



# Torrey Pinecone

A news bulletin for the  
Torrey Pines Docent Society

Online version 19 April 2012

## Life in the Los Peñasquitos and San Elijo Lagoons

by Joan R. Simon

**A**t the March 10<sup>th</sup> docent monthly meeting, Doug Gibson, Executive Director and Principal Scientist at the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy arrived without his promised “show and tell” (the waters being too cold for live specimens in early March), but with a lively and colorful PowerPoint presentation that did not disappoint. He spoke about how alike the San Elijo Lagoon and the Torrey Pines Los Peñasquitos Lagoon are. They are similar in size (100 sq. mi. for Los Peñasquitos v. 77 sq. mi. for San Elijo), number of invertebrate species (50 v. 45), and number of fish (22 v. 23). They are also similar in the challenges they have faced with an expanding population at their doorsteps.

In fact, for the past 125 years, the welfare of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon has been under threat. With the building of the railroad in 1887 and highway 101 in 1901, which removed the coastal strand, the ocean no longer had easy access to the lagoon. Then in 1940 sewage began to be discharged into the lagoon waters and this problem went unchecked for more than 30 years; later, in the 80s and 90s, sewage spills added insult to injury, with eutrophication spurring excessive algae growth and suffocating native species. From

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1960 – 1990, as the watershed was developed and Interstate 5 built (1965), excessive fresh water run-off from the growing amount of hardscape threatened to overwhelm the lagoon’s salinity and allow invasive fresh water species to out-compete saltwater plants and animals. Conditions today are much improved, thanks in part to the Clean Water Act, which mandates (if not always enforces) clean water practices, and the efforts of naturalists in both lagoons. Among the many challenges that remain is ensuring access of ocean waters to the lagoon. In the past, when there was less fresh water run-off and pollution, the lagoon could be closed for considerable periods of time and remain vital. Today, however, the inlet must stay open if the lagoon is

## Docent General Meeting Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup> 9 am

**Location:** St Peter's Episcopal  
Rec Hall, Del Mar

**Speaker:** Eddie Kisfaludy worked at Scripps Institution of Oceanography for 10 years as the Curator of Field Operations and Biological Specimen collector, completing 800 scientific excursions in Southern California, and around the world. Currently one of his many projects is in conjunction with Sir Richard Branson's quest to explore the five deepest places on earth using a manned submarine.

**Program:** Last November, a multiagency effort with Scripps Oceanography, NOAA, Sea World, lifeguards and Virgin Oceanic was coordinated to sink an adult fin whale offshore San Diego to create the largest whale fall known to science. Captivating video and photos of this unusual effort will be presented, highlighting an amazing oceanic adventure. Eddie will also discuss the migration of our local gray whales.

to survive, with a window of “no more than 15 – 20 days,” Mr. Gibson remarked, adding that in the summer, “it will crash in 24 hours.”

Every year the post-winter sands migrate onto the beach and inevitably close off the inlets to both the Los Peñasquitos and San Elijo lagoons.

(cont. on pg. 5)

## March 2012 Docent Meeting Minutes

*Excerpted from notes of TPDS March 10th General Meeting, by Secretary Bill Eckles. Complete minutes in docent library.*

**Ken King**, President, called the meeting to order at 10:30 am.

**The Docent of the Month** for March is **Janet Ugalde**, Class of 2007, selected for her substantial contributions to the Children's Program and Lodge hosting.



*Photo by Herb Knufken*

“A member of the class of 2007, I’ve been on a path to the TPDS Children’s Program since attending Sixth Grade Outdoor Education Camp. Those teachers inspired me to a lifelong passion for nature, and the Children’s Program allows me to repay that debt. I am proud to be part of a group that teaches respect for nature to the next generation.”

### **Ranger Report:** (Lisa Urbach)

Lisa talked about several challenging situations when entering and leaving the Reserve. When the left turn lane off northbound Torrey Pines Road is closed, you must continue north until you can legally make a U-turn to head southbound into the Reserve. In this situation, the Right Turn Only sign is usually posted when exiting the Reserve and traffic wishing to travel north out of the Reserve must first drive south until a legal U-turn can be made.

Lisa also noted that if entrance traffic is backed up onto the roadway when a docent needs to be at the Reserve, or if the Reserve parking is full and the entrance is blocked, pull into the bus stop area and call the kiosk to get admitted. An attendant will assist you into the Reserve.

