Weekend Marine Science

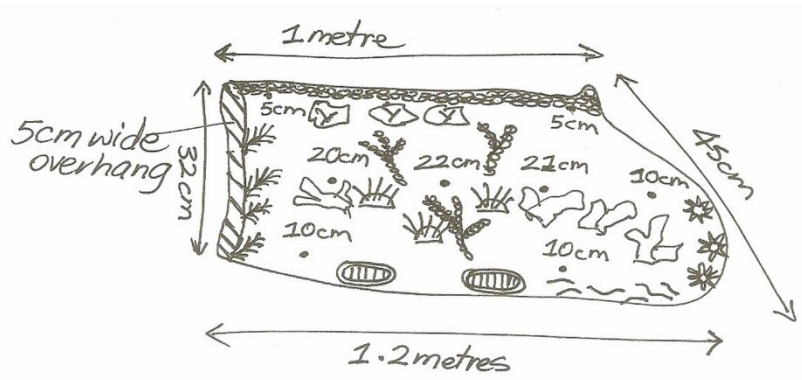
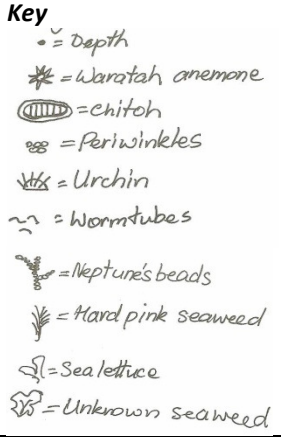
Rock pool audit

Visit a rock platform and select a small rock pool that is easily accessible and safe to observe at low tide. Note: Rock platforms can be unsafe in dangerous sea surf conditions. You are going to observe and record as much information as you can about this rock pool and learn more about life on an inter-tidal rock platform. Ideas to help guide your scientific observations and recordings are outlined below. This is an activity you can do by yourself or with a group of friends.

Some things to do:

- ***Use an art book or A4 paper attached to a clip board and pencil to do an outline sketch of your rock pool. Things to include are shape, surrounding features including any channels that link your rock pool with others and overhangs. You can annotate your sketch with measurements including size dimensions and water depths at different points.***
- ***Now you can start to record what marine life you can see in your rock pool. It is important to note first of all how many different types of organisms you can see. It doesn't matter if you don't know what they are; make up your own key like the one shown below.***
- ***The second thing you might like to do is to pick a couple of different organisms and count them. Make up a tally in your note book or at the bottom of your sketch to record the numbers of each. If you are in a group of people, you can divide up the task of counting different organisms or choose more than one rock pool and compare your findings.***
- ***Also of interest is to note where particular organisms are located. Mobile organisms like anemones, chitons, urchins and sea slugs, will move around (some ever so slowly). This means they may not be in the same place next time you come along.***

Sample record

Date: 6/12/10	***Time: 10am***	***Tide: Low***
Site: Skillion rock platform, Terrigal, NSW		***Weather: Fine***
Sketch  		***Key*** 

What else can you do?

- ***Use some of the reference links on the MESA website to find out the names of organisms you didn't know. Find out what they are some things that look like plants may actually be animals. What do they eat and what eats them? Did you find any rare organisms in your rock pool audit?***
- ***Return to the same rock pool on another day. Note any similarities or differences compared to your previous audit(s). Are there any patterns? How could you explain them?***