



TORREYANA

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

No. 136

October 1986

Next Docent Society Meeting

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 9:00 A.M. AT THE VISITOR CENTER

For our October meeting, we will have as our guest speaker Pat Flanagan, Education Coordinator of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Sanctuary. Our guest is an expert on animals and plants of the coastal wetlands.

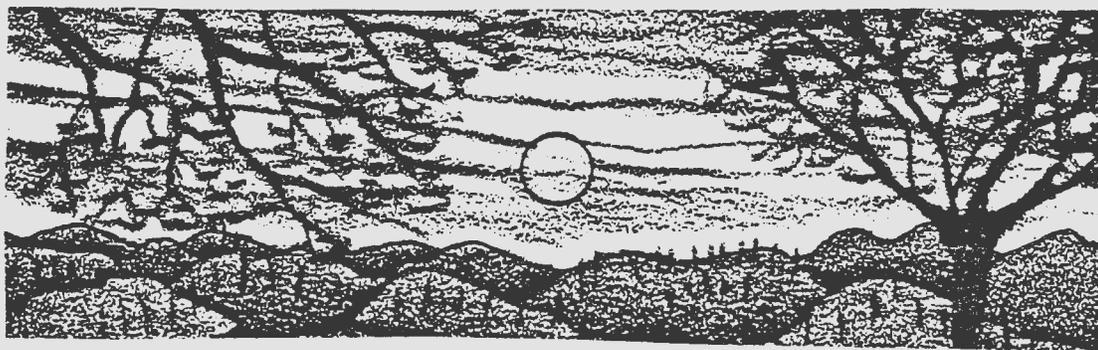
After her presentation and a coffee break, she will take us down to "our lagoon" and give us an opportunity to learn more about this particular part of our Reserve.

W I L D E R N E S S W E E K E N D C A N C E L L E D

Circumstances beyond our control make it necessary to cancel the Wilderness Weekend scheduled for October 11-12 at the Sierra Club Lodge.

Refunds will be made at the October 18 meeting to those who have already paid fees.

The committee is investigating other possible destinations for an outing at a later date. More information will be available at the October meeting.



Secretary's Notes by Marc Gittelsohn

President Janet Humphreys called the monthly meeting of the Torrey Pines Docent Society to order at 9:08 a.m. on Saturday, September 20, 1968. Thirty-eight were present. Janet first thanked everyone for fulfilling their duty shifts so faithfully this summer. The duty calendar has been fully signed up from July to September, and Coordinator Bill Anderson has reported "no headaches."

Further details on the upcoming Wilderness Weekend (October 11-12) were outlined by its various architects and final sign-ups took place. Janet reminded those who are not going that the Lodge and nature walk duties on those days still need volunteers.

Bob Wohl said that a symposium on oral history sponsored by the California Department of Parks and Recreation will be held on Wednesday, November 5, at the regional office. Ten docents and staff members from Torrey Pines have been nominated to attend this important all-day event. Bob also drew attention to the ten new plastic signs that now enhance the exhibit cases in the Lodge. These informative graphics describing the animals therein were written by Hank Nicol and funded by the Society.

Grace Martin announced that Ida Marra, W. J. Morrison, and Georgia Tarwater have completed their assignments and have advanced to full-docent status. That now makes six associates of the 1986 class to have joined docent ranks.

Your secretary mentioned that he has enrolled in Barbara Moore's first-rate class on "The Natural History of Chaparral Plants and Animals" offered through the San Dieguito Adult Education. Barbara, a Docent Society supporting member, also regularly gives classes on local birds, seashore life, and related subjects. These classes are a marvelous continuing supplement to our own program and will be listed in advance in future issues of Torreyana.

Grace Martin introduced the main speaker of the morning, Ron H. McPeak. His topic was "The Dynamics and Nature of Kelp Beds of the San Diego and Coastal Regions." Ron grew up in the Los Angeles area. He was graduated from California State University at Long Beach and earned an MS in biology from USC. For the past 18 years Ron has been associated with the Kelco Company, now a division of Merck, where he is Kelco's Senior Marine Biologist.