Lisa also talked about the substantial amount of new graffiti on the Beach Trail and asked docents observing violators to try to achieve voluntary compliance from offenders. If this is not possible, then a Ranger should be called. In the meantime, notice the clothing, the instrument being used to carve, the "handedness" of the violator, and as much specific detail as you can. A photo helps. Without a Ranger onsite when the violation occurs, you would need to make a "citizen's citation," which is basically your word against the perpetrator, so details can be effective. You should be aware that if you make a "citizen citation," you will need to follow up with a court appearance. When confronting a visitor with a "service dog" in the Reserve, ask the person involved, "Who is the dog for?" and "What service is being provided?" However, no proof is required. Ken suggested mentioning that "it is currently rattlesnake season" and "we have ticks in the area... perhaps you could find a safer place to go with your animal."

**President's Announcements:** (**Ken King**) Ken used pie charts to show the source and disposition of income for the Reserve. Currently, income is largely from Museum Shop sales, donations and Art in the Pines. Outflow is primarily through Museum Shop inventory purchases, the Children's Program and AIP. A new pin will be awarded to docents attaining five years of service.

If you feel a fellow docent's medical condition warrants a membership "get well" card, please advise **Bill Eckles** (Secretary) who will send one. Use your judgment regarding the appropriateness. Giving Bill all

## ART IN THE PINES

Saturday, May 5: 10:00 - 5:00  
Sunday, May 6: 10:00 - 4:00

135 Artists, *Plein Air*  
Competition  
Opportunity Drawing  
Food, Music, Poetry  
Children's Activities

**Parking:** North and South Lots  
(shuttle to the Reserve)  
National University (walk  
to the Reserve)

the pertinent information will minimize awkward comments on the card.

**Kathy Dickey** and **Lou Adamo** will help with public walks in the Extension.

**Spotlight On: Lou Adamo** displayed several weather/climate measurements comparing our Reserve with San Diego statistics from Lindbergh Field. Rain amounts were similar, but there were wider ranges of temperatures at the Reserve and more humidity. Overall, there are basic similarities with understandable difference from the "micro-climates" of the area.

**Torrey Pines Association: (Rick Vogel)** There will be a CALPA conference held here in San Diego May 16 – 20 (see notice on pg. 5). We are trying to make the affair stand out positively and Rick would like to have 15-25 docent volunteers to conduct guided walks through the Reserve on the afternoon of Thursday May 17 when CALPA members will visit the Reserve.

**Art in the Pines: Judith Zyskind** singled out a few key participants, including **Janice Barnard** (Finance), **Bob Doolittle** (Logistics) and **Lillian Lachicotte** (Volunteers). Docent assistance will need to be extensive, so please sign up with Lillian (see notice on pg. 3). Help is being

solicited for areas such as walks, the Museum Shop, children's events, traffic management and sales. The event is expected to be bigger, better and more profitable than last year. There will be more participating artists, more prizes and two days rather than one. Bob has developed a website at [Artinthepines.org](http://Artinthepines.org).

**Science Fair: Sally Whitlock** announced that the Science Fair is scheduled for March 21. Judges include **Walt Desmond, Lillian Lachicotte, Paula Shaw, Lou Adamo, Joan Adamo, Frank Burham, Bill Sheehan and Sheldon Krueger**. We look forward to similar high quality performances as in the past.

**Museum Shop:** There are now some adorable hand puppet stuffed animals at the Museum. Give them a look-see!

**Children's Program: Laura Lowenstein** reported many new docent participants. She asked that we encourage new volunteers to participate.

**Training: Janie Killermann** reports an enthusiastic crew of 36 new docent trainees. She requested that mentors do their best to team up with trainees at today's meeting. Contact by phone or email if you do not connect today.

**Trail Patrol: Frank Burham** requested *weekend* participants in Trail Patrol.

**Book Club: Molly McConnell** announced that Book Club members would meet at her house on March 20 at 2:30 pm.

**Membership: Carol Smith** requested that changes to the membership roster be submitted as soon as possible, in order to be included in the new list that will be distributed at the April meeting.

Ken adjourned the meeting at 11:55 am.

## Art in the Pines Volunteers

Look for Art in the Pines docent volunteer information now available next to the Date Calendar entry at [torreypine.org/DocentLogin](http://torreypine.org/DocentLogin).

Your help is needed to make this event a huge success. Sign-up sheets are in the docent library and will be available at our April meeting.

