



TORREYANA

A NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE RESERVE

Volume 8, Issue 1

January 2007

A December Celebration

By Victoria Schaffer

Photo by Herb Knufken

So, once again we celebrated. We celebrated the Torrey pines on

peregrine sightings, the noisy ravens, the return of not-seen-for-a-while shorebirds, and walking on the beach without being able to resist picking odd flotsam and jetsam. And the welcoming Lodge

some atavistic determinant, we once again came together.

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our beloved mesa, the fragrant salvias, the festive toyons and the manzanitas. And the taken-for-granted ocean views with fiery sunsets, the exhilaration of spotting a gray whale's rugged back, and pods of dancing porpoises. And the fossil mollusk shells in the cliff's remnants of ancient lagoons and tidal creeks, the Western Fence lizards, and even the rattlesnakes. And the

after a long hike in the cold, with crackling logs in the fireplace, and friendly Rangers, and wide-eyed children enjoying the furry creatures and the "Please Touch" message.

As ancient cultures through the centuries have, in various fashions, celebrated the return of the sun and the ever so imperceptible lengthening of the days, and perhaps compelled by

We shared each other's food, Alan's hot wassail and Sharon's "Tres Leches" cake and countless other treats, and above all, we celebrated each other, the savvy of the old timers and the refreshing enthusiasm of the newly minted. We celebrated each other, tree-huggers, wild flower lovers, weed-whackers, computer-pounders, beachcombers, bird-watchers, native planters, storytellers, trail-patrollers, picture-takers and overall "green" people that we are! We greeted each other and listened to each other for validation that this ancient mesa and its gnarled trees, and precious flora and fauna are worth coming back to over and over, and preserving. And, once again, we found it! □

The **Torrey Pines Docent Society** publishes the *Torreyana* bi-monthly. Items for publication may be submitted to Victoria Schaffer, victoria1906@adelphia.net or left in the *Torreyana* mailbox at the Lodge. In alternate months, TPDS publishes the *Torrey Pinecone*, edited by Walt Desmond. The *Pinecone* includes the monthly duty calendar, announcements and information concerning membership meetings. Items for publication in the *Pinecone* should be e-mailed to w.desmond@sbcglobal.net. Submissions for either publication are due on or about the 20th day of the preceding month. Please send postal address changes to:

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Many thanks to the docents contributing to this newsletter and to Senior Editor Victoria Schaffer and Copy Editors Lillian Lachicotte and Walt Desmond. Many thanks to Vernie McGowan for mailing and distribution.

Roger Isaacson
Director of Communications

From the President

What a tremendous year of achievement and progress! While many challenges remain, I think we will look back on 2006 as a year of significant developments. It is a testimonial to the talents and depth of our membership that the accomplishments range from the obvious to the more discreet. Certainly the completion of the Library remodel, the clean up of the Whitaker Garden and the front of the Lodge, as well as the progress toward the establishment of the Endowment are notable. Of equal significance are projects such as the transformation of the Web site, the expansion of computer applications, the settling in of the Trail Patrol, progress with the nursery and continued improvements to the Bookstore. This has all happened while the Society has met the demands of the Children's Program, staffing the Lodge, leading walks, both Special and regularly scheduled, and the eradication of non-native plants.

What is most impressive about the accomplishments of the past year is the breadth of the involvement across the Society. These results are due to the participation of a large number of very involved and committed Docents. We have not just seen the same small number of individuals associated with every project, but rather a wide variety of Docents focusing in on where they can help the most.

The Holiday Party is a great example of the strengths of our Society in that it was a huge success, despite having been organized on such short notice. The party was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate another year of service to the Reserve as well as a chance to simply relax and spend time with dear friends and colleagues. A special thanks to Patricia Wahle and her team for stepping in and organizing such a successful event. Congratulations and thank you!

Your Board also deserves special mention. This group has done a tremendous job on a wide range of challenging issues. Many members were new this year, but that did not stop us from moving successfully through an aggressive agenda. We will miss the contributions and camaraderie of retiring members Barbara McCardle, Rick Vogel and Christina Bjenning. In particular, in three years as Treasurer, Rick has significantly rationalized our accounts and leaves his successors with a strong foundation.

Finally, I would like to thank you for the honor and privilege of having been named Docent of the Year. Given the commitment and the contributions of our membership, however, I think it is a designation that should be shared by all of us. Over the past year we have made significant and meaningful contributions to the Reserve, strengthened our Society and laid the foundation for continued progress. This has been the work of many hands working cooperatively and efficiently together. For this we should be proud and thankful. I look forward to another exciting and challenging year in 2007.