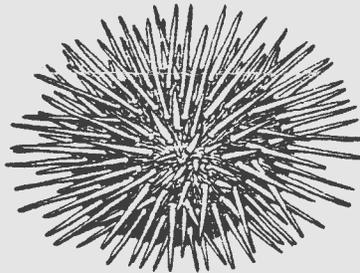
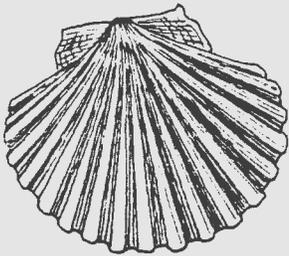
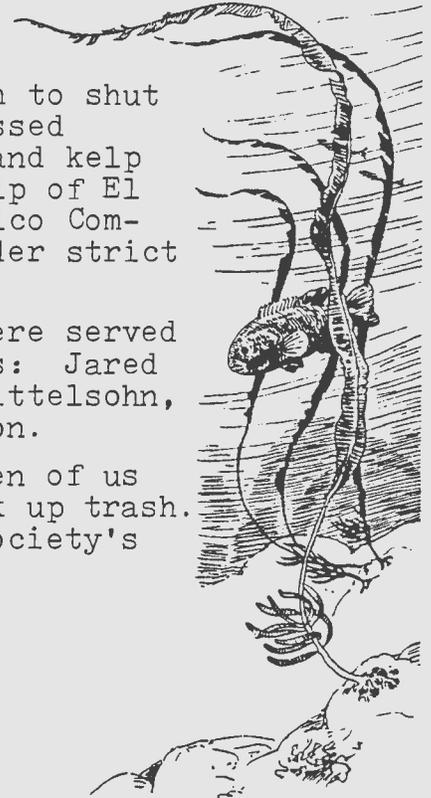
Ron said that forests of giant kelp (Macrocystis pyrifera) are to be found in many parts of the world, but those off the California coast from Point Loma to Carmel are particularly well developed. Naturalists with the Vancouver expedition of 1794 first noted the giant kelp beds off California. Later, in 1834, Charles Darwin celebrated their importance, worldwide, as a habitat for many living creatures. Kelp itself has other values for man in terms of its minerals, vitamins, and other substances, especially algin, which when processed is utilized in many products as a thickening, stabilizing, and gelling agent (e.g., in salad dressing, paint, ice cream).

Ron then turned to the ecology of kelp. With the help of his wonderful slides, he showed how kelp can grow as high as 120 feet

and form a surface canopy that can be dense enough to shut out as much as 90 percent of the light. He discussed kelp's various predators (among them sea urchins and kelp scallops) as well as the devastating impact on kelp of El Niño and fierce coastal storms. His firm, the Kelco Company, is licensed by the state to harvest kelp under strict controls.

After Ron's informative talk, refreshments were served outside. These members furnished the tasty treats: Jared Aldern, Bob and Marge Amann, Maurie Brown, Marc Gittelsohn, Milli Horger, Wolfgang Koessler, and W. J. Morrison.

Karen Dusek issued large bags to several dozen of us and led us to the Torrey Pines State Beach to pick up trash. This effort replaced our usual walk and was the Society's contribution to the state-wide Beach Cleanup Day.



Docent Doings

Duty Coordinator Bill Anderson notes that the October duty calendar is well filled except for the October 11-12 weekend, when many of you planned to attend the Wilderness Weekend. Now that the event has been cancelled, docents are requested to contact Bill and sign up for duty on those days. At least six slots remain to be filled. Call Bill at 459-2532.

Bill makes one small request in regard to the duty calendar. Please sign in pencil, not ink. Limited space and frequent changes make ink impractical.

Getting to Know You by Parker V. Foster

I have lived in the northern part of La Jolla, near Torrey Pines Reserve, for most of the past 25 years. Fifteen or more years ago I used to bring my children here for picnics, but I don't believe I had set foot in the park from that time until earlier this year when the latest docent class was formed. I came across the short article in the newspaper asking people interested in being docents to respond. I heeded the call, enrolled in the class, and completed the final requirements a couple of months ago.

A year or so ago I retired as an administrator with the San Diego Unified School District and started involving myself in quite a few new activities and interests. One of the first of these interests was taking the docent training class at the Museum of Man. I completed that late last winter and have been giving tours to elementary school groups for several months now. I found that I really enjoy this sort of endeavor. When the opportunity to explore another new, but similar, interest at Torrey Pines came along it seemed like a very good complement to the Museum of Man work. I have since found this to be true. I still have a lot to learn at Torrey Pines, especially on the trail walks, but I have thoroughly enjoyed my duties so far. Certainly the fine group of docents and the new friends I have made here at Torrey Pines have not been the least of the pleasures.



ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE by Jeanne Dunham

I would like to thank all the Docents who supported the preservation of Penasquitos Canyon by attending the Sorrento Coalition picnic on September 6.

