

Pinniped Subsidies along the California Coast in Marin County

Frankie Gerraty, University of California, Santa Cruz

Beaches where pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) give birth – areas known as “rookeries” – can be hotspots of nutrient transfer from marine to terrestrial ecosystems. Marine nutrients left behind in the form of beach-cast pinniped carrion (i.e. carcasses and placentae), become a potential food source for a wide variety of terrestrial consumers including insects, gulls, raptors, raccoons, coyotes, and mountain lions. To explore how the abundance of carrion at rookeries alters the diet and foraging habits of terrestrial animals (namely coyotes), Frankie Gerraty from the University of California, Santa Cruz is employing camera trapping and scat analysis techniques in six counties along the California coast. Alongside the National Park Service, CA State Parks, and several non-profit partners, Gerraty hopes this research will derive new insights on the role that pinniped carrion plays in terrestrial food webs.

“Inspired by numerous reports of coyotes preying upon and scavenging seals and sea lions across the California coast, my research explores the causes and consequences of these coyote-pinniped interactions.”

– Frankie Gerraty,
UC Santa Cruz



Researcher Frankie Gerraty

Coyote consuming pinniped carrion on Point Reyes beach.
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