



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 346

March 2014

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Bats

by Joan R. Simon

A rapt audience listened avidly as Cindy Myers, from the “bat team” at Project Wildlife, “made bat lovers out of us all” (to quote Docent **Mike Yang**). She brought with her a wealth of information about bats and cleared up many misconceptions. She also brought a live bat who once he was woken up (they’re nocturnal, after all), yawned, ate a little, and totally charmed the docent onlookers.

Of the 1300+ species of bats (representing almost 1/4 of all mammal species), only three are vampire bats, and only one lives off mammal blood (and even then, does so benignly) -- so much for the scary bat of film stardom. Almost all bats in the United States are insect-eating (world-wide there are more than 720 species of insect-eaters), and all are micro bats (as opposed to the larger mega bats). The 22 species of bats in San Diego County are all small and for the most part surprisingly cute. “They look like puppies with wings,” Cindy remarked about the mega bats, as she sped through a parade of delightful slides. The smallest species is the canyon bat which weighs in at 4 grams with a diminutive 6” wing span, looking a lot like a Sphinx Moth in flight.

Bats are essential to farmers, consuming literally tons of bugs every day. One small bat can eat 1000 mosquito-sized insects in an hour! In tropical parts of the world, where many bat species eat fruit or nectar,



Davey, the sleepy Mexican Free-tailed Bat who charmed the docents at the February general meeting

Docent General Meeting

Saturday, March 8, 9 am

Location: St Peter’s Episcopal Rec Hall, Del Mar

Title: Bees: The Ecological Importance of Native Bees

Speaker: Keng-Lou James Hung

Keng-Lou James Hung has been interested in bees since he was a child. At Dartmouth he wrote his honors thesis on native bees and is now studying the ecology and conservation of bees at UCSD. His PhD research focuses on the response of bee communities to urbanization and the consequences of biodiversity loss.

James’ presentation will serve as a crash-course on the natural history, diversity and ecological importance of native bees, as well as the conservation of pollinators and pollination ecosystem services.

they are the primary pollinators for wild bananas, breadfruit, avocados, tequila-producing agave, cashews, dates and figs, to name some of the plants dependent on bats.

Bats have the same arm and hand bones as humans and are the only mammal capable of powered flight (i.e., they are not gliders). While they have sophisticated echo-location abilities which enable them to hunt at night using sound, they also have perfectly fine vision. Some have such excellent hearing they are able to pick up the sound of a scorpion walking on the desert ground.

(cont. on pg. 3)

Inside

President's Message	2
General Meeting Minutes	3
Docent of the Month	4
Children's Program	4
Laura Lowenstein Retires	5
Channel Island Trip	5
New Truck (Beautiful Sight)	5
HBH Crew	6
Progress at Parry Grove	6
Did You Know?	7
2014 Science Fair	7
Come Join TP Book Club	7
In Memoriam	7
Birds of the TP Ext-Part 1	8
Taxonomy Shouldn't be Taxing	9
Bird List	9

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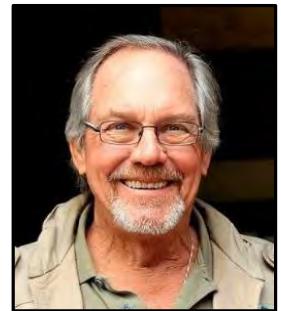
Sr. Park Aide: Louis Sands

Park Aides: Joy Inton, Jake Mumma, and Johnson Jou

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Message from the President

I wish I could say that the sun is shining, the birds are singing and the flowers are popping up with reckless abandon, but it is only the frequent dousing of fog that provides the necessary water for our thirsty Torreys, Towhees, Bladderpods and Bushtits. Dang, things are dry out there and it doesn't look much like more rain is in store. Nature is behaving naturally, but unusually.



The committees are hard at work. Safety is checking out the new Parry Grove steps, ways to control traffic up and down the hill, trail demarcations and handrails up the stairs at High Point. The museum is looking to improve plant and animal displays and to provide fuller stories and a coordinated way of delivering them. Plant signs are going up in the Lodge's front garden and appropriate new natives are being planted there. The TIK continues to hydrate visitors and educate them on the beauties of our Reserve. We are making progress in keeping visitors and vehicles on the right tracks and directing hikers to the trails with peeler pole fencing and eye-rod and cable.

