Afterword

While I would definately express my belief in this variety of a project as worthwhile, there are some recommendations I would like to make to anyone attempting this type of project in the future. The first concern is time. Although four months may seem to be more than enough time to gather data significant enough to draw a clear conclusion, it is by far too little. Because the purpose of this project was to analyze the effects of El Niño on tide pool ecosystems, the amount of time required to survey a given site needs to be at least one year- more if possible. Having only four months to completely gather data at a given site will not allow enough time for a significant change to occur. This project would be more suited for long term research projects- perhaps something at more of a college level. Even though the data collected showed elevated temperature and salinity levels, I can only use a control based on seasonal averages published in books; actually sampling these levels at the same site throughout the year would be much more accurate.

A second cause for difficulty in the project was transportation. Although it may seem relatively close, the tide pool area surveyed (north of Half Moon Bay, CA) was a good hour's drive. If anyone in the future attempts this project, it would be advisable to first be sure that transportation to and from the tide pool- at least *twice* a month- is not a problem.

As far as the experiment itself goes, I would also caution choosing a site that is far from human touch (if at all possible). Many tide pool organisms, especially sea stars, end up becoming something to take home for many people. This obviously makes collecting reliable data extremely difficult.

Generally speaking, this research experiment was both enjoyable and fascinating. Rarely do I ever encounter such an opportunity where learning and enjoyment come together in such a productive blend. While the experiment itself wasn't able to draw definative conclusions, I can say that I learned all the more trying to make it work. The incredible abundance of life in the microcosm of a tide pool truly brings to life Steinbeck's advice to "look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again." When El Niño returns in the future, I would not hesitate to recommend this experience to anyone.

End

[**Click to view bibliography**](http://docs.google.com/bib.htm)

[Return to Introduction page](http://docs.google.com/intro.htm)

This page was created by Brian Wikner, who can be contacted at [x21@geocities.com](mailto:x21@geocities.com).