

I have absolutely loved my last few weeks in the biodiversity lab! At first, I was uncertain about jumping into the research and fitting into the lab group as I unfortunately missed the Intern Orientation, but the transition was in fact seamless. Noel was able to get my caught up quickly on the first day, and I eagerly starting reading research papers, inspecting fossils, and coding R.

One of my favorite activities we have done in the lab was identifying which fossils belong to which class (bivalvia, cephalopoda, or gastropoda). I think the hands on experience and internal debates within my group made it more engaging and made me truly consider what is unique across these classes. Could what I thought was a gastropoda truly resemble a snail?

Then, we got to take our knowledge into the field at the New Brighton State Beach. I was fascinated looking at the rocks trying to spot embedded plant or animal skeletons. One of the coolest things I saw was (thanks to Christianne) part of a whale rib that poked out of the rock on both ends. You could see two ~1-2 inch long pieces of rib, despite it looking like wood, protruding from the rock. I am grateful that Jenny took the time to point out other whale bones in rocks closer to the ocean. I was also able to examine the shell beds and question how they got there. There were arthropods crawling around the rock and inside the cave. To follow up on all of the whale bones, we got to visit the UCSC Marine Lab and see whole whale skeletons. I predominantly observed the blue whale skeleton while listening to the tour guides explain facts about it. I can't believe that the whole skeleton washed ashore in Pescadero in 1979. The grey whale skeleton was also interesting to see, especially since it did not have an extra layer of paint -- it was the skeleton in its purest form. I am grateful that I got to participate in the beach trip and see both live (the humongous crab!) and dead animals.

I am excited for camping and to continue exploring paleobiology!