

**TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program
of the
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary**



“Inspiring and educating, one kayaker at a time.”

**Season Evaluation Report
Summer 2002**



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Program Mission

To inspire and educate sea kayakers and other ocean users about the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) and its wildlife, while promoting respectful wildlife viewing.

Introduction

The TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program (TeamOCEAN) for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is a seasonal field program that provides face-to-face interpretation of Sanctuary natural history and programs, as well as guidelines on how to enjoy marine wildlife without disturbing it. The target audience is primarily ocean kayakers, but includes other sanctuary resource users who may be encountered on the water, such as boaters and divers. Ocean kayakers are one of the sanctuary's fastest growing and most under reached user groups. A large percentage of ocean kayakers are visitors to the area and are unaware of or undereducated about the Sanctuary's existence and sensitive wildlife.

The Sanctuary's TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program puts knowledgeable naturalists out on the water in sanctuary kayaks, to greet and interact with fellow day kayakers. The naturalists serve as docents for the marine sanctuary, promote respectful wildlife viewing, and protect marine mammals from disturbance. The program is based on the principles that most kayakers care deeply about the ocean environment, and most wildlife harassment is unintentional.

The TeamOCEAN naturalists interact with the kayaking public in a friendly and positive manner while interpreting the sanctuary's resources and answering questions about its ecology and wildlife. They provide proactive information on the best etiquette for viewing sensitive marine wildlife without changing the animals' natural behavior. When necessary, the team members ask boaters to back away from animals, and then explain the biology behind the protective regulations and how to recognize behaviors that precede disturbance. TeamOCEAN naturalists have no enforcement authority; they do not write tickets or issue warnings.

The Sanctuary's TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program was piloted in the fall of 2000 with the goals of increasing outreach to the ocean kayaking community, minimizing kayak-related disturbances to marine wildlife through education, and providing an increased on-the-water presence for the Sanctuary. The summer of 2002 was TeamOCEAN's third season in the MBNMS.

I. EVALUATION OF THE 2002 TeamOCEAN PROGRAM

A. Program Staffing

Recruitment for seasonal naturalists to staff the TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach program began in April 2002, and the contracts were initiated in June. The budget allowed us to contract with four part-time staff this year, and to designate one of the contractors as the Team Leader, with additional responsibilities and more hours. Work began June 7, was expected to end September 29, but continued into October since contract hours remained. From June through August the standard on-water workweek was 6 hours per day for 3 days a week, Friday

through Sunday. A typical workday lasted from 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 or 4:30 p.m. In the month of September work was reduced to two six-hour days a week (Saturday and Sunday), and in October the team worked only two days to use up remaining contract hours. The Team Leader worked approximately seven additional hours per week on various team coordination and data management duties. Contractors were given the opportunity to take one weekend off per month.

One full-time member of the MBNMS Education and Outreach staff served as the program coordinator and spent an average of 10 hours per week from April to December on team training, supervision, gear acquisition, logistics, and reporting.

B. New Volunteer Program

This year, we expanded the TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program to include a volunteer corps. Volunteer naturalists committed to working one six-hour shift per month. They received the same kayak skills and natural history training and had the same duties and responsibilities as paid staff naturalists, although volunteers were always paired with staff naturalists on the water. Nine enthusiastic individuals, from San Francisco to Santa Barbara, volunteered for the program. They provided an invaluable supplement to the staff naturalists, allowing for enhanced coverage on the water and greater outreach to the public.

Volunteers' satisfaction with the program was very high. In a post-season anonymous evaluation, all respondents reported that they received the support they needed at all times, felt valued and appreciated as a volunteer, felt like they were part of the team, and would recommend the program to others.

C. Training

TeamOCEAN staff naturalists received 35 hours of training, while the volunteers received 22 hours of training prior to beginning interpretive work on the water. All participants completed an 8-hour class on kayak paddling and rescue skills, donated by Eskape Sea Kayaking and Monterey Bay Kayaks. This ensured that all TeamOCEAN members were confident and competent paddlers and able to rescue each other or themselves in the case of a capsized.

