

# TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR  
TORREY PINES  
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 396

May 2018

## The Not-So-Delicate Wild Cucumber

by Joan R. Simon

At the April monthly meeting, Pao Chau introduced docents to the many fascinating traits of the wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*), a familiar vine seen in the Reserve during the early spring. Among its many interesting qualities are the unusual growth pattern from its seed and its enormous energy-storing tuber. Perhaps what most caught the attention of docents at the meeting was its ability to stop baldness in men, with a rather striking (and one might say deal-breaking) side effect. But first, here are some of the basic facts about the wild cucumber.

The wild cucumber is part of the gourd family (Cucurbitaceae), which in addition to the grocery store (or home garden) cucumber includes such edibles as squashes, pumpkins, zucchini, and a variety of melons, including watermelons. The wild cucumber, however, is not itself edible, containing a soapy substance, saponin, which makes it useful as a laxative, but bitter to the taste (in fact its Latin name means “bitter big fruit”). The seed germination starts with the root growing deep underground and forming a large tuber (or manroot) where food (energy) is stored. Drawing on the food stored in the tuber, the wild cucumber starts growing soon after the onset of the rainy season, as early as December, so it is one of the first new plants of the season. It uses its tendrils to attach to other plants forming a delicate (and harmless) vine that belies its large, enduring storage tuber. By the onset of the dry season in May, its leaves have shriveled up and it has returned to a dormant state underground, waiting for the next rainy season to emerge again.

The wild cucumber has both female and male flowers. The male flowers are the smaller



## Docent General Meeting

Saturday, May 12, 9 am

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

**Speaker:** Clinton Winant, Professor of Oceanography (Emeritus) at Scripps Institution of Oceanography

**Topic:** The Tides

Dr. Winant will talk about tides, tidal fluctuations, their influence on the circulation of the ocean and its relationship to world climatic changes. By focusing on the La Jolla shoreline, he will discuss the tides' contributions to the nearshore energy dispersion, which impacts the distribution of water, pollutants, nutrients, and sediments near the coast and the formation and erosion of our sandy beaches.

**Refreshments:** Docents with last names beginning with **D-E-F** will be responsible for providing snacks for this meeting.

ones clustered along a stalk. The female flowers (see photo) appear by themselves, and contain a swelling, the ovary, behind the flower. The seeds are huge, leaving large compartments in the dried fruit after they have “popped.” They are dispersed by rodents who store them in their underground burrows, sheltering them from wildfires.

The native people had many uses for the wild cucumber. The one we all learned in docent training was the use of the toxin-containing root to stun fish in a small body of water, allowing for easy capture. In addition, the root was used as a laxative, which was needed, at times, because of the constipating-causing tannic acid in acorns, a staple of indigenous diets.

## Inside

Meeting Minutes	2
Children's Program	3
Docent of the Month	4
Spotlight On	4
Torrey Pines Cliff Road	5
Ranger Dave Richards	5
La Jolla Half Marathon	6
Earth Day at TP	7-8
CEED Event	8
TP Book Club	8
Bird of the Month	9
Bird Survey	9

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TP Association: [torreypines.org](http://torreypines.org)

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

There are also analgesic, anti-inflammatory, and steroidal qualities to the wild cucumber roots. Another common practice was to treat hemorrhoids with the boiled leaves. Cucumber seeds were strung as jewelry beads and, when charred, used for body and ritual painting.

Perhaps the most interesting use was to treat hair loss by rubbing the oil from the roasted seeds onto the scalp. There is an enzyme that converts testosterone into a form that causes hair to fall out. The wild cucumber contains a chemical that blocks the action of that enzyme. The properties are similar to those in Finasteride which is used in modern-day hair loss pills. Unfortunately there are a number of side effects, including possible impotence -- perhaps too high a price to pay.

For more information on the wild cucumber, see Margaret Fillius' Plant of the Month in the [February 2016 Torreyana](#). Also, sign into the [Docent Login](#) in the Volunteering section of the TPSNR website, and look under "Operation Manuals/References."

## Meeting Minutes -- April 14, 2018

Meeting called to order at 9:05 am by **Ingo Renner**.

