Feather Boa Kelp

Egregia menziesii

Named after the surgeon-naturalist Archibald Menzies, who collected the "type" specimen.

WHERE IT'S FOUND

Feather boa kelp is commonly found on exposed rocks during the lowest tides, and out into the subtidal zone to about 18 feet deep.

MEET THE SEAWEED

Sometimes resembling a feather boa–hence its common name–feather boa blades are speckled with tiny spikes and can grow up to 40 feet long. Gas-filled bladders punctuate the extensive length, holding it aloft at high tide. These bladders, like the kelp's textured straps and olive-green blades, can vary wildly in appearance. Location, temperature, and ocean salinity (the concentration of salt in the water) all affect the seaweed's outward presentation. Its resilience in our time of shifting ocean temperatures is evident in its increased abundance along the northern Pacific coast.

The *Discurria incessa,* a sea snail known as a seaweed limpet, lives and dines exclusively on this kelp.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A resilient seaweed, feather boa kelp thrives along Vancouver Island, where surgeon-naturalist Archibald Menzies collected its "type" specimen. Menzies handed off naming duties for all of his samples to Dawson Turner, an English banker and botanist, who originally called this kelp *Fucus Menziesii;* it was renamed *Egregia* in 1876.

Dawson's wife, Mary Dawson Turner, oversaw all of the lithograph printings for Dawson's treatise on seaweed, *Fuci, or Colored figures and descriptions of the plants referred by botanists to the genus Fucus* (1808). Herself an accomplished artist, Mary illustrated botanical publications, created various collections of etched portraiture, and skillfully depicted architecture and landscapes.