## Children's Program

by Sue Randerson, Children's Program Director and Laura Lowenstein, Children's Program Coordinator

Spring is bursting out all over and lots of animals and birds are being spotted on our children's hikes. Two rattlesnakes were seen on the Guy Fleming trail. Check out this rattlesnake photo taken by **Wes Farmer** when he was on Razor Point trail with the kids March 2<sup>nd</sup>.



The students have also seen many dolphins. Unfortunately, they missed seeing a gray whale that was in the breaker line one Monday and coming too close to shore. A kiosk worker said that some dolphins came on the shore side of the whale and herded it out to sea...and the whale continued on its way north. The kids also enjoy seeing the roadrunner, who makes a regular appearance near the Lodge, often with a lizard in its mouth.

We are happy to have several docent trainees accompanying us on the trail. We welcome you to come as often as you like, whether or not you plan to become a part of the Children's Program (of course we hope you will!) There is much to learn from the presentations and on the docent-led walks with the kids, which will be useful in whatever volunteer area you choose to pursue.

**Frank Burham** filled in for **Barbara Wallach**, who hurt her back weeding, and gave a wonderful presentation on The Reserve, Plants and Habitats. He illustrated adaptations using five signs he had created which showed the five different plant communities and their particular characteristics. He showed how plants adapted to the conditions in each of those communities. The signs will be in the box of materials and available for anyone who is doing presentations.

**Important Notice:** Our April training date has been changed to Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup> instead of April 6<sup>th</sup>. The school originally scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup> had a conflict but was able to switch to April 6<sup>th</sup>. **Diane Greening** has generously agreed to do her presentation on the 5<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at 9:30 am for a fun interpretive session with Diane, followed by some on-trail exploring and sharing of tips and ideas. All Children's Program docents as well as anyone interested in the Children's program, including docent trainees, are warmly invited. Please RSVP to Laura or Sue to let us know you are planning to attend.

I (Sue) missed Torrey Pines while I was in Vietnam for three weeks in February/March. But I felt right at home when I saw in the dirt on our path some perfect antlion traps! It seems antlions are found in many places around the world!

**FLASH From Laura Lowenstein:**  
Don't forget to donate your ZooNooz magazines to the Museum Shop

## 2012 Docent Trainees Enjoy Learning, Laughing and Logging Hours

By Janie Killerman



Guest speaker Keith Meldahl, Professor of Geology and Oceanography at Mira Costa College, pauses during a stroll along the park road and wows trainees with a stratified rock formation, demonstrating millions of years of geologic drama. Meldahl points out that the eroding Torrey sandstone, laid down some 50 million years ago, is topped by a thinner layer of cobbles which originated in volcanic fury near Sonora Mexico, and both are capped by the harder, erosion-resistant red Linda Vista formation which helps preserve the lower layers.



Professor Meldahl stands atop Red Butte and points to the Pacific Ocean which--he informs trainees--lay two miles further west in a previous ice age. By contrast, during times of global warming, the melting ice caps covered the area we know as TPSNR with ocean waters that extended to the hills behind Escondido.



Docents Bob and Sherry Doolittle bring delight to trainees with their "Bad Host/Good Host" spoof--a favorite moment in the Lodge Hosting training presentation.

## Facts and Fancy About Torrey Pines SNR

by Jack Friery

This is the second in an occasional series about the unique features of Torrey Pines SNR. You may use it to begin discussions with visitors to the Reserve—or even as an inspiration to write an article for the *Torreyana* or *Pinecone*. Suggestions about this series are welcome.

The answers are on page 6.

In and around Torrey Pines SNR, you may find:

1. The California state bird
2. The California state flower
3. A plant that Indians burned to purify their lodges for religious ceremonies
4. A predatory bird that weighs no more than a bar of soap
5. One of the fastest-growing plants in the world
6. A bee from Europe
7. Several endangered plants
8. Two endangered birds
9. One plant that is used to make toothpaste, ice cream, cosmetics—and gunpowder
10. Hieroglyphics



Training Administrator Jeannie Smith shows Isabet Yarrington how to log in her docent hours while Karen Lisi, David Woo, Bernie Dream, Darby Lewis and Allen McAfee await their opportunities.

(Lagoons, cont. from pg. 1)

The \$100,000 (per lagoon) dredging by mechanized equipment is done in both lagoons, usually back to back sometime between late March and May. The San Elijo Lagoon has the benefit of a \$2.3 million endowment to cover the yearly dredging expense, but the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation is not similarly funded.