**Speaker:** Laura Cunningham did not show up.

**Recent Visitor Snake Bite:** **Ingo Renner** informed the docents that a visitor was bitten on the toe by a rattlesnake this week. She was wearing flip-flops and was just past the "No Drones" sign at the beginning of the beach trail. An ambulance transported her to Scripps La Jolla Hospital where she was given anti-venom medicine.

**May CEED event:** **Joe Meyer** announced that our next CEED event will be to the Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve on Thursday, May 10 (see pg. 8 for details).

**La Jolla Half Marathon:** Joe announced that **Ann Smith Mercandetti** is requesting a few more volunteers for the La Jolla Half Marathon, with over 7000 runners coming through the Reserve on April 22 in the morning. The race starts a half hour earlier this year, so volunteers will need to arrive no later than 6:45 am.

**New T-shirts for sale in the Museum Shop:** **Joe Meyer** presented several t-shirts available in the Museum Shop. For **docents only** is a sage-colored, long-sleeve T-shirt that is medium weight and 100% cotton (\$12). Also for docents we still have the vintage sand-colored, short-sleeve T-shirts with a 50/50 blend (\$10). There is a new 100% cotton women's T-shirt available for sale to all: crew neck, cornsilk color with a black "Mat" Torrey pine emblem. Finally, Joe showed the ball cap and dark blue, long-sleeve T-shirt, only available as a combo. All XXL T-shirts cost \$2.50 more because that is what the manufacturers charge us. T-shirt sales have increased to more than 20% of total Museum Shop sales. Lodge hosts should know that the docent-only T-shirts are stocked in the whale room. Additional visitor T-shirts are also in the whale room and restocking the shelves is encouraged during slow times at the Lodge.

**Mini-Training Workshops:** **Ray Barger** announced that workshops are planned for TIK training on April 28 & 29, and **Steve Neal** reported that Lodge Host training will be held on April 17 & 18. Times and more information have been posted on Google Groups. In the future there will be mini-training for leading Public Walks.

**Earth Day:** Set up for Earth Day at the Lodge on April 21 will start at 7:45 am, with the event occurring from 9 am until 1pm. **Ingo Renner** mentioned that besides docent volunteers manning various booths and helping with set up & take down, it would be nice if we had a lot of Roving Interpreters in the Reserve on Earth Day weekend.

**TPA Update:** **Ken King** announced that the April 21 Garden Party at the Fleming House is sold out.

TPA is funding \$60,000 for the construction documents and drawings for the Lodge rehabilitation of the roof, front porch, utilities and seismic projects. This is basically everything that will be needed for the bidding process to begin.

Inspired by Dr. Molly McClain's book, *Ellen Browning Scripps: New Money and American Philanthropy*, Ken is offering walking tours of the EBS buildings and sites in La Jolla. His scheduled walks on 4/24, 5/1, and 5/15 are already booked, but he will offer more walks in the near future. The walks are on on Tuesday afternoons at 1:00.

**President's Report:** **Ingo Renner** made a plea for docents to volunteer to prepare Spotlight On presentations for future monthly meetings (see article on pg. 4).

With **Michael Yang** and **Bonnie Hornbeck** retiring as librarians, there will be a committee of 5 docent librarians replacing them. This team will be charged with reducing the 21 categories of materials to a reasonable number. They will also decide what to do with our video media.

On our [torreypine.org](http://torreypine.org) website, under Volunteering, there is a brand new docent application form for our fall training class. This form stresses that training is to produce successful interpreters, and requests that commitment from the applicant.

A new ranger, **Dave Richards**, will start working at TPSNR on April 19 (see his profile on pg.5).

The lagoon mouth is scheduled to be dredged open starting Friday, April 27, with work continuing into the following week.

**Google Street View Spotlight On:** **Ray Barger**

demonstrated a useful tool available to docents. Google walked and filmed our Reserve in 2014 and 2016. Using the street view in Google Maps, a docent is able to view a 360 degree view at various spots along our trails. In collaboration with CA State Parks, there

are more than 150 park trails that are viewable with Google Street View.

The presentation is posted on Google Groups. Additionally, street views are available for the Extension.

**Wild Cucumber Spotlight On:** **Pao Chau** suggested that a discussion of the Wild Cucumber is a good way to interact with our visitors. (See article on pg. 1.)

