



TORREYANA

Published for Members of the Torrey Pines Docent Society, #99, Sept., 1983

NEXT DOCENT MEETING: Saturday, September 17, 9:00 A.M., Lodge
FOSSILS OF COASTAL SAN DIEGO COUNTY will be the subject of Tom Demeré's talk, including a slide presentation and display. Tom is curator of Paleontology and Geology at the Natural History Museum. This will be the first time for this topic to be covered at one of our meetings, and promises to be most interesting!

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU

The Torrey Pines Docent Society is the grateful recipient of a \$1000 donation from the G. Rex Green Memorial Fund. The fund is the result of contributions from family members and friends. The money will be used for museum renovation purposes.

AN OPEN LETTER TO 1983 TRAINEES WHO ARE NOT MEETING THEIR MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Dear New Member,

Docent Alert! Docent Alert! This is an All-Points-Bulletin to be on the lookout for missing trainees. Subjects were last seen at the March-April training meetings that were held in the vicinity of Torrey Pines State Reserve. Description of subjects: valuable and necessary to the Docent Society.

The most important characteristics of any volunteer are involvement and reliability. Although you did sign an application stating that you would be able to do two duties a month, we do understand that school, family, career or travel can change the amount of free time one has available. There are a few docents who, because of such concerns, are on a pre-arranged one-duty-a-month basis. Please call the duty coordinator (455-6414) or the president (452-7683) in order to make arrangements for maintaining your membership. A lack of response on your part will be taken as meaning that you wish to remain "missing".

Hoping to "find" you,

Judy

News & Notes

MUSEUM RENOVATION PROJECT UPDATE

Don't let the fact that the museum cases are empty fool you into thinking that nothing is being done. A lot of behind-the-scenes work is currently going on. Isabel Buechler, Millicent Horger and Ranger Bob Wohl recently visited with the curator at the Museum of Man and came away with some Indian artifacts, on loan from their collection.

Carolyn Anderson has made such a realistic looking owl habitat that it looks as if she cut a section out of a cliff with owl scat, eggs, nest and Torrey pine branches all intact.

With a portion of the money from the G. Rex Green Memorial Fund we will be able to engage a taxidermist to preserve a bobcat, an owl, a squirrel and, eventually, a heron. These road kills were obtained in cooperation with the State Dep't. of Fish and Game, largely thanks to former park aide Chris Getty, now employed full time with Fish and Game but still loyal to T.P.S.R., who has been referring all such calls to our rangers.

THE BIG FREEZE

The ranger staff is quickly running out of room to store specimens before taking them to a taxidermist. If you have any freezer storage space available, please inform Ranger Bob Wohl.

The 1920's corner is beginning to take shape. But we've hit a small snag. Ranger Randy Hawley has not been able to locate chairs that look like the ones used in the Lodge during its restaurant days. So... if there are any frustrated woodworkers out there, or if you know of anyone with this skill, we would appreciate your help. The Docent Society will supply all materials needed. Please contact Ranger Hawley or Judy Schulman if you would like to help.



Docent Doings

The south overlook of the Guy Fleming Trail was the scene of the wedding, August 13, of former docent, Marc Cimolino (now supporting member), and Carolyn de Piolenc. Marc is currently in the middle of post-doctoral studies, involving laser chemistry, at the U.S.C. Chemistry Dep't. Best wishes to Marc and Carolyn!

Docents are definitely people on the move! Carol Hansen is spending part of the summer in Alaska. Wonder if she will run into Ruth Hand and her husband, Tom? Having finished her hike in the Himalayas, Shelley Rogers is now hiking through Pakistan.

Former docent Sue Karcher (secretary 1978) gave birth on June 25 to a 9 lb. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. boy, Matthew Justin Karcher Gelvin.

Do we tell TPSR visitors more than they really want to know? See page 4.

AN ODORIFEROUS ADVENTURE

by Hank Nicol

The area around the front door of the Lodge didn't smell so pretty good. I thought I was the first one in, but I could tell that a skunk had been around earlier. The odor was only mildly offensive. It wasn't as if the skunk had lost its temper. At 9:00 Ranger Randy Hawley and Park Aide Martha Roane came in. They didn't agree with me that the offense was mild, but it seemed as though the offender had moved on.