Steve Usher

President, Torrey Pines Docent Society

Docent Chronicles

December 06

Next General Meeting
January 20, 2007 9 a.m.

at

National University just across the highway from the Torrey Pines Golf Course (15 min walk from the Visitor Center)
11255 North Torrey Pines Road.

We will learn about some Native American legends of the Red Tailed Hawk, accompanied by flute music, in a program by Max Lopez and Nancy Conney.

(to be confirmed)

Highlights from the December General Meeting

By Victoria Schaffer

Photos by Herb Knufken

TPDS Board President Steve Usher thanked Pat Wahle and her team for their hard work with putting together the wonderful holiday potluck, and doing it on such a short notice.

Docent of the Year: Steve Usher was recognized for the many accomplishments during 2006, including the Library renovation, establishing the TPDS-TPA



Endowment and other joint efforts with TPA, and voicing TPDS opposition to Rep. Duncan Hunter proposal for Santa Rosa Island. Steve has also been recognized by CALPA for his TPSR work. Steve noted that all accomplishments resulted from "his team" work.

Lifetime Members: After 10 years of active service, docents **Nelson Bray, Myrna and John Burton, Marion Dixon, Kathy Estey, Bob Margulies, Ree Miller and Jane and Bob Talbert** were named Lifetime members.

TPDS bid farewell to **Ranger Gary Olson** and thanked him for five

years of work with the docents and valuable contribution to TPDS. **The TPDS and TPA presented Ranger Olson with two beautiful framed photographs: of the TPSR formations by David Rightmer; of a Peregrine falcon by Will Sooter.** President Pat Masters thanked Ranger Olson on TPA's behalf.

The **TPSR Trails Report** will be presented during a public meeting at the Lodge at Torrey Pines hotel, on February 6, 2007. TPA will submit comments on the report. More information about the meeting will be sent to the Docents via email.

Steve Usher expressed appreciation to the 2006 TPDS Board, and special thanks to the departing Board members, Secretary **Barbara McCardle**, Programs Director **Christina Bjenning**, and Treasurer **Rick Vogel**.

Gene Walker will be taking docents' pictures for the 2007 parking permits after the general meeting on January 20, 2007.

Paul Whitby was hospitalized for surgery.

Wildlife and Wildflower Symposia will be presented at the San Diego Natural History Museum, to introduce the new 2007 Southern California Coast Almanac Calendar. Mini-lectures on **Flowers, Birds, Mammals and Reptiles** will be given by



scientists whose work was included in the calendar, at the SDNHM on **January 30, 2007, 7 - 9 p.m.** Those interested in attending should call 619.255.0203 to register.

Volunteering Opportunities

Docents are encouraged to learn more about the Children's Program by joining any of the scheduled program walks, and later on to conduct walks in this exciting and rewarding activity. Walks are Thursday and Friday morning. Interested docents should contact Laura Lowenstein, Cecily Goode or Diane Greening for more details.

The Lodge Duty Coordinators, Irene Larrimore and Lillian Lachicotte welcome docent participation in this activity, which provides opportunities for interaction with our many visitors, and for sharing information about wonderful TPSR. For schedule and other details, see the Duty Calendar at the end of the newsletter.



AUTUMN

All day

a lid of grey cloud

pressed on the land

until, at sunset,

a crack of light appeared

where the sky met the sea,

and sunlight spilled

on the waters

and me.

by Maryruth Cox



Trail Tales: Excerpts from the Trail Patrol Log

Edited by Victoria Schaffer

After their trail duties, patrollers also take time to log their observations. These are some of their log entries.

"In the low light of a fall afternoon, a darkish mystery hawk perched high above the coastal bush on a lonely and exposed Torrey pine snag. The Parry trail coastal slope shivered grayish-green under the heavy layering of low clouds. The figure of the hawk seemed bowed and cowed, forced to hunker head down, wrapped in wings tightly closed as if a thin jacket would insulate from cool, coastal gusts. Even a few ravens across the coastal scrub and scattered bush, sat dreary and dejected inside the dubious shelter of their own shivering snag.