**Docent of the Month:** **Michael Yang** for his 10 years of service as librarian, plus volunteering as a Roving Interpreter and at Special Events, and for his superb photography (Two of his pictures were used in our 2018 docent tide calendar).

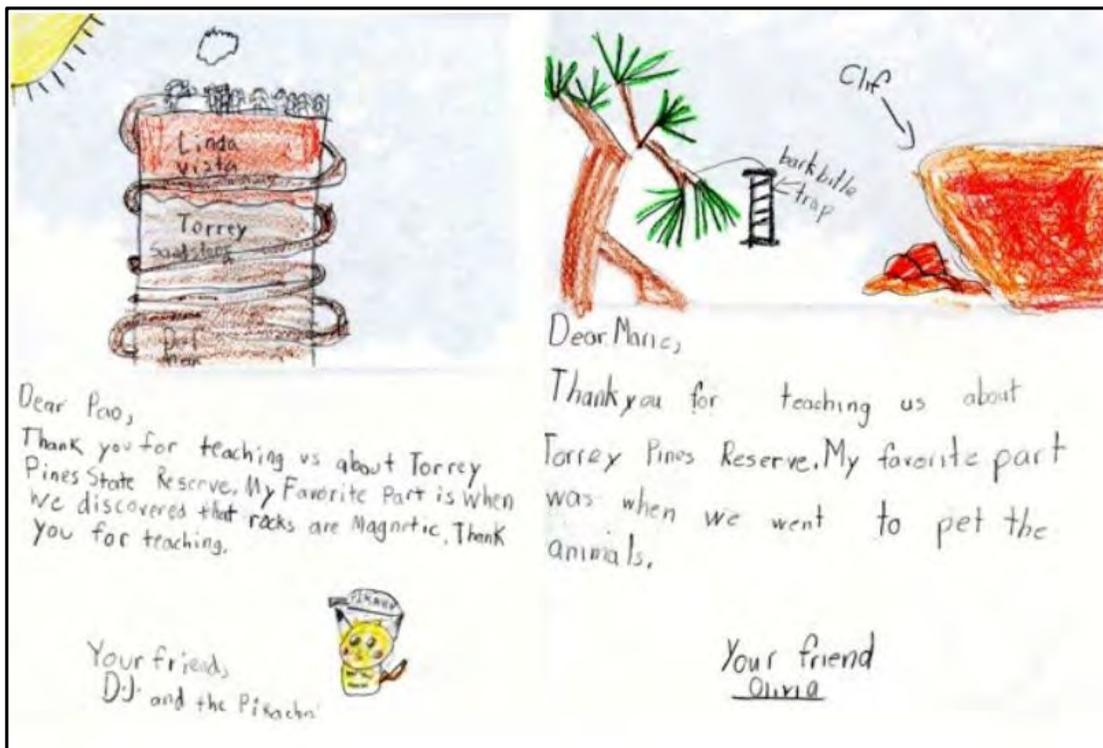
**Refreshments:** At May's General Meeting, docents with last names starting with **D-E-F** are responsible for snacks.

## Children's Program

by Janet Ugalde, Children's Program Director

Sandburg Elementary returned to TPSNR this spring, bringing 100 second grade students to our Geology program. Thank you, Mrs. Edwards, and your enthusiastic students, for making the time to send us delightful thank you notes.

THANK YOU Children's Program team members for giving Sandburg Elementary a great field trip: **Ann Mercandetti Smith, Pao Chau, Kathy Dickey, Susan Elliott, Jennifer Greenberg, Meg Jackson, Marie Johnson, Barbara Justice, Louis Sands, and Janet Ugalde.**



