



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
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STATE NATURAL RESERVE

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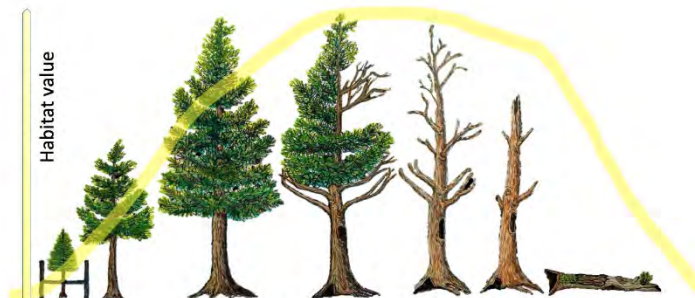
Life Among Dying Trees

by Dan Hammer

If a tree falls in the forest, it not only makes a sound – it also creates or enhances habitat for birds and other wildlife. So too do dying or dead standing trees and the dead limbs of living trees.

At the January 9 TPDS meeting on Zoom, naturalist Gillian Martin opened our eyes to “the wonderful life of a dying tree.” In a lively presentation on death and dying, Gillian gave docents a fascinating look at the tremendous habitat value of these trees.

“A tree has two lives,” she said. “One when it’s healthy and mature, and another as it starts to die.” In fact, some trees have more diverse habitat value as they die, when decaying wood and loosening bark provide many benefits for birds and various mammals, not to mention insects, fungi, and bacteria. The role of fungi and bacteria is to cull weak and dying trees, “getting them ready for their final resting place.” With the help of other organisms, they break down dead trees and return them to the soil, renewing the cycle of life and keeping ecosystems in balance.



Dying trees are particularly vital for birds that nest in cavities in their trunks or limbs. About 80 species of cavity-nesting birds are found in North America, including 11 ducks, 22 woodpeckers, 40 songbirds, 10 owls, and 2 falcons. Among these are a number of TPSNR residents

Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, February 13, 9 am

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

Speaker: Greg Erickson, Ph.D.

Topic: “Rancho Bernardo–Style Rock Art”

After 30 years in the Department of Reproductive Medicine at UCSD, Dr. Erickson retired and is currently Professor Emeritus. He is a member of the American Rock Art Research Association and President and Founding Member of the San Diego Rock Art Association. Since retirement, he has pursued his passion for rock art, using state-of-the-art DStretch enhancement technology to record previously invisible Rancho Bernardo Style (RBS) rock art found in Rancho Bernardo, Poway, and Escondido. He is the author of seven rock art publications and has given numerous lectures at national meetings and to the general public on his rock art research.



such as the Nuttall’s Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Western Bluebird, Bewick’s Wren, and House Wren.

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Rodriguez

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DeBusschere (on temporary leave), Joy
Inton, Shawn Jacobs, Johnson Jou
(Interpreter), Ingo Renner

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Gillian calls woodpeckers “the carpenters of the bird world.” They earn this title because they are uniquely suited to excavating their own nest and roost sites in decayed wood. When vacated, their cavities become nurseries for secondary cavity nesters such as small owls, bluebirds, chickadees, nuthatches, swallows and wrens. Dead trees and dead limbs in live trees often host a variety of insect prey which benefit not only woodpeckers but a variety of insectivores, including hummingbirds.

Nature needs dead and dying trees to support woodpeckers, which are keystone species in healthy habitats. By exposing hidden insects in dead trees, woodpeckers sometimes enable other wildlife access to them. Woodpeckers are the “first responders of insect outbreaks,” thereby reducing insect populations and perhaps extending the life of some trees.

Dead trees are valuable not just to birds but to other vertebrates. In California, about 35 species of mammals – including raccoons, squirrels, foxes, and bats – use dead trees and downed wood for habitation. The western fence lizard, the arboreal salamander, and other organisms also use nooks and crannies in dead trees and downed wood for safety from the elements, thermoregulation, and protection from predators. Fallen trees and logs may become transportation corridors and bridges for stream crossing.

Along with food and shelter, dead trees and stumps provide birds and wildlife with unobstructed views for hunting and flycatching, territorial defense, courtship, preening, and food storage.

Despite their great value to the environment, dead and dying trees are commonly removed with little thought to the habitat that disappears with them. At TPSNR, tree removal is sometimes urgent and essential – as in 2015, when 49 Torrey Pines were taken down, primarily ones that were not yet dead but harbored large colonies of bark beetles and red turpentine beetles, which can move on to attack healthy trees if left unchecked.