A visitor who happened by and I stood together on the western side of the sloping main ride below the Guy residence and spied this sulky and silent show. But to our surprise, a nearly flat beam of ebbing sunlight shot laser-like through the layers and lit up the lookout limb, highlighting the likely bush prey below. A switch went on as the hawk brightened and unfolded his glorious wings. With a slight and deft leap, he was air-born, revealing the width and breadth of his feathery plumage, diagonally gliding to his long-awaited prey. The glow of the ebbing light just caught his wings translucent and lit his luminous auburn red tail feathers. The visitor stood silent a moment and said: 'So that's a red-tailed hawk.' " *Rhea Bridy, Autumn Rookie, 11/16/06*

Since we hadn't been there for some time, Bobbi and I decided to

do our patrol in the Extension. As we exited the Del Mar Heights Elementary School parking lot towards the Margaret Fleming Nature Trail, we noticed there were no signs identifying this as a Reserve. A rusty pole was standing where a sign might have existed. This appeared to be a high use area. To get to the baseball field from the parking lot one had to enter a portion of the Reserve. Down the trail from the baseball back gate, a rotted post was down with the cable partially covering the trail. We circuited the Gully Trail to check on the washed out bridge. Sure enough, about three feet of the bank was still washed away, though the bridge looked very sturdy. Signs were still posted indicating trail and bridge closure.

We hiked to the south entrance off Del Mar Scenic Parkway. All signs were in good condition. As we started back up the Margaret Fleming Nature Trail we noticed a group of about 20 adults coming down. They were not NHM Canyoneers or Sierra Club (I checked their schedules later.) so they were possibly from a college class. It was tricky finding the connection from the Margaret Fleming Nature Trail back to the parking lot. After following a few false trails we were able to return and decided to check out the Red Ridge Trail. We drove down the formerly private access drive, and found all the signs in good condition. There was a family gathering at a house accessed by the drive, and we exchanged greetings with an elderly lady in her nineties and two guys propping her up.

As I was calling the Lodge to report our patrol completion, a gentleman about 50 years old went by with a dog off leash. I called to

him that dogs were not allowed in the Reserve. He muttered something unintelligible and continued on into the Reserve. I didn't call this violation in because the cell phone coverage was not good, but decided to include it in a report to the Rangers. I would guess that this person had used this trail to run his dog before. It was a beautiful day and we enjoyed re-exploring this part of Torrey Pines State Reserve."

Paul Whitby, Extension Trail Patrol, 11/ 7/06.

"If you were to visit the spot now, you would hear the humming of little bees around the yellow flowers. Two weeks ago, there were closed husks of pods, no bees, just a ravenous Raven using its powerful beak to hammer and pry open the capsules. Thus is winter in the bluff of the coastal scrub, two tall stalks of Shaw's Agave showing off its multi-headed bloom, like a totem pole.

December brings sunsets like pads of butter melting on slate and purple seas. Before the ocean and sky could begin their evening adieu, I had encountered a Raven transforming before my eyes. Like a giant ebony woodpecker, it swung its formidable beak time and time again into the top of the agave capsules, sounds of which ricocheted inside the self-contained canyon slopes. The animal skipped a beat now and then to check my movement and my gaze. There was something inside the capsule, perhaps the dewy-honeyed flowers, softened by the early morning rain. Perhaps the showers had not permitted the Raven to forage for scraps earlier, and now he was making up for lost time. The totem pole's height disallowed any glimpse inside his feast, but then

the Raven transformed again. With a graceful glide downhill, across my patch of Guy trail and to a very low thicket, the raven became the Trapeze Artist. With an assist from a slightly elevated wing or two, he walked with ease across the thicket of leaves. After a prolonged look at me, the raven transformed into a dark and portly goose. It dove deep into the recesses of the bush with its tail tipping upward to the sky. I could easily see the sheen of its winter down rippling its specks of iridescent feathers. It returned topside with its prize, delicately poised in its beak, a plump and rain-soaked lemonade berry. Not a luscious lizard, but sweet, just the same. About the time I saw the hawk, it was hunting by the ride of a thermal just above the raven's evening performance. Aware and defiant, the raven returned to the bounty of the totem pole for one last gluttonous forage. Then he came to his senses, paused and cocked his head skyward. The raven grumbled at his mate, called her urgently away from the second stalk which she had monopolized the entire time, and she responded. The two skulked away slowly, and downhill reluctantly. There would be no confrontation between the raven and the Lion in the Sky this evening. They would just let it be, in this little succulent bend in the winter Guy trail."

Rhea Bridy, Winter Rookie, 12/05/06

"I sent a Trail Problem Report about the Guy Fleming Overlook guard wires on the 1st of December. Today, Dec. 5, the most critical, upper wire was repaired. Kudos to Ranger Knox and the Maintenance crew for a rapid response.

