



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 426

January 2021

A Most Unusual Holiday Party

by Joan R. Simon

There were no sunny (or cloudy) skies above, no light breezes from the ocean, and no tables overflowing with food. But this year's holiday party, attended by more than 80 docents via Zoom, was filled with good cheer – and some very funny hats and sweaters (see photos on pg. 3). Merrily hosted by **Kristine Schindler**, the hour-and-a-half-long gathering included music, stories, photographs and an “ugly sweater” contest that was not to be missed.

Carols were sung, accompanied by **Debi Buffington** on the flute and **Marty Hales** on the harmonica; **Garnet Roehm** shared stories of his childhood dog “Black & Whitey”; and **Betsy Seible** showed spectacular photos from her recent trip to Patagonia.



El Chalten National Park, Chile

Roger Isaacson was given the Heart Award for his “lifetime dedication and service” to Torrey Pines. **Lynne Small**, who has been the leader of the Whacky Weeders since 2011, was awarded Docent of the Year (See articles on pgs. 4-5.)

Docent General Meeting

Saturday, January 9, 9 am

Location: Online via Zoom (link to the meeting will be emailed to all docents)

Speaker: Naturalist Gillian Martin

Topic: The Wonderful Life of a Dying Tree

Gillian Martin founded the [Cavity Conservation Initiative](#), a Southern California nonprofit whose mission is to protect habitat for cavity-nesting birds and other wildlife that rely on dead trees. She is also the co-founder of [Tree Care for Birds and other Wildlife Program](#), a committee of the Western Chapter International Society of Arboriculture. Her presentation unveils the habitat value of dead trees as well as dead limbs in living trees. Attendees will learn what to consider when selecting and converting a hazardous tree as a habitat tree. They will forever view a dead tree with greater interest and appreciation.

Nine members from the class of 2011 were celebrated for earning Lifetime Memberships, after serving ten years as docents: **Carolyn Colwell, Karen Fraser, Paul Howard, Greg Lafreniere, Gerry Lawrence, Kristine Schindler, Lynne Small, Thomas Stehlik** and **Valerie Thomas**.

Congratulations!

The highlight of the morning was unquestionably awarding three “ugly sweater” awards:

Most Creative to **Sandy Levin**; Most Colorful to **Michelle Kurtis Cole**; and the crowning prize of Ugliest Sweater to **Diana Coram**. Don't miss the accompanying photos on pg. 3!

(Cont. on pg. 3)

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TPDS Executive Board Members:

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Vice-president: Roger Isaacson

Treasurer: Janet Ugalde

Secretary: Gabriele Wienhausen

Directors-at-large:

Harry Proctor

Annette Ring

Stu Rosenwasser

Cres Torres

Myrna Trust

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Dave Richards, Jesus "Chuy" Salinas
Rodriguez

Sr. Park Aides: Louis Sands, Jake Mumma

Park Aides: Cheryl Biernacki, Krista
DeBusschere (on leave), Joy Inton, Shawn
Jacobs, Johnson Jou (Interpreter), Ingo
Renner

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President's Message:

What a year 2020 has been -- it was anything but normal. Slowly but inevitably, the presence of the COVID-19 virus upended all our plans.



It was a year that has been universally challenging for everyone. For me, and I imagined for my docent friends, it was hard not to be able to walk among the pines or along the beach in order to find the calm and solace that nature gives us in times of uncertainty and upheaval. Yet in those dark times, there were many bright moments for me. **Roger Isaacson** reconnected us all on Zoom for the monthly docent meetings. Some docents sewed masks for the park staff and for other docents. Others shared their talents to entertain us. There were the excellent speakers who educated us remotely. Supervising Ranger Dylan Hardenbrook sent us Reserve pictures from his patrols. The park aides took us along virtually on their hikes through the Reserve. There was the special treat of Docent Days where we got to see and experience the quiet of the Reserve without the usual mass of visitors.

I was pleasantly surprised and amazed at how docents and park staff worked together to keep each other safe and connected to the place we love. I am honored to be part of this group of wonderful people.

There is hope in the new year with the release of vaccines. Though the road to normalcy is long, I look forward to meeting with the new board (remotely) on January 6 to explore creative ways to safely fulfill the Docent Society's mission to "protect, preserve and maintain Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve and to interpret its unique value to the public through a variety of educational programs, guided nature walks and Lodge hosting." And, I hope to see you (remotely) at the January 9 general meeting.

