



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 436

November 2021

A 130,000-Year-Old Mastodon in Our Back Yard

by Joan R. Simon

