

KELP DIVING

Dense kelp beds are common features along the Southern California coastline, and most research divers will encounter situations involving entering and exiting the water through the surface kelp canopy. Divers should consider the following when planning or executing a kelp bed dive:

- Entry through kelp is best accomplished by making a feet-first, feet-together entry, rather than a headfirst or backroll entry that could result in entanglement.
- Slates, tapes, bags and other hanging equipment should be held close to the diver's body to avoid getting hung up in the canopy.
- Carrying a dive knife strapped to the inner calf can reduce the chances of entanglement.
- By entering without an inflated BC a diver can avoid entanglement and begin descent as soon as he or she enters the water.
- Divers should expect a darker dive as the result of a thick surface canopy.
- By remaining in one place during ascent, a diver can make an exit hole by allowing exhaled bubbles to move kelp fronds.
- Once at the surface, a diver has three choices to reach the boat or shore:
 1. Move in steps toward the shore. Get a visual of the exit site and head toward it by continuously sub-surface swimming towards the area and popping up in holes in the canopy.
 2. Get a visual on the exit area, take a compass heading and make a sub-surface swim toward it.
 3. Use the "Kelp Crawl". Keep your body on the surface of the surface canopy and use a Dog Paddle technique to make your way to the surface. Inflated BCs, Game bags, tools and slates should be organized to minimize interference.
- When getting into a boat the diver should clear any kelp from equipment and tanks so they are not pulled back into the water as they pull themselves up onto the boat.