All too often, however, property owners, homeowners’ associations, forest managers, and park staff seek to clear all “dead wood” to tidy up the landscape or prevent fires – even though a mix of dead trees can enhance forest diversity and provide certain ecological benefits that healthy trees do not. Safety must come first, Gillian says, but she adds that an arborist certified in risk assessment may be able to offer management options that would allow part of the tree to remain in place. “Always ask if the tree has to be removed completely,” she adds. “If these habitat trees are safely retained and monitored, we can alter the public’s perception of them by putting a sign on them.”

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That is why Gillian says that “dead trees need ambassadors, now more than ever” and why she educates the public and decision makers about their value. As founder of the [Cavity Conservation Initiative](#), she is working to protect habitat for cavity-nesting birds and other wildlife that rely on dead and dying trees.

If you missed Gillian’s wonderful presentation, you can [watch it here](#). For additional information and resources, click [here](#) or email Gillian at Gillian.Martin@CavityConservation.com

General Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2021

The General Meeting was called to order at 9:05 am by President **Lynne Truong**.

Lynne welcomed Torrey Pines docents to the GM, conducted again via Zoom. The meeting was attended by 104 docents.

Speaker

Naturalist Gillian Martin, founder of the Cavity Conservation Initiative and co-founder of the Tree Care for Birds and Other Wildlife program, gave a talk on the “Wonderful Life of a Dying Tree.” (See pg. 1.) In her presentation, Gillian helped us learn about and appreciate the habitat value of dead trees as well as dead limbs in living trees.

TPDS Business

Lynne shared the following business items:

- *TPDS Board*

Lynne welcomed the new board members: **Harry Proctor**, **Cresencio Torres**, and **Myrna Trust**. She thanked departing Board members **Mark Embree** (member at large) and **Gerry Lawrence** (Treasurer) for their dedication, service and hard work. In addition, Lynne thanked outgoing Board President **Janet Ugalde** for her leadership and expressed gratitude for Janet’s willingness to continue to serve on the Board and as the Society’s treasurer.

With three new TPDS board members (Harry Proctor, Cresencio Torres, and Myrna Trust), there are new liaisons to several committees. The latest list of liaisons can be found on our website under [Docent Docs](#).

- *Updates from Supervising Ranger Dylan Hardenbrook*

- o The team of rangers is currently short-staffed (Ranger Chuy Salinas, recovering only slowly

from COVID-19 infection, has not been able to come back to work full-time). This has been challenging in the face of an above normal number of visitors. Because so many visitors ignore the face-covering requirement, Ranger Hardenbrook strongly encourages docents to be safe. Docents are not allowed to engage in team volunteer activities, i.e., perform Reserve services that involve more than one docent. Docents are welcome to do volunteer work as Roving Interpreter, but should always maintain safe physical distance from visitors.

- o All rangers received the first round of COVID-19 vaccinations. Vaccinations of park aides will hopefully occur in the very near future.
 - o CA Parks highly recommends that all docents and volunteers participate in the *Bear-in-Mind* training, a Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention training. The goal is that all park volunteers understand what it means to work in a respectful and healthy professional environment. Docents and volunteers are strongly encouraged to use a tailored workbook that will train docents and volunteers to comply with California state law and California Department of Parks and Recreation policy regarding sexual harassment and discrimination.
- Roger has sent out the workbook to all TP Docents and volunteers. All docents should do the training and email the completed workbook to Park Aide Louis Sands.
- o The new restrooms in the north parking lot are fully functional, and State Parks maintenance is creating signs that will help visitors find their ways to the trails.

- *Cleaning of display animals in the Lodge*

Lynne shared that TPDS Board provided funds (via the TPDS’s budget allocation for museum maintenance) for a tool that allows cleaning of the preserved animals in the Lodge. Park aides and docents will be trained in how to use the cleaning tool. The equipment costs \$1,900. This one-time expense will, in the long run, save money because it will replace the costly regular “termite” tenting of the building.

- *Torrey Pines Docent Membership*

Lynne reminded docents that the \$25 annual membership dues need to be paid by January 16 to avoid losing full membership status. Lynne also urged

docents to record all 2020 volunteer hours by that date.

Docents who became Lifetime members will receive their badges by mail.

- *Inventory of TPDS Committees, Workgroups, and Special Projects*

Board members **Cres Torres** and **Gabriele Wienhausen** will develop an inventory of all existing TPDS workgroups, committees and docent-performed significant tasks (e.g., cleaning of bird bath). The goal is to increase the visibility of existing workgroups and service opportunities, and encourage and facilitate participation.

