

# TORREYANA

Published for Members of the  
Torrey Pines Docent Society  
and the Torrey Pines Association

No. 135

September 1986

## *Next Docent Society Meeting*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 9:00 A.M. AT THE VISITOR CENTER

For our next meeting we are fortunate in having Ron McPeak, a marine biologist with Kelco. He will present a slide show on the dynamics and utilization of the kelp forest. No doubt all of us, walking on the beach or looking down from the bluff, have seen the kelp and will welcome the opportunity to learn more about it.

After the speaker, we'll all go down to the beach to participate in the state-wide beach cleanup day by removing trash from our own Torrey Pines State Beach. Plastic bags will be provided; you might want to bring gloves.



## **Secretary's Notes** by Marc Gittlesohn

Thirty-two docents, trainees, and supporting members were in attendance at 9:15 a.m. on Saturday, August 16, as President Janet Humphreys convened the monthly meeting of the Torrey Pines Docent Society. Janet began by thanking all those who helped make the honorary brunch on July 19 the grand success it was. Melba Kooyman and Jack Cannon were present, so Janet was able to present Melba with her onyx paperweight commemorating her 10 years as a docent and Jack with mementos honoring the Cannons for their 10 years as docents and supporting members.

The president also recognized important new enhancements to Torreyana under editor Isabel Buechler. She particularly noted Marion Dixon's excellent series on Reserve staff, Grace Martin's pieces on coming events and speakers, the poetry submitted by various members, and Jeanne Dunham's article on efforts to preserve Peñasquitos Canyon.

Judy Schulman, who serves as editor of the League of California State Park Non-Profit Organizations Newsletter distributed the latest issue (June 1986) to the group. She mentioned that the purpose of LCSPNO is to serve as a communication network which shares ideas among its constituent groups. She distinguished between LCSPNO and the San Diego Docent League, which consists of volunteer organizations in this county but is not limited to State Park organizations. Glenn Dunham is our representative on the Council of the League. Its membership includes such docent associations as the Natural History Museum, the Maritime Museum, the Mingei International Museum of World Folk Art, Old Town State Historic Park, and Torrey Pines State Reserve.

Bob Wohl asked the Society if members had any interest in doing foot patrol duty on the trails during the Reserve's busiest hours. Assigned functions could consist of tactfully reminding Reserve visitors of rules (e.g., no dogs or food) and of answering questions. Docents engaged in such activity would be highly visible and would be representing the park on site to visitors who may never come to the Lodge or go on nature walks. There is a parallel for this in the Cuyamacas, where docents are patrolling now. General interest was expressed by the group in participating in such work, and a number of docents declared they would personally like to do it.

Karen Dusek said that Saturday, September 20, has been designated as beach cleanup day in California. She asked if we could participate. Since the 20th is our monthly meeting date, it was agreed that after the speaker we will all go down to the Torrey Pines State Beach and pick up trash there as the Society's contribution to this state-wide effort.

Judy Carlstrom detailed plans for the forthcoming Wilderness Weekend to be held on Saturday and Sunday, October 11 and 12, at the Sierra Club Lodge in the Laguna Mountains. (See page 4 for further information on this event.)

Jeanne Dunham announced that on Saturday, September 6, from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., the Sierra Club and the Friends of Peñasquitos Canyon are co-sponsoring a picnic lunch to draw attention to the impending out-size development projects threatening Lopez Canyon (See page 5 of August Torreyana and last page of this issue.)

The picnic will be held at the west portion of the Canyon (enter via the east end of Sorrento Valley Boulevard). Bring your own bag lunches. Among other activities there will be guided walks and a marvelous opportunity to see a gorgeous area of San Diego.