Amid the activity, Ceanothus are peeking out, and wild cucumbers have already shown their white blossoms and impressive fruit on meandering vines. Popcorn flowers are popping and Harlequin Beetles are proliferating on Bladderpods, while Harvester Ants continue their battle with the Argentines, providing viable food for the Horned Lizards.

Yes, life goes on and this is an appropriate time to look around and count our blessings. Through the fiscal difficulties California has endured, the Department of Parks and Recreation has survived with only superficial damage (at least, so far). The Docent Society has expanded its efforts to provide help to the paid professionals: rangers, park aides and State employees. We've repaired damage from increased wear and tear. We're making education to our visitors more thorough and valuable. We're making our acreage even more beautiful. I love greeting visitors to the Lodge where I continue to hear abundant "thank-you's" and "awesome's." We're all doing a great job preserving and protecting this acreage we all love.

Bill Eckles
President,
Torrey Pines Docent Society

FLASH From Joy Inton: Don't forget to donate your ZooNooz magazines to the Museum Shop.

(cont. from pg. 1)

Like all mammals, they can contract rabies, although it's estimated that less than ½ of 1% of bats are actually infected. Nevertheless, since rabies is always fatal if untreated right away, Cindy strongly cautioned never to touch a bat (or other wild mammal) with bare hands and to report any exposure immediately.



Park Aide and Docent Joy Inton dresses up as a bat.
Photo by Herb Knüfken



From L to R: a Hoary Bat, a Western Red Bat, and a Western Yellow Bat. All three roost in the leaves of trees.

Project Wildlife

Project Wildlife is one of the largest wildlife rehabilitation organizations in the country. Its medical staff and volunteers help orphaned, injured and sick wildlife throughout San Diego County. Each year, they assist over 10,000 birds and mammals representing more than 300 species. Most are returned to the wild. Visit their website at: projectwildlife.org.

Torrey Pines Docent Society General Meeting Minutes for February 8, 2014

Excerpted from notes of the TPDS General Meeting, by Secretary Annette Ring. Complete minutes are in the docent library.

Meeting called to order at 11:05 am by **Bill Eckles**.

Spotlight On: "Hunting Whales and Dolphins with a Camera" by **Wes Farmer**. This included many beautiful photos of whales and dolphins.

Special Recognition: **Laura Lowenstein** retired from her role as a park aide at the end of 2013. Laura has been involved with the Reserve for more than 25 years. She has likely worked with more supervising rangers than any other park aide in California. One of her focuses was the Children's Program. **Barbara Wallach** presented Laura with a tile with a Torrey pine branch on it and there was a delicious cake. (See pg. 5.)

Docent of the Month: **Carolyn Butterfield** was named Docent of the Month for her work as treasurer, keeping the books in order, and "keeping us out of jail." (See pg. 4.)

General Announcements:

There will be a memorial for **Bobbi Whitby** on Wednesday, Feb. 12th at 2 pm at the amphitheater behind the Lodge. Her ashes will be scattered afterwards.

Ann Smith Mercandetti is looking for docents to monitor the road during the La Jolla Half-Marathon early on Sunday, April 27th. About 6500 runners are expected to go through the park in about three hours. Having docents along the road will help to keep runners from leaving trash in the Reserve.

Parking passes for 2014 are now numbered for each person. Please take care of them; some have already been lost.

"Art in the Pines" stamped water bottles are now half-off for docents.

New docent training session starts on Feb. 22nd. Please contact **Diane Stocklin** if you have any questions.

The San Diego Science Fair judging is on March 26th.

Peggy Farness invited all to join her next Saturday, February 15th from 1 pm to 3 pm at the Lodge to make water bottle carriers out of plastic shopping bags. Only scissors are needed.

TPA Update: (**Rick Vogel**) The TPA's 67th annual meeting will be on Sunday, February 23rd at 3 pm at the Martin Johnson House at Scripps Institute of Oceanography. Dr. Molly McClain will speak about her book "Ellen Browning Scripps: A Natural Woman." All docents are welcome. See the TPA website for more information: torreypines.org

Per **Bob Doolittle**, we now have the new replacement truck. Many thanks to TPA and the Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation. The new truck is a white Toyota with an

extended cab and should give us many years of service.
(See pg. 5.)