- *Torrey Pines Conservancy*

Lynne reported that the President of the Torrey Pines Conservancy, Peter Jensen, attended the January TPDS board meeting, where he explained why the name Torrey Pines Association was changed to Torrey Pines Conservancy. According to Peter, the term conservancy better communicates the mission of the organization, which is to protect and secure in perpetuity the scenic beauty of the Reserve. TPC is a fundraising organization that supports improvements at the Reserve, advocates on public issues affecting the welfare of the TPSNR, participates in management plans, helps sustain the Reserve in perpetuity with the Torrey Pines Reserve Endowment Fund, and communicates with members about Reserve Issues. Lynne expressed appreciation for TPC's support and partnership. To ensure continued good communication, one member of the TPDS's board will attend TPC Board meetings and thus act as a liaison between the two organizations.

TPDS Treasurer Updates

Treasurer **Janet Ugalde** shared that while the pandemic forced major adjustments to operations, TPDS has built financial reserves for the long term. Despite the pandemic in 2020 having forced closure of the Museum Shop, our major source of income, TPDS is fiscally sound and in good financial shape. Our financial info is accessible on [Docent Login/](#).

Docent of the Month

Docent of the Month is **Diane Russell**, an avid weeder, who has been for many years regularly joining the Whacky Weeders on Mondays as well as Thursdays.

The meeting ended at 10:55 am.

Many docents remained on Zoom for an additional 30 minutes of informal socializing.

Docent of the Month: Diane Russell

Photo by Herb Knüfken

I was born in Liverpool, England, and left for Canada when I was 18 years old to work with hunters and jumpers (horses). I met my husband there, and we moved to the United States for his work as a race horse trainer. When he became ill with cancer in 1997, we moved from the San Gabriel Valley, which was very smoggy in those days, to a healthier climate in San Diego. We would walk around Torrey Pines for the peace and tranquility it gave us. In those days, the entry cost was only \$2.00!



After my husband passed away, I was hiking at Torrey Pines with a friend and we stopped at the museum shop, where there was a sign-up sheet for docent training. My friend insisted I should try it, and the rest is history. **Barbara Wallach** was the one who most encouraged me to join the Whacky Weeders.

Being English, I already had a love for gardening, and Torrey Pines is one giant garden.

Supervising Ranger Dylan Hardenbrook Celebrates Ten Years at TPSNR

by Joan R. Simon

Supervising Ranger Dylan Hardenbrook came to Torrey Pines just over ten years ago, in September 2010. (See [Torreyana, September 2010, pg. 4.](#)) “I still feel like the new guy,” he said in a recent interview. But in truth, only Ranger Kyle Knox, head lifeguard Ed Vodrazka, and Park Aide Louis Sands preceded him. But there were “lots of docents, of course” who are still active today.

“I worked for years at the camp grounds at San Elijo,” he noted, but coming to Torrey Pines was “much more what I expected to be doing as a ranger, interacting with the public.” What does he like best about his job? “Being involved in projects that make the place work better for people to enjoy.”

This interest has translated into many successful projects. “Visitation keeps going up,” he said. “so we put in some very good trail delineations,” with the help of funding from the TPC (Torrey Pines Conservancy) and the TPDS. “I’ve been pleasantly surprised at how well the public has responded to that. And a lot of the areas where there were switchbacks have regrown.” But he cautioned: “We never want to add man-made things to the Reserve,” except where necessary to prevent erosion and damage to the Reserve.

There have been many other improvements during Dylan’s tenure. “Downhill bicycle riding was forbidden at the end of 2013,” which, along with crosswalk delineation, has made the road much safer for pedestrians. Trail repairs over the ten years include new steps at Parry Grove, renovation of the Broken Hill trail, and ADA-accessible walks on the South Fork of Broken Hill, the West Overlook, and Whitaker Garden/Scripps Overlook. The steps down to the beach were redone, new fountains and benches installed around the Reserve, and picnic tables and umbrellas added at the South parking lot. Much of the funding for these projects was supplied by TPC and TPDS. The Lodge restoration project is still looking for long-term funding, but some of the “low-hanging fruit,” such as repairing the floor in the Lodge, has been accomplished. The anticipated renovation of the Beach Trail, however, has been put on hold, initially because of COVID-19 travel restrictions for state workers, and later when funding and personnel went to the places affected by the 2020 fires in Northern California.



Work is ongoing at the west parking lot bathrooms, which have been closed since 2015. Replacing the sewer line below ground is set to begin in September 2021, with the bathroom construction to start the following September. The north lot bathrooms were redone in 2020 during the pandemic.

