



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 433

August 2021

SoCal Wildfire 101

by Dan Hammer

July's speaker presentation was as timely as it was illuminating. With California's 2021 fire season roaring in, Dr. Charlie de la Rosa provided valuable information and insights on the causes and effects of wildfires in Southern California.

As Natural Lands Program Manager for the San Diego Zoo Wildfire Alliance (SDZWA), Charlie runs a 900-acre Biodiversity Reserve adjacent to the San Diego Zoo Safari Park (photo below). Using science-based, species-focused land management, the program conducts scientific research along with public education and outreach.



In presenting his land manager's perspective on fire, Charlie began with a brief history of fire management and fire regimes (frequency) in Southern California from the Pleistocene epoch to the present day.

During the Pleistocene, almost all fires in coastal California's grass and shrublands were caused by lightning strikes. With limited resources and intermittent drought, local plant species developed mechanisms to survive fire, giving them an evolutionary "leg up." For example, our beloved laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*) is long lived and fire resistant. Following a fire, it persists in the same location with the same architecture and distribution.

Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, August 14, 9:00 am

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

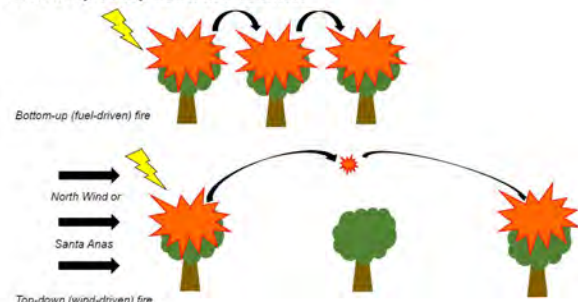
Speaker: Professor Paul Jensen, Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Topic: "From the Sea to the Pharmacy": the long journey of marine natural-product drug discovery and why it's important to understand and preserve biological resources

Dr. Jensen is a professor in the Center of Marine Biotechnology and Biomedicine at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD. His research group is broadly interested in which microbes in the ocean produce natural products, why they make them, and how to better exploit them for useful purposes. His presentation will highlight the potential of the world's oceans to yield new medicines with a focus on new approaches to natural product discovery from marine microbes and the importance of understanding and preserving biological resources.

Along with dry fuel, local fires need wind to spread. In evergreen forests, many fires are fuel-driven, starting with lightning and moving from one tree to others nearby. In coastal California, however, embers blow on strong north winds or Santa Anas from one tree to another some distance away, often passing over intervening vegetation. (Contrary to conventional wisdom, most Southern California fires do *not* spread via overgrown brush.) (Cont. on pg. 3)

Bottom-up vs top-down fire behavior



The Torrey Pines Docent Society publishes the *Torreyana* monthly, edited by Joan Simon and Dan Hammer on alternate months, and is formatted and produced by Roger Isaacson. Submissions are due on or about the 20th day of the preceding month and may be emailed to

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FLASH

Don't forget to donate your
ZooNooz magazines to the Museum
Shop so they can be passed on to
other readers.

Volunteers Needed for Public Walks, Lodge & TIK

Photos by Herb Knüfken

We're looking for a few good docents.

Docent activities are up and running, but so far the TPDS has struggled to recruit enough docents to lead public walks or staff the Visitor Center and Trail Information Kiosk (TIK).

Some docents might be hesitating to volunteer because their skills are a bit rusty, and others might feel apprehensive about engaging with the public during the current COVID surge. TPDS has done its best to provide help on both fronts. Two training videos for Lodge hosts are available [here \(19 min\)](#) and [here \(30 min\)](#). As for health precautions, the Lodge docent desk has been equipped with a plexiglass shield, both doors and all windows are open during operating hours, and docents are masked. Note that the Lodge is still operating at a reduced schedule, and shifts are two hours long; volunteers who want to accrue more hours are encouraged to sign up for two shifts in a row. In August, we plan to add a 2 - 4pm shift *on weekdays* if we have docent support. Stay tuned for more.



At the TIK, interactive materials have been removed and a physical barrier installed to maintain social distancing. (To watch the TIK training video, click [here \(13 min\)](#).)

And, of course, guided walks take place in the open air, and guides can wear masks if they so choose.