Stay well and happy trails,

Lynne Truong

TPDS President

We were serenaded out with a new version of “Deck the Halls adapted to the times: “Don we now our ‘plague’ apparel.”

* * *

Here is a recap of the business portion of the meeting, chaired by outgoing docent president, **Janet Ugalde**:

Janet noted the passing of docent **Bill Key**, who served from 2007 to 2015, working as a TIK host and a Roving Interpreter.

Lynne Truong, membership chair (and incoming TPDS president), reminded docents to pay their dues. It will be the only determination as to whether you get a parking pass to the Reserve in 2021, since the hours requirement for 2020 has been suspended. Current stickers will be valid through the end of March 2021.

Retiring board members **Mark Embree** and **Gerry Lawrence** were thanked for their service. Mark orchestrated the “living memory” video of the Reserve and served as member-at-large from 2018 to 2020; Gerry was treasurer from 2014 to 2020. The incoming directors-at-large will be **Harry Proctor**, **Cres Torres** and **Myrna Trust**.

Janet Ugalde was thanked for her two years as our president, her work in streamlining the financial structure of the docent society, her assistance in transitioning to new museum shop management, and her many years of work with the Children’s Program. She will continue on the board as treasurer.

Lynne Truong, incoming president, was welcomed as “a natural leader and a supportive teammate.” Continuing board members are **Roger Isaacson** as vice president, **Gabriele Wienhausen** as secretary, and **Annette Ring** and **Stu Rosenwasser** as members-at-large.

Costume contest photos:



Most Creative: Sandy Levin



Most Colorful: Michelle Kurtis Cole



Ugliest sweater: Diana Coram



Another “Ugly” sweater: Annette Ring with a booze pouch

Docent of the Year: Lynne Small

Photo by Herb Knüfken

Thank you for this honor. It comes just as I am finishing 10 years as a docent, and it also comes as we finish a difficult year of COVID.

I first saw the Reserve at such a different time. We had moved to the area in the early 1970's. For old-timers, as a bit of nostalgia, I too recall the scary bottom part of the Beach Trail along an edge (extra scary when trying to herd a two-year-old) and even the famous Fat Man's Misery. But then for many years I visited the Reserve only occasionally. I drifted back in the early 2000's when the load of the rest of my life began to lighten. **Barbara Wallach** lured me to the Reserve to volunteer with her new Whacky Weeders (WW) group, and I came to love the hillsides, the views, the trees, and the task of removing the nonnative plants to protect these habitats.

When I retired from teaching math at the University of San Diego, I decided to become a docent and took over as WW coordinator later that year. I also Lodge hosted until the coordinating job began to take up all the time I had. Since then, I've been up to my ears in weeds. I have been privileged to work with wonderful people -- the weeders themselves primarily, but also with rangers, park aides, and folks from the district office. And I relish the occasional chance to chat with visitors when I'm out working. Mostly, I find (or find out about) nonnative plants, plan doable ways our group can remove them, and then join the fun of doing the work. We welcome everyone who wants to join us.



It was all ticking along until COVID arrived. Then the Reserve closed. Completely. I spent a few intriguing weeks editing "A Ranger's-Eye View," but then -- at Supervising Ranger Dylan Hardenbrook's invitation -- slowly, tentatively we got some masked, socially-distanced weeding started again and ever so gradually expanded as the Reserve opened up -- until all group activities closed down again a few weeks ago. I am honored to have been able to play a role in the Docent Society's effort to adjust and adapt to this time of COVID in whatever way we could.

