

UC SANTA BARBARA

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New iPhone App Bridges Science, Technology, Education, and a Day at the Beach

A new, free iPhone application developed to engage and educate the curious about the wonders of California tidepools has been released. Users can download the California Tidepools application and find out about the creatures that live and feed in the rocky shallows along the California Coast.

The application was developed through collaboration between the UC Santa Barbara Marine Science Institute (MSI); Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS); and volunteers from Citrix Systems, Inc.

With vivid photos and fun facts, users can get the basics on the myriad organisms that live in California tidepools, where inhabitants have evolved specialized ways of dealing with varying and sometimes harsh conditions.

According to Scott Simon, manager of the Marine Science Institute Education and Outreach Programs, the application was the result of discussions on how to bridge technology and field applications, making them accessible for anyone.

"With so many wonderful places to explore tidepools on the Central and South Coast, we thought giving them a guide at their fingertips would really help them learn more during the experience," Simon said. "We don't always have a naturalist

or guide book with us, but few people go out without a cell phone."

"Our job is to manage and take care of our ocean resources," said Laura Francis, education coordinator for the CINMS. "We created the app to highlight some of our important intertidal algae and invertebrates, and provide answers to frequently asked questions about tidepool etiquette and exploring tidepools safely and gently without harming the creatures that live there." The application has already been downloaded over 1,000 times, and has received high ratings.

California Tidepools was developed as a free educational tool and to promote the upcoming Outreach Center for Teaching Ocean Science (OCTOS), a state-of-the-art facility that MSI and CINMS are establishing on the UCSB campus. OCTOS will provide up-close, immersive, and interactive marine science education to students of all ages.

"OCTOS will be a virtual world that takes visitors beneath the waves on firsthand encounters with the many wonders of the sea. We are working hard to make these experiences so real, so informative and so exciting that all visitors will be inspired to become stewards of the ocean," said Mark Brzezinski, director of MSI. "We hope by immersing them in the process of ocean discovery each student will envision themselves becoming part of the next generation of ocean explorers."

The California Tidepools application is also available for iPad and iPod and is accessible from the Apple App Store.

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†Bottom photo: With the California Tidepools app, curious visitors can learn instantly about the creatures at their feet.

Photo credits: CINMS

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