Thirteen hours of "classroom" training, coordinated and presented by MBNMS Education staff, provided in-depth coverage of MBNMS programs, regulations, resources, and natural history, with emphasis on the marine mammals and seabirds commonly seen from kayaks. TeamOCEAN goals, operations, and on-water reporting procedures were covered, as well as interpretive techniques. A presentation by NOAA Enforcement thoroughly clarified regulatory interpretation and enforcement and the role of the kayaking staff as educators rather than enforcement officers. A guest speaker from Pacific Grove Ocean Rescue provided information on marine communications protocols, marine emergency and rescue procedures, and local marine hazards.

The staff received an additional 12 hours of in-field logistics training, split between Elkhorn Slough and Monterey, covering gear and kayak storage and maintenance, local wildlife "hot spots", and introductions to the harbormasters, local kayak shops, and The Marine Mammal Center. The staff naturalists then passed this information on to the volunteers on the job.

One mid-season enrichment training session was offered in August. A guest naturalist from BayNet presented an information-packed slideshow on the seabirds of the sanctuary.

D. Results on the Water

TeamOCEAN's first day on the water was June 15, 2002. The team worked a total of 61 days from the start to the finish of the program on October 27, 2002. Work was split evenly between the two most heavily kayaked areas within the MBNMS: Monterey's Cannery Row (31 days) and Elkhorn Slough (30 days). The enhanced staffing power provided by the combination of paid staff and volunteers allowed for a team in both locations on most weekend days. The team collectively clocked a total of 549 person hours on the water, with volunteers working 30% of those hours.

The TeamOCEAN staff and volunteers always worked as a team on the water, with two to three people in Elkhorn Slough and two to four people in Monterey each day. There was always at least one paid staffperson working at each location each day. TeamOCEAN naturalists found that certain otter rafts or seal haulouts could be interpreted and protected from disturbance most effectively when one team member positioned themselves at an appropriate distance away and intercepted approaching kayakers in a docent-like manner. Therefore the team often split up to individually contact different groups of kayakers. The team normally stayed within visual contact of each other for safety reasons but also carried VHF marine radios to facilitate communications. Each team carried a cellular phone to allow contact with shore-based enforcement or rescue personnel.

This was the first season that we developed and used pre-printed data sheets on waterproof paper to allow consistent collection of data while on the water. For every interaction with a member of the public, TeamOCEAN naturalists recorded the following information: date, time, location, type of group (such as rental kayak, private kayak, boat, diver), shop of origin if the group consisted of rental kayakers, number of people in the group, the reason for approach (informational, to prevent a wildlife disturbance, because a disturbance was seen, or to give a safety warning), and the naturalist's feeling of how their information was received (positive, negative, or neutral response). When a wildlife disturbance was seen, the naturalists recorded the species, number of disturbed animals, and type of disturbance (head raise, flee without diving, flee with diving, or flush from a beach) and were asked to record detailed comments on any other relevant information. Information from data sheets was entered into an Excel spreadsheet for storage and analysis.

Data collected on the water by TeamOCEAN have been very useful for evaluating the program. Table 1 shows a summary of the season's interactions in both Monterey and Elkhorn Slough. A total of 3,529 individuals were contacted by TeamOCEAN with information about the Sanctuary and its resources, 53% of them in Elkhorn Slough. This equates to an average of 58 people per day, or 16 people per hour on the water. The daily approach rate was consistently higher in Elkhorn Slough than in Monterey from June through August, but was higher in Monterey during September.

Ninety percent of the interactions at both locations were informational, validating our perception of the program as a primarily educational and proactive program. Many of these

interactions were lengthy conversations, and most involved answering questions posed by the kayaker(s). On average 5% of all interactions (72) were initiated with the specific goal of preventing an imminent wildlife disturbance, while 4% of the interactions (60) followed an observed disturbance. These proportions were very similar at both Elkhorn Slough and Monterey.