Vice President Grace Martin proudly announced the names of two more trainees of the class of 1986 who have completed their assignments and are now full docents: Maurie Brown and Parker Foster

We were indeed fortunate that our James E. Bittner, Torrey Pines Park Aide, was available and willing to speak on birds and birding in place of the announced speaker, Claude Edwards, who did not appear. A native San Diegan, Jim first studied at UC-Davis and later graduated from San Diego State last December with a major in Environmental Social Science and a minor in Zoology. He has been employed at the Reserve since Summer 1983. One of Jim's many contributions to Torrey Pines has been the compilation of the invaluable Checklist of the Birds of Torrey Pines State Reserve, State Beach, and Los Peñasquitos Marsh (1984). (Art work is by docent June Warburton.) Jim's future career plans involve work in parks, but he may first get a second degree in zoology with an emphasis on avian research.

Jim spoke informatively but with good humor and feeling about birds. He discussed equipment, field guides, clothing, and other necessities for novice birders. We were reminded that San Diego is considered one of the two best counties in the U.S. for observing birds and that Torrey Pines is one of the best places in San Diego because the diversity of its terrain (open ocean and sea-shore, lagoon and marsh, and woodland/coastal scrub) allows it to host no less than 213 bird species. He succinctly mentioned some of the things to look for as beginning watchers: (1) color, (2) size, (3) behaviors and eating habits, (4) configuration and shape, and (5) calls. Above all, he shared his passion for the values and joys of the bird-watching mania.

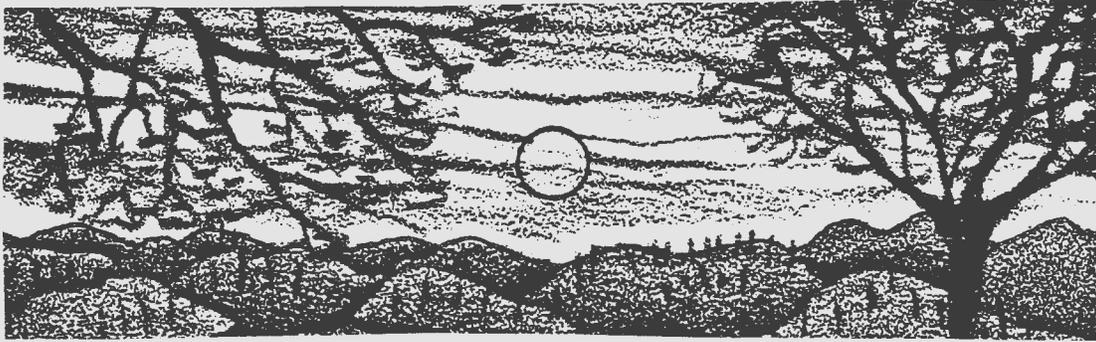
Wonderful refreshments--brought by members Bill Anderson, Pete Bardwick, Georgette Camporini, Glenn Dunham, Jo Kiernan, Judy Morrow, and Jan Taylor--were then served on the patio before some 18 of us left for an hour's bird watching and listening walk on the Parry Grove Trail led by Jim. We saw a number of birds and, under Jim's tutelege, heard many others. High point of this interesting walk was the sighting of several flocks of surf scoters swimming in the surf off the beach and quite out of season. They were duly recorded in our "lifetime lists." Thanks, Jim.

## ***News and Notes***

Congratulations are in order for three more trainees who have finished the requirements and are now full docents! They are Parker Foster, Maurie Brown, and Ida Marra. Good work!

## ***TPA Topics***

Neither Torrey Pines Association nor Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation submitted an article for this month's Torreyana.



CALLING ALL DOCENTS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND SPECIAL FRIENDS TO WILDERNESS WEEKEND '86, OCTOBER 11-12

Judy Carlstrom announced plans for the Wilderness Weekend and sign-ups began at our August 20 meeting. Here is a recap of important information and a brief outline of activities planned.

WHO: Docents, their families, and special friends.

WHEN: From 10 a.m. Saturday, October 11, to 3 p.m. Sunday, October 12. You may come Saturday only.

COST PER PERSON: \$4.00 for lodging and \$4.00 for meals (dinner and breakfast); \$3.00 if Saturday only.