There were approximately 120 people present; many had never been in the canyon before and were surprised at the beauty they saw. If you haven't been there you should make it a point to visit because in the beginning of September the Coastal Commission voted to extend Genstar's permit to build the 1402 unit condo development and to extend Sorrento Valley Boulevard across the mouth of Lopez Canyon. Genstar is also filing a permit application to amend the development to add 132 units in the near future.

This development will have grades in excess of 25% which will increase stream siltation, wildlife corridors will be blocked, habitat will be lost, and the visual impact will be significant.

What can we do? As I write this the City Council is meeting to determine the canyon's fate. There are many people from several organizations who are going to the meeting. We can hope the council is receptive to our concerns. If you'd like to know their decision please call me at 298-9128 (eve).

Notes from the Naturalist by Hank Nicol

STINGS

Some Sierra Clubbers were hiking down the Beach Trail. One man, who thought he was minding his own business, was stung. By what? A bee? A wasp? A whatzit? Seconds later another man was stung. Each had an idea he was in trouble. Each had had a bad reaction to bee stings. Each was prepared. Each had medicine that would protect him from going into shock. Even with the shots neither of them looked so pretty good. At least both of them were able to hike on out.

* * *

Down at Flat Rock the garbage cans were overflowing. The maintenance 4WD truck was down, and the tide was up. To prevent total disaster I carried down some large plastic bags. Many, many wasps were buzzing around the trash. They were thicker than your average yellow jacket, and they wore greenish-yellow and black stripes. They were feasting on stale beer and a half-eaten muskmelon.



I looked in The Insect Guide. Number 140a looked about right. The book said the drawing was of a sand wasp, Bembix spinolae. These live "from Texas to th4 Dakotas...." That's a long way off, but the picture still looked right to me. I called Dave Faulkner. He's the entomologist at the Natural History Museum. One time he had identified 24 species of wasps and 25 species of bees between the Lodge and the Guy Fleming Trail. He never even got off the road to do it. He would know. Dave told me I wasn't far from the mark. The wasps were a Bembix species very closely related to 140a. They live in small colonies on burrows along paths. They patrol the trails to catch flies to provision their nests. Aha! Sounds like the varmints guilty of attempted Sierraclubicide.

* * *

I had just cruised past 30 or 40 cars and up to the stop light. I was gunning my sickle up the 805 ramp. I wanted to get well ahead of any of 30 or 40 drivers who might want revenge. None of them needed to. The tank felt hot, hot, hot! The bike was on fire! It would explode! I looked down. A greenish-yellow and black striped wasp was trapped between my right knee and the gas tank. It was giving me the business. I managed to shake it loose and continue on my way. I was far more fortunate than the Sierra Club hikers. In a few minutes my knee cooled off. My only continuing problem was an itch that lasted two weeks. Maybe I'm not as immune to stings as I thought I was.

Hank

BIRD-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB by Jim Bittner

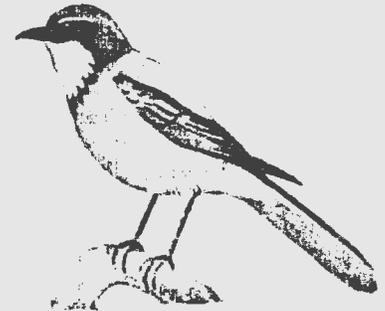
I was still a bit sleepy as I walked from my truck toward the Lodge one morning, looking forward to a cup of hot chocolate to knock away the cobwebs. I was jolted from my lethargy by the most peculiar squealing sound.... I looked around, and off to the side, below some chamise, I witnessed the most bizarre bit of natural history I've seen in this Reserve. A scrub jay (Aphelocoma coerulescens) was wrestling with a brown towhee, and each time the towhee tried to escape, the jay would pummel the smaller bird with its wings and bill. The towhee was then suddenly silent. It was dead, and the jay proceeded to tear its victim apart and make a meal of the towhee.

Well, I was awake by now! I had never seen anything like this before among the "passerines," or perching birds. Of course, hawks regularly eat other smaller birds, but that's the nature of the raptors.

So into the office I went, to dig through my reference materials. The huge Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds, regarding scrub jay feeding habits, says

"...eats acorns, nuts, pinyons, corn, fruit, moths, crickets, turtles, snails, eggs and young of small birds, mice, shrews, lizards, frogs, will come to feeding stations for suet, bread, sunflower seeds."