## Docent of the Month:

### Mike Yang

**B**orn in the Philippines of parents with Chinese, Portuguese, and Filipino heritage, I had no choice but to have an exciting life exploring the world. I completed my primary, high school and college education (De La Salle University) in Catholic schools in Manila, run by the Christian Brothers from Chicago (of all places). Armed with a degree in chemical engineering, a feeling of "there's got to be more out there" and the wanderlust genes of my multinational parents, I applied to graduate schools in the US and was accepted into the PhD program in Materials Science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. I obtained my doctorate in due course, applied for and was granted US immigrant status, and became a US citizen at a naturalization ceremony held in Tucson, Arizona. My wife, daughter and I have lived and worked in Manila, Troy, Dallas, Cleveland, Tucson, San Francisco, and (finally!) San Diego. Joining Torrey Pines Docent Society was a no-brainer for me. As soon as I saw the sign posted in the Lodge for docent trainee applications, I thought to myself, "I'll get to learn all this stuff and get into the Reserve for free?" Sold! I completed docent training in 2007 and received my "lifetime" nametag at the 2017 holiday party. In my 11-year association with TPDS, I served as treasurer for a year (didn't really like counting money) and as librarian for 10 years (I do like nature books!). What has sustained me through all the years in TPDS was Trail Patrol (aka Roving Interpreter), a duty I have loved both for its contact with nature and its interaction with the visiting public. I am currently taking a "sabbatical" but plan to re-engage fully at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve next year. I am hoping that by 2019 the docent pay will have been increased, however slightly.



## Spotlight On

by Mark Embree

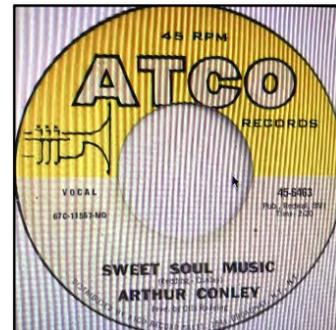
**I**n his 1967 hit song, "Sweet Soul Music," Arthur Conley began the introduction of each new singer with "spotlight on." Through the various illuminations, the listener learned that Wilson Pickett sang "Mustang Sally," Otis Redding uttered the memorable "fa, fa, fa, fa, fa, fa," and James Brown was indeed, "the king of them all."

Although some current docents may possess some of the soul attributes

Conley highlighted in his AM radio classic, it is the knowledge of the Reserve and the empowerment of fellow docents that seek the spotlight Conley championed.

At each monthly meeting, one or two docents will share an interesting fact about the Reserve, a humorous, historical anecdote, or a successful presentation technique that can be used later by other docents while leading a scheduled walk or in response to a question while Lodge hosting or working at the TIK or as a Roving Interpreter. For example, at the April meeting, **Pao Chau** shared many, interesting traits of the wild cucumber. Although docents may have learned during their training that native people used the root to aid in fishing, how many were aware the cucumber possessed both male and female flowers, or its seeds have the ability to germinate in the cool confines of a squirrel's burrow? **Ray Barger** introduced docents to Google Street View, a technology featured in Google Maps and Google Earth. In the near future, prospective hikers will be able view a collage of trail pictures instead of just a straight line on a map before choosing the right hike for a day's outing at Torrey Pines. Uncertainty whether to tackle a trail might easily be addressed through pictures that reveal not only the beautiful trail-side scenery of Torrey Pines, but also the beach and cliff views from Flat Rock to the South Kiosk.

Each "Spotlight On" presentation, of approximately ten minutes in length, allows every docent to share a small piece of the Reserve so others can later share the information with our visitors. If interested in making a presentation, please contact **Gabriele Wienhausen** or **Mark Embree** and include the topic and desired month to present. A PowerPoint is always beneficial; please provide **Roger Isaacson** with a thumb drive the morning of the presentation. Hopefully the "Spotlights" will become a regular feature of every monthly meeting.



## Torrey Pines Cliff Road: a 1930 Debate

by Judy Schulman

When I was Lodge hosting recently, Supervising Ranger Dylan Hardenbrook let me look at a book one of the Balboa Park rangers had given him. It was entitled *Torrey Pines Cliff Road: Petitions, Letters and Photographs 1930*. It contained dozens of petitions, a few photographs, several letters, and some newspaper articles – all concerning a proposed new cliff road at Torrey Pines.

