



Coast Range Chronicles 11: “F#@%ing Kelp”

by

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In early fall, before the big winter swells hit, some reefs along the central coast are so dense with kelp that you could almost walk across the fronds. It gets even thicker at low tide. I’ve seen egrets standing on mats of kelp as if loitering on dry ground.

The stuff is a bitch to surf in. When paddling through the worst of it you have to grab the fronds and pull yourself along as if climbing a rope. If you duck under a wave and surface in the kelp, it pulls you down and you’re forced to bushwhack out of the jungle. It’s irritating and vaguely creepy.

Surfing through the tangle entails a bumpy and brutal ride. It’s quite entertaining to stand on the bluff and watch people race down the line and hit the kelp at full throttle and stop abruptly like they’ve nailed a massive speed bump. They’ll flounder and face-plant and kook-out in countless different ways. The carnage is hilarious and curiously satisfying to watch.

But I've noticed that when I'm racing down the line and hit the kelp and kook-out badly it doesn't seem quite as funny or the least bit satisfying.

F#@%ing kelp.