Observations

Ever since I first moved to California in the summer of 1993, I can remember being fascinated with its natural surroundings- particularly the ocean. Being originally from the land-locked state of Colorado, the ocean was something new, exciting, and interesting. Never before had I been able to witness the beauty of sea life; reading books could not even come close to experiencing it firsthand. As I began high school courses, the ocean started to become just as much a body of potential scientific study as a curious and new place to play.

Beginning early this year, I began to hear more and more about a strange weather phenomenon known as El Ni�o. I had never before heard such a topic discussed so extensively among teachers, weathermen, and other news personel. What, I thought to myself, was El Ni�o?

Before too long, I caught on to what everyone was talking about. El Ni�o, I was told, was the movement of warm water up along the coast of North America during the winter months. This surge of warm water would cause typical winter weather to become more abundant and intense. It was said that this phenonemon would drastically affect the amount of rain that the area received; increased awareness of flood potential would be necessary. While I initially dismissed El Ni�o as just another undetectable weather occurance, it soon became apparent how seriously this could affect the area we live in. I then thought to myself, if this effect can be so detrimental to the man-made world, what must it be doing to the natural world?

Asking this question, and recalling to mind my interest in the plethera of life found off shore, I began to form what would eventually become a four month investigation into the effect of El Ni�o on the San Fransisco peninsula's coastal tide pools.