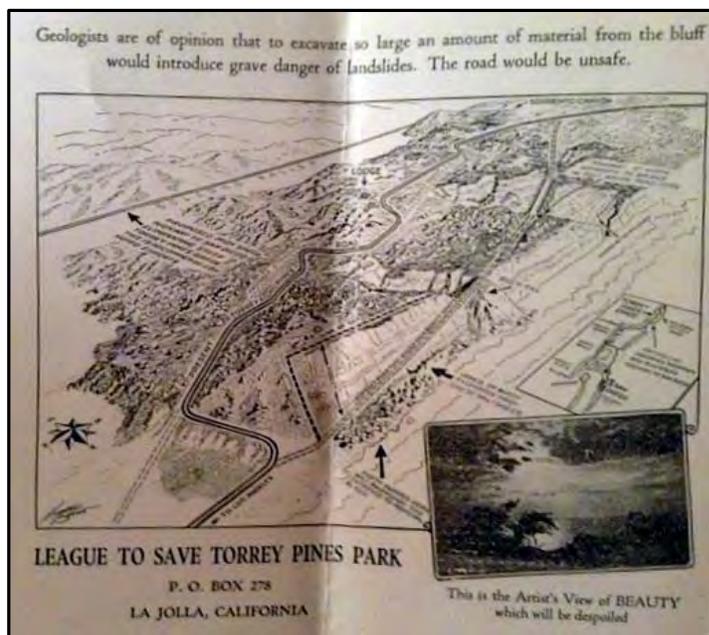
The petitions were in support of the proposed new cliff road. I had previously read that Miss Ellen Browning Scripps was originally in favor of the new road. This is confirmed by the fact that her lawyer, J.C. Harper, signed one of the petitions. I also noted that a few people signed this petition saying that they had signed another one opposing the road by mistake. Letters supporting the cliff road came from the Automobile Club of Southern California (AAA), a number of La Jolla businesses, the Hotel Valencia, the Kiwanis Club, and Casa de Mañana.

Some letters against the proposed road came from scientists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography; one of these had a number of academic formulas trying to prove that the cliffs, no matter what the builders did, would naturally erode over time. There were also letters opposing the road from the League to Save Torrey Pines. Between 1928 and 1930, the League fought a

proposed cliff road above the beach, which was supposed to eliminate the curves and grades in the old road. They felt that this new proposed road not only would destroy a section of the park but also would be costly to build and maintain. One of the reasons they were so against this new proposal was that it called for using landfill in the canyons so that the road could go across them.

I have included two pages from the pamphlet that the League distributed to local officials and the public.

In the end, the opponents of a cliff road won, and the new road (N. Torrey Pines Rd.) was built on the lagoon side of the Lodge in 1933.



## Meet Our New Ranger: Dave Richards

Photo by Joan R. Simon

We are pleased to welcome Dave Richards who joined the TPSNR ranger staff on April 19. Dave graduated from the California State Park Ranger Academy in 2008 and first worked at the San Clemente campground for two and a half years. He was then transferred to the San Elijo and So. Carlsbad campgrounds, where he has worked for the past 8 years. A lifelong resident of San Diego, he remembers coming to Torrey Pines as a kid to work on projects with his Boy Scout troop.



“I am looking forward to working in a place that is more focused on the protection of the natural environment,” he said. “It’s the reason I became a ranger.”

Welcome, Dave, to Torrey Pines!

## Year VI for the La Jolla Half Marathon

by Ann Smith Mercandetti

For the sixth year in a row, Torrey Pines docents arrived at the Reserve bright and early to be on hand to welcome over 7,000 LJHM runners to Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve. **Paul Dunphy, Linda Zlotnik, Ken King, Lillian Lachiotte, Betsy Seible, Joellen Barnett, Ann Walker, Cindie Leonard, Irene Larrimore, Jan Lombard, Joan Simon, Mark Embree, Susan Morrison, Helen Grundler, Michelle Kurtis Cole, and Kristine Schindler** reported to the upper east parking lot before 6:45 am on the beautiful Sunday morning of April 22 as the sun rose over the mountains to the east. Our own TP staff rangers Kyle Knox and Jesus "Chuy" Salinas were already at the Reserve when we docents arrived.



Docent Paul Dunphy Photo by Linda Zlotnik

Each year we learn a few new things about monitoring events, and this year's run went as smoothly as any yet. Docents are often thanked for our presence, and the runners enjoy the encouragement docents give them, particularly as they head up our "big hill". It is a positive experience for the runners, the docents, and, of course, for the Reserve.

We hope more docents will join in the fun next year. It takes quite a few of us to "cover" the 1.5 miles through the Reserve, so "the more the merrier"!



Photo by Joan R. Simon

## Photo News Clips



In the morning on Saturday, April 14, a Torrey pine in front of the Lodge fell down. The Lodge/Visitor Center was closed for 24 hours until the large tree was removed by maintenance.

