



# Featured Creature



Jerry Kirkhart (Los Osos, CA)

## Ochre sea star

*Pisaster ochraceus*



### Animal Type

Invertebrate



### Habitat

Rocky shores



### Diet

Carnivores (e.g. mussels, barnacles, snails, limpets)



### Range

Alaska to Baja California

I'm so hungry, it feels like I have **two stomachs**. Guess what? Sea stars actually do! When hungry, they push out one of their stomachs and surround a tasty mussel, for example. Digestion starts outside of the body! Once dissolved enough, they switch the prey to their second stomach inside to finish eating.

### Researcher Spotlight



#### Karina Brocco French

PhD Student  
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#### What do I study?

I study how pollution from ships in the Port of Los Angeles impacts the health of important marine life on our coasts.

#### Why are sea stars so important?

Animals without backbones (invertebrates) are ironically the backbones of our ecosystems; without them, we wouldn't have the beautiful California coastlines we know and love.

### Like butterflies, sea stars metamorphose

Sea stars start as microscopic larvae (with several stages). They grow and eat until they **metamorphose** into adults. They look drastically different at each stage, but it's the same colorful sea creature!