WHERE: Sierra Club Lodge in the Laguna Mountains (there will be a map in the October Torreyana).

WHAT TO BRING: Two sack lunches, sleeping bag, and air mattress or cot. (Space is available if you want to pitch your own tent.)

TRANSPORTATION: You may sign up on the carpool list at the September meeting.

If you would like to attend the Weekend, it is very important that you call Judy Carlstrom at 748-0181 or Grace Martin at 452-1176. Final sign-ups will take place at our September 20 meeting. We would appreciate payment at that time from as many of you as possible.

This year we are fortunate to have Bob and Marge Amann as our host and hostess at the Sierra Club Lodge in the Laganas. Cars must park FACING OUT at the Lodge. The Lodge can accommodate 60 and has indoor bathrooms, a large kitchen with ample refrigeration and cooking facilities, and a fireplace.

After you have signed up, the head chef will contact you by phone and assign you to a food group for Saturday's evening meal. You will then confer with the other members in your group, decide on your contribution, and purchase the needed groceries. Please try to do your meal preparation that night at the Lodge. This is an event that is meant to promote camaraderie and provide entertainment! Speaking of entertainment, Glenn Dunham has offered to organize a game of trivial pursuit a la Torrey Pines State Reserve. Categories will be geology, wildlife, botany, Indians, Hank Nicol, and history. He needs your help, so bring a list of questions for him to put into the game when you come to the September meeting, or mail them to him now (3873 Pringle Street, San Diego 92103).

A detailed schedule of activities and a map showing the location of the Sierra Club Lodge will appear in the October Torreyana.

*(This is the fifth in a series of Torreyana profiles on members of the staff at Torrey Pines State Reserve.)*



Torrey pines aren't the only thing that's unique about our State Reserve: there's also Clyde Walker, better known as "Sarge." At 76 he is probably the oldest paid state park employee in California, and with 13 years on the staff, he is its longest-term member.

He had already retired twice, once from the Navy and once from the Civil Service, when he came to Torrey Pines in 1973. He doesn't look forward to retiring again: "Work is what keeps me alive," he says. And his retirement isn't even being discussed by Supervising Ranger Bob Wohl, who considers Sarge "irreplaceable."

"I can do anything that needs doing on the Reserve, except the peace officer duties," Sarge points out, adding that he's actually qualified for those, too, because of police training in his youth. However, they aren't part of his job as a seasonal park aide, although all the other routine tasks are: the kiosks, the trails, the office, and some special assignments as well.

One of his special assignments back in 1975 was setting up an overnight campground at North Beach for 145 units, and then supervising the area from 4 p.m. to 12:30. "We had silence from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.," he notes, emphasizing that respect for rules, something he learned in the military, is the basis for a smooth-running operation. When camp duty palled on Sarge after five years and he requested a transfer to regular Reserve routine, no replacement could be found to take his job, and the popular campground shut down. "People come back all the time asking me when it's going to open up. The District says it might again next year."

Sarge is also in charge of the "Pig Run," a race that began in 1977. It's named not for the participants but for the featured item on the feast that follows the exercise. The race takes place at low tide (this year on September 20), and the 600 runners, who include men, women, and children, cover various distances through the park, depending on their ability.

Some situations that aren't on the agenda are always occurring in the park, of course. One that got Sarge labeled as a hero some time ago was an attempted suicide by a woman who tried to throw herself in front of an oncoming train on the tracks through the lagoon. Sarge, who had been called to the scene by a bystander, threw himself across the woman and pinned her down as she headed for the tracks. "It was just a reflex action," he says modestly, though he later realized that the lady was larger than he and could have dragged both of them under the train.

With another appropriate reflex action, Sarge probably saved his own life.

The gas tank on his car exploded in his garage, igniting the building and his clothing: "I just rolled on the ground to put out the flames"--but not before they had caused sufficient damage to put him in the hospital for four months and leave some scars as reminders.