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(Cont. from pg. 1)

The early Anthropocene epoch (from about 11,000 years ago to the 1770s) brought the first anthropogenic burning (human-caused fires) along with the first managed burns. In our area, Kumeyaay fire management utilized different types of managed burns for each ecosystem: coastal sage, chaparral, oak woodlands, pine forests, and wetlands.

After the Spanish arrived in the 1770s, they radically transformed land use and fire management in the San Diego region. To open new lands for Spanish cattle ranching, governor Pedro Fages banned cultural burning. This “cultural genocide maneuver” disconnected Native peoples from their traditional land management and food sources in order to make them more reliant on the Spanish.

The altering of land use and fire regimes continued during the California Gold Rush. Using hydraulic mining, a “shockingly impactful mining method,” miners removed millions of tons of soil and the vegetation it supported. Like ranching, mining altered fire regimes in impacted areas.

The modern era has brought a “massive expansion of vegetative-free areas” and devastating fragmentation of natural areas. As Charlie said, “It’s all about the speed and magnitude of changes.” When wild lands are cleared for development, invasive plants move in, bringing “unprecedented changes of landscapes.” In burned areas, invasive plants outcompete natives. And as fires become more frequent, especially in urban/wildlands interface zones, it becomes harder and harder for native plants to

recover. This pattern creates a less-biodiverse ecosystem as native species cannot tolerate frequent fires.

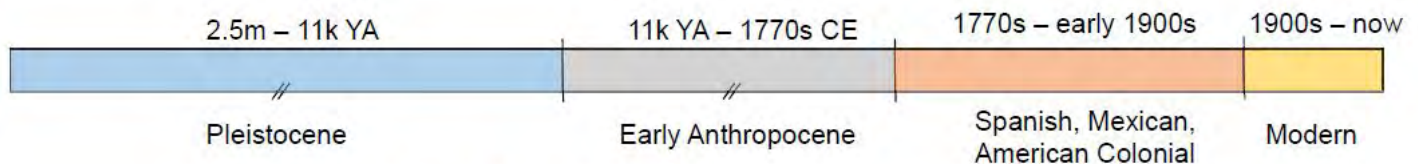
Charlie went on to debunk the popular notion that more-intensive fuel management can prevent wildfires. (As he said, “When you hear simple answers to complex questions . . . run!”) Clearing land is more likely to promote fire-prone weeds than prevent fire. And fire breaks don’t work, especially in areas where fires are wind-driven. If these fires can jump a ten-lane freeway, a fifteen-foot fuel break won’t stop them. What does work, then? Instead of managing fuels, we should manage the “Five P’s.”

- People: behavior and capacity to plan
- Prevention: e.g., better management of power lines, the leading cause of fires
- Planning: build houses where it’s safe, not on or adjacent to wildlands
- Protection: create defensible houses with roof sprinklers, fire-resistant roofing materials, well-ventilated attics, defensible space, etc.
- Prediction: close monitoring of fire dangers

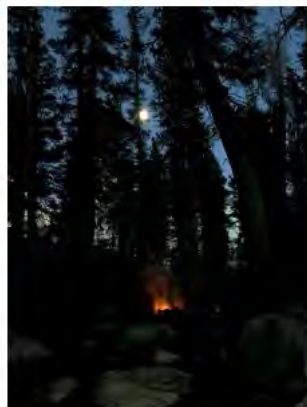
(The “Five P’s” were originally proposed by Dr. Jon Keeley, Senior Scientist with the USGS at the Western Ecological Research Center in Sequoia National Park, California.)

If you missed Charlie’s presentation or want to see it again, [click here](#).

Timeline of fire regimes from Pleistocene epoch to present



- Pre-human history
- Evolutionary relationships between vegetation and fire



- Anthropogenic burning
- Managed burns



- Managed burns banned
- Landscape transformation via agriculture, livestock ranching, mining



- State level mgmt
- Increase in accidental human-caused fires
- Habitat fragmentation
- Invasive plants
- Climate change

General Meeting Minutes

The General Meeting was called to order at 9:05 am by President **Lynne Truong**. The meeting was again conducted via Zoom; 95 docents attended.

Invited Speaker

Dr. Carlos (Charlie) de la Rosa, the Natural Lands Program Manager for the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, presented on “Wildfires in Southern California’s Arid Ecosystem.” (See article on pg. 1.)