Today, with diligent efforts to keep the lagoons open and less pollution, both lagoons abound with life. There are Striped Mullet, California Halibut and Staghorn Sculpin. In fact, a lagoon's primary function is as a nursery, Mr Gibson said, and "85% of the fish we eat use lagoons." There are California Mussels, California Butter Clams, and the Gould's Bubble Snail, which is an indicator species for a healthy, "really good system." The California Horn Snail, which is a host to many parasites, is a good indicator of diversity in a system; "the more you have," Mr. Gibson noted, "the more diverse" your system is. There are Fiddler Crabs "that burrow along the shoreline," Egrets (Great and Snowy), and Clapper Rails, which are adjusting to climate change by building their nests in higher ground. And don't forget, the thriving population of deer that lives upstream in the two lagoons.



In the next few weeks you will begin to see more artists painting on the trails of Torrey Pines. These 50 outdoor artists, or *en plein air* (in open air) artists, are preparing their works for the Art

in the Pines *plein air* competition to be held the weekend of May 5 and 6. The judging will take place before noon on Saturday, and their works will be on display, the original or a facsimile if the original is sold, throughout the weekend.

The art of *en plein air* painting was not a possibility until the 1840's when oil paint was manufactured in a tube and would stay soft without heat under it. At the same time the portable easel with telescoping legs and a built-in palette was designed. This allowed an artist to walk outdoors and paint a scene captured accurately, whether it be with the early sunlight, bright shadows of midday or the soft light of the evening dusk. The work could then be completed in their studios. When we think of early outdoor landscapes, picture the works of the Barbizon School and the French Impressionists.

At our 3rd annual Art in the Pines you will be able to see and purchase art from over 120 of our local San Diego artists, many of them fellow docents. All paintings, photos, sculptures, gourds, jewelry and ceramics are nature-based. To date 35 artists have donated their works for the Opportunity Drawing, along with a number of other prizes from local businesses. The tickets are \$2 each

or 6 for \$10. They will be available at the general meeting and in the docent library. Take enough to give your friends an opportunity to win! Join us for food, hikes, children's activities, poetry and music.

## DQOM ( Docent Question of the Month): How Far is My Walk at TPSNR?

by Jim Larrimore

Returning up the road from the Guy Fleming Trail on a Special Walk in January, one of the visitors asked how far we were walking on our tour. Not knowing, I replied "about 1-1/2 miles" and she responded, "That's all?" That led to preparation of this DQOM, which gives docents the length of walks starting from the Lodge. Michael Yang assisted with measurements used for this table with his GPS. We would welcome other distance measurements.

Walks at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve	Miles
From <b>TPSNR entrance</b> up the road to <b>Lodge</b> (up 330 feet)	0.8
From <b>Lodge</b> down Beach Trail to <b>Yucca Point</b> , return same way to <b>Lodge</b>	1.1
From <b>Lodge</b> by Red Butte, along Canyon of the Swifts to <b>Razor Point</b> , return same way to <b>Lodge</b>	1.2
From <b>Lodge</b> down road to <b>Guy Fleming Trail</b> entrance, Guy Fleming loop, return to <b>Lodge</b>	1.4
From <b>Lodge</b> down Beach Trail to <b>Yucca Point</b> , across to <b>Razor Point</b> , up the hill to <b>Lodge</b>	1.5
From <b>Lodge</b> down Beach Trail to <b>Flat Rock</b> , return same way to <b>Lodge</b>	1.5
From <b>Lodge</b> along road to <b>Broken Hill South</b> fork, to <b>Broken Hill Overlook</b> , back to <b>Broken Hill North</b> fork, return along road to <b>Lodge</b>	2.0
From <b>Lodge</b> along road to <b>Broken Hill North</b> fork, down to <b>Flat Rock</b> , return on Beach Trail to <b>Lodge</b>	2.1
From <b>Lodge</b> along road to <b>Broken Hill South</b> fork, to <b>Broken Hill Overlook</b> and then to <b>Flat Rock</b> , return by Beach Trail to <b>Lodge</b>	2.5
From <b>Lodge</b> along road to <b>Broken Hill South</b> fork, down to <b>Flat Rock</b> , along beach to <b>TPSNR entrance</b> , up road to <b>Lodge</b> (up 330 feet)	3.2

## CALPA Conference in San Diego and Torrey Pines, May 16-20

The California League of Park Associations (CALPA) is holding its annual conference this year in San Diego. CALPA is a state-wide organization made up of

associations, such as the TPA, that support State parks throughout California. Its goal is to serve and unify these associations and to serve as a resource for the improvement of all park associations. The conference will be full of interesting presentations and networking opportunities. The theme is “Uncharted Waters: Exploring the New Parks World for a Sustainable Future.” Our goal is to provide information and contacts that will help people supporting the parks deal with the new reality (and finances) of our State Parks System.