Today was another day in paradise, probably the most

pleasant day of the year to be on trail patrol. I did encounter three men riding bicycles on the trail, stopped them and explained the danger of narrow trails, hikers and bikes. They dismounted, said they understood and walked their bikes back to the road.

There was a feeding frenzy about 100 yards off the shoreline. Pelicans and cormorants were diving and splashing with vigor. I saw dolphins for the first time in a long time, probably going after whatever the birds were eating. I spent two delightful hours in interpretive discussion with a couple from Philadelphia. Then I watched a beautiful sunset over an expansive low tide beach. Overall, a really great day."

Frank Burham, 12/05/06

Geology Walk in January

Don Grine will give a geology walk for docents on our beach on Jan 20, starting at 3:00 p.m. at the steps across from the restrooms. The walk will last about two hours, taking us to the Carmel Valley fault south of Flat Rock. Low tide is -1.4 feet at 4:33 p.m. You may bring guests but please only a few. If we get too many people, nobody can hear. Bring binoculars for birds and some of the geology.

Anybody can turn back at any point with no hard feelings.

On-line Torreyana

www.torreypinesreserve.org
or www.torreypine.org

Remember the Web version is in **color**. Just click on **'Torreyana'**.

DON'T MISS DOCENT-ONLY INFO on Docent Home, found also at www.torreypine.org. Click on 'Docent Login' at the bottom of any page, enter the Username and Password from recent Pinecone (or from Roger Isaacson via 'Contact' link).

An Instructive Mistake

by Don Grine

During a recent geology program for our Children's walks, Margaret Fillius had a sudden bout of forgetting. Telling the students about how to tell one mineral from another by testing hardness, she told them that quartz is softer than steel so you can scratch it with your knife. Wrong!

As she was talking, she tried to gouge a quartz crystal with her knife and, of course, the knife point slid harmlessly across the quartz. Margaret was really doing the experiment and immediately cried out, "I was wrong. Quartz is harder than steel. The knife didn't scratch it."

I stood up to tell the kids that they had just seen and heard something both useful and unusual, somebody really paying attention to what is happening. Margaret showed them that, even when you think you know the result, you need to watch the test and be willing to change your mind.



Docent Field Trip to Mission Trails

I have tentatively arranged for a field trip to Mission Trails Regional Park on Sunday, January 28, 2007. A tour of the Visitor Interpretive Center will begin at 10:00 a.m. led by Ranger Heidi Gutknecht. At 10:30 a.m. we will split up into groups of approximately 10 and go on a trail walk which will last about an hour and a half. I will lead one group, Fred Kramer, who is the president of the Trail Guides (their name for docents who lead walks) and other trail guides will lead as necessary depending on the number of people who sign up. Those who choose to

can bring a lunch and we will drive to Old Mission Dam (about 2 miles) for lunch and a tour around the dam. For those who desire to do so, a hike up Oak Creek canyon, one of the most scenic trails, can be provided. The Trail Guides would like a reciprocal visit to Torrey Pines State Reserve at a future date. There is no entrance fee. Signup sheets and maps will be available at our next docent meeting on January 20th.

Mission Trails Regional Park is one of the largest urban parks in the nation. It is 5800 acres (10 square miles) and growing, with over 40 miles of trails, climbing rocks, campground and two lakes. It has several mountains over 1000 feet, Cowles Mountain, being the most well known at 1591 feet. It has a new equestrian center and trails for horses and the San Diego River runs through it. It has a state-of-the-art Visitor's Interpretive Center, built in 1995 at a cost of 5.5 million dollars and won an architectural award for that year. Although it is a regional park, it is administered by the city of San Diego Parks and Recreation, the same as Balboa Park.

Regards,

Paul Whitby, Docent, Torrey Pines State Reserve and Trail Guide, Mission Trails Regional Park

[Ed. Note: Check out the MTRP Web site at www.mtrp.org]

Paper or plastic? Neither...ceramic.

At the next general meeting coffee break, you will notice that we are using recycled paper products. These are significantly more expensive, but TPDS is doing its part to prime the pump, increase the volume, provide a market for

recycling and ultimately bring the price down. It's still very hard to find recyclable disposable cups—anybody know of a source?. But we don't need those if you remember to bring your own ceramic cup. It remains difficult and controversial to determine whether paper or Styrofoam cups are more environmentally friendly overall. And if you count producing the ceramic cup--it takes about a year of drinking coffee to make your cup economical. But if you already have it, using it will make you instantly more earth-friendly! Don't forget next meeting--reduce TPDS contribution to the landfills.

