

CAL POLY HUMBOLDT

MS position evaluating abundance, distribution, and diet of Harbor Seals in northern California

We seek a Master's student candidate to support research on the evaluation of abundance, distribution, and diet of Harbor Seals in northern California. The student will join collaborators at Cal Poly Humboldt (Humboldt) in the Departments of Wildlife and Zoology, supported by a grant from the California State University (CSU) Council on Ocean Affairs, Science & Technology (COAST). The successful candidate will collaborate with another graduate student currently working on the project and may also help to oversee and advise undergraduate honors theses in support of the project.

This position offers the opportunity to work on an interdisciplinary project evaluating both marine mammal and fish populations in Humboldt Bay, in northern California. Successful applicants should have experience surveying marine mammals and fishes, operating small, motorized vessels and kayaks in marine conditions, operating unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and working independently. A modest annual salary is available through a grant provided by CSU COAST to Principal Investigators Drs Dawn Goley and Micaela Gunther, Professors in the Departments of Zoology and Wildlife, respectively, at Cal Poly Humboldt, who will serve as graduate committee members and mentors. California residents may be eligible for the State University Grant to cover in-state tuition.

Cal Poly Humboldt is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and the Departments of Wildlife and Zoology are committed to creating inclusive learning environments that recruit, welcome, and train the diverse next generation of wildlife biologists. The Gunther and Goley labs are healthy and safe environments committed to maintaining and promoting a diverse, inclusive, and collaborative work environment where members are empowered to freely and openly share their different views, ideas, and experiences.

Required Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in Wildlife, Biology, Zoology, Ecology, or related field
- At least one year of field experience working in this field of study
- Ability to work both independently and as part of a team to achieve research goals
- Small boat and/or UAV (boating certificate, drone license), or equivalent experience
- Generally strong field, mapping, and quantitative skills
- Experience conducting fieldwork under challenging conditions (e.g., inclement weather)
- An interest in utilizing non-invasive and genetic methods to study marine ecology

Preferred Qualifications:

- Experience with marine mammal and marine fish surveys
- Experience identifying marine fish species using otoliths
- Field experience in a leadership role
- Experience using GIS and R to manage and analyze wildlife/biological data
- Experience managing and analyzing large data sets

Interested applicants should send the following materials combined into a single pdf, with last name as title of file, to micaela.gunther@humboldt.edu with subject line "**Harbor Seal MS 2026**":

1. A letter of research interest that highlights relevant skills, field experiences, and career goals;
2. A cv or resume, including contact information for three references; and
3. Transcripts (unofficial okay) from all undergraduate institutions.

The successful applicant will be asked to submit an official application to the Natural Resources – Wildlife graduate program at Cal Poly Humboldt. Anticipated start date is 10 Aug 2026. **Applications received by 10 April 2026 will receive full consideration.**