This confirmed a number of things: the jay is an occasional carnivore, definitely an omnivore, and that Hank knows what he's doing when he includes sunflower seeds in the morning bird food mix!



Scrub Jay

Scrub jays appear slimmer than most jays and have long, narrow tails. The upper parts, including the wings and tail, are a rich, deep blue, except for the back, which is a contrasting brownish color. The throat and upper breast are whitish with narrow, bluish streaking. The harsh, often repeated "ike-ike-ike" call can be heard over considerable distances. They also make mewling noises, clicking sounds, and whistles.

Scrub jays are common inhabitants of scrub oak, chaparral, pinyon-juniper stands, and residential areas. These varied habitats and the "catch-all" diet have resulted in an all-purpose bill, quite strong and pointed. In oak woodlands, jays bury an extraordinary number of acorns, which help regenerate forests that might be destroyed by fire or drought.

A few years back, a scrub jay nested in the rafters above the pay phone at the Lodge, and the twig nest can still be seen. Nests are usually compactly built platforms, mixed with moss and dry grass. Both the male and female help build the nest, then the female lays 3-4 eggs, greenish with darker olive blotches on the shell. She incubates for approximately 16 days.

The "scrubbie" has been called intelligent, alert, bold, quarrelsome, and at times playful. Watching them from the front porch of the Lodge proves this. I'm just glad I'm not a towhee.

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



Jim Bittner is familiar, either by name or in person, to most Torrey Pines docents. In his three years on the scene here, first as geography intern in 1983, then Park Aide, he has compiled a comprehensive checklist of the birds of the Reserve, written an article on birding field guides (Torreyana, June 1986), and in July of this year not only conducted a scheduled birdwatching trip but also filled in for the ornithology speaker who failed to show.

He seems always to be smiling. Perhaps that's because he loves his work. He's one of the lucky few who has known from an early age what he wanted to do--be involved with the outdoors--and has headed down a very straight track doing it.

He is currently the only Reserve staff member born in San Diego and resident ever since (in Pacific Beach). Although he interfered with his parents' plans for celebrating New Year's Eve by arriving late on December 31, 1960, he soon went along with their other recreational activities, which centered around camping and backpacking. As a youngster he explored Cuyamaca, Palomar, Laguna, Anza-Borrego and other nearby wilderness areas with his folks. By now he has covered all the national parks and dozens of state parks in the western United States. Recently he impressed his fellow-workers with a slide show of highlights from these excursions (available to docents on request).

Indeed, photography is changing from a hobby to a profession for Jim this fall when he returns to San Diego State University to specialize in pictures of nature and wild life. He already has one degree from SDSU, a B.A. earned in December 1985 in "Environmental Social Science," an interdisciplinary major which combines geography, history, anthropology and other courses dealing with man and his relation to the land.

Before SDSU he attended the University of California at Davis, where he concentrated on wild life biology. This included a course in ornithology, which extended an interest his parents had fostered early on. The college course left no doubt in his mind that birdwatching was a fascinating occupation that he would continue. By now he has a "life list" of 300 North American species, plus an ever-expanding library, binoculars, and bird-call tapes. His enjoyment of birds is infectious and his knowledge extensive, as those docents who accompanied him on the recent birdwatching trip can testify.

Who but a specialist would know, for instance, that the white-throated swift, which zooms around the Reserve canyons, is the fastest bird in the world? (Most of us guessed humming bird.) Jim told us that the aptly named swift travels approximately 140 mph and has developed an extra membrane across its eyes for wind protection.

But speed isn't everything in the feathered kingdom, and Jim finds the raptors,

those magnificent sharp-beaked, strong-taloned birds of prey, the most fascinating group of flyers. He recalls a blustery day in Parry Grove when a big red-tailed hawk hovered no more than ten feet above him for a full two minutes (he timed it!), curious perhaps about the hawk-like sounds the man was making. Before flying away, the hawk lit on a nearby tree branch, spread its wings, and preened out two feathers that fell to the ground. "It was as though he was giving them to me," Jim marveled; he still has them hanging from the mirror in his truck.

Jim's experiences at Torrey Pines have all been positive. After his 30-hour-per-week, three-month internship as a student, he was offered a Park Aide post at the Reserve, the first intern to be rewarded with seasonal employment, according to Bob Wohl. And even though Jim is returning to full-time studies this fall, he plans to continue to work weekends at the Reserve.