I had to drive up to Area Headquarters to pick up some stuff. While I was there I got a call from Randy. He had found the skunks. Yep, plural. There were two of them. They were in a garbage can 'round the back. I asked him to let them be for a while. I wanted to take some pictures.

When I got back I got out my camera, and Randy showed me the skunks. They were sound asleep among the paper bags and milk cartons. How had the skunks gotten into the can? I had understood that skunks can't jump. Anything a foot off the ground was safe.

The garbage can was blocking the door. Randy and I moved the can back so we could open the door. We carried the can outside....very carefully. Randy set himself to release the skunks while I tried to take some pictures. Randy tipped the can over. He got it on its side, but he'd been too gentle. The skunks still felt right at home. Randy beat on the bottom of the can with a broom. One skunk shot out. It caught me winding film, but I could see clearly that it was a half-grown spotted skunk. That explained how the critters had gotten into the can. Spotted skunks are more agile



than the striped ones, and these youngsters had been able to climb up the steeply slanted brace on the back door. The skunk came out slowly. Then it ran around behind the can. Randy removed his body from that position. The skunk poked its head around to look at me. Then it, too, ran for the woodpile.

There they stayed. And why not? A woodpile has lots of nooks and crannies for a pair of skunklings to grow up in.

Ed. note: "The spotted skunk does a handstand when it is frightened." From Western Outdoor Environmental Guides - Mammals (by Harrington, Vessel & Wong)



Secretary's Notes

by Isabel Buechler for Julie Marine

President Judy Schulman conducted a short business meeting in the Lodge on August 27 at 8 p.m., after which Ranger Randy Hawley led 22 docents, guests, and park staff on a star walk. On an unusually clear night (for the coastal area), Randy regaled the group with legends as he pointed out the Big Dipper, the North Star, Corona Borealis, Jupiter, Scorpio, the Milky Way, and Vega. An added attraction was a brilliant "shooting star" directly overhead, traveling from east to west.

Hospitality Chairman Glenn Dunham provided refreshments in the Lodge after the walk. Thank you, Glenn. And special thanks also to Ellen Sjolholm, who made delightful native-plant herbal bath balls which she gave to attendees.

TOO MUCH EDUCATION HAS RUINED THE SIMPLE WALK IN THE COUNTRY (Article from the Seattle-Post Intelligence by Ann Combs, submitted by Judy Carlstrom)

People don't take walks in the country anymore. They jog around lakes. They climb mountains and scale cliffs. They ride their bikes along the city streets. But they don't take walks in the country, and I think I know why.

It's not that they're afraid they'll wander off the trail and get lost. It's not that anyone's fed them stories of marauding bears and mad dogs running loose. It's not even because they think they'll stumble into a patch of poison oak or fall into a bog.

No, I have a feeling the reason people don't take walks in the country anymore is because what used to be a simple and pleasant pastime has suddenly become a final exam in botany and biology, with every third passerby a professor administering the test.

I'm not sure when it all started; when, "Isn't that a lovely tree?" became, "Ah, a *Cornus nutallii*," and "Oh, look at that beautiful bird up there" turned into, "How about that? That's the first *Prycopus pileatus* I've seen this year."

I DO know that I can't even step out the door or walk around the yard without someone dogging my heels and pointing out that what I thought was just a lovely bush is actually a *photinia faseri*, that my "golden chain" tree is a laburnum with "pendulous racemes of yellow flowers," and that the roses I've always referred to as "red" are Lady Ashley-Ashley-Smiths.

I know that last March when I was sitting out on the back steps, breathing in the fresh spring air and admiring the daffodils under the plum tree, I was told that what I saw were jonquils and narcissus at the base of an Italian prune tree. And I know that the "bird" I'd welcomed back from "somewhere in South America" was a "gray-cheeked thrush" that had merely dropped by on its way from a winter in Peru to summer in Alaska.

So it's no wonder I and others have ceased venturing into the woods....
...What's the use of strolling down a country lane if, instead of being able to relax, look at the scenery, and listen to the birds, we're going to have to submit to a lecture....?

