

DISCOVER WONDER

FRANCESCA KOE
Diver, instructor and advocate



Last summer, I was proud to be recognized by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation at the Ocean Awards Gala for my stewardship of our Northern California marine ecosystems. For over 11 years, I have volunteered for the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) and its non-profit partner the Greater Farallones Association, but the truth is it has been my honor to do so. I am so very fortunate to have discovered for myself what wonder is along our wild and rocky coasts; to have experienced thousands of awesome moments watching others discover the wonder of our magical marine environments during fishing trips, SCUBA classes, dive tours, and freediving sessions — all in the waters of our sanctuaries. I have been teaching curious minds and training brave bodies (both young and old) to safely go underwater and explore the other 70 percent of our planet since 2003.

My stomping grounds? Well let's just say the marine habitat of our NorCal backyard is known as the Serengeti of the Sea! One of only five major cold-water upwellings in the world occurs in our backyard — these nutrient-rich waters attract and feed more animals because of their intrinsic abundance, and as a result more ecological productivity occurs along our shores than most anywhere. In northern California, majestic coastal mountains on land are outgunned by stunning underwater canyons, reefs and pinnacles which

have historically been adorned with nereocystis, (bull kelp in Marin, Sonoma and Mendocino) and macrocystis (giant kelp in Monterey and Big Sur).

These keystone kelp forests provide a critical foundation for our nearshore coastal ecosystems, which translates into the privilege of seeing more amazing critters: more whales, more seabirds, more invertebrates and more fish. I'm a lucky girl as I get to choose between the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) and the GFNMS, depending on what I want to see and do.

Our sanctuaries provide sustenance for animals and homo-sapiens alike. It is still a wonder to me that every time I go on the ocean, or immerse myself in it, I find my senses reinvigorated, my spirit renewed, and my curiosity tickled. There is so much to discover and explore; beauty to behold and power to be humbled by. I feel eternally grateful for every chance I get to delve under the surface and to witness the wonder and mysteries of my preferred habitat. In return for the many gifts I have received from these marine ecosystems, I pledge to share it with as many others as I can, to educate decision-makers on why we need to prioritize the protection and restoration of these marine resources, and to continue to discover wonder as I go.

WATCH FRANCESCA'S VIDEO ▶

There's an Ocean of Sanctuaries to Discover

Beautiful and awe-inspiring, they are home to miraculous wildlife that soar above and swim below the water's surface. Explore and do your part to help protect these wet and wonderful places.

Discover your story, Discover Wonder.



**National
Marine Sanctuary
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