Sixteen Petals of Glory

by Rhea Bridy

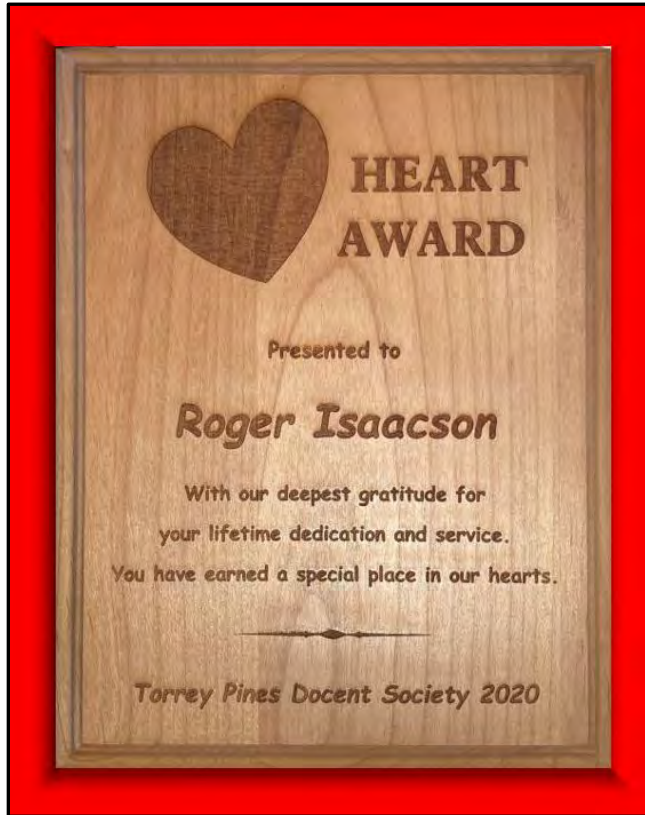
On a sweeping ridge,
the raven calls from over my head,
high above the waves of the sea, but
inside a small protected pocket
of tanned and ashen-leaved ground,
sixteen petals of glory radiate,
and welcome the glowing sunlight,
clapping their stems in the breeze,
cascading petal tips along swirling wind,
in tune with a celestial, life-giving star,
in time for the fresh start of new.



Bush Sunflower

Heart Award

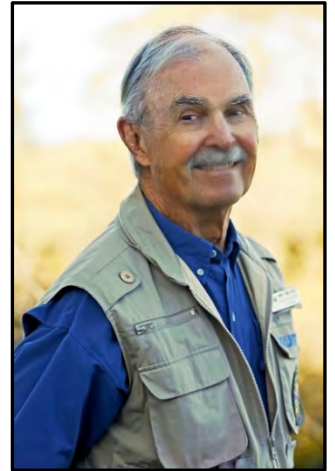
An extremely grateful Docent Society has honored **Roger Isaacson** with the Heart Award. He has generously shared his time and talents with us since 2004. This year, his extraordinary efforts have allowed us continue to support each other through Zoom meetings, education and social events.



Heart Award: Roger Isaacson

Photo by Herb Knüfken

I would like to thank the TPDS Board for the Heart Award. It was a complete surprise, making it even better. To help us through this world pandemic, I am grateful we have the tech tools that have become easier for the average person to grasp. Setting up and running Zoom meetings has been very rewarding for me, especially with the "thank you's" I have had from many docent participants. We all now know the catch phrase of 2020: "You have to unmute yourself." As part of the Docent Refresh team Zoom meetings, this was the least of our problems. For various reasons, some docents had login problems, which were usually solved quickly. In retrospect, I think the most humorous mishap was when a speaker was unaware of being disconnected almost immediately after starting her talk. It was 30 minutes before she could be notified by phone. (To not be disturbed, she had turned off her phone. Fortunately, a docent had her husband's phone number and we finally reached her.) The talk continued on without a hitch and became one of the most watched on the docent Vimeo site.



Like many bad things in life, there are going to be some upsides. Many more people are now working from home, and it is predicted that this will be a continuing trend even when we return to normal times. Many meetings (business and personal) are actually more inclusive and efficient when done remotely.

It is not always easy to be grateful, but being grateful is a timeless virtue. Of the many instances of sage advice in the records of ancient civilizations, this has been my favorite:

Gratitude is not only the greatest of the virtues, but the parent of all the others – Cicero (106 –43 BCE)

Docent Dues Are Past Due!

by Lynne Truong

To retain your membership in the Torrey Pines Docent Society, please pay your annual \$25 membership dues by December 31, 2020.

Payment Methods:

1. \$25 check to TPDS, mail to
PO Box 2414
Del Mar, CA 92014
2. \$26 via Paypal: follow this link torreypine.org/donate2/ and scroll down to the very bottom of the page for the yellow Donate button.

Please log your service hours. The DEADLINE for logging 2020 service hours is January 15, 2021

Note that the 2020 passes will be honored until the end of March.

The 2021 pass labels may be obtained from a park aide.

Update on Fledgling Torrey Pines

by Pete di Girolamo

For those docents who may not be aware of efforts to save or restore Torrey pines at the Lodge and Whitaker Garden, here is a summary of successes and failures by the Garden Committee and Park staff.

Perhaps most intriguing – and mostly frustrating – was the discovery of new seedlings by Docent **Ann Smith Mercandetti** last year, initially west of the Lodge where the fallen tree damaged the wall, and then in the wooded island between the Park road and the West Parking Lot.

