

# TORREYANA

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Published for members of the Torrey Pines Docent Society, #53, July, 1980

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NEXT DOCENT MEETING - Saturday morning, July 19, 9:00 A.M. Lodge

Our own Hank Nicol, Park Naturalist, will lead us on a nature walk, sharing his expertise to help us to become better interpreters.

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## *Conn Quest by Martha Conn*

What an enthusiastic group! Our 7:30 A.M. Bird Walk and Breakfast was a success as far as people turn out. The birds were not so cooperative.

Our clever V.P., Frances Parks, has treated us to some very fine programs. Unfortunately for us, she has decided to study in Switzerland. She will be leaving Sept. 1. Anyone interested in taking over for her, let it be known.

After some discussion, summer hours were limited to Fri., Sat., Sun. due to lack of volunteer hours. You are still welcome during the week. If possible, announce your arrival to the ranger. If a weekday is your best time to help, please come.

For our weekend schedule we will need each day:  
2 volunteers ..... 11 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.  
2 volunteers ..... 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.

With no official duty coordinator we are going to rely on monthly volunteers; they are:  
July Ruth Hand 459-9020  
Aug. Penny Hoffman 282-9662

Note- New Location- The sign up sheet for all duties will be kept at the front desk. We hope this will avoid any confusion.

# Conn Quest by Martha Conn (continued)

The breakfast was a feast thanks to Julie Marine's diligent organization. So many tasty goodies were contributed by generous docents. Many thanks to all, and those eggs did get scrambled in spite of the electrical blackouts.

Gene Barber added to our gaiety by presenting worthwhile door prizes which were eagerly received. I wanted to win the dinner for two at the Torrey Club.

The discussion of spending our funds continues. Mention has been made for aquariums and one has been donated by Marc Cimolino. Last month it housed two little toads. Thanks, Marc. Other suggestions have been made for binoculars, a spotting scope, captains chairs. Let's decide.

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## LETTER FROM RANGER JEFF PRICE

Dear Docents,

In this parks and recreation "business" it seems people are always on the move. I am no exception.

I have been here at San Diego Coast since 1977. Having expanded my work experience by supervising both campgrounds and by working here at Torrey Pines for 10 months, I find it time to move on. Beginning August 1st, I am transferring to Anza-Borrego State Park. My patrol sector there will be the eastern third of the Park, including Santa Rosa Mountain Preserve, Ocotillo Wells, Elephant Trees and Split Mountain. It's only about 200 square miles in size, which means I'll probably never get to know any of it as well as I have Torrey Pines.

I have enjoyed being associated with such an energetic group as TPDS. In the future I hope you will continue to grow and help meet the needs of visitors to this beautiful and unique Reserve.

Please visit if you are at Anza-Borrego. I will miss seeing all of you at work, meetings and in the community.

Jeff

If you were among the early morning hikers your rewards were several. Janice Victoria, a specialist in ornithology, demonstrated the skills of bird watching. The prize sighting was of the rufous-sided towhee; others viewed were the scrub jay, the Ca. thrasher, brown towhee, a type of swallow, crow; and, often heard but not seen, was the wrenit, who sings "the voice of the chaparral". Bird calls are used for mating and to establish territory. If you are bothered in the night by excessive singing, check your location. Porch lights and street lights can awaken the birds whose eyelids are light sensitive. Throw the shoe at the light, not at the birds!

Business for the day included a budget balance of \$931.15. A shortage in the cash drawer covering two weeks totaled \$47.67. Not good.

Ranger John Magee was introduced who helped us sort out our summer duties. (See schedule on page 1.)

## News & Notes

Natural History Museum -- The Convo-neers' one-hour walks through Florida Canyon continue Sundays beginning at 2 p.m. Call for information. Balboa Park. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

### Museum Plans Underwater Exhibit

The San Diego Museum of Natural History will host a "Deep-Ocean Photography" exhibit from July 3 through Aug. 10. The exhibit was produced by the U.S. Navy oceanographic agencies in cooperation with the New Orleans Museum of Art.

(Ed. Note: Tues. is "free" day at the Natural History Museum.)