On May 17, the conference will come to Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve for a number of docent-led tours and a reception at the Lodge. Thank you to all the docents who have volunteered to lead these tours and attend the reception. We still need more docent participation (as of March 10 we have 13 volunteers and we would like to provide at least 20). This evening is an opportunity to share our Reserve with a group of passionate parks supporters from all over the state. Please sign up and come to our celebration. Thanks.

Rick Vogel,

## Answers to page 4 quiz :

1. California Quail, *Callipepla californica*. Pairs of California Quail call antiphonally, meaning that the male and female alternate calls, fitting them into a tightly orchestrated pattern. (Per Cornell University’s *All About Birds* site, [tinyurl.com/72szads](http://tinyurl.com/72szads).)
2. California Poppy, *Eschscholzia californica*. California Indians cherished the poppy as both a source of food and for oil extracted from the plant. (Per the California State Library site, [tinyurl.com/7adoph](http://tinyurl.com/7adoph).)
3. White Sage, *Salvia apiana*. “Leaves of white sage were smoked, made into a tea, and used in sweatshouses to cure colds. White sage leaves were also used by the Diegueño as a shampoo to clean their hair and to keep it from turning gray. Crushed leaves were rubbed on the body to eliminate body odor; this was often done by Cahuilla men before they went hunting. The smoke from burning white sage is used widely by many Native Indian groups as part of their purification ceremonies.” (USDA Plant Guide, [plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/cs\\_saap2.pdf](http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/cs_saap2.pdf).) I have also heard, but have not confirmed, that white



sage acted as a fumigant—it chased fleas out of the lodges.

4. The American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*. A male American Kestrel may weigh as little as 3.5 ounces. American Kestrels eat mostly insects and other invertebrates, but may also eat small rodents and birds. (I have seen one blithely munching on an unfortunate escaped parakeet.)
5. Kelp. Some kelp species can grow as fast as half a meter a day. See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelp).
6. Honey Bee, *apis mellifera*. Honey bees expanded to North America with human-assisted migration during the 17th century—farmers needed pollinators. See: [tinyurl.com/3nuw7h3](http://tinyurl.com/3nuw7h3).
7. Torrey Pine (*Pinus torreyana*)/Del Mar Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa* ssp. *crassifolia*)/Nuttall's Scrub Oak (*Quercus dumosa*)/Short-leaved Dudleya (*Dudleya brevifolia*). The Short-leaved Dudleya is endemic (limited) to San Diego County. See [sandiego.sierraclub.org/rareplants/085.html](http://sandiego.sierraclub.org/rareplants/085.html).
8. California Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila californica*)/Belding's Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*). The entire world's population of the California Gnatcatcher occurs in Baja California and coastal southern California, and the bird is threatened because of habitat loss. (See: [audubon2.org/watchlist/viewSpecies.jsp?id=57](http://audubon2.org/watchlist/viewSpecies.jsp?id=57)) Savannah sparrows were not named for savannahs (grassy plains.) They were named for the first specimen collected by the naturalist who named them—in Savannah, GA. (See: [tinyurl.com/allaboutbirds-org-savspa](http://tinyurl.com/allaboutbirds-org-savspa))
9. Kelp, again. A product derived from kelp, alginate, is used to thicken products such as ice cream, jelly, salad dressing, and toothpaste. (See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alginate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alginate)) As for kelp’s influence on the local gunpowder industry, see: [tinyurl.com/7rvvd9k](http://tinyurl.com/7rvvd9k).
10. “Hieroglyphics” is a nickname for tunnels made by bark beetle larvae in Torrey pine trees. (See: [sanaturalareas.org/whatsthis.html](http://sanaturalareas.org/whatsthis.html)) Look for them in fallen trees beside the trail.



Drawings above-left by Rhea Bridy

Photo above by Herb Knufken

# phoTORREYgraphs

by Judy Schulman

Taken from the roof of the Lodge, this is a view of the parking lot we usually don't see. Notice that the garden hasn't been planted and is, in fact, smaller than it is now.



The flagpole was presented to Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve on June 14, 1966 by the Torrey Pines Rotary Club.

## Coffee Fern in the Extension

by Maryruth Cox

After the fall rains the Extension metamorphoses from a dusty canyon to a cathedral of delight as bright blooms and freshly washed leaves appear on every side. We wander up the Margaret Fleming Trail B on our pilgrimage to the coffee fern, whose lone specimen dangles green leaves of brilliant hue at the edge of the trail where it forks to the west.