So how does somebody come up with life-saving reflex actions when necessary? Sarge credits his youthful training and his military experience. Born on a farm in the tiny town of Jamaica, Iowa, he was one of five children. "We had to come up the hard way. We all helped with the cattle and the grain, and in the winter we trapped animals for food." His Iowa years included other grit-building experience: "In high school I worked summers with a railroad section gang. During the depression years I was a coal miner. I was also a sergeant in the National Guard--that's where I got my nickname." A big silver

*A recent letter to the San Diego Coast District of the Department of Parks and Recreation is evidence that Sarge's personality and service are recognized and appreciated by the public:*

*7/27/86*

*Dear Sir:*

*I felt it would be worthwhile to let you know how we feel about one of your Rangers.*

*We look forward every summer season to seeing Mr. Walker at the North Beach parking lot entrance.*

*His cheerful welcome and greetings help make our days at Torrey Pines Beach more enjoyable.*

*Sincerely,*

*(signed)  
San Diego*

badge testifies to other duty as a deputy marshal in the sheriff's reserve, a job which involved him in the capture of headline criminals whom he still won't name publicly for fear of retribution.

From Iowa he went to Wyoming in 1936, troubleshooting for the telephone company. "That's where I froze, sitting up on a pole at temperatures of 35 below, with the wind blowing." That discomfort made it easy for him to decide to stay in California when he came to visit his brother here. At first he took laboring jobs, then along came World War II, and he joined the U.S. Navy, serving as an aviation metalsmith on a flat-top carrier in the South Pacific. Postwar, he spent four years in the Reserve, then was called up for duty in Korea, this time as a machine-gunner on a bomber for ten months. When Viet Nam erupted, he was still in the Reserve and this time was flight engineer on a supply run from Pearl Harbor to Da Nang. "I don't know what the supplies were, but the crew all got special medals for doing it," he recalls.

CLYDE WALKER (continued)

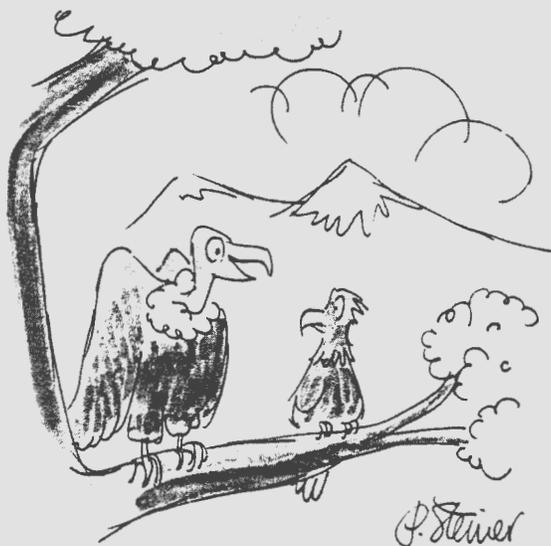
After Viet Nam, he was employed in the Civil Service at the Naval Air Station as an electroplater until 1973. "I wasn't going to work any more when I retired there, and I traveled a little. Then one day I visited Torrey Pines and ran into an old marine sergeant friend of mine on duty up here. He talked me into going for an interview with the park district supervisor." The supervisor knew a good thing when he saw it, and within a few months Sarge was on duty part-time covering the trails in the new Torrey Pines Extension. "I walked 10 or 12 miles every day, and I knew every rock in the place.

Since that time he has been a regular seasonal aide on the Reserve during the seven busy months of the year. He has seen 40 rangers come and go and has made friends with all of them. He believes in teamwork and tells new park aides, whom he helps supervise, "We all work together and do a job until it's done." His own pride in work and loyalty to staff members not only set a good example but have won him lifelong friends who still come back for visits.

A man who works so hard at his job might be entitled to put his feet up and watch TV after hours. But not Sarge. At his home in Lemon Grove, he puts on his gardener's hat and fights the battle with Southern California's hard soil and prolific insects to produce, among other things, giant zucchini or tender sweet corn, which he shares with rangers and docents lucky enough to be on duty when he brings a load of produce to the lodge.

