Marine fishes rely on an array of habitats throughout their lives, including habitats in the deep sea. Rockfish and other demersal fish species have been shown to be associated with structure-forming deep sea corals and sponges worldwide, including Hawaii, the Gulf of Mexico, and along the west coast of North America. There is growing concern that theses deep sea corals and sponges may provide critical habitat to commercially important species of fish as well as other deep sea fauna. Many of these macroinvertebrates are slow-growing and long-lived, which if destroyed can take centuries to recover, if at all. Due to their association with common recreational and commercial species of fish, deep sea corals and sponges can be exposed to destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling. By better understanding deep sea coral and sponge communities and their distribution, management decisions and planning can be made with regards to where they occur.

Nissa Kreidler is currently building a biological model to create habitat suitability maps for deep-sea coral and sponges off the coast of southern California. Working under Mark Henderson of the Fisheries Cooperative Unit at Humboldt State, her research will identify what major environmental factors affect the distribution of deep sea coral community assemblages. Nissa is a recipient of NOAA's Nancy Foster scholarship and her work will directly assist in the management and protection of deep sea habitats inside and outside of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary in the Southern California Bight.

Nissa comes from a background in marine and coastal conservation and science communication. She earned her B.S. from University of California, Santa Cruz where she worked in island conservation in California and the Philippines. She researched climate change impacts on the rainforests of Southern China and salt marshes of the San Francisco Bay. Her academic and career path has been driven by her love of the natural world and her passion for the communication and application of scientific research. When Nissa isn't mapping deep sea corals, she is usually trying to do a handstand, identifying bugs, or petting dogs.