The half dozen at the Lodge side were not in a sustainable location, so an effort to transplant them in the ground or into some maintained pots in shaded areas was undertaken, but unfortunately most ended up dying, despite their more propitious locations and additional watering. Only one “baby Torrey” transplant has made it so far, residing in a small cage at the west side of the Lodge Garden by the roadside wall.

Of the three that “eagle-eye” Ann spotted while weeding in the West Lot island, there is now one healthy but still tiny seedling in a cage by the Park road, left to live or die on its own with only Mother Nature’s care.

The greater success has been among the larger nursery-grown 15-gallon potted pines planted west of the Children’s Pavilion last year. They were initially watered by Park staff and are now on their own in spite of the dry fall weather. We have lost only one, south of the Pavilion, which was replaced with a smaller, 5-gal. tree this fall and is currently being watered. We believe the success of the larger pines started with digging deep holes “flooded-in,” and planting with wider basins to encourage initial root development. All



purchased nursery-grown stock is required to be sourced from our Torrey Pines biome, as are any other native species we might add to our interpretive garden areas.

Whitaker Garden has been a tougher planting location. Several years ago the Garden Committee planted four 5-gal. trees, watering and monitoring soil moisture, but eventually losing all but one that is holding on at the south edge of the Garden. A 15-gal. tree planted at the same time as the Pavilion trees is slowly growing at the center of the Garden, and this fall **Bob Glaser** and I planted two more 5-gal. trees which we are currently monitoring and watering.

Because Whitaker Garden was created on the site of a former parking lot on the hard Linda Vista soil cap, it remains a challenging area for most planting.

It will be interesting to see what our changing climate has in store for the Reserve and our cherished Torrey pines!



Getting Our Trash On (and Out)!

by Kristine Schindler

Photographed here is **Cindy Tozer** going above and beyond on Sunday, Dec 6 during our first and last Torrey Pines State Reserve 101 roadside and lagoon-side clean-up for 2020.



All the docents who joined in for this opportunity to be good stewards and pick up things tossed aside by others who don’t care as much as we do, were rewarded with views into the Reserve and lagoon who others missed out on. That is the payoff for getting our trash on (and

out)! Big hearts, many backs, and masked smiles were involved last month. Thank you to **Karen Fraser, Gabriele Wienhausen, Joan Simon, Paul Howard, Steve Neal, Mary Hohmeyer, Betsy Seible, Cindy Tozer, and Donna Mancuso.**

Keep it safe all and here is looking forward to a still different, but better 2021! Thank you for all you do in the Reserve, for the TPDS, and beyond.

Welcome New Roving Interpreters

by Annette Ring

Congratulations to the ten docents who recently joined the Roving Interpreters team: **Gretchen Embree, Franne Fischman, Lore Heath, Lisa Kakone, Jean Kelleher, Mark Lippard, Suzan Potuznik, Cres Torres, Howard Wilcox, and Ann Williamson.**

Even with the challenges of the current 2020 distancing guidelines in place, these docents stuck with it and met all of the requirements to become Roving Interpreters. Well done!

Many thanks to all who helped make the video class possible: Ranger Kyle Knox, Park Aide **Ingo Renner**, and the great cast of characters who did role playing. Also, sincere thanks to the experienced Roving Interpreters who took the new Roving Interpreters out on the trail for a hike. If you'd like to view or review the video, click [here](#). (Docent Login password required.) The video has both the COVID-19 guidelines and the directions for Roving Interpreters.

Please keep in mind Roving Interpreting is about being the eyes and ears for the rangers and interpreting for visitors. It is not about enforcing the rules. Always wear your mask when you are representing the TPDS as a Roving Interpreter.

Stay Safe and see you out on the trail!



Suzan Potuznik on Guy Fleming Trail during her hike with an experienced RI docent. They really are smiling under their masks!
Photo by Annette.

Museum Shop Sale Success!

by Nancy Walters

On December 3, the Museum Shop team hosted a holiday shopping event to sell limited items, pre-ordered and then safely picked up behind the Lodge. The event was considered safe and very successful, with more than \$2,000 worth of items sold! It was great to see so many familiar faces up there, even though some were hard to recognize with hats, sunglasses, and masks on. What a great opportunity to purchase many items for holiday gifting and also benefit the shop, which has been closed for nearly nine months.

The shop team would like to thank all the docents and staff for supporting this event!

We look forward to opening in 2021!



L to R: Selma Torres, Mary Hohmeyer, Nancy Walters, Valerie Thomas
Photo credit: Annette Ring

News Flashes!

