

CHANNEL ISLANDS EXPEDITION

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MANUFACTURE DE HAUTE HORLOGERIE

Oceana successfully completed its first of three ocean research expeditions launched in the United States in partnership with Swiss watchmaker Blancpain around the Channel Islands off Southern California in 2024. From April 29 through May 3, the expedition team explored and documented the biodiversity that makes these waters globally important.

The expedition team conducted visual scuba diving surveys to quantify and identify species and habitats — including thousands of fish, invertebrates, and habitat forming corals and kelp — providing a glimpse into the biodiversity at risk. State-of-the-art low-light cameras captured high-resolution images and videos of unique, rare, and unusual species and habitats in need of protection. The expedition team collected water samples at 18 sites that will be DNA sequenced in a lab to identify virtually all ocean life inhabiting and traversing these waters. Successful piloting of a hybrid underwater vehicle FUSION demonstrated the promise of this technology to provide meaningful intelligence for ocean conservation, such as producing high resolution side-scan sonar maps of rocky reefs and identifying precise GPS locations of lost fishing gear.



Red gorgonian corals (*Leptogorgia chilensis*) with an assemblage of kelp forest fish species amidst giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) off Santa Cruz Island
© Oceana/Danny Ocampo



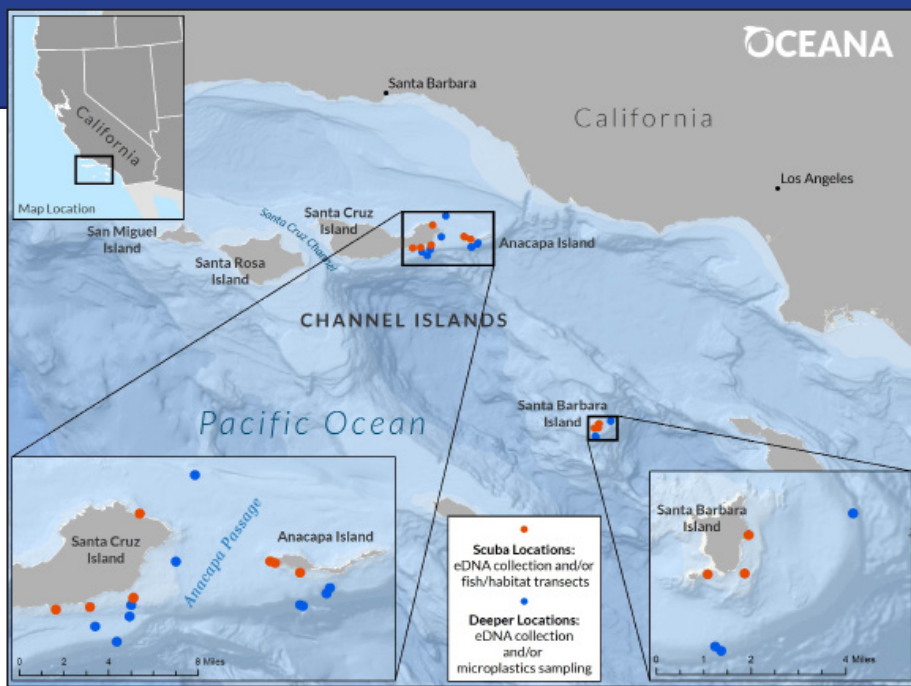
California aglaja (*Navanax inermis*), a predatory sea slug, off Santa Barbara Island.
© Oceana/Geoff Shester



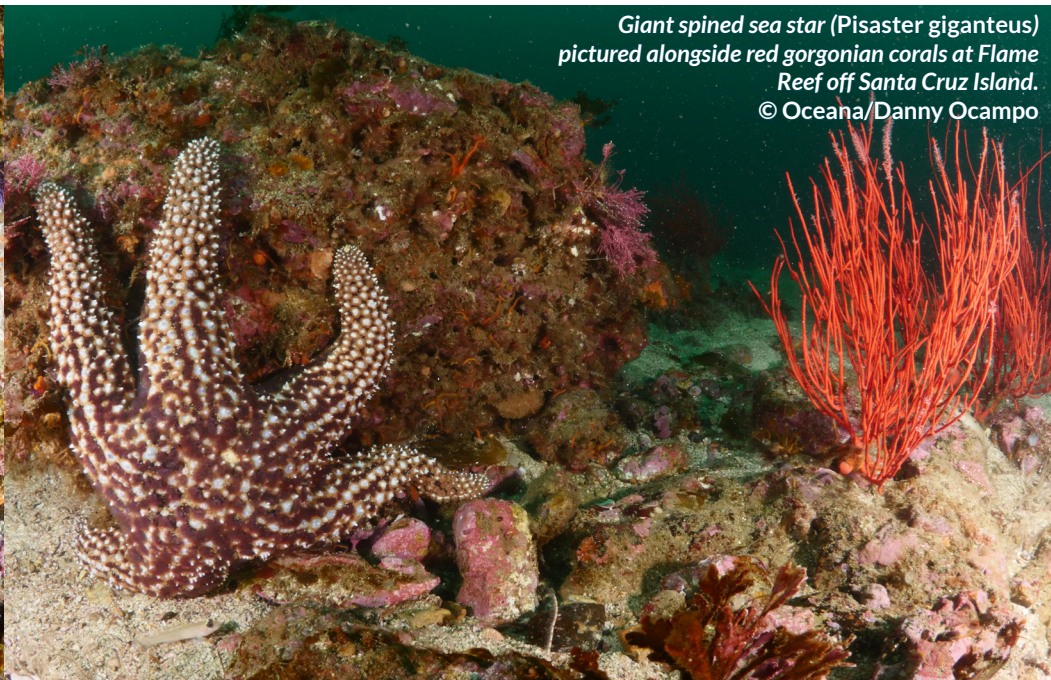
Scientific diver Geoff Shester films red gorgonian corals (*Leptogorgia chilensis*) and California golden gorgonian coral (*Muricea californica*) off Santa Cruz Island.
© Oceana, courtesy Jason Heaton

The images and research gathered on this expedition will support our work to protect ocean biodiversity by reducing entanglement of ocean animals – including whales, sea lions, sharks, and other fish – in set gillnet fishing gear. These fishing nets, which can span 20 football fields long, target California halibut and white seabass and are known for their high bycatch rates.

Map, right: Expedition dive locations showing both scuba locations and deeper sites where we collected samples.



Horn shark (Heterodontus francisci) nestled between two rocks at Cat Rock off Anacapa Island.
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Giant spined sea star (Pisaster giganteus) pictured alongside red gorgonian corals at Flame Reef off Santa Cruz Island.
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Garibaldi (Hypsypops rubicundus) pictured between golden and red gorgonian corals at Flame Reef off Santa Cruz Island.
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