On Dylan’s watch, a fifth ranger was added to the staff in early 2020. Dylan credits the docent-led 2015-16 visitor census, showing an annual visitation number of 3.1 million, with helping him convince State Parks that Torrey Pines needed an additional ranger. A full-time Interpreter position was also added, but budget cuts related to COVID-19 postponed filling it in 2020.



Dylan helping with the Pavilion assembly, August 2018

How does Dylan see the work of docents? In a word, *essential*. “Without you being here during the COVID-19 crisis, it’s become even more obvious how much we rely on you.” Before the pandemic, he said, “the regular users were familiar with our rules about dogs, food, and so forth.” But many visitors now are first-timers. “It’s like a continuous holiday weekend,” he noted. “Torrey Pines and parks in general are being used as a safety valve.” The last few months, since the Reserve reopened in late September, has been tough for the staff. “We are trying to educate the public, without the labor force [the docents] we usually have.”

Congratulations, Dylan, on your first ten years at Torrey Pines. We look forward to many more productive years working with you.

Looking Back ... and Forward to 2021

A report from the Torrey Pines Conservancy

by Peter Jensen, President, TPC

In 1940, Ralph D. Cornell, a prominent landscape architect in San Diego and defender of what would become Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, wrote: “If a self-perpetuating organization of private citizens were formed to take an interest in and promote the welfare of Torrey Pines, it could be of inestimable value to a long-range program.”

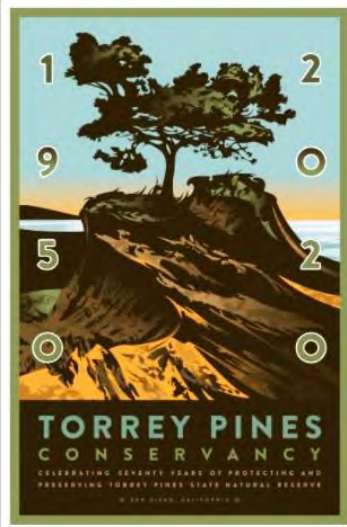
He described these private citizens as “friends” of the last natural habitat of the Torrey pine. We are those friends – all of us who love the Reserve and wish to protect it for the enjoyment of all – and we express this friendship through two organizations: the Docent Society, with its mission to educate, and the Torrey Pines Conservancy, with our charge to raise funds and disperse them.

Our membership now numbers 273. We have hundreds more “Lifetime” members from the days when we offered State-authorized parking passes to the Reserve, but that program ended in 2013. We wish to increase the roll of active members, so please consider joining! Membership fees are considered direct donations to TPC Reserve programs.

In 2020, TPC members enjoyed several virtual hikes, “fireside chats,” and other lecture events thanks to the leadership of knowledgeable docents. These online events were popular, several times welcoming over 100 in attendance. In 2021 we hope to go back to in-person events as soon as possible.

Regular email communications to members included newsletters, notices of park closures, fundraising pleas, and more. We held an annual meeting in February, as we always do, featuring the election of new officers and a keynote presentation by Nigella Hilgarth, Ph.D., former head of Birch Aquarium.

In equal partnership with the Docent Society, we both oversaw a robust endowment of over \$820,000. TPC fundraising efforts last year brought in over \$50,000 from private donations. Every year we donate between \$50,000 and \$100,000 toward Reserve projects, depending on the



ebb and flow of State Park needs. We also take on one project a year via a grant from the E.B. Scripps Foundation, the most recent being an anthology of *Torreyana* articles, soon to be a book available later this year.

Other recent and current projects include the purchase and planting of a Torrey pine at the new north beach restroom; funding the helicopter airlifts of trail building supplies to Razor Point, and the removal of hundreds of pounds of trash from the lagoon (to avoid Reserve workers' multiple trips on foot that would trample habitat); interpretive signage at the north grove reforestation project (a Scripps grant); and more.

Our major fundraiser of the year was a “Jazz for the Pines” online concert by musicians Peter Sprague and Rebecca Jade.

Going forward, we hope to help fund a major Lodge restoration and repairs to the badly damaged trail system in the Extension. Both will be significant expenditures – perhaps the largest our organization has undertaken. Exciting times are ahead!

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.