His wife, Ramona, an Iowa girl whom he met in Wyoming and married in California 45 years ago, says he works "all the time." But activity may be catching, for she herself became an LVN after raising their two sons, and then a volunteer on buses for the handicapped when an injury forced her retirement from nursing. She is currently active in her church, looking forward to the day when her husband will have more time to spend at home.

That may take a while. No one gives up a lifelong habit easily, even if it's overworking. Besides, Sarge has the verve, stamina, and tenacity of a man much younger. Though he may have acquired much of it through tough training, some credit should probably also go to good genes: his four brothers and sisters, one older than he, are all still living and in fine health. Just another remarkable circumstance to add to the unusual events that have made the life of this Iowa farm boy a story of much more than simple hard work.



*"Life was tough for us too, until we got on the endangered list."*

*Notes from the Naturalist* by Hank Nicol



HOT STUFF



Somehow the subject of formic acid came up. I'm not a scientist. I'm only a generic naturalist. I had to look it up. Formic acid is the simplest carboxylic acid, whatever that might be. It's made by putting sodium formate into sulphuric acid. It's a "colorless, fuming liquid with a pungent odor. It irritates mucous membranes and blisters the skin." It's used to remove hair from hides and to make dyes. It coagulates latex in the making of rubber. With my two years in Thailand, I should have remembered that one.

\* \* \*

The sun had gone down. Visibility was getting close to zero. I was on the shore of Hilo Bay helping to put away a dugout canoe. This was not one of your fiberglass and quiche imitations from Waikiki. This was a real dugout made from a real tree. It was \*H\*E\*A\*V\*Y\*, heavy! But that's another story. Just after we got the canoe turned over and covered, the ants struck. They had crawled all over me, and, at some signal over the ant communications network, they all attacked at once. Napoleon should have had such a system. I made the ten yard sprint to the water. I didn't hit a stingray. I didn't get hit by a shark. I didn't care. Whew!



A few months later I was leaning on the limb of a rambutan tree. In case you're wondering, the rambutan, or ngoe, is a relative of the lychee but larger and cheaper. The leaves were touching my head. Nice cool shade. Pow! Zowie! I was catching it again. Big, red ants were doing a number on my head. These "tailor" ants make a nest by "sewing" a couple of leaves together. They use the larvae as "needles." The needles produce their own thread. A tailor touches one leaf and then the other with the head of a larva. Glue oozing from the head sticks the leaf edges together. The colony is small in size, but it defends itself with vigah when a bird blunders near, or when some clown sticks his head into the nest.



I'm sure you have your own ant stories...by the dozen. But why does it hurt? Does an ant sting, or does it bite? It does both. A primitive type ant is like its wasp ancestors. It's armed at both ends. It clamps down with its side-to-side jaws and gets a good grip. Then it jams in the stinger. More modern species don't have stingers. They just spray you with nasty, burny stuff.



The school kids are always shying back from the big, red ants they see on the trail. "Aw, they don't sting. I've never been stung." These are harvester ants. They collect seeds, but they don't seem to clear out large areas and make big mounds like the harvesters you see on the desert. You can see them hauling leaves, flower petals, and other inedible stuff. They take this deep into the ground where they make it into compost. They collect water from dew, from underground, or from wherever, and grow fungus. They're mushroom farmers.



I've been telling this story for nine years. I told it again the other day. Well, the tenth year has started. That very afternoon I felt a burning, stinging pain on the old gluteus. Within a few seconds I felt more pain in more places. I didn't have much



choice....drop the pants and find the cause. Fortunately the trail was deserted. I found three of my harmless, red, harvester ants curled up and giving me what for. I got rid of the ants, but I felt the pain for three days. I'm beginning to think this has something to do with formic acid.

