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TORREYANA

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Torrey Pines Docent Society
and the Torrey Pines Association

No. 121

July 1985

Next Docent Society Meeting

Saturday, July 20, 10 a.m. BEACH PARTY at Entrance to Reserve

It's time for our annual beach party bash. Bring your favorite sun-tolerant dish for a day of feast and friendship. Afterwards we will break up for informal beach and lagoon exploration. Hibachis will be available for those who need one. Please bring your own place setting and beverage.

Meet at 10 a.m. at the picnic tables to your right as you begin to climb the road up to the Reserve.

Friends and families are welcome. SEE YOU THERE!



MARGARET ALLEN'S HOME LOST IN FIRE

The residential inferno of Sunday, June 30, the worst in the city's history, brought tragedy to Margaret (Fleming) and Elden Allen, when their home in the 3300 block of N. Mountain View Drive was destroyed. The Allens are presently staying with relatives in El Cajon. An honorary docent as well as Secretary of the Torrey Pines Association, Margaret reported to Dr. Whitaker, President of TPA, that all Association records were lost. The Allens had returned only Friday evening from a trip to Oregon, where Margaret had spent six days in a hospital because of a heart problem. She required a wheel chair for the trip home.

Docents and TPA members alike extend their condolences to the Allens. We wish Margaret a speedy return to good health and hope we can in some way help them recover from their incomprehensible loss.

Notes from the Naturalist by Hank Nicol



FOOLS
WORDS OF GOLD

People tell me I have a way with words. Sometimes, I guess, I do. Sometimes I do not. I want to apologize for last month's closing line. Drink "Two Reserves?" That whiskey was made from a very low grade of corn.

A person who has a way with words can be very convincing. It doesn't mean he is making any sense. I have been known to make mistakes. I have been known to hang my blunders out for the whole world to see.

I don't feel too bad for saying that salt marsh daisies grew along the Guy Fleming Trail. The place is bone dry and almost 200 feet above the salt marsh. Even so, better botanists than I had made the same mistake. Sometimes I pick up some piece of misinformation and parrot it for years. Remember the 400-year-old Torrey pine at High Point? I told people that gray whales ate krill for longer than I care to think about. Then I found out what and how they really eat. I wrote that killer whales are the only cetaceans that attack warm-blooded prey. I was promptly informed that false killers and pilot whales attack dolphins.

Some things I will accept, out of caution, or out of chicken-heartedness. Nightshade may or may not be poisonous. Ditto locoweed. Somebody else can be the guinea pig. I respect rattlesnakes. I'm not particularly afraid of them, but I'm not about to kiss one on top of the head. I don't even go out of my way to be stung by a bee..., and I'm immune! I'm immune to poison oak too, but I'm not going to eat it, with or without the Thousand Island dressing.

When I see a superlative--biggest, smallest, most, least, commonest, rarest, onlyest-- I have suspicions. I once read that deerweed "always has two seeds in each pod." I counted the contents of about 50 pods. I had only a pocket knife and a magnifying glass for tools. I got a terrible headache, and now I will admit that I didn't find any pods with any number of seeds other than two.



I have come across other statements I have a hard time swallowing. They may even be true. You may have heard of mustard plaster made from certain insects. Could be, but I have found a recipe for mustard plaster which is a mixture of powdered mustard, flour (my mother used corn meal) and water. This goop was spread on muslin and used as a "counterirritant." This counterirritant made blisters to cure some deeper injury. It seems approximately like stubbing your toe so you can forget your headache.

Recently I was told, as were you, that a certain sage looked like a cross between Cleveland sage and black sage. "All Cleveland sage plants have only two-whorl flower heads." This one had

stalks of from three to five. These two sages may "commonly hybridize," but black sage has gone to seed before Cleveland sage blooms. Black sage must have some kind of potent, long lasting pollen. I have my doubts. I hope you have doubts too. An air of expertise can get someone a commission as a consultant. He may, or may not, know what he's talking about. Don't trust experts too much. I'm not an expert. Don't trust me at all.

