensity due to wind or other weather conditions. Do not get stranded at the tidal pool by an incoming tide.
- Tidal pool rocks can be slippery so be cautious and step carefully to prevent falls. Avoid stepping on tidal pool plants and animals.
- Read and obey any posted beach signs.
- Avoid rockfalls and slope failures by staying back from beach cliffs and steep bluffs.
- Stop exploring the tidal pool if a thunder or lightning storm approaches or at the first sign of bad weather or rough water conditions. Seek shelter on the shore.
- If you notice that a member of your tidal pool exploration group is missing, immediately notify your project leader, parent, or guardian.
- If you are injured while exploring tidal pools, notify your volunteer leader, parent, or guardian. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.