TPDS Business

- **Docent of the Month**

Lynne Truong announced that TPDS is honoring **Mediha Denker** as Docent of the Month. Medi is a member of the 2019 docent class. Lynne said that Medi is always one of the first to volunteer for docent duties, including signing up for the first day of Lodge reopening. In addition to Lodge duties, Medi regularly takes on TIK shifts. Thank you, Medi, for your commitment to the Reserve and the TPDS community. (See article on pg. 5.)

- **Treasurer’s Report**

As reported by Treasurer **Janet Ugalde**, TPDS’s quarterly fiscal reviews confirm that the Society remains in solid financial shape. The detailed fiscal reports have been published on Docent Login under *Administrative Reports*. They are also available in the Lodge Library, where a copy has been posted on the bulletin board. Janet shared fiscal good news: Since reopening on June 21, the Museum Shop reported more than \$2K in income. TPDS also received a \$500 donation from the K.L. Calkins Family Fund (via the Coastal Community Foundation) in recognition of **Roger Isaacson**. Janet also thanked **Thomas Holland** for reviewing TPDS’s insurance policy.

- **Anthology Update**

Roger Isaacson gave a sneak preview of the anthology project that he and his team (**Joan Simon**, **Dan Hammer**, and **Kathy Dickey**), have been working on for the last several months.

The book’s preliminary title is *Island of Wilderness*. It will contain selected *Torreyana* articles – written between 1975 and the present – organized under the following headings: The Land, The First People, History of the Reserve, Flora, Birds, Mammals, Reptiles, Insects and Spiders, and Sea and Lagoon. The authors of the selected articles are mostly docents, past and present. It is expected that the book will have less than 200 pages and will contain many drawings and photos. The team is currently working with a book designer to transform the anthology material into a visually engaging coffee table book. Roger reminded the docents that this project is a partnership with TPC. **Peter Jensen**, TPC’s president, had proposed the venture and had – to kick start its funding – successfully applied for a grant from the

Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation. The grant (\$7K) will cover some of the production costs, but overall the project will be a nonprofit venture. Roger hopes that the book will be available in time for the holiday season and estimates that it will be sold for about \$30.

Roger reported that he and his team are now working on obtaining photo permissions from current and former docents. Roger will send out the permission form via an eblast to all docents whose photos will be used.

- **Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Update**

Janice Barnard reminded the docents of the presentation by Mike Hastings (Executive Director of the [Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation](#)) about his collaboration with scientists, engineers, and key stakeholders, to update the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Enhancement Plan, originally certified in 1985. Mike has reached out and, via Janice, is inviting all docents to provide urgently needed feedback about the future of the North Beach Parking Lot. Hearing from as many of us as possible about the currently proposed options for redesigning the area, which would include new facilities (interpretive center, lifeguard station) and new modular bathrooms away from areas vulnerable to flooding, would be essential for developing a blueprint for the future. Janice informed the docents that Roger will send out an eblast; she strongly encouraged the docents to participate.

- **Torrey Pines Lodge Duties Update**

The Lodge reopened on June 21. **Lynne Truong** thanked the Museum Shop team, which, under the leadership of **Nancy Walters** and **Selma Torres**, was essential for the successful reopening. Lynne pointed out, however, that TPDS is struggling to fill all available shifts. She urged docents to sign up for work at the Lodge, reminding them of the training videos and suggesting that signing up with a buddy might reduce docents’ hesitations. Docents who have worked at the Lodge since reopening shared that the experience is very rewarding and safe. Both doors and all windows are open during operating hours. Docents must wear a mask, and the cashier works behind a plexiglass shield. The docents said that accepting only credit cards for payments has made the job very easy. Lynne confirmed that the Lodge will continue to operate at a reduced schedule through August: M – F from 10 am to 2pm and weekends from 9am – 3 pm. All shifts will be two hours long.

- **Trail Information Kiosk (TIK) Updates**

Lynne confirmed that interactive material still cannot be used at the TIK. The installation of the new plexiglass for the display case had to be postponed because a bird decided to use the area as a breeding spot.

- **Ranger Liaison to Docent Society**

Lynne shared that Ranger Stephanie Adams has been named volunteer liaison. In this role she will attend the meetings of the Board and also the monthly General Meetings. Stephanie is currently working with us on getting the

necessary permissions to conduct our traditional end-of-the-summer social in September at the beach. Lynne has also asked Stephanie to explore the possibility of conducting a night walk in the Reserve.