Over 95% of the interactions initiated by TeamOCEAN naturalists were with fellow ocean kayakers, and the majority were with individuals who had rented kayaks. In Monterey, 8% of the contacts were with individuals paddling their own kayaks, while 85% were with rental kayak customers from three kayak shops. A handful of outreach interactions (19) took place with motorboats, divers, kayak divers, jetskiers, and pedestrians. In Elkhorn Slough, privately-owned kayaks were encountered more frequently. One quarter of the team's contacts were with private kayakers, three quarters were with rental kayak customers from two shops, and a few (11) took place with motorboats, divers, and pedestrians.

On Monterey's Cannery Row, TeamOCEAN provided daily interpretation and guidelines for respectfully viewing a variety of marine mammals in their local habitats. Particular attention was given to help kayakers recognize and understand the importance of not disturbing resting sea otters, harbor seals, and California sea lions both in the water and hauled out. The team prevented a total of 45 disturbances and observed a total of 30 disturbances to wildlife along Cannery Row. The team also educated uninformed kayakers about off-limit areas such as the beach at Hopkins Marine Station Reserve.

In Elkhorn Slough, TeamOCEAN provided natural history interpretation and protection of skittish harbor seal haulouts, foraging sea otters, and many seabirds, in particular the endangered brown pelican. The team prevented a total of 27 disturbances and observed 37 disturbances to wildlife in Elkhorn Slough. The team also discouraged kayakers from landing on and trampling mudflats and sensitive pickleweed marsh habitat and from entering off-limit or hazardous side channels.

E. Documenting Wildlife Disturbance

While TeamOCEAN's primary goal was community outreach, the naturalists also collected valuable information for the MBNMS Pilot Enforcement Program about the types of disturbances and problems occurring in popular kayaking locales. Some of the disturbances recorded by TeamOCEAN this season include pedestrian disturbances of sea lions on the Monterey Breakwater and harbor seals hauled out on beaches in Moss Landing Harbor. Observed motorboat disturbances include travel within the kelp beds along Cannery Row, fishing activity off the Breakwater, and commercial wildlife excursions coming too close to the animals in both Monterey and Elkhorn Slough. Most kayak-induced disturbances in Monterey occurred as a result of amateur kayak launches off the Plaza Hotel Beach and due to kayakers not being aware of sea otter rafts, or kayaking too close to the sea lions on the Breakwater. In Elkhorn Slough, most disturbances resulted from kayakers coming too close to harbor seal haulouts and roosting brown pelicans.

In Monterey, 30 individual wildlife disturbances involving a total of 150 animals were seen by TeamOCEAN naturalists, or an average of five disturbed marine mammals per day that

the team was working. The number of wildlife disturbances on days when the team was not present is unknown. Two thirds of the disturbances involved sea otters. Twelve of these instances (collectively involving 43 animals) were mild disturbances (head alerts); in four disturbances (affecting eleven animals) the otters swam away from their resting spot without diving; and in five instances (involving 22 animals) the otters dove away. Sea lions were often seen to be disturbed from their haulout on the Monterey Breakwater: the team recorded five instances (involving 70 sea lions) of animals flushing from the Breakwater rocks.

In Elkhorn Slough, 37 individual wildlife disturbances involving a total of 504 animals were recorded by TeamOCEAN, for an average of 5.4 marine mammals and 11.4 seabirds disturbed per day that the team was on the water. The number of wildlife disturbances on days when the team was not present is unknown. Harbor seals were most frequently disturbed, especially when resting on their mudflat haulouts. Eleven instances of harbor seal head alerts were recorded, involving 45 animals; and five instances of haulout flushing were observed, involving 101 animals. Seven sea otters disturbances were recorded; in most the otter dove away. Nine disturbances of seabirds were noted, involving the flushing of over 340 birds; all but a few were endangered brown pelicans, disturbed from their roosting sites along the slough banks.

The number of observed wildlife disturbances varied by group type (e.g. rental kayak, private kayak, etc.) and were not proportional to the occurrence of that group type (indicated by the number of TeamOCEAN interactions with the group type) (Table 2). In Monterey, the disturbances were disproportionately caused by motorboats and kayaks rented from Adventures by the Sea. One reason for the latter may be the proximity of Adventures by the Sea's launching and landing beach to a persistent sea otter raft, which often put inexperienced kayak rental customers in the near vicinity of resting sea otters. In Elkhorn Slough, the disturbances were disproportionately caused by motorboats and kayaks rented from Kayak Connection. It was not in the scope of this year's Kayaker Outreach Program to address these patterns or the underlying causes.