## Quizz

- A) The word "chaparral" comes from the Spanish word "chaparra" which means:
- 1- a handsome fellow
  - 2- leather trousers
  - 3- evergreen oak
  - 4- cowboy hat
- B) The "Witches' Broom", occasionally seen in Torrey Pines, is:
- 1- a parasite in the mistletoe family
  - 2- a gorilla's nest
  - 3- a cancerous growth caused by a fungus
  - 4- a disease with probable multiple causes, in part hereditary

# Poetry Corner

HOW DEL MAR GOT ITS NAME by Joyce Evans

Illustrated by John Thunen

Del Mar was first called "Weed", after a Confederate Army captain who became a rancher in Sorrento Valley. In 1885, a Mrs. Loup, wife of the postmaster, read a popular ballad called "The Fight of Paso Del Mar", which gave her the idea of changing the name from "Weed" to "Del Mar". The ballad described a fight between a fugitive herdsman, Bernal, and one Pablo, who was riding a mule. They met and fought for the right of way on a narrow path along a steep cliff high above the sea. It has been conjectured that the path may have been in the area above Flat Rock. Here is the ballad:

## The Fight of Paso Del Mar

With his poncho wrapped gloomily round him,  
Bernal mounted the dizzying road,  
And the chasms and steep of the headland  
Were slippery and wet as he trod.  
Wild swept the wind of the ocean,  
Rolling the fog from afar,  
When near him a mule-bell came tinkling,  
Midway on the Paso Del Mar.

"Back!" shouted Bernal, full fiercely,  
And "Back!" shouted Pablo in wrath,  
As his mule halted, startled and shrinking,  
On the perilous line of the path.  
The roar of devouring surges  
Came up from the breakers' hoarse war;  
And "Back, or you perish!" cried Bernal,  
"I turn not on Paso Del Mar!"

The gray mule stood firm as the headland.  
Bernal clutched at the jingling rein,  
Then Pablo rose up in his saddle  
And smote till he dropped it again.  
A wild oath of passion swore Bernal,  
And brandished his dagger, still red,  
While fiercely stout Pablo leaned forward,  
And fought o'er his trusty mule's head.



They fought till the black wall below them  
Shone red through the misty blast;  
Stout Pablo the struck, leaning further,  
The broad breast of Bernal at last.  
Then, frenzied with pain, the swarthy herdsman  
Closed on him with terrible strength,  
And jerked him, despite of his struggles,  
Down from the saddle at length.

They grappled with desperate madness,  
On the slippery edge of the wall;  
They swayed on the brink, and together  
Reeled out to the rush of the fall.  
A cry of the wildest death-anguish  
Rang faint through the mist from afar,  
And the riderless mule went homeward  
From the fight of the Paso Del Mar.

Excerpted from Del Mar Decades  
by Elizabeth Whitfield Richards

Answers to Quizz:

- A) 3
- B) 4

## THE STORY OF THE MIRA MESA OWLS by Hank Nicol

This year I did the bravest thing I have ever done. I coached a Little League team. I had several cardiac arrests and nervous breakdowns. The team was a winner, and, by the end of the season, I felt as if I had 14 sons instead of one. I bring this up because I want to show that you don't have to Kayak down the Yukon, canoe up the Orinoco, or scale the Ruenzori Range to learn about nature.

At one evening game there was a crisis. Nobody had unlocked the portable chemical outhouse. There were several patches of tall chaparral in the vicinity. That's where I headed. Before I got to my destination there was a flurry of feathers. It was an owl, but it shot through so fast I couldn't quite read its plates.

By late in the season the team was in danger of winning the league championship. The manager, Bob Berg, who, in his free time is a Navy C.P.O., called a voluntary Sunday morning batting practice. Half the team showed up. There was lots of enthusiasm, lots of fun and lots of foul balls. I walked over to a patch of chamise looking for a stray ball. I found the ball. I also found a hole... with an owl in it.

You already know that owls often live in holes. But holes that look more suitable for ground squirrels? These are burrowing owls. They are able to dig their own holes as much as ten feet deep, but they often take up residence in burrows deserted by squirrels, foxes, or even skunks. The females can lay ten or eleven eggs where the big owls, like the Great Horned, usually lay only one or two. All owls seem to lay white eggs. There isn't any need for camouflage in a dark hole, and white eggs are easier for mama owl to see.