We first found the coffee fern there in 2007 and each year have watched its cycle of life. In the winter the leaves are first round and green, then become elongate with a fold around the edges of the back side. Under these folds are tucked the sporangia that will float away to form prothalli, tiny plants that have the sex cells which will unite to form a new generation of the coffee fern.

The old spore bearing plants shrivel and turn brown in the dry summer, then after the fall rains they become green and grow again.



The coffee fern, or *Pellaea andromedeafolia*, is a type of cliff brake fern, and is native to California. It was first recorded in San Diego in 1874 by Daniel Cleveland, one of the founders of the San Diego Natural History Museum. Since then it has been found all over San Diego County on this side of the mountains. Guy Fleming reported it in Torrey Pines Reservation in 1924, and other observers have found it since in Fat Man's Misery. Margaret Fillius has seen the coffee fern in a closed part of the Extension.

## California Park Advocacy Day

by Rick Vogel

The California State Parks Foundation organized the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Park Advocacy Day for Tuesday March 20 with 4-5 Legislator appointments for the more than 180 participants. A key focus was trying to get our representatives to oppose further budget cuts -- \$11 million last year and an additional \$11 million for the coming fiscal year beginning July 1, 2012. It is this \$22 million in cuts that caused the Department of Parks and Recreation to propose closure of the 70 Parks (including Palomar and San Pasqual in San Diego County). In addition, if the governor's package of tax increases does not pass in November, all seasonal life guards and 20% of all Rangers must be laid off. Can you imagine Torrey Pines' beaches without lifeguards or with one less Ranger?

We also lobbied to support AB 580. This bill is a hangover from the last session when it was stalled in the Assembly's Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. SB 580 provides that anyone (not just State agencies) who wants to use park property for other than park purposes must convince the State Parks and Recreation Commission that there is no practical alternative to the proposed use, AND must compensate the DPR for that use with property of equivalent natural, historical and cultural value. Money is a valid compensation only if no equivalent property can be found. Similar legislation passed two years ago, but Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed it. It is expected that the current Governor would sign it into law. Since two of the five legislators we visited, Assemblyman Garrick and Senator Wyland, were principal supporters of the Orange County Toll Road through San Onofre, this is a bill that needs strong lobbying.

I urge you to contact your representatives in the legislature to support these efforts. Every voice matters. Your Assemblyman or Senator may not agree with our position, but the fact that you have written him or her in support of Parks can make a difference. If we don't participate in the process we can't blame others for our failure.

For a copy of the full California Park Advocacy Day Report, go to: [torreypine.org/Park-Adv-Day.pdf](http://torreypine.org/Park-Adv-Day.pdf)

## What are the Whales Telling Us?

by Arline Paa

My husband David and I just returned from a whale watching trip down the peninsula of Baja California to the lagoons of Scammon's and San Ignacio. We went by bus with a tour company called Andiamo Travel. They have done tours for Birch Aquarium and are based in San Diego. It was a 5 night/6 day tour.

Our group of 19 met at the San Diego Airport parking lot to board the bus that was to become our tour vehicle. Everyone was in a state of excitement in anticipation of our shared adventure. Two of our passengers had done the same trip last year, one from Arizona, the other New York City.

We stayed in the Desert Inns in San Quintin, Guerrero Negro, San Ignacio and Catavina. It was a series of four trips out into the lagoons on a *panga*, a fisherman's boat. This was whale watching *par excellence*! We will never be satisfied again just to see a few spouts or whale tails. The whales

approached our boats, mothers lifting their babies up to us to be petted and kissed! *Muchos besos*!! Even the mothers wanted to be touched! It was a sensation and a thrill I will never forget. SUCH EXCITEMENT! People in boats singing, screaming, some even dancing on their boats.

You could see whales spyhopping (heads out of water, akin to a human treading water). In the distance, whales were breaching, looking like huge masts on a boat. Some whales were mating, with huge horizontal splashes.

The water was warm, like a huge spa. We learned so much about the behavior of whales from our experienced guides. Also, we learned a lot about Mexico, Baja in particular, from our guide, Karla, who was born in Ensenada. We were wined and dined like royalty.