Hank

News and Notes

A NOTE OF SYMPATHY

Docents have been saddened to learn that the husband of long-time docent Grace Claire died suddenly while they were vacationing in the Holy Land. Our sincerest sympathy is extended to Grace.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES by Glenn Dunham

There are still some open dates on the duty calendar for July that need to be filled. Please call me at work (573-6698) or stop by the Lodge to sign up. Open times are:



July 4	12-3
7	11-2 and 1-4
14	11-2 and 1-4
27	11-2
28	11-2 and 1-4

Jeanne has been working on the library and the pile of magazines and pamphlets back in the Docent room. She purchased and donated magazine holders to help keep the magazines in some reasonable order. Thank you Jeanne! She is making lists of all the books and magazines which should be ready by the next meeting. Please make sure that you have signed out for any books that you have borrowed so they get on the list. Leave Jeanne a note at the Lodge, or call me with any that need to be added.

I didn't receive any comments on my quality committee suggestion, either for or against, so I would like to at least restate that experienced docents signing off for the walk requirement for a new docent must be sure that accurate information is given to the public. Any weak areas must be critiqued. For the new docents, I suggest that knowing the material you do present, not being afraid to say "I don't know," and giving a practice walk to friends prior to giving your public walk are important.

Due to the divergent views on the extent of changes required to the by-laws, I feel we need a committee to review them and recommend changes. Any volunteers for such a committee should please contact me.

We must have a board meeting at our next docent meeting. Board members are asked to please call me if you will not be able to attend or if you have any items you want discussed.

PRAYER FOR A MARSH HAWK by Bernard Dambron

It was a Sunday afternoon, last fall. My wife Dawn and I were riding our bikes along the flood control channel, on the quiet little road that goes from Friars to Quivira, occasionally glancing at shorebirds down in the waterbed and listening to the songs of the meadowlarks.

As we approached the bridge that connects Ingraham to Midway, we noticed a man standing by a white van on the right side of the road. He was gazing at some bird in the sky through a pair of binoculars and seemed to be in a state of great agitation.

We slowed down and looked up, but all we could see were a dozen or so seagulls and a couple of terns, apparently nothing to get excited about. We stopped next to the birdwatcher and got off our bikes. The man acknowledged our presence by pointing to a large bird of prey circling over the water.



Harrier or Marsh Hawk

"What is it?" Dawn asked. "Marsh hawk," replied the man. "I've been here since noon watching him. He's been trying to catch a fish all that time. I have never seen such bad luck! I can't believe it! Here, want to take a look?"

He handed us his binoculars and we both took a peek at the unlucky bird. It was the largest marsh hawk we had ever seen. Well, larger, anyway, than the three or four Dawn and I had seen a few weeks before at Border Field State Park. I mentioned this to our companion, but he simply answered, "They can be pretty big."

We kept watching the bird for a while. He was now flapping his wings and hovering above the river. Suddenly, he dived and hit the water, legs first. We held our breath. The bird pulled off the water. Nothing. Empty clawed! He flew up in the air, soared for a few moments, hovered once again, and...wooff! Another dive.

"Maybe he'll be lucky this time," Dawn said.

"I sure hope so," the man added. "This bird deserves a good meal. He's been working so hard for it!"

But to no avail. The hawk had missed again. He kept diving and missing, and it did not look like things were getting any better for him. Every time he pulled off the water, he seemed to be slower, heavier, and just about ready to quit. But he would not give up. He continued to dive, over and over again.

"Can you imagine," said James (we had introduced ourselves by then), "what it takes for this bird just to get a fish? How

much effort he's got to put it? And we think life is tough!"

"Right," I agreed. "All we have to do to get food is to drive to the grocery store."

The bird was getting ready for another dive. "There he goes again," James exclaimed. "Look at him. This bird is unbelievable! Please God, if there is a God in heaven, please let him have a fish."