Strategic Plan: (**Bill Eckles**) In an effort to save people's time and improve the flow of information between committees and the Board, members of the Board will serve as liaisons to each committee. There are 33 functions/committees in the TPDS. Representatives from them attend Board meetings to report back on what is going on. All are welcome at the meetings. The hope is that these liaisons will give the many functions and committees a point of contact so that communication can flow easily in both directions.

Treasurer's Report: (**Gerry Lawrence**) The 2014 budget is balanced and has been approved by the board. Income is projected to be down due to the cancellation of Art in the Pines and cessation of water bottle sales. TPDS has a healthy reserve in the bank. The budget and on-going monthly expense statements are posted on the bulletin board in the Docent Library.

Ranger's Report: (**Bill Eckles**) Ranger Lisa Urbach has been promoted to supervisor of the San Elijo and South Carlsbad campgrounds and we welcome Jared Kolar as our new ranger. (See article in the February *Torreyana*.) Parry Grove Trail is expected to open in 4 to 6 weeks.

Trail Patrol: (**Lynne Truong**) There are 18 newly-trained Trail Patrol docents as a result of the recent training session.

TIK: (Trailhead Information Kiosk) **Sally Whitlock** and **Donna Close** invited all to join the "TIK Talkers." There are two shifts, 10 am – 1 pm, 1 pm – 4 pm on weekends and holidays. The two-year anniversary of the TIK is coming up. In the last 8 months the TIK has made \$828 from donations.

Channel Island trip: There will be a trip to the Channel

Refreshments: For March's general meeting docents whose last names start with M, N or O are responsible for snacks.

Islands the 2nd weekend in September. (See article on pg. 5 for more details.)

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am

Children's Program

by Barbara Justice and Marie Johnson, Children's Program Directors and

Louis Sands, Children's Program Coordinator

We are having a fun and busy start to 2014 thanks to our Coordinator and all the docents participating in the Children's Program. We had three different topics for February: Native Americans - the Kumeyaay Indians (3), Geology (5) and Ecosystem & Food Chains (1). A total of 471 children and 46 docents participated in the different

Docent of the Month: Carolyn Butterfield

Photo by Herb Knüfken

What a surprise to receive the nomination of Docent of the Month and what a great honor! Having been Treasurer for the past two years, I have gained a real insight into the high caliber of our members and the degree of excellence with which they perform their various activities. I am privileged to be a member of this group.

I first began to come to Torrey Pines between 1943

and 1948. My mother

would bring us with a few

friends to play in what was

then a city park. For her it

must have seemed a place

of sanity and calm with my dad away fighting the war in

the Pacific. We children would make up adventure

stories and then act them out. My favorite role was

that of the lookout which necessitated climbing a tall

tree to watch for the pirates or whatever bad actors

the story called for. Picking up needles on the ground, I

was delighted to find that each bunch always had five

needles, no more and no less. Later we moved in and out

of the area several times, but Torrey Pines has always

felt like coming home.

I trained to become a docent in 2002, finishing in 2003.

I have participated in Lodge Hosting, Trail Patrol, Weed

Whacking and Art in the Pines. As a mentor to a new

trainee this spring, I plan to continue to learn new things

about the Reserve in addition to no tree climbing and no

picnics.

programs. Presenters for February were Louis Sands, **Ann Smith Mercandetti, Joellen Barnett, Frank Burham** and **Janet Ugalde**.

We are planning an outing to the Living Coast Discovery Center in Chula Vista on March 11th, where we hope to learn some valuable information to interpret for our young visitors.

Please contact us if you want more information about the Children's Program and/or come and hike with us and the children.

Laura Lowenstein Retires (But Stays on as a Docent)

by Barbara Wallach

Photo by Herb Knüfken

At their meeting on February 8th, the docents thanked **Laura Lowenstein** for her years of service when they recognized her significant contributions to the Society and the Reserve. Her goal was to always provide a warm and welcoming place to docents, staff and visitors.

Laura became a docent in 1989 and a park aide in 2001. She served as an aide for 12 ½ years under seven different Supervising Rangers. Her work included serving in the entry kiosk, interpreting to school children and other non-profit groups, and coordinating docents/volunteers in such activities as



Earth Day celebrations, Bioblitz events, Art in the Pines, appreciation dinners and potlucks, docent holiday parties, craft workshops, and many more. She was instrumental in docent training and served most notably as a very effective coordinator of the docent-led Children's Education Program from 2003 until June, 2012.

