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Author

Strand, Steve

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Supporting an Educational Marine Science Camp for Urban Youth

Steve Strand

University of California, Los Angeles

Background

With support from Sea Grant, the UCLA Ocean Discovery Center operates educational marine camps for children in summer programs run by the Boys & Girls Clubs in the Los Angeles area. Sea Grant has funded Sea Camp every year the camp has offered programs.

The goal of Sea Camp is to teach inner-city and under-represented youth, many of whom have never been to the beach, about the plants and animals living in Santa Monica Bay. Through hands-on activities, students learn about the many kinds of interactions between people and coastal ecosystems. These day-long summer programs complement the UCLA Ocean Discovery Center's school-year programs for students.

The camp also serves as a classroom for science teachers, who participate as camp counselors. Activities are designed to help teachers develop curricula that meet California State Science Standards.



Children participating in an educational marine summer camp at the UCLA Ocean Discovery Center. Photo: UCLA Ocean Discovery Center.

The UCLA Ocean Discovery Center, located at the base of the Santa Monica Pier in Los Angeles, is a public aquarium and marine science learning center, dedicated to educating K-12 students, as well as the general public, on the basic concepts of marine science and conservation. The aquarium is affiliated with UCLA and opened in 1996.

and shark egg-cases—in the main part of the aquarium. They also are encouraged to touch live animals and peer inside the microscopic realm at the microscope lab.

The camp's activities vary from year to year, but in 2001 students were challenged to learn as much as they could about four marine organisms of their choice by observing animals and querying staff and docents. As part of the day's activities, students toured the Santa Monica Urban Runoff Recycling Facility, a one-of-a-kind operation that recycles runoff for use in commercial landscaping. Students were also taken on a field trip to a local beach, where they conducted a survey of marine debris and looked at the types of marine litter that marine animals may mistake for food.

In the summer of 2001, more than 600 children, aged from 5 to 17 years, participated in Sea Camp. These children came from areas as diverse as Santa Monica, Venice, Westchester, Inglewood, Compton,



Campers display their projects. Photo: UCLA Ocean Discovery Center.

The Project

At Sea Camp, children are introduced to the biological, oceanographic and environmental conditions of the Santa Monica Bay through interactive presentations, slide shows, video presentations and a guided, hands-on exploration of marine artifacts—whale bones, shells

Westminster and North Hollywood.

Dr. Steve Strand, director of the Ocean Discovery Center, said of the camp: "These children discovered the marine environment and initiated a stewardship for the Santa Monica Bay. This experience increased their sense of awe, caring and responsibility for the ocean. It also opened the door for these children to explore opportunities available in the sciences."

For more information:

Dr. Steve Strand

Director

UCLA Ocean Discovery Center

UCLA

Tel.: (310) 825-0376

Email: strand@biology.ucla.edu

Cooperating Organizations

Malibu Boys & Girls Club

Santa Monica Boys & Girls Club

Santa Monica YWCA

Venice Boys & Girls Club

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Russell A. Moll, Director • Dolores M. Wesson, Deputy Director • Paul Olin, Interim Associate Director for Extension
• Marsha Gear, Communications Coordinator

University of California, San Diego, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093-0232

Phone: (858) 534-4440 Fax: (858) 453-2948 Web site: <http://www-csgc.ucsd.edu>