Divine intervention, or the result of persistence? Sheer luck or mathematical law? I don't know, but this time, when the bird rose again in the air after hitting the water, he had a fish in his claws.

P.S. Note for the serious birder: According to Peterson's Field Guide to Western Birds, "Our only hawk that dives into the water" is the osprey. So maybe we did see an osprey that day. But whatever the bird was, the prayer was for a marsh hawk.



Secretary's Notes by Betty Andrews

The Torrey Pines Docent Society regular monthly meeting was held on June 15, 1985, in the Lodge.

Duty roster and attendance sheet were passed around by Glenn Dunham, President.

Bob Wohl introduced our first speaker, Bill Evarts, a photographer, who showed the group some examples of his work. Bill has grown up in the area, so is familiar with the Reserve. Bob Wohl raised the subject of the possibility of using some of the photographs on postcards or posters.

Judy Carlstrom gave out take-home exams for new docents, along with a bibliography. She then went over the trivia quiz that was in the last Torreyana.

Judy introduced docent Irina Gronborg. Following refreshments (supplied by Maeona Clark and Elizabeth Nicoloff), the group went outside where Irina discussed sketching from nature, giving ideas and pointers on equipment. She talked about beginning a sketch and carrying it through the various stages. The group then tried their hands at sketching.

TPA Topics by Thomas W. Whitaker

At a meeting called by Department of Parks and Recreation and San Diego State University on June 14, 1985, an attempt was made to evaluate the "Prescribed Burn" at the Reserve, conducted during January 1985. Jessie LaGrange and Margaret Knight, Counselors of the Torrey Pines Association, attended the meeting. They very kindly briefed me on the highlights of the meeting. Unfortunately, because of illness, I was not able to be present. I think their impressions would be of interest to members of TPA and the Docents.

Evidently the meat and potatoes of the assessment are chronicled in a six-page report (with tables) prepared by Bill Tippetts, State Park Reserve Ecologist (copies will be available at Reserve Headquarters). The main findings are listed below in the form of recommendations.

1. Conduct prescribed burning from November to March, when rainfall can be expected for the several months following.
2. Ignition techniques in litter under pine trees should allow some organic material to remain following the burn. If this cannot be reasonably expected, then clear the litter around the bases of high risk trees.
3. Acceptable upper limit for live fuel moisture (measured in chamise) for prescribed burning should be 100 percent in east and north slopes and 110 percent in west and south slopes.

This report does little to disarm critics of control burn as a forest management practice under circumstances peculiar to the Torrey Pines State Reserve. It is incumbent upon our two organizations to monitor plans for future control burn closely. It appears that much greater caution and fine tuning of techniques are necessary before this management practice can be routinely successful.



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OBE'S DIARY

Role of predators to prune the weak

By O. B. EUSTIS

Coyotes catch deer. Deer eat farm crops and baby trees. Everything eats and gets eaten.

Some folks get frothing mad at the sight of a coyote; believe they threaten the very existence of our deer herd. Yet most modern deer problems stem from too many rather than too few. Predator prejudice goes much deeper than mere logic. Its discussion stirs emotions almost hazardous to confront. Let's do it anyway.

All wildlife diets vary seasonally. Coyote diet probably runs heaviest to deer when the fawns first start following their mothers. Newborn fawns spend most of their time lying still or nursing. They travel very little, give off little odor. At about three weeks they begin to eat a little greenery. That's when we first see them in the alfalfa. Coyotes see them, too.

Last June I watched a coyote atop a stone fence watching deer in alfalfa. There were about 12 does and fawns. They watched the coyote, too; gradually moved out into the field as more deer arrived. Finally the coyote left the stone pile, disappeared into the alfalfa. The does immediately became skittish. Suddenly the coyote appeared bounding toward the deer. They scattered. He chased one fawn, but all made it to the woods.