The Society presented her with a lovely tile plaque in remembrance of her service and wishes her well in her retirement. We are pleased that she will continue to participate in docent activities at the Reserve.

Channel Island Trip in September – Note Date Change

by Kristine Schindler

Our list of interested docents and friends/partners is growing for the next Channel Island trip. Consider joining in for Saturday, **September 13th through Tuesday, September 16th**. The trip includes bus transport, three nights on the boat, multiple islands (Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, and San Miguel - weather permitting), kayaking, snorkeling, hiking, Torrey Pines, giant coreopsis grove, a NPS naturalist, great food, wonderful company, and MORE. It will cost approximately \$625 per person. Contact **Tom Polakiewicz** for further details and to get your name added to the list. The expected group size is 35, so act now if you are interested. A deposit of \$100 is required by the April 12th general meeting; the remaining balance will be due by the June 14th meeting. We are looking forward to this trip, since the previous Channel Island trip in 2011 was fantastic. You can reach Tom at tpolakiewicz@aol.com.



September 2011- Channel Island trip

A Beautiful Sight to See

by Lynne Small



A beautiful sight!? It may not be quite as beautiful as some other Torrey Pines vistas, but it is still beautiful to see the new TPDS truck at work, e.g., delivering Whacky Weeder bags full of iceplant (*Carpobrotus edulis*) to a dumpster. The truck is a 2005 Toyota Tundra with extended cab and automatic transmission. The list of drivers has had to be limited due to insurance costs, but it includes some ever-present docents, such as **Frank Burham**, and Park Aides Jake Mumma and **Johnson Jou**, so it shouldn't be hard to find someone available to drive it when needed. The truck was originally to be donated to the Docent Society by the Torrey Pines Association, but the Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation stepped in and returned most of TPA's contribution. Thus, ultimately the Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation is the major donor, though many thanks also to TPA for its role and contribution. **Bob Doolittle** spent many, many hours finding the right truck at the right price, and now we have it! Maintenance and insurance will be paid for by TPDS.

HBH CREW: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Kristine Schindler

Since May 2011, I have been coordinating road clean-ups along Hwy 101/ Torrey Pines Road, the road that runs up (and down) the hill outside of the Reserve. These quarterly clean-ups have been well-supported and successful. It seems that if there is less trash out there on the roadsides, there is less trash thrown out onto the roadsides. Kind of like graffiti in big cities. And the docent support has been absolutely wonderful!

Here are some statistics to share for those who like to see the #s:

2011: 27 docents involved in four clean-ups w/ 18 unique docents (meaning several docents helped with more than one clean-up)

2012: 39 docents involved in four clean-ups w/24 unique

2013: 32 docents involved in four clean-ups w/17 unique (with a few non-docents here and there)

Each clean-up generally takes somewhere between two and three hours. The total number of hours put in by docents over those three years is approximately 250. Quite impressive! Thank you so much to those involved.

For our first clean-up in 2014 in early February, there were 8 of us, but believe me we could use more help. And that leads me to the title of this piece: What's in a Name? I have been looking for a good name for this group from the start to make it attractive, recognizable, and enduring to the

docent group. A good name to draw more folks into the fold. A good name to "compete" with the Seabees and Whacky Weeders. But, Trash Talkers or Roadside Cleaners just does not really do it. So, what I have landed on for now is HBH Crew. What does that mean, you ask? HBH = Hands, Backs, and Hearts.

All three are very important for those who decide to pitch in and help with this particular docent activity. Hands and backs for obvious reason and hearts because you really have to LOVE THE RESERVE to walk up and down the outside road and pick up litter.

It is a very special group of docents who support this activity and I appreciate each and every one on the HBH Crew. Want to join us? We always need new docents to get involved and will welcome you and your hands, back, and heart graciously. To be notified of future clean-ups, please send me an email at krisbo@cox.net

However you SERVE the RESERVE, thank you!



Progress at Parry Grove!