Stump after tree removal. Photo by Joan R. Simon



CEED trip of April 11, 2018 to Mission Trails Regional Park

Photo by Annette Ring



Memorial for Stu Smith on April 20 at Whitaker Garden. The new bench and water fountain were installed in his memory.

Photo by Roger Isaacson

## Earth Day Exhibits at TPSNR on April 21, 2018



Arts, Crafts, and Kumeyaay Culture -  
*Annette Ring, Susan Elliott, Janet Ugalde,  
Diane Stocklin*



Mother Nature - *Gloria Garrett* (holding a  
southern alligator lizard from the Reptile  
booth).



"San Diego Seratones" (Mesa College  
Choir), directed by Prof. Momilani  
Ramstrum, docents performing, B J.  
Withal, Eileen Conway.



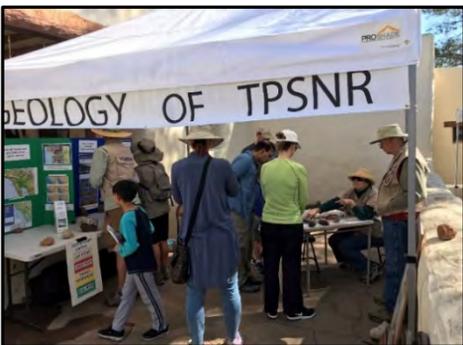
Beaks and Feathers - *Barbara Wallach,  
Jeannie Smith*



Welcome Booth, Children's Passports -  
*Bruce & Patty Montgomery*



Insects & Arachnids, live species display -  
*Joy Inton, Johnson Jou*



Geology of TPSNR - *Debi & David  
Buffington, Ray Barger*



Green Table, Reducing One's Footprint -  
*Kristine Schindler, Suzan Potuznik, Molly  
McConnell, Michelle Kurtis Cole, Wayne  
Kornreich*



Reptiles, live species display - *Jeff  
Nordland and sons*

## More Photos of Earth Day



Native Bees - Adrienne Lee and Jess Davids



Magnetism and Ocean Creatures - Wes Farmer



Raptors Institute booth, live species display - Tessa Wiley and Danny Sedivec [raptorsinstitute.org](http://raptorsinstitute.org)

Earth Day photos by Suzan Potuznik, Joan R. Simon, and Roger Isaacson

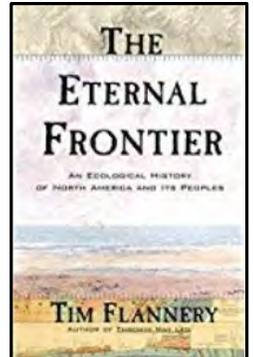
## Torrey Pines Book Club

**When:** Tuesday, May 8, 1:00 pm

**Where:** Carol Hunt's house in northeast Del Mar

**What:** *The Eternal Frontier: An Ecological History of North America and its Peoples* by Tim Flannery  
From Amazon:

In *The Eternal Frontier*, world-renowned scientist and historian Tim Flannery tells the unforgettable story of the geological and biological evolution of the North American continent, from the time of the asteroid strike that ended the age of dinosaurs 65 million years ago, to the present day. Flannery describes the development of North America's deciduous forests and other flora, and tracks the immigration and emigration of various animals to and from Europe, Asia, and South America, showing how plant and animal species have either adapted or become extinct. The story takes in the massive changes wrought by the ice ages and the coming of the Indians, and continues right up to the present, covering the deforestation of the Northeast, the decimation of the buffalo, and other facets of the enormous impact of frontier settlement and the development of the industrial might of the United States. Natural history on a monumental scale, *The Eternal Frontier* contains an enormous wealth of fascinating scientific details, and Flannery's accessible and dynamic writing makes the book a delight to read. This is science writing at its very best—a riveting page-turner that is simultaneously an accessible and scholarly trove of incredible information that is already being hailed by critics as a classic.



All TPDS docents are welcome. Meetings usually last a couple of hours. RSVP to Carol Hunt if you plan to attend. (Check Member List for email or phone number.)