I've never seen burrowing owls at any park where I've been stationed, though I think they must be around Torrey Pines someplace. When my kids were small I used to take them to Brannon Island State Recreation Area on the Sacramento River to see burrowing owls. Brannon Island is more famous for striped bass than owls. It is also more famous for howling wind. It blows almost as hard as it does in my old home port, Benicia.

You will hardly ever see one burrowing owl. They come in pairs, and the pairs often come in colonies. Their colonies are usually right in ground squirrel colonies. I don't imagine the ground squirrels like that much. The owls are just as happy living at the end of an airport runway or in a vacant lot as they are in their natural habitat.

Owls are not 100% nocturnal. The burrowing owls do most of their hunting in the daytime. They stand alertly at their front doors in bright sunlight. If you walk around them they will rotate their heads and keep an eye on you all the way. No, you can't wring their necks by walking circles around them. If you walk slowly toward them they seem to dissolve into the ground. If you charge, they may head for the basement. or you might scare them out into the open. When they are away from their holes, you can see that they are very small, only about ten inches tall, but that

they have very long legs.

Burrowing owls like to hunt by perching high up on something with a clear view. A portable chemical outhouse or a Little League backstop does just fine.

And what is the name of our baseball team? Sorry! It's the Dolphins.



*Hank*

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## *Along Our Bloomin' Trails*

### HEAT WAVE! AND HOW THE POIKILOOTHERMS AND HOMEOTHERMS COPE

By Bill Brothers

7-50

July heat scorching the trails of Torrey Pines. We rest in the shade of a twisted pine with the slight sea breeze lofting through our draped clothing. Perspiration collects around our hat bands, with droplets sliding earthward from the brow. Moments of how we, as humans, cool ourselves during nature walks.

But what about the four legged animals who call Torrey Pines home? You know, the poikilotherms and homeotherms who fascinate the mind and gladden the heart. The lizard and his cousin poikilotherms, who have a variable body temperature; who, when feeling warm from the solar fire turn lighter in color to reflect more light, or stand upright on all fours to feel the cool breezes caressing their bellies. The reptilian beauties also wiggle into the shade during midday temperatures, thus avoiding the wrath of Apollo.

The warm-blooded homeothermic mammals, with a constant body temperature, keep cool by lowering their physical activity (ah! a siesta and iced tea) or by dissipating excessive heat. This latter technique brings great relief for animals who pant or perspire, but others lose their heat from ears, legs and feet and keep a whole lot drier. The ingenious ground squirrel scurries to his underground antechamber for quick relief from hyperthermia before returning to your sack lunch, mindlessly forgotten as you cool your thoughts in the Pacific.

*Bill*

TORREY PINES DOCENT SOCIETY

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Deadline for Torreyana copy  
the 1st of each month.  
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Even though you are an old docent, and consider yourself "experienced" on the trails, it's a good idea to join someone else's walk once in a while. You learn new things! Not long ago I tagged along after Gene Barber. I liked the quotation he used at the end of his walk:

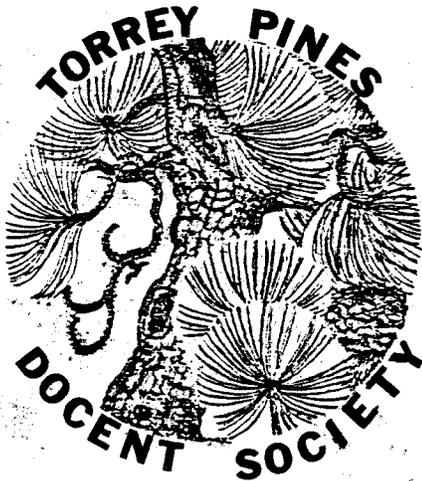
A FINAL DAY by Edwin Way Teal

If I were to choose from all the sights and sounds and fragrances that I would most like to see and hear and smell, among all the delights of the open world, on a final day on earth, I think I would choose the following:

- the clear, ethereal song of a white-throated sparrow, singing at dawn
- the smell of pine trees in the heat of noon
- the lonely calling of Canada geese
- the sight of a dragon fly glinting in the sunshine
- the voice of the Hermit Thrush far in the darkening woods at evening
- and, most spiritual and moving of sights, the white cathedral of a cumulus cloud floating serenely in the blue of the sky.

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