Article & photos by Kristine Schindler

With a total of 116 steps in place, know that the Parry Grove trail is getting closer to re-opening. We are all eager to have this wonderful trail back. On February 7th several docents from the Safety Task Force (STF) went out on the trail to look at the current status and progress to date. Yes, the entryway on to the main trail is still steep and there are many stone steps to go



down and then climb up again to enjoy the trail, but it is well worth the effort. The STF is asking questions about possible handrails in a few key locations and a sign at the

top of the trail to make sure people are aware of the steep entry and series of steps. It is not a trail for all Reserve visitors, that's for sure. The overlook work in this area continues as well and will be an ADA asset to enhance the Reserve and allow us to serve an important group of visitors. We have the following park staff to thank for their efforts: Russ Andersen (lead), Drew Briggs, Jeremy Denton, Jose Lopez, and Irma Malagon.

I look forward to my first hike on Parry Grove when it officially re-opens sometime soon.



Steve Tarkington and Ken King

Did you know?* **Who Was First, Part 3**

by Tom Polakiewicz

When people first arrived at Torrey Pines some ten thousand years ago the landscape was much different than it is now. It was near the end of the Last Glacial Maximum, and the sea level was about four hundred feet lower than it is today. The climate was cooler and wetter, and the shoreline was as much as three miles farther out. Peñasquitos Lagoon was a four hundred foot deep canyon. Instead of the gently sloping sandy beaches we see today, the shoreline was rocky and dropped off steeply into the ocean depths.

The economy of the earliest people reflected their environment. Their diet consisted primarily of the bounty of the sea. They ate shellfish such as mussels, rock oysters, limpets, barnacles and abalone. They took advantage of the near shore waters to catch fish like White Sea Bass, Pile Perch, Moray Eel and Yellowtail. They caught lagoon fish, hunted migrating birds and took the eggs of nesting birds.

Sea levels rose rapidly from the time of the earliest habitation until about six thousand years ago when they reached nearly the present levels. At that point the lagoons began to fill with sediment and sandy beaches began to form. The change in geography brought about a change in the lifestyle of the people. They continued to exploit the ocean with tule reed boats, but with the loss of the rocky shorelines, they lost the more productive rocky intertidal zones of earlier times. They began to look more to the inland areas for food and fiber and to more intensively manage inland resources.

In the next article in this series we will examine what life was like for the people who lived at Torrey Pines from five thousand years ago until European contact.

*This “**Did You Know?**” tidbit is one of a series of occasional submissions from **Tom Polakiewicz**.

2014 San Diego Science Fair

The TPDS judging team is preparing for this year's Greater San Diego Science & Engineering Fair scheduled for March 26th. Team members are **Bill Key**, **Wes Farmer**, **Paula Shaw**, **Sheldon Kruger**, **Lillian Lachicotte**, **Johnson Jou**, **Joy Inton**, **Denise Sunseri**, and **Wayne Kornreich**.

The Team will preview the projects from students in grades 7 - 12 on the eve of March 25th, with final judging on March 26th. We anticipate presenting up to four deserving students at the May 10th general meeting.

Sally Whitlock & Frank Burham

Judging Team Coordinators

Come Join the Torrey Pines Book Club!

by Molly McConnell

Are you an avid reader -- or would you like to read more? Would you like to socialize more with other docents? The Torrey Pines Book Club, which started in 2012, is looking for new members. We meet in each other's homes on one Tuesday a month for book discussion and socializing. Although we like to emphasize non-fiction and fiction nature books, we stray into other areas as well. Some of our favorite selections include: *River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey* by Candice Millard, depicting TR's explorations in South America; *The Indian Lover* by local author Garth Murphy, a novel about pre-1849 California; *Infidel*, the autobiography of an African Muslim woman who became a member of Parliament in the Netherlands; *Caleb's Crossing* by Geraldine Brooks, a fictional account of the first college-educated American Indian; and *Lost in Shangri La* by Mitchell Zukoff, about a jungle plane crash during World War II. We don't take ourselves too seriously, as fun and laughter are a large part of our agenda! If you would like to join us on March 18th, our next book is the novel *Swamplandia!* by Karen Russell. Please contact Molly McConnell at mollyfleur@yahoo.com for further information.

In Memoriam:

The Docent Society has lost two long-time members recently: **Bobbi Whitby**, Class of 2002, and **Bob Talbert**, Class of 1988.