One thing that our guide talked about frequently was that the whales are teaching us forgiveness. These grey whales used to be called "devil fish" because of their aggressive behavior. They were hunted almost to extinction. In the 1970's a fisherman in San Ignacio Lagoon had an encounter with a friendly whale. Returning to land, he told his fellow fishermen about it. They laughed at him,



but the same thing happened the next day. So, is this what they are trying to teach us...to forgive? What other wild animal pushes her baby to you to be kissed and petted? This behavior only occurs in these two lagoons. These tours are given in February and March. You can call or write to ask us for more information or contact the travel company ([andiamo-travel.com/2010/index.html](http://andiamo-travel.com/2010/index.html)). We have LOTS of pictures to share.

## Critter Corner ~ Burrowing Owls

by Jake Mumma, Park Ambassador & Aide

Photo by Herb Knufken

I'm sure most of you have heard of and/or seen our Reserve's newest resident, the Burrowing Owl, down at South Beach.



Who would have ever thought we would find such a critter, a Western Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*), in such a high traffic location, especially when these owls generally tend to nest in open grasslands or prairies far away from humans. It is said that these particular owls will find and nest in pre-excavated burrows, unless the soil is soft enough for them to create their own (see Jim Larrimore's Docent Question of the Month, October 2011 Pinecone, regarding the relationship between Burrowing Owls and ground squirrels:

[torreypine.org/Pinecone/pinecone1110.pdf](http://torreypine.org/Pinecone/pinecone1110.pdf)). It looks as if our owl found and adopted a resident ground squirrel's burrow. Sources claim that Burrowing Owls are commonly found to line their nests with animal scat, which helps to mask the owl's scent from predators and attract insects for food.

The nesting season in North America typically starts in late March or April, when the males must find one female to mate with. Listen closely for the two syllable "hoo-hoo" call, which is vocalized by males at the burrow entrance when they are trying to attract females. (These owls can also make angry squawking sounds, and by this owl's color, markings and behavior, it is believed that our Torrey Pine owl is indeed a male in search of a female.) However, once a mate is found, the males must relocate to a satellite burrow nearby to allow the female to lay anywhere from 4-12 eggs. While most of the eggs will hatch, on average only 4-5 chicks will survive. In some locations, these owls will reuse a nest for multiple years in a row. Other times, they will abandon the nest after only one season to find a better location. I guess we'll just have to wait and see if this little guy likes the neighborhood enough to stay for a second season.

Unlike most owls, Burrowing Owls are diurnal, but will hunt throughout a 24-hour period if they have young to feed. When hunting, Burrowing Owls will stay perched

and on the lookout until they spot prey, which they will either chase on foot across the ground or rapidly swoop down on from the air. Their diet is variable, consisting of mice, lizards, insects and even fruits and seeds from various cacti.

We are very lucky to have this little guy as a resident, as these magnificent creatures are endangered in Canada, threatened in Mexico, and of special concern here in the United States. With that in mind, let's enjoy this special little resident, but continue to respect his boundaries in the hopes that he remains here in the Reserve for many seasons to come!

*Ed. Note: This informative tribute was written before the disappearance of our resident Burrowing Owl. The author writes: "One possibility is that too much human contact and attention has finally forced him to relocate out of the park (there was a TV news station getting some up close footage recently). Another possibility is that he was grabbed by a predator such as a peregrine falcon or hawk. Finally, there is the possibility that he was unsuccessful in finding a mate and has relocated to a new spot in hopes of better luck. Hopefully, he will show up sooner or later, if not in that burrow, then in one nearby."*

## Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: Mar 3, 2012

Total of 91 species

Snow Goose 2	Great Blue Heron 3	Western Gull 15	American Crow 94	Common Yellowthroat 7
Gadwall 30	Great Egret 3	California Gull 80	Common Raven 62	Yellow-rumped Warbler 19
American Wigeon 43	Snowy Egret 5	Caspian Tern 2	Northern Rough-winged Swallow 27	Spotted Towhee 8
Mallard 17	Little Blue Heron 1	Royal Tern 2	Tree Swallow 1	Rufous-crowned Sparrow 4
Blue-winged Teal 2	Black-crowned Night-Heron 1	Eurasian Collared-Dove 1	Bushtit 42	California Towhee 36
Cinnamon Teal 20	White-faced Ibis 27	Mourning Dove 4	Bewick's Wren 6	Savannah Sparrow 2
Northern Shoveler 17	Turkey Vulture 1	Burrowing Owl 1	House Wren 2	Song Sparrow 31
Northern Pintail 7	White-tailed Kite 1	White-throated Swift 8	Marsh Wren 7	White-crowned Sparrow 33
Green-winged Teal 17	Red-shouldered Hawk 2	Anna's Hummingbird 31	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 1	Golden-crowned Sparrow 3
Lesser Scaup 9	Red-tailed Hawk 4	Rufous Hummingbird 2	California Gnatcatcher 6	Red-winged Blackbird 11
Surf Scoter 6	American Kestrel 2	Allen's Hummingbird 1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 2	Brewer's Blackbird 2
Bufflehead 9	Peregrine Falcon 1	Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird 2	Wrentit 23	House Finch 73
Red-breasted Merganser 2	Clapper Rail 1	Belted Kingfisher 1	Hermit Thrush 1	Lesser Goldfinch 59
Ruddy Duck 1	American Coot 21	Nuttall's Woodpecker 2	Northern Mockingbird 9	House Sparrow 1
California Quail 4	Snowy Plover 20	Northern Flicker 2	California Thrasher 5	
Pied-billed Grebe 2	Semipalmated Plover 10	Black Phoebe 10	European Starling 2	
Eared Grebe 1	Willet 1	Say's Phoebe 3	Orange-crowned Warbler 9	
Western Grebe 31	Long-billed Curlew 1	Cassin's Kingbird 4		
Brandt's Cormorant 4	Heermann's Gull 1	Western Scrub-Jay 7		
Double-crested Cormorant 19	Ring-billed Gull 10			
Brown Pelican 30				

**Observers:** Jack Friery, Herb Knufken, Gary Grantham, Frank Wong, Blair Francis, Kathy Dickey, and Anonymous

**Comments:** Snow Goose 2: two sub-adults have been seen for weeks at the mouth of the lagoon.



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*The Torrey Pinecone*, a calendar of events, notes from business meetings, and other items of specific interest to the docent membership, is published bi-monthly (even months). For odd months we publish the *Torreyana*. Please submit items by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to the Editor [Editors@torreypine.org](mailto:Editors@torreypine.org). This newsletter is edited by Docent **Joan Simon**. Items for publication may also be left in the *Torreyana* mailbox in the docent library.

### April 2012 TPDS Lodge Docent Hosting Calendar- Updated 3/28/12

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 L- W-Rowbottom L- W- L-	2 L-Sogo L-Bogan L-B&F Eckles	<i>Maids</i> 3 L-Colwell L-Ivany L-Bogan	4 L-Walker/ Hrountas L-Barnard L-Small	5 L-Simon L-Batarseh/ Stehlik L-Heinemann	6 L-Lawley L-Dewhurst L-Sabellae	7 L- W- L- W-Kamen/Yehu L-
8 L-Rowbottom W-G Beardsley L- W-Fillius L-	9 L-Arnold L-F Doolittle L-Bogan	10 L-M Lewis L-Fiorentino L-Bogan	11 L-Bogan L-Barnard L-	12 L-Tarkington L-Fiorentino L-Heinemann	13 L-Lawley L-Dewhurst L-S Rose	14 <b>Meeting</b> L- W-Sanseverino L- W-Farness L-
15 L-Dickey W-G Beardsley L-Lombardi W- L-Heinemann	16 L-Sogo L-Batarseh/ Stehlik L-B&F Eckles	<i>Maids</i> 17 L-M Lewis L-Ivany L-Bogan	18 L-Bogan L-Phillips L-Humphreys	19 L-Griffiths/Malm L-Simon L-Tarkington	20 L-Schindler L- L-	21 L-McGee W- L-Sabella W-Kamen/Yehu L-Hartung
22 L- W-Rowbottom L-Zyskind W- L-Hartung	23 L-Stehlik L-F Doolittle L-Dickey	24 L-Colwell L-P&A Paa L-Heinemann	25 L-Hrountas/ Walker L- L-	26 L-M Lewis L-Woods L-A Howard	27 L-Simon L-Humphreys L-S&S Rose	28 L-McGee W-Sanseverino L- W-Fillius L-
29 L- W-Schindler L-P&A Paa W- L-	30 L-Sogo L-Phillips L-Heinemann		Lodge hosting hours: L- 9-12 L- 1-3 L- 4-6		Walks W Sat/Sun/Hol 9:30 (Start 10:00) W Sat/Sun/Hol 1:30 (Start 2:00)	

To sign up for an opening, call the hosting docent (858-755-8219) to confirm the time and write your name in the Logbook. If you cannot do your session, please try to find your own substitute by switching with another docent or using the short-notice list. Then call the hosting docent to make the change in the Logbook. Coordinators: Irene Larrimore & Jan Lombardi