As you might expect, his hobbies are all nature-oriented. He rock-climbs in the Sierra's, in Joshua Tree National Monument, and on local Mount Woodson. He likes the solitary life of the backpacker, perhaps an outgrowth of his life as an only child. He has taken a six-day trip alone through the Grand Canyon, finding it full of natural wonders to absorb him and, for relaxation, "I like to just sit on a rock and listen to the wind." He also enjoys cross-country skiing and bicycling.

But it is evident from Jim's cheerful demeanor while meeting visitors and docents on the Reserve that he also enjoys company. So, in his spare time last year he became an adult leader for the Boy Scouts, accompanying them on backpacking trips and teaching them about plants, birds, and other facets of nature, something not all Scout leaders are qualified to do. Last winter he took a Scout troop to San Jacinto Wilderness State Park and taught the boys winter climbing with crampons and ropes. "It was a great experience. We saw mountain lion tracks, bobcats, coyotes, all sorts of wildlife." Wherever he hikes, he takes along his resources: ten pounds of field guides, check lists, texts, star charts, and binoculars to help in his continuing search for knowledge about nature.

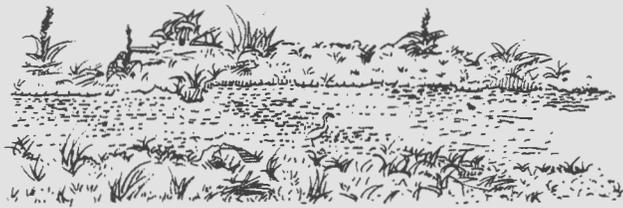
With that knowledge plus outdoor experience and improved photographic techniques, Jim will soon have the required background to make a success of one of his next goals: photojournalism for such magazines as Audubon. Travel to other locations is also a glimmer in the future. "Right now Alaska is beckoning," he muses, "or even Nepal."

You can be sure of one thing: whatever he does and wherever he goes, he'll be communing with nature and interpreting it for others through photography or writing.*

(*See p. 6 in this month's Torreyana for Jim's second bird-of-the-month column, a first step in his new career of nature journalism.)



Brown Towhee



Los Penasquitos Lagoon Foundation
P.O. Box 866 Cardiff, CA 92007

LOS PENASQUITOS LAGOON FOUNDATION REPORT by Jessie La Grange

Correspondence read at the meeting of August 27, 1986, included a letter of resignation from Karen Watling, which has been accepted with regret. Her enthusiastic support has served the Lagoon Foundation well and she will be acutely missed.

An informational letter regarding the recently formed and incorporated Del Mar Terrace Conservancy had been received from Jessie La Grange. The planned condominium development of the "Beau Soleil" property adjacent to the North Torrey Pines Beach entry has been the major concern of this group.

Don Rose reported on the status of the State acquisition of the SDG&E lagoon land. The escrow should be closed in October with the transfer of title to the State.

Don also represented the Lagoon Foundation Board at the Coastal Conservancy hearing on August 21, 1986, where the acquisition of the Sorrento Associates properties of 20.6 acres costing \$650,000 was unanimously approved. Letters of support for this action had been sent by the Torrey Pines Docent Society, Torrey Pines Association, Community Planning Group, and concerned individuals.

Glen Greenwald reported on the lagoon monitoring data. Slides of marine life were shown, and it was noted that the temperature and salinity of the lagoon water were increasing, leaving the life support systems vulnerable to adverse physical changes. However, there was no indication of excessive plant or animal "die-off" at this time.

The next meeting will be: September 24, 1986
MacDonald's Public Room
Solana Beach
7 p.m.

TPA Topics

Addresses for the following TPA members are missing. If you can supply any of them, please contact Mrs. Robert Hopper at 259-9053.

Mrs. Helen Marston Beardsley	Mrs. Cynthia Pfaeffle
Mrs. Harriett M. Headley	Mrs. R. S. Pickard
Mrs. Mary Marston	

TORREY PINES DOCENT SOCIETY

President: Janet Humphreys

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

Isabel Buechler
3702 Oleander Drive
San Diego, CA 92106
Phone: 222-7016

ROSTER UPDATE

They've moved:

Bill Brothers
6864 Town View Lane
San Diego, CA 92120
Phone: 265-1545

Ruth Hand
5740 Lake Murray Blvd.
La Mesa, CA 92041
Phone: 461-8919



"According to the book, its song consists of a vigorous repetition of a single 'tweet.' It doesn't say anything about a guitar."

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FOR

*Judy Schulman
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