TeamOCEAN staff contacted NOAA Office of Law Enforcement five times during the season to report disturbances and, when possible, contacted the responsible persons in an educational manner. The team regularly alerted and assisted the Marine Mammal Center in locating and rescuing sick or injured sea lions and on one occurrence contacted the SPCA regarding an entangled sea bird. Team members also regularly removed trash from the water.

An appendix to this report, detailing each documented wildlife disturbance, is available upon request.

F. Budget and Assets

The MBNMS 2002 TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program cost a total of \$18,300. \$13,000 was allocated to salaries for the four contract naturalists, and the remainder was required for gear acquisition to support the program's expansion to include volunteers. MBNMS staff time is not included in this sum. \$1,500 was donated to the program this year in the form of kayak skills classes for all naturalists, and an additional \$9,500 worth of kayaks and gear has been donated in past years by industry leaders Perception and Kokatat. The program currently is

in possession of sufficient kayaks and gear to support seven people on the water at one time, collectively valued at approximately \$18,700.

G. Summary

We feel that the 2002 TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program has been the most successful season yet. First, the program had undeniable resource protection benefits, through prevention of numerous wildlife disturbances within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary as well as valuable information collection for the MBNMS Pilot Enforcement Program.

Secondly, TeamOCEAN was a strong education and outreach success. Ocean kayakers are certainly a populous user group that MBNMS outreach programs have largely overlooked. Based on wildlife disturbances documented by TeamOCEAN and reported to the Sanctuary in recent years, they are a group who need more information on the regulations protecting wildlife and guidelines on how to watch wildlife respectfully. The personal, face-to-face contact with sanctuary users, which sets this program apart from many MBNMS outreach programs, is known to have a stronger impact and leave people with a more lasting memory of the message being communicated. So, while there are several alternative methods for communicating wildlife-watching messages to ocean kayakers (e.g. brochures, training videos, laminated cards attached to rental kayaks), we believe a personalized “docent-like” on-water approach provides the most effective and best-received vehicle for spreading the Sanctuary message. Since this program provides the opportunity for question-and-answer exchanges, it also allows for public education in greater depth and on a wider range of Sanctuary topics than the publication-based methods. This strategy may reach a smaller number of individuals but the quality of the contacts is optimized. Furthermore, a positive, personal education experience carries with it an increased probability that the message will be taken to heart, and passed on to others.

Additional advantages of the TeamOCEAN program include providing a more tangible Sanctuary presence on the water, and greater Sanctuary visibility to the public, the kayaking industry, and the media. This year the Kayaker Outreach Program staffed an outreach booth at the MBNMS 10th Anniversary Oceans Fair, and was featured in two print articles distributed nationally to coastal resource managers (Jan/Feb 2002 *NOAA Coastal Services magazine*, and August 2002 *Coastlines*).

Informal feedback from the kayakers contacted by our TeamOCEAN personnel was very positive. The great majority of contacts were extremely pleasant (90% were rated as positive by the naturalists; see Table 1), with many people expressing appreciation for the interesting information and gratitude that their first contact was a friendly FYI to inform them of what was the “right thing” to do. Many people thanked the team for being there, saying it made them feel that the Sanctuary was being well protected. A small number of kayakers reacted negatively (1%) or showed a neutral response (5%) to the educational approach of the team. This seemed to be largely due to their disinterest in interpretive education. Businesses and agencies reacted positively to the program. We received very supportive feedback from the harbor masters and the local kayaking community, including owners and staff of kayak rental shops, tour and class operators. Representatives of the national kayak industry (Perception and Kokatat) have generously supported the program by donating boats and gear.

In summary, TeamOCEAN was able to provide natural history information and wildlife-watching guidance to over 3,500 sanctuary users over the course of 61 days on the water. We attribute this success to the increased number of staff and the addition of a volunteer corps this season. Structuring the program with a contracted Team Leader (as suggested by last season's participants), who coordinated the staff and volunteers and was responsible for data entry and analysis, was another very helpful improvement. Additionally, we set up new methodologies for data collection that have greatly facilitated the accurate evaluation of the program and enhanced the team's role as monitors of ocean kayaking activity and marine wildlife disturbance.