The brand new restrooms at the North Beach Lot are now open! (No more porta potties in that lot.)

In the Reserve, Yucca Point is now mostly open to the public (the north portion of the loop is still closed due to erosion, but the Overlook benches are accessible).

Razor Point is still closed.

The No-Longer Mysterious Sweet Potato Sea Cucumber

by Tsaiwei Olee

I enjoy taking photos of birds, especially when they are feeding. Last month while walking on the South Beach at Torrey Pines, I saw a Western Gull pecking on a reddish round ball. I clicked the shutter. Then something interesting happened -- the young gull pulled out some gut-like stuff from the middle of the ball and ate it. I had no idea what the gull was eating, but knew it was definitely not a plant. Unfortunately my search on the internet gave me no answer. A few weeks later, docent **Lisa Kakone** posted a question on our Google group with a photo showing something she saw on the beach, which was exactly the same thing I had been trying to identify. Somebody suggested they might be salps. But most of the salp photos I saw showed translucent bodies. Then my docent classmate **Gabriele Wienhausen** replied. She checked with the right place for an answer: The Scripps Institute of Oceanography. And our mystery was solved!



The reddish spherical objects on the beach that gulls love was the “sweet potato sea cucumber” (*Molpadia arenicola*). It belongs to the sea cucumber class ([Holothuroidea](#)). The plump sea cucumbers have a smooth or slimy skin and no tube feet. They ingest sand continuously to extract the organic particulate materials. The large amount of sand they ingest makes them look plump. You find them mainly on California and Baja California beaches. *Molpadia arenicola* has hemoglobin for oxygen transport. The hemoglobin gives the animal a reddish sweet potato color. I suspect the easiness of collecting sweet potato sea cucumber samples in Southern California contributed to the well-studied data of their hemoglobin proteins.

It has been a fun and cool experience studying this interesting creature with our docent group!

Torrey Pines Book Club

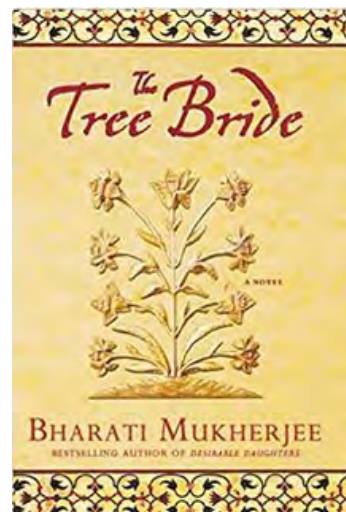
We will continue to meet via Zoom at our regularly scheduled time. Please notify **Ken King** if you plan to participate and if you need any extra help getting connected.

When: Tuesday, January 12, 1:00 pm

What: *The Tree Bride* by Bharati Mukherjee

Amazon says:

National Book Critics Circle Award-winner Bharati Mukherjee has long been known not only for her elegant, evocative prose but also for her characters -- influenced by ancient customs and traditions but also very much rooted in modern times. In *The Tree Bride*, the narrator, Tara Chatterjee (whom readers will remember from *Desirable Daughters*), picks up the story of an East



Bengali ancestor. According to legend, at the age of five Tara Lata married a tree and eventually emerged as a nationalist freedom fighter. In piecing together her ancestor's transformation from a docile Bengali Brahmin girl-child into an impassioned organizer of resistance against the British Raj, the contemporary narrator discovers and lays claim to unacknowledged elements in her “American” identity. Although the story of the Tree Bride is central, the drama surrounding the narrator, a divorced woman trying to get back with her husband, moves the novel back and forth through time and across continents.

February 9: *Two in the Far North* by Margaret E. Murie and Terry Tempest Williams