I used to say things like, "Boy, that blue jay's making a racket out there." I don't anymore--not since I was told, "That's not a blue jay, silly. That's a Steller's jay. Can't you tell the difference?"

I used to admire arbors and comment on the lushness of the vines. I don't anymore--not unless I want to spend 20 minutes listening to folks argue over the pronunciation of clematis.

And most of all, I used to think it was safe to go out after dark, when every bush looked like every other bush and all the tall plants were simply called trees. I don't anymore.

The other night I wandered out into the yard, took a deep breath, and sighed, "Isn't it peaceful, standing out here under the stars?"

And before I knew it, a voice in the night droned, "See, over there? That's Scorpius. It's just south of Ophiuchus, and Antares is its brightest star."





ANIMAL TALK



Roadrunner

(*Geococcyx californianus*)

If you are hiking at Torrey Pines and all of a sudden you see a cloud of dust.....keep on watching. Within that cloud you just might see a Roadrunner. This slender, long tailed ground bird is every bit as comical as the cartoon character that has delighted both children and adults for three generations.

Like the cartoon character, he appears to be moving on wheels, for, at top speed, his feet are a mere blur. His footprints prove that, in high gear, he takes 22 inch strides. Since he has been clocked at over 15 miles per hour, that means that he is taking 12 steps per second. He can also fly a little, for short distances, but because of his ground speed, flying isn't really necessary. Even more remarkable than his speed is his maneuverability. With his wide, flat tail acting as a rudder, he can dart, twist, come to a dead halt, and then start up again at top speed. He can also make 90 degree turns that defy the law of inertia.....or as the old saying goes....he can turn on a dime...and give you change!!

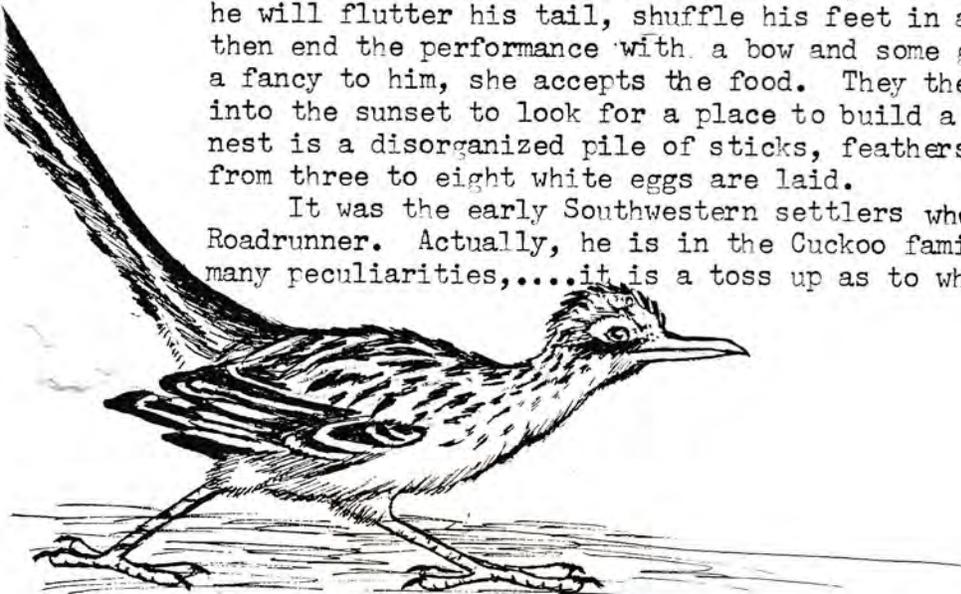
The Roadrunner's footprint takes the form of an X, with two toes forward, and two toes back. The American Indians believed that the X sign would give protection from evil spirits. For this reason, they felt that the Roadrunner had special powers. They often decorated their graves with the X sign and put Roadrunner feathers on their cradle-boards.