We recommend that the TeamOCEAN Kayaker Outreach Program be continued indefinitely into the future. We envision TeamOCEAN gaining recognition and visibility for the Sanctuary Program, while providing an educational forum to address marine wildlife disturbances within the MBNMS. Towards this goal, we have a few suggestions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of TeamOCEAN in future years.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT YEAR

A. Staff and Volunteers

The staffing changes implemented this season (increasing the paid staff from two to four, designating a Team Leader, including volunteers, and reducing the workweek from four to three days) were all excellent improvements to the program. These aspects of the program should carry on unchanged next year.

We recommend that the patrol days and locations remain the same. The on-water season should start earlier, on Memorial Day weekend, and run until mid-October (budget allowing) at both locations. Patrols after Labor Day should continue to be limited to Saturday and Sunday only. We may consider establishing two shifts to allow on-water coverage for up to eight hours, especially on Saturdays, the busiest day.

We recommend that the TeamOCEAN volunteer program be continued and expanded to include more volunteers. Greater volunteer availability would be helpful to avoid staff shortages that prevented the team from going out at both locations on a few days. The naturalists also reported that although teams of two are adequate, a team of three people (at each location) allows for better coverage and more effective public outreach. Recruiting more volunteers is the best way to achieve this ideal team size. The only anticipated cost of an expanded volunteer corps will be the cost of the kayak skills class, if the program's training needs exceed the local instructors' ability to donate class time. At the beginning of the season it was crucial that volunteers and paid naturalists be paired, but towards the end of the season some of the volunteers could go out in teams without a paid staffperson, if they felt comfortable doing so. We feel that the program's combination of paid and volunteer naturalists worked very well, and we do not envision that volunteers will ever replace the paid staff.

Following a suggestion from last season's staff, full-time MBNMS education staff stayed closely involved with the contractors this year to provide effective support and communications

between the MBNMS office and TeamOCEAN personnel. Scheduling and day-to-day coordination was done by the contracted Team Leader, but the MBNMS program coordinator met regularly with the Team Leader, and once with the entire staff team. It is recommended that next year the program coordinator should have a few more meetings with the entire team, and occasionally join the team on the water to observe and provide guidance. As in this season, NOAA Enforcement staff should continue to be involved in the training and as a consultant to the team throughout the season to provide regulatory clarification and to receive, evaluate, and process reported violations.

B. Training

We recommend that the “classroom” portion of the training be lengthened to cover additional material identified by this year’s team as desirable, mainly more natural history information on the kelp forest and slough habitats, and more focus on seabirds. Natural history field trips should be considered as possible additions to next year’s training, possibly on the MBNMS Shark Cat and/or the Elkhorn Slough Safari boat. More written supplementary materials should be developed to enhance learning, such as a “FAQ sheet”. More team-building activities would also be appropriate.

If budget or donations allow, we recommend a second day of on-water paddle and rescue skills training (the standard training course is two days). It would be advisable for the MBNMS staff person(s) doing the training to accompany the team on the water for their first few days, to provide guidance, quality control, and supplementary information.

C. On the Water

We have no substantive recommendations for changes to on-water operations in future years, beyond requests for a few additional gear items and a change in the data book format to allow easier writing while on the water.

D. Program Evaluation

Data collected on the water by TeamOCEAN have been very useful for program evaluation. The on-water record-keeping system will be continued in future years. This year’s program was also evaluated in a detailed discussion with the contractors and through an anonymous post-season written survey for volunteers. For next season, we recommend the development of a short survey and comment card, to be filled out by rental kayak or tour customers at the kayak shops. The survey could address the customers’ feelings about their contacts with TeamOCEAN, and the impact that the information had, such as whether they intend to follow the team’s wildlife-watching recommendations in the future. Another possibility to consider is the development of a shore-based observation program to document disturbances of wildlife at key locations, with the goal of determining whether disturbances are reduced on days when TeamOCEAN is operating. We would like to investigate the feasibility of such a program, and whether it could be tied in with existing wildlife-observation research and volunteer programs.