December 2020 Book Club meeting on Zoom

Bird of the Month: Anna's Hummingbird

by Jack Friery; photo by Herb Knüfken

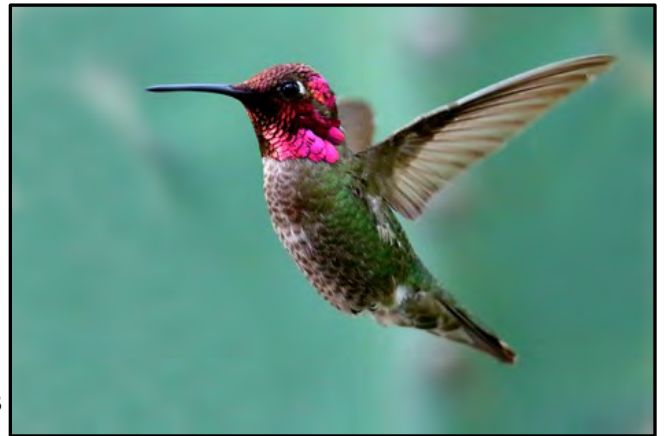
Our featured bird this month is the **Anna's Hummingbird**, *Calypte anna*. The Anna's Hummingbird is about two inches long, and weighs 0.1 to 0.2 ounces — no heavier than a nickel. The male has a crimson-colored head and throat. The female is absent this coloring. The Anna's is a very vocal hummingbird, with a buzzy, unmelodious song. (Blame us, not the bird. Apparently, much of its song is above the range of human hearing.)

Anna's Hummingbirds have a normal body temperature of around 107 degrees Fahrenheit. At night, when the ambient temperature drops, the bird goes into a state called torpor — to conserve energy, its body temperature drops, and its respiration and heartbeat also slow down. At first light, the bird has to get nourishment immediately, to restart its systems, or it may be in peril.

For years, this was the only hummingbird that was a year-round resident of Southern California. The Allen's Hummingbird has now joined the Anna's as a permanent resident. (See article in [Torreyana August 2010](#)).

Some may be curious as to who "Anna" was. Most birds are named after famous naturalists or may carry a name that describes a physical attribute. Not so the Anna's Hummingbird. The Anna in our story is Anne Debelle, Princesse d'Essling, the Mistress of the Robes to the wife of 19th century French Emperor Napoleon III. Legend has it that a French naturalist named the bird after Anne in an effort to curry favor with the French court.

Sources: allaboutbirds.org/guide/Annas_Hummingbird/overview; audubon.org/field-guide/bird/annas-hummingbird; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna%27s_hummingbird; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_d%27Essling; vancourier.com/community/who-was-anna-vancouver-s-official-bird-has-royal-pedigree-1.20074675.



Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: December 2020

Number of species: 83
(+3 other taxa)

Blue-winged Teal 5
Gadwall 23
American Wigeon 37
Mallard 2
Northern Pintail 18
Green-winged Teal 8
Lesser Scaup 4
Bufflehead 15
California Quail 2
Pied-billed Grebe 1
Western Grebe 419
Clark's Grebe 1
Mourning Dove 35
White-throated Swift 10
Anna's Hummingbird 37
Allen's Hummingbird 2
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird 6
hummingbird sp. 21
Common Gallinule 1
American Coot 4
Snowy Plover 2

Semipalmated Plover 21
Long-billed Curlew 1
Sanderling 6
Least Sandpiper 2
Willet 9
Heermann's Gull 11
Ring-billed Gull 13
Western Gull 27
Royal Tern 6
Red-throated Loon 6
Common Loon 2
Black-vented Shearwater 36
Brandt's Cormorant 240
Double-crested Cormorant 6
Brown Pelican 84
Great Blue Heron 3
Great Egret 3
Snowy Egret 4
Osprey 1
White-tailed Kite 2
Northern Harrier 3
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1
Cooper's Hawk 2
Red-shouldered Hawk 2
Red-tailed Hawk 6

Nuttall's Woodpecker 12
Northern Flicker 16
American Kestrel 7
Peregrine Falcon 3
Black Phoebe 14
Say's Phoebe 7
Cassin's Kingbird 13
Loggerhead Shrike 1
California Scrub-Jay 13
American Crow 17
Common Raven 7
swallow sp. 1
Bushtit 69
Wrentit 57
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 14
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 4
California Gnatcatcher 20
House Wren 13
Marsh Wren 1
Bewick's Wren 2
California Thrasher 9
Northern Mockingbird 2
Hermit Thrush 22
Scaly-breasted Munia 5
House Sparrow 3

House Finch 73
Lesser Goldfinch 38
Dark-eyed Junco 11
White-crowned Sparrow 57
Golden-crowned Sparrow 7
Savannah Sparrow 2
Song Sparrow 35
Lincoln's Sparrow 5
California Towhee 63
Spotted Towhee 24
Western Meadowlark 4
Red-winged Blackbird 26
Orange-crowned Warbler 8
Common Yellowthroat 13
Yellow-rumped Warbler 183

Observers: Kathy Estey, Gary Grantham, Cheryl Grantham, David Walker, Deborah Walker, Marty Hales, Andy Rathbone, Tsaiwei Olee, Gabriele Wienhausen, et al.

View this checklist online at ebird.org/checklist/S77569649



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