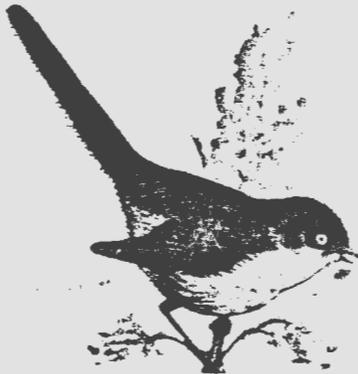
Hank



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THE BIRD OF THE MONTH CLUB by Jim Bittner

While walking along the trails in the Reserve, a smile never fails to cross my face when I hear the "song of the chaparral"--the bouncing-ball call of the wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*). More often heard than seen, this bird has a song that resembles the sound of a tennis ball dropped to the floor, speeding up towards the end before stopping.



Wrentit

The wrentit is the only member of the family Chamaeidae, and is only found in western North America. The name "wrentit" is apt, for its head, beak, and pale eyes closely resemble those of the European tits, while the long cocked tail and secretive habits remind one of our wrens. Many birders call the wrentit the "sticky-up," because of its prominently perky tail!

Found in dense chaparral and low tangles of vegetation, the wrentit spends its adult life within a small territory (about two acres) chosen during its first year. Wrentits travel in male/female pairs, so if you see one, look around for the other nearby.

It is said pairs mate for life, and they can often be heard chirping and whistling at each other within a shrub.

An interesting aspect of the wrentit's behavior is the hesitation to cross open spaces, if only a few feet across. It has been suggested that the Columbia River has effectively prevented this species from entering the state of Washington, even though that side of the river offers suitable habitat.

Identifying the wrentit from wrens seen in the Reserve is done by noting the pale yellow eye, long unbarred tail, and short bill. Weak fliers, they're lucky to make it across the trail to brush on the other side! They prefer to hop through the shrubs, feeding on insects and other invertebrates, and will switch to fruit and plant matter in colder weather.

Come the spring, wrentits will nest in dense chaparral, building a shallow, compact cup of twigs, bark, and dead leaves bound by spider silk. The four eggs, greenish blue and unmarked, are incubated by the female at night and both parents by day. They hatch in about 16 days.

Be sure to listen for that bouncing ball--the "song of the chaparral."

**TORREY PINES DOCENT SOCIETY**

President: Janet Humphreys

Deadline for Torreyana copy is the 25th of each month. Send contributions to the editor:

Isabel Buechler  
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Phone: 222-7016

ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE by  
Jeanne Dunham

On July 28, 1986, a group called the Sorrento Coalition was formed for the purpose of addressing the impact of the proposed development on Lopez Ridge in Los Peñasquitos Canyon. They plan a picnic on September 6 to publicize the protest to the construction. Please plan to attend this event to show our support.

(PLEASE CIRCULATE)

# Picnic

in  
Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve

Saturday, September 6

11:00 - 4:00

(Brief presentation at 12:30)

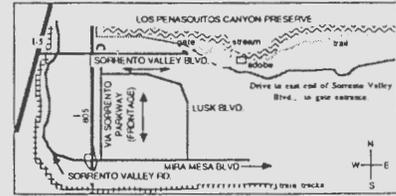
GUIDED HIKES!

MUSICAL  
ENTERTAINMENT!

SUNSHINE!

BIRD WATCHING!

KITE FLYING!



BRING YOUR OWN PICNIC FIXINGS AND A BLANKET - -  
DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED FOR A SMALL DONATION

(Sorry: No open fires or smoking permitted in the Preserve)

The west end of this preserve is threatened by a 4 lane public road to serve a private development. Spend a few hours with your family and friends to demonstrate an appropriate use for this park. We need A REAL SHOWING OF FORCE to send a message to our community leaders that the canyon should remain as is. See you there!

Sponsored by the Sorrento Coalition  
576 9027

Torrey Pines Docent Society  
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2680 Carlsbad Boulevard  
Carlsbad, CA 92008



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