E. Additional Outreach

We envision the future TeamOCEAN to include additional strategies for spreading a message of respectful wildlife viewing to kayakers, other groups of wildlife viewers, and perhaps

even to the general public. Some bear little added expense but require additional staff time, such as distributing MBNMS and TeamOCEAN literature and giving proactive outreach presentations to all local kayak rental facilities (in late spring) and to regional kayaking groups, such as Bay Area Sea Kayakers and the Sierra Club. Other ideas require funding, as well as staff time, such as the production of laminated wildlife identification and “etiquette” cards that can be given to kayak shops for attachment to rental kayaks. This concept has recently been embraced by the local kayaking industry and several nonprofit groups, and the MBNMS will be coordinating the wildlife card development this winter. Funding for the card will be solicited from local marine businesses and environmental agencies. Installation of signage at popular kayak launch spots, and the production of an educational video for viewing by renters at kayak shops, are some other unexplored venues for community outreach.

We also propose for consideration the possibility that TeamOCEAN staff and volunteers could be available for a broader range of resource protection and education projects, beyond kayaking. Occasionally resource issue education needs may arise which a corps of trained docents could appropriately and effectively address. An example, which occurred in the summer of 2001, was the period of intense bait fishing activity on the Santa Cruz Wharf that led to the entanglement and subsequent rescue of almost 200 brown pelicans in one month. In that situation, knowledgeable Sanctuary docents could have helped to educate fishermen on how to avoid entangling pelicans, and what best to do once it occurred. If similar crises should arise during future TeamOCEAN seasons, the Sanctuary should consider temporarily diverting effort from kayaker education to the more immediate resource protection needs.

Table 1. Summary of 2002 Season Data

	Monterey	Elkhorn	Total
Number of days on the water	31	30	61
Total staff & volunteers hours	269	280	549
Number of people approached	1671	1858	3529
Number of people/day	54	62	58
People/hour	15	16	16
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Number of approaches	695	714	1409
Group Type			
Kayak, rental	85%, 589	73%, 519	
<i>Monterey Bay Kayaks</i>	317	242	
<i>A B Seas</i>	80	N/A	
<i>Adventures by the Sea</i>	148	N/A	
<i>Kayak Connection</i>	N/A	234	
<i>Shop could not be identified</i>	44	43	
Kayak, private	8%, 59	24%, 169	
Boat	<1%, 6	1%, 9	
Kayak diver	1%, 9	<1%, 1	
Diver	<1%, 3	<1%, 1	
Jetski	<1%, 1	0	
Reason for Approach			
Informational	89%, 617	91%, 648	
To Prevent a Disturbance	6%, 45	4%, 27	
Saw a Disturbance	4%, 25	5%, 35	
To give a Safety Warning	<1%, 4	<1%, 2	
“Feeling of the Interaction”			
Positive	89%, 619	92%, 655	
Neutral	7%, 49	4%, 28	
Negative	1%, 7	1%, 8	
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Total disturbances observed	30	37	
Enforcement calls/questions	5	0	

Table 2: Wildlife Disturbance by Group Type

	<u>Monterey</u>		<u>Elkhorn Slough</u>	
	Percent of disturbances (number out of 30)	Percent occurrence on the water ^a	Percent of disturbances (number out of 37)	Percent occurrence on the water ^a
AB Seas rental kayaks	13% (4)	12%	N/A	N/A
Adventures by the Sea rental kayaks	33% (10)	21%	N/A	N/A
Kayak Connection rental kayaks	N/A	N/A	41% (15)	33%
Monterey Bay Kayaks rental kayaks	20% (6)	46%	14% (5)	34%
Private kayaks	7% (2)	8%	19% (7)	23%
Motorboats	13% (4)	2%	14% (5)	2%
Divers	0% (0)	1%	0% (0)	0%
Pedestrians	3% (1)	1%	3% (1)	0%
TeamOCEAN	7% (2)		3%	

a Percent occurrence on the water for each group type is indicated by the percent of TeamOCEAN approaches to that group type.