Bobbi Whitby, a Lifetime Docent, was active until very recently. Over the years, she enjoyed doing the Children's School Program, Lodge Hosting and Trail Patrol. She was an accomplished artist and loved working with the "crafty" docents making items to sell in the Museum Shop. Bobbi is survived by her husband, Docent **Paul Whitby**, also class of 2002. [Click here to link to Bobbi's Obituary](#)

Bob Talbert passed away in January at the age of 91. He and his wife Jane were in charge of refreshments for our monthly Docent Meetings when they were held at the Lodge. Although well-remembered Lifetime Docents, they both had become inactive in recent years.

Birds of the Torrey Pines Extension-

Part 1

by Kathy Dickey

The Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve (TPSNR) Extension provides a wide variety of habitats for birds, and each species uses specific areas for their feeding, nesting and shelter activities. Habitats include the majestic and rare Torrey Pines, coastal sage scrub, upland chaparral, and a small riparian area. We are fortunate that these beautiful habitats are preserved into the future for all the plants and animals that live there, and for those humans who enjoy encountering them.

The Extension is home to at least 45 species of birds, and many hundreds of individuals, but not all are present in any given month. Monthly bird counts performed over many years by the Torrey Pines Docent Society typically tally from 17 to 35 species, depending on the season and the weather.

Housing developments and roads encircle the Extension,



Black Phoebe Photo by Kathy Dickey

bringing urban birds to the territory and adding to the diversity of birds that can be seen. On almost any day, one can find House Finches,

Northern Mockingbirds,

Black Phoebes and House Wrens on the periphery of the Extension. Late fall and winter months bring House Sparrows to the mix.

A number of birds can be seen year-round. Look at the tops of the bushes and trees and listen carefully for little kissing noises: you will likely find brilliant green- and red-feathered Anna's Hummingbirds. If you are fortunate, during the winter months you might spot their cousins, the orange-brown Allen's Hummingbirds.



Allen's Hummingbird Photo by Kathy Dickey



Spotted Towee Photo by Herb Knüfken

Darting along the paths or calling from the tops of bushes, California Towhees and Spotted Towhees are year-long residents. They use their feet to stir up leaves on the ground, looking for seeds. Our state bird, the California Quail, can be found running along trails and ravines, usually in small family groups. Hidden in the brush thickets, Wrentits are usually heard long before they are seen, voicing loud and insistent "bouncing ping-pong ball" calls. The calls and songs of the California Thrasher are as loud, varied and repetitive (and sometimes annoying) as those of a Northern Mockingbird.

Tiny Bushtits, usually in large flocks, can be found on the branches of larger bushes, often hanging upside-down. They make soft ticking noises as they peck away at tiny insects and spiders on the leaves. Other species often heard and seen year-round include Western Scrub-Jays, Bewick's Wrens, Mourning Doves, American Crows and Common Ravens.

The only bird species in the Extension listed by the state as threatened or endangered is the tiny California Gnatcatcher that lives in open areas of the sagebrush. Listen for it carefully and you may be rewarded with a cat-like "meow" call. This is the most at-risk bird protected in the Extension, and so far they have been very successful in their survival there.

Next month, in Part 2, we will discuss the raptors, woodpeckers, owls, flycatchers and migrating birds that can be seen in the Extension.

Taxonomy Shouldn't be Taxing

by Jack Friery

Recently, a docent asked me why our monthly bird list that appears in the *Torreyana* (see below) is in such apparently random order. Why aren't the birds listed alphabetically? Or in size order? Or order of appearance? Or habitat?

The answer is taxonomical. Our bird lists are laid out in (more or less) taxonomical or scientific order.

Taxonomy is a word that describes the system devised by Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus in the mid-18th century. Linnaeus brought order out of chaos to the biological world by creating a nested hierarchy of nature, beginning with a kingdom and ending with a species. For example, our simple House Finch, or *Carpodacus mexicanus*, would be in the Kingdom *Animalia*, Phylum *Chordata* [mostly vertebrates], Class *Aves* [birds], Order *Passeriformes* [perching birds], Family *Fringillidae* [true finches], and genus and species *Carpodacus mexicanus*.