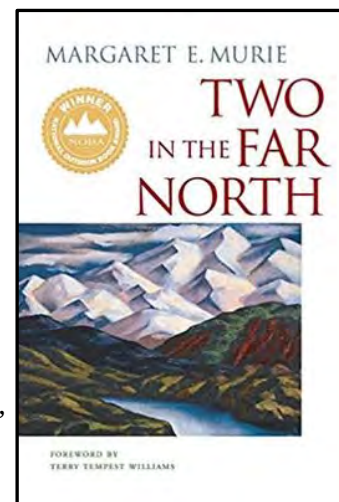
When: Tuesday, February 9, 1:00 pm

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

Amazon says:

In this moving testimonial to the preservation of the Arctic wilderness, Mardy Murie writes from her heart about growing up in Fairbanks, becoming the first woman graduate of the University of Alaska, and marrying noted biologist Olaus J. Murie. So begins her lifelong journey in Alaska and on to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where along with her husband and others, they founded The Wilderness Society. Mardy's work as one of the earliest female voices for the wilderness movement earned her the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

March 9: *Braiding Sweetgrass - Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer



Bird of the Month: Green Heron

by Jack Friery; photo by Herb Knüfken

Our featured bird this month is the **Green Heron**, *Butorides virescens*. This cousin to the Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, and Snowy Egret is much smaller and more secretive than those conspicuous birds. The Green Heron is only 16 to 18 inches long and weighs but 8.5 ounces. And, while the larger cousins are easily seen, the Green Heron is usually found hidden in the reeds at water's edge while it waits for a tasty fish to swim by. But it's not simply waiting. The Green Heron is one of the few birds that use tools to entice their prey – it often creates fishing lures with bread crusts, insects, twigs, and feathers, dropping them on the surface of the water to entice small fish.

For the literature lovers among us, we should mention that Shakespeare never mentions herons as such in any of his plays (despite the fact that there are about 835,000 words in the plays), but he did know herons. In Hamlet, the hero says "I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw" (Act II, sc. 2). "Handsaw" is not a tool. The word is local dialect for *heronsaw*, an old way of saying *heron*. There certainly was method in Hamlet's madness, herons or not.

Sources: allaboutbirds.org/guide/Green_Heron/overview; audubon.org/field-guide/bird/green-heron; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_heron.



Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: January 2020

(Actually conducted in late December, as part of the Rancho Santa Fe Audubon Christmas Bird Count.)

Number of species: 86 (+4 other taxa)

Gadwall 2	Whimbrel 1	Belted Kingfisher 3	House Finch 29
American Wigeon 24	Long-billed Curlew 1	Nuttall's Woodpecker 7	Lesser Goldfinch 4
Mallard 25	Spotted Sandpiper 1	Northern Flicker 7	Dark-eyed Junco 4
Green-winged Teal 6	Willet 5	American Kestrel 11	White-crowned Sparrow 46
Canvasback 1	Heermann's Gull 52	Peregrine Falcon 5	Golden-crowned Sparrow 4
Ring-necked Duck 2	Ring-billed Gull 21	Black Phoebe 16	Savannah Sparrow 3
Lesser Scaup 23	Western Gull 37	Say's Phoebe 4	Song Sparrow 30
Bufflehead 11	California Gull 7	Cassin's Kingbird 3	Lincoln's Sparrow 1
Red-breasted Merganser 1	gull sp. 3	Loggerhead Shrike 1	California Towhee 40
Ruddy Duck 10	Royal Tern 6	California Scrub-Jay 6	Rufous-crowned Sparrow 1
California Quail 10	Red-throated Loon 2	American Crow 19	Spotted Towhee 12
Pied-billed Grebe 1	Common Loon 4	Common Raven 22	Western Meadowlark 10
Western Grebe 1109	Black-vented Shearwater 26	Bushtit 52	Red-winged Blackbird 67
Clark's Grebe 3	Brandt's Cormorant 32	Wrentit 30	Orange-crowned Warbler 3
Eurasian Collared-Dove 4	Double-crested Cormorant 6	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 6	Common Yellowthroat 3
Mourning Dove 23	Brown Pelican 42	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 3	Yellow-rumped Warbler 129
Anna's Hummingbird 43	Great Blue Heron 2	California Gnatcatcher 12	
Costa's Hummingbird 1	Great Egret 6	Rock Wren 1	
Allen's Hummingbird 1	Snowy Egret 12	House Wren 1	
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird 5	Osprey 1	Bewick's Wren 4	
hummingbird sp. 2	White-tailed Kite 2	wren sp. 2	
American Coot 10	Sharp-shinned Hawk 1	California Thrasher 5	
	Cooper's Hawk 3	Northern Mockingbird 5	
	Red-shouldered Hawk 3	Western Bluebird 13	
	Red-tailed Hawk 9	Hermit Thrush 24	
	Great Horned Owl 1	House Sparrow 3	

Observers: Marty Hales, Tsaiwei Olee, David Walker, Deborah Walker, Robert Turner, Karen Turner, Kathy Estey, Gary Grantham, Andy Rathbone.

View this checklist online at ebird.org/checklist/S79345545

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



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