Since the Roadrunner lives in a hot, dry climate, where temperatures often reach over a hundred degrees, he rests in a shady place during the hottest part of the day. Since water is scarce in his habitat, he replenishes his body water by the things he eats, like lizards, whose bodies have a high water content. He also eats insects, plants, snakes and rodents. The deadly rattlesnake is just another meal to this strange and interesting bird. Their strategy against poisonous snakes depends heavily on their flashing speed for success. It is a matter of dodge and peck, dodge and peck, until the snake is exhausted and the bird can deliver a killing blow with its razor-sharp bill. The snake is then swallowed whole. Also aiding him in his hunt for food is his spectacular eyesight. Often he has been seen with his head tilted sideways, one eye focused on the ground, and the other scanning the sky for airborne enemies.

In springtime, the Roadrunner establishes a territory in which he will court his lady love. When he finds her, he'll first offer her food. Then he will flutter his tail, shuffle his feet in a dust-stirring dance, and then end the performance with a bow and some gentle coos. If the lady takes a fancy to him, she accepts the food. They then dance and bow, and go off into the sunset to look for a place to build a nest. For a Roadrunner, a nest is a disorganized pile of sticks, feathers and old snake skins, where from three to eight white eggs are laid.

It was the early Southwestern settlers who gave the bird the name, Roadrunner. Actually, he is in the Cuckoo family,.....and because of his many peculiarities,....it is a toss up as to which name suits him best.

June



TORREY PINES DOCENT SOCIETY

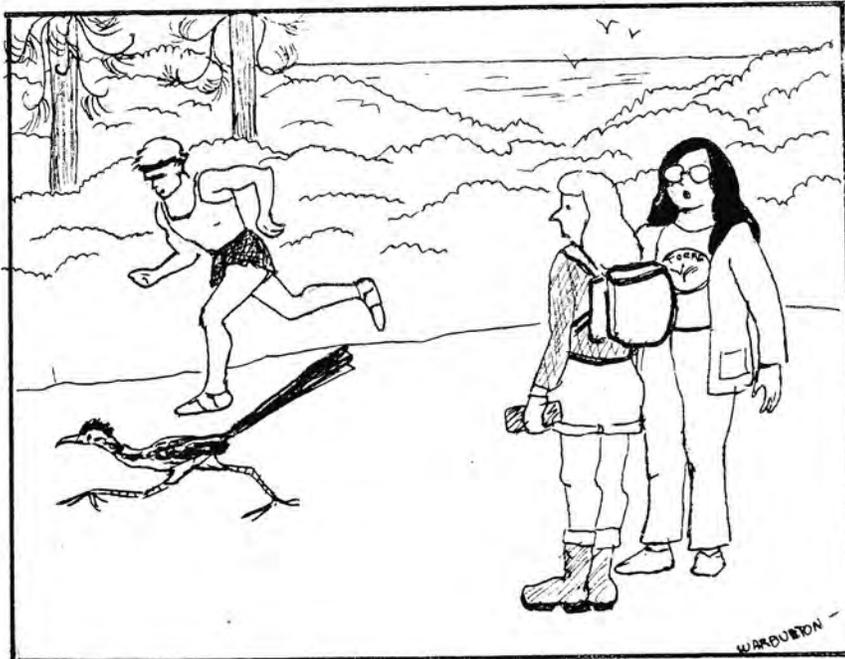
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Poetry Corner

"Man today has his eyes trained
only on the society of man. This is
particularly true of city dwellers
who almost every day see nothing
but man-made things. They have
forgotten the universal world of
nature."

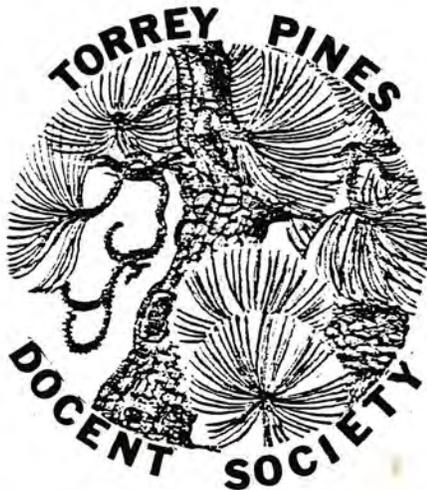
-Koichi Tohei, Akido in
Daily Life

JUDY ON DUTY



...and we have two species of Roadrunners
in the Reserve.

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