Leave the Driving to TPSR to Them

"How do I take the bus to Torrey Pines?" is an occasional question at the Desk. There is a new sheet in the Desk Manual, updating those directions. The route is easy--NCTD Route 101, going both north and south. The stops are critical: Northbound travelers have to get off and get on at the TOP of the Torrey Pines grade, by National University—the next stop is at the bridge just before Del Mar!! This gives them a nice walk on the old road up to the Lodge and back. Southbound, one can catch the 101 at the South Beach entrance OR at the top across from National University. Riders from downtown can take an express bus that gets to Route 101 in 40 minutes.

DOCENTS: Have you tried the bus? Route 101 runs every 1/2 hour every day. Fare for seniors is \$2.00 for all day (\$4.00 for younger folk). That's less than a gallon of gas, and produces no (additional) greenhouse gases. □



Photo by David Blue--Brandt's Cormorants feeding frenzy

Birds of Torrey Pines: *Brandt's Cormorants*

By David Blue

Brandt's Cormorants are one of three species of cormorants that are sometimes seen at Torrey Pines. Although strictly maritime (and never seen in the lagoon as the Double-crested Cormorants are), they can sometimes be seen flying by off the coast. Typically a wintering species, they are quite rare in the summer months, although a few breed on the cliffs at La Jolla. In the last twenty years, the TPDS bird survey has recorded them only 50% of the time in January, and less than 33% of the time from September through April. Even when seen in the winter months, it is typically only one or two birds, and almost never more than ten.

Thus it was exciting during the December 2 bird count to find a huge feeding flock of Brandt's Cormorants numbering over a thousand birds just off the lagoon mouth. Evidently there was a big school of fish just outside the surf line, which in addition to attracting all the cormorants, also attracted a number of Brown Pelicans, many gulls, and a pod of dolphins. At times the cormorants were even moving in among the surfers. The accompanying photo gives a feel for the size of this flock. When zoomed in, over 550 cormorants can be counted. However, because this shot was taken with a telephoto lens, the view was not wide enough to capture all the birds that were out of sight to the left and right.



Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: December 2-3, 2006

Total of 76 species (unusual sightings shown with an asterisk and in italics)

<i>Canada Goose</i> * 8	Brandt's Cormorant 1000+	California Gull 35	European Starling 20
Gadwall 45	Double-crested Cormorant 10	Western Gull 12	Yellow-rumped Warbler 31
American Wigeon 22	Great Blue Heron 3	Royal Tern 4	Common Yellowthroat 7
Mallard 1	Great Egret 4	Forster's Tern 4	California Towhee 10
Blue-winged Teal 4	Snowy Egret 3	Rock Pigeon 5	Rufous-crowned Sparrow 2
Northern Shoveler 21	<i>White-faced Ibis</i> * 5	Mourning Dove 7	Savannah Sparrow 1
Northern Pintail 6	White-tailed Kite 3	White-throated Swift 1	Belding's Savannah Sparrow 2
Green-winged Teal 4	Northern Harrier 3	Anna's Hummingbird 3	Song Sparrow 9
Lesser Scaup 1	Red-tailed Hawk 5	Belted Kingfisher 2	White-crowned Sparrow 36
Bufflehead 25	American Kestrel 3	Black Phoebe 7	Red-winged Blackbird 10
Ruddy Duck 16	American Coot 31	Say's Phoebe 4	Western Meadowlark 1
Pacific Loon 4	Black-bellied Plover 9	Cassin's Kingbird 3	Brewer's Blackbird 6
Common Loon 5	Snowy Plover 12	Western Scrub-Jay 4	House Finch 7
Pied-billed Grebe 8	Willet 39	American Crow 12	Lesser Goldfinch 3
Eared Grebe 1	Long-billed Curlew 1	Common Raven 4	House Sparrow 1
Western Grebe 180	Marbled Godwit 4	<i>N. Rough-winged Swallow</i> * 2	
<i>Clark's Grebe</i> * 1	Sanderling 14	Bushtit 44	
Brown Pelican 12	Western Sandpiper 3	House Wren 2	
	<i>Dunlin</i> * 1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1	
	Dowitcher sp. 5	California Gnatcatcher 3	
	Heermann's Gull 15	Wrentit 4	
	Ring-billed Gull 22	Northern Mockingbird 1	

Observers: David Blue, Kathy Estey, Blair Frances, Gary Grantham, Don Grine, and Herb Knufken

Previous months are posted on the TPSR Web site at www.torreypinesreserve.org
On the menu bar point to "Activities" and then click on "Bird-sightings."