Linnaeus' structure of classification was based upon observable characteristics and intended to reflect natural relationships between animals. For example, falcons are much like hawks and eagles in appearance and hunting habits. Therefore, they deserved to be closely listed with hawks and eagles. However, in recent years, there has been significant reordering. Genetic studies are showing that looks can be deceiving. A newer system of bird taxonomy has been suggested, called the Sibley–Ahlquist taxonomy.

It is based largely on DNA analysis and interpretation (see: rjohara.net/cv/1991-auk). Whether the old or new taxonomy conventions are adopted, DNA analysis has had an effect on bird taxonomy, even for the traditional taxonomists. For example, ducks were moved to the head of the taxonomical line, ahead of loons. And our friends the falcons soared to new heights in the pecking order.

The following is from an American Birding Association article in 2012:

“Falcons and parrots are moved far away from their long-standing placements [with eagles and hawks] in the official taxonomic sequence. Recent genetic studies found that falcons are much more closely related to songbirds than to other ‘hawks’— quite a jolt to our traditional belief. According to this research, falcons' closest relatives are a group (or ‘clade’) consisting of the parrots and the passerines. As a result, the new [American Ornithological Union] *Check-list* sequence inserts Falconiformes (caracaras and falcons) and Psittaciformes (parrots) between Piciformes (woodpeckers) and Passeriformes (songbirds).

These major revisions show us once again that as scientific knowledge improves, long-standing taxonomic sequences are not sacrosanct.”

[blog.aba.org/2012/07/new-aou-check-list-changes-2012.html. Emphasis added.]

The current “official” taxonomical list of North American birds as maintained by the American Ornithological Union can be found at aou.org/checklist/north/print.php.

Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: February 1, 2014

Number of species: 79

Gadwall 25
American Wigeon 10
Mallard 19
Blue-winged Teal 2
Cinnamon Teal 2
Northern Shoveler 14
Northern Pintail 25
Green-winged Teal 10
Canvasback 2
Redhead 1
Lesser Scaup 9
Bufflehead 22
Ruddy Duck 15
California Quail 4
Pied-billed Grebe 4
Western Grebe 4
Brandt's Cormorant 20
Double-crested Cormorant 17
Brown Pelican 142
Great Blue Heron 1

Great Egret 1
Snowy Egret 13
Black-crowned Night-Heron 2
White-tailed Kite 2
Northern Harrier 1
Red-shouldered Hawk 2
Red-tailed Hawk 4
American Coot 16
American Avocet 2
Semipalmated Plover 1
Spotted Sandpiper 1
Willet 9
Sanderling 2
Least Sandpiper 27
Heermann's Gull 4
Ring-billed Gull 27
Western Gull 3
California Gull 7
Herring Gull 1
Eurasian Collared-Dove 3
Mourning Dove 2
Anna's Hummingbird 36

Allen's Hummingbird 3
Belted Kingfisher 1
Nuttall's Woodpecker 4
Northern Flicker 2
American Kestrel 5
Peregrine Falcon 1
Black Phoebe 4
Say's Phoebe 3
Cassin's Kingbird 1
Western Scrub-Jay 4
American Crow 18
Common Raven 19
Bushtit 27
House Wren 3
Marsh Wren 2
Bewick's Wren 2
California Gnatcatcher 8
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 5
Wrentit 17
California Thrasher 7
Northern Mockingbird 2
European Starling 3

Orange-crowned Warbler 3
Common Yellowthroat 8
Yellow-rumped Warbler 10
Spotted Towhee 7
Rufous-crowned Sparrow 1
California Towhee 19
Savannah Sparrow 3
Song Sparrow 33
White-crowned Sparrow 17
Golden-crowned Sparrow 1
Red-winged Blackbird 26
Brewer's Blackbird 2
House Finch 24
Lesser Goldfinch 18
House Sparrow 2

Observers: Herb Knüfken,
Frank Wong, Gary
Grantham, Kathy Dickey,
Bob Glaser, Blair Francis,
Jack Friery, Eva Armi, and
Anonymous

Previous Bird Surveys may be found at torreypine.org/activities/bird-sightings.html



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Where did the Hosting/Walks Schedule go? With the new Volgistics online signup system the whole month fills up very quickly. Volgistics is now being used by 90% of the docents and any openings are available online or you can check the paper copies in the Green Notebook behind the docent desk in the Lodge that are updated every Monday. Questions can be emailed to portal@torreypine.org.