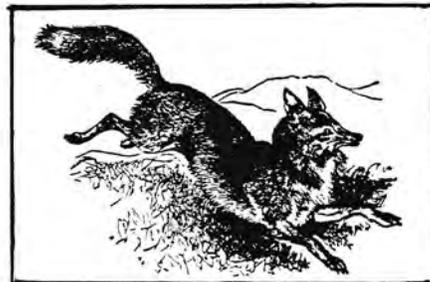
In a few moments I saw the coyote trotting away. He had tested the herd; found nothing catchable. Had there been a weakling or one younger than the others, he would certainly have detected it by watching; caught it in that first rush. I have never seen

a coyote catch a deer, but know people who have, using exactly the hunting method I witnessed.

Predators concentrate on the weak and the lame because they are easiest. All nature is energy - conservative. Don't run if you can walk; don't run farther than necessary. When fawns get big enough to consistently outrun coyotes, coyotes switch to other prey. If mice are plentiful, they are easier to catch than deer and just as nourishing; rabbits the same. Coyotes will eat just about anything including fruit, fish and garbage. They are smart enough to hunt in packs, may split up and herd healthy adult deer into an ambush. Their second peak of deer predation is in late winter when the herds are concentrated by heavy snow and weakened by starvation. The worse the winter the more deer the coyotes get.

Coyotes are not native to eastern America. Their big immigration coincided with the resurgence of deer herds after control of forest fires and outlawing of commercial hunting. Now, next to man and domestic dogs, they are the most effective deer predators. They have few natural controls, will increase in numbers as long as prey species abundance permits. The coyotes on our place have three pups. We listen to their chorus on good nights. They add quality to our outdoors.

Predators are good for their prey. They have given deer incredible grace, speed, awareness. We have plenty of deer, but as chief predator I watch the competition. Who shall sit in judgment?



This article was contributed by supporting members Les and Mary Jane Raymond, who reside in Rogers City, Michigan.

TORREY PINES DOCENT SOCIETY

President: Glenn Dunham

Deadline for Torreyana copy is the 25th of each month.

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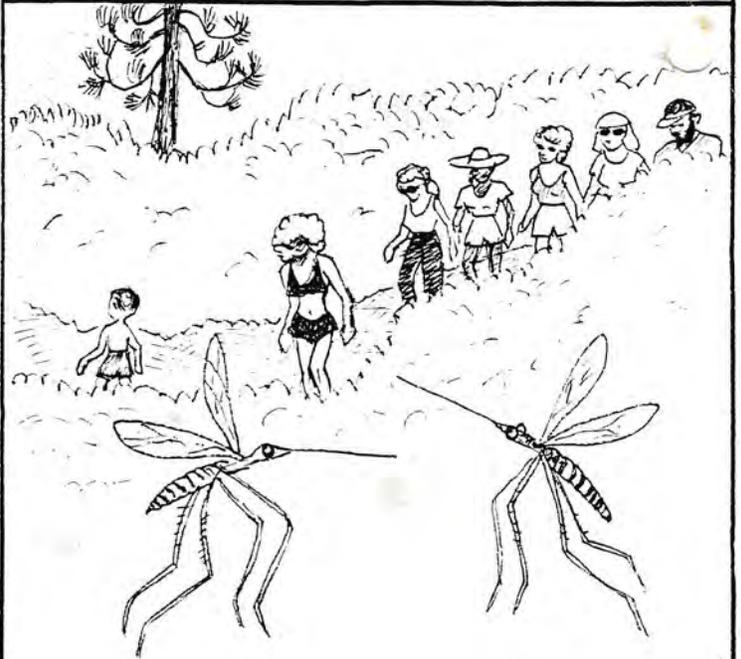
Phone: 222-7016

Poetry Corner

An inexhaustible good nature is one of the most precious gifts of heaven, spreading itself like oil over the troubled sea of thought, and keeping the mind smooth and equable in the roughest weather.

Washington Irving

Torrey Titters



That was so thoughtful of you dear...
to have our lunch delivered.

WAS 208.10N

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FOR