**June 12:** *Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel* by Carl Safina

### May 2018 CEED event

**Date:** Thursday, May 10

**Time:** 10:00 am

**Place:** Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve  
2301 University Drive, Newport Beach, CA  
Meet at the Muth Interpretative Center

**Duration:** 2 – 3 hrs.

**Leaders:** Docents from the Newport Bay Conservancy

# White-faced Ibis

by Jack Friery

Our featured bird this month is the **White-faced Ibis**, *Plegadis chihi*. This bird is about 20 inches in length, with a long down-curved bill and long legs. Despite its size, it only weighs from 16 to 18 ounces. Its white face can only be seen only in summer breeding plumage.

The White-faced Ibis can be found foraging in shallow water, in marshes or even wet ditches or irrigated farm fields. At Torrey Pines Reserve, we normally see the White-faced Ibis at the back end of the lagoon, near the pumping station. The bird is usually seen in medium to large flocks. In one of our monthly docent bird counts in 2010, we tallied 130 individuals.

In Egyptian mythology, the ibis was venerated as representing the god Thoth, who was responsible for writing, mathematics, measurement and time, as well as the moon and magic.

Sources: [allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-faced\\_Ibis/overview](http://allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-faced_Ibis/overview);

[audubon.org/field-guide/bird/white-faced-ibis](http://audubon.org/field-guide/bird/white-faced-ibis);

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibis)



Photo courtesy of Herb Knüfken

## Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: April 7, 2018

Number of species: 83  
(+2 other taxa)

Blue-winged Teal 4  
Cinnamon Teal 5  
Gadwall 21  
American Wigeon 18  
Mallard 8  
Green-winged Teal 7  
Lesser Scaup 5  
Bufflehead 9  
Red-breasted Merganser 2  
California Quail 6  
Pied-billed Grebe 2  
Double-crested Cormorant 10  
Brown Pelican 26  
Great Blue Heron 4  
Great Egret 6  
Snowy Egret 14  
Black-crowned Night-Heron 1  
White-faced Ibis 8  
Cooper's Hawk 4  
Red-tailed Hawk 5  
Common Gallinule 2  
American Coot 39

Whimbrel 6  
Long-billed Curlew 1  
Marbled Godwit 1  
Least Sandpiper 7  
Western Sandpiper 18  
Greater Yellowlegs 1  
Willet 14  
Ring-billed Gull 21  
Western Gull 4  
Caspian Tern 3  
Royal Tern 9  
Eurasian Collared-Dove 6  
Mourning Dove 29  
White-throated Swift 3  
Anna's Hummingbird 32  
Allen's Hummingbird 1  
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird 13  
Belted Kingfisher 1  
Nuttall's Woodpecker 7  
Downy Woodpecker 1  
Northern Flicker 2  
American Kestrel 2  
Peregrine Falcon 1  
Black Phoebe 13  
Ash-throated Flycatcher 2

Cassin's Kingbird 6  
Western Kingbird 7  
yellow-bellied kingbird sp. 1  
Hutton's Vireo 4  
California Scrub-Jay 3  
American Crow 29  
Common Raven 17  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 8  
Tree Swallow 2  
Cliff Swallow 4  
Bushtit 52  
House Wren 5  
Marsh Wren 3  
Bewick's Wren 12  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 1  
California Gnatcatcher 10  
Wrentit 44  
Western Bluebird 2  
Hermit Thrush 3  
California Thrasher 9  
Northern Mockingbird 2  
Orange-crowned Warbler 10  
Common Yellowthroat 10  
Yellow-rumped Warbler 5  
Wilson's Warbler 2

Dark-eyed Junco 2  
White-crowned Sparrow 32  
Golden-crowned Sparrow 3  
Song Sparrow 22  
California Towhee 38  
Spotted Towhee 30  
Yellow-breasted Chat 2  
Black-headed Grosbeak 2  
Bullock's Oriole 2  
Red-winged Blackbird 21  
House Finch 43  
Lesser Goldfinch 31  
House Sparrow 1

**Observers:** Frank Wong, Jim Wilson, Kathy Dickey, David Walker, Mark Embree, Tina Rathbone, Andy Rathbone, Eva Armi, Bob Glaser, Herb Knüfken, Gary Grantham, Marty Hale, and Anonymous

View this checklist online at [ebird.org/view/checklist/S44529992](http://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44529992)

Herb Knüfken's amazing photo gallery, including many birds, may be found here: [pbase.com/herb1rm](http://pbase.com/herb1rm)



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