- **Invitation to Serve**

Lynne encouraged the docents interested in assuming a TPDS leadership role to contact members of the Nominating Committee: **Ken King, Janice Barnard, Steve Neal, Frank Burham and Medi Denker.**

The meeting ended officially at 10:50 am. Many docents continued to chat with each other via Zoom.

Children's Program

by *Louis Sands, Children's Program Coordinator*

Hello, Docents!
We're baaack...well, sorta!

First of all, mark your calendars, please: **Thursday, September 16, 2021, 10:00 am, Children's Pavilion.**

Join **Janet Ugalde** and me for the Children's Program kickoff meeting. Let's come together and help each other to remember just how much fun we have providing outdoor education to deserving kids! **ALL** docents are welcome, new and returning.

In an effort to minimize safety concerns while still providing students access to our beloved Reserve, we will employ a few temporary changes *during the fall months*. Our goal is to sharply reduce the student-to-docent ratio by capping the daily allowable number of students at 36. Essentially, the intent is to deliver our brand of outdoor education, one class at a time. Thirty-six is at the high end of average class sizes reported by our county's school districts; the expectation is that most classes will fall between 25 and 30 students.

We understand that schools want all classes that comprise a grade level to have access to the same educational experiences, so we will do our best to schedule same-school class visits within the same month, if not over consecutive program days.

The [torreypine.org website](https://torreypine.org) will include instructions for interested teachers, starting September 8. In brief, teachers will need to submit reservation request forms to the program coordinator, who will manually input their information into a Better Impact schedule; docents can then sign up to lead walks or present topics by using Better Impact! There are separate BI signups for walks and presenters. Easy, breezy.

Again, this is the plan for the fall. We will stay as nimble as possible because planning programs during this pandemic has been affected by many unknowns and moving targets. Hope to see you all (and a few new faces) in September!

Docent of the Month:

Medi Denker

Photo by Herb Knüfken

I was born and raised in the suburbs of Istanbul, Turkey, a bridge between Asia and Europe, along the shores of the Sea of Marmara. My understanding of nature was shaped by the seas and the beautiful coastlines that lined them.



I moved to New York in 1990. I got my first real taste of hiking as I experienced the gorges and waterfalls of Ithaca, when I used to drive up to see my daughter at Cornell University - and was immediately hooked.

My first visit to a national park was Zion. Seeing the beauty of the rising cliffs covered with trees and the power of nature affected me to my very core. Since then, I have visited all the parks in Utah as well as many in California, and I am hoping to visit many more.

I discovered Torrey Pines soon after moving to San Diego and quickly got into the ritual of hiking its magical trails, especially in the early mornings. It felt natural to be so close to the beautiful trees and the blue waters of the Pacific while enjoying the park's blissful tranquility. There was no particular aspect of the park that grabbed me the most. In fact, it was the combined effect of it all - the windswept cliffs, the native vegetation, the gentle breeze, the birds gliding over the water along the shore.

It was during one of my hikes that I met Gloria Garrett, learned about the Docent Society and wanted to be a part of it. I feel deeply grateful to everyone who trained me and opened up the doors to this lovely new world. Now, every time I drive down the road from Del Mar and see the cliffs of Torrey Pines and the beach as I come for my shift, my heart soars with love, excitement, and pride for being a part of the TPDS family.

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, August 10, 1:00 pm

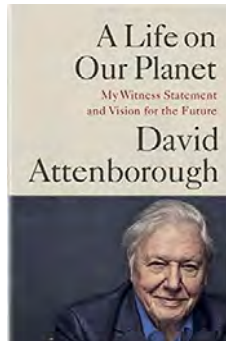
What: *A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future* by Sir David Attenborough.

Sir David says:

See the world. Then make it better. I am 93. I've had an extraordinary life. It's only now that I appreciate how extraordinary. As a young man, I felt I was out there in the wild, experiencing the untouched natural world – but it was an illusion. The tragedy of our time has been happening all around us, barely noticeable from day to day – the loss of our planet's wild places, its biodiversity. I have been witness to this decline. *A Life on Our Planet* is my witness statement, and my vision for the future. It is the story of how we came to make this, our greatest mistake – and how, if we act now, we can yet put it right. We have one final chance to create the perfect home for ourselves and restore the wonderful world we inherited. All we need is the will to do so.

All TPDS docents are welcome. Meetings usually last a couple of hours.

September 14: *Rain of Gold* by Victor Villaseñor.



Waste Not, Want Not

by Rhea Bridy

Now that Bushmallow's mighty
Bloom has flown with
The spring,
Bladderpod nectar
Seems to please
The bees
And summer's needs.
Pungency is in the nose
Or sensitive feet
Of the beholder.
Best to polish off
Every plump speck
Of pollen.
After all, waste not,
Want not.
Words to live by.



Bladderpod and bees

Kindness Rocks!

by Kristine Schindler

We had a somewhat impromptu gathering in the Reserve on Tuesday, July 6. Six of us turned out for playful, peaceful art fun and important reconnects. So beautiful to see all of you my docent friends (including the bottom halves of your faces) and enjoy quiet time in the Reserve. All these Zoom calls during the pandemic have been a truly key way to stay connected, engaged, and informed, BUT they lack the benefits of being with each other in person (the old-fashioned way). Thanks **Frank Burham, Barbara Wallach, Bill Eckles, Cindy Tozer,** and **Joanne Miale** for saying Yes to my TPDS Google Group invite.



If there is interest, I would love to do this again. Most of the painted rocks will be going to our City of Kindness initiative/outreach in Solana Beach. Bringing smiles and kind messages to strangers and friends.

Bird of the Month: Ash-throated Flycatcher

by Jack Friery; photo courtesy of Herb Knüfken

Our featured bird this month is the **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, *Myiarchus cinerascens*. This genteel bird has a grayish-brown head and wings, an ashy-gray face, a cinnamon-colored tail, and a pale-yellow wash on its belly. The Ash-throated is about eight inches long and weighs about an ounce.

As its name suggests, the Ash-throated Flycatcher feeds predominantly on insects. However, it may supplement its diet with berries, including the fruit of native mistletoe. As with other dry-environment species, it need not drink water – it secures its moisture requirements from its prey.

The Ash-throated Flycatcher is a summer visitor to the Reserve and breeds in inland San Diego. After breeding, the bird migrates to Mexico and Central America.

Sources: allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ash-throated_Flycatcher/overview

Unitt, *San Diego County Bird Atlas*

audubon.org/field-guide/bird/ash-throated-flycatcher.



Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: July 2021

Number of species:64
(+3 other taxa)

Mallard 26
Surf Scoter 86
Western Grebe 1
Clark's Grebe 1
Mourning Dove 30
White-throated Swift 24
Anna's Hummingbird 28
Allen's Hummingbird 6
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird 7
hummingbird sp. 4
Killdeer 2
Western Gull 55
Caspian Tern 8
Brandt's Cormorant 12
Double-crested Cormorant 2
Brown Pelican 48
Great Blue Heron 4

Great Egret 10
Snowy Egret 18
Osprey 1
Northern Harrier 1
Cooper's Hawk 2
Red-shouldered Hawk 2
Red-tailed Hawk 2
Downy Woodpecker 2
Nuttall's Woodpecker 12
American Kestrel 1
Peregrine Falcon 2
Pacific-slope Flycatcher 1
Black Phoebe 12
Ash-throated Flycatcher 20
Cassin's Kingbird 11
Hutton's Vireo 2
California Scrub-Jay 12
American Crow 12
Common Raven 17
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 40

Barn Swallow 3
Cliff Swallow 3
Bushtit 46
Wrentit 51
California Gnatcatcher 6
House Wren 2
Bewick's Wren 6
wren sp. 2
California Thrasher 9
Northern Mockingbird 16
Western Bluebird 2
Swainson's Thrush 2
Phainopepla 3
Scaly-breasted Munia 14
House Finch 150
Lesser Goldfinch 59
Dark-eyed Junco 3
Song Sparrow 16
California Towhee 58
Rufous-crowned Sparrow 1
Spotted Towhee 42

Yellow-breasted Chat 9
Hooded Oriole 3
Red-winged Blackbird 4
Brown-headed Cowbird 1
Orange-crowned Warbler 6
Common Yellowthroat 16
Yellow Warbler 4
Wilson's Warbler 1
Black-headed Grosbeak 8

Observers: Marty Hales,
Steve Neal, Tsaiwei Olee,
Andy Rathbone, Phyllis
Kuszner, Donna Mancuso,
Gabrielle Wienhausen, Kathy
Dickey, Anonymous, Robert
Turner, David Walker,
Deborah Walker

View this checklist online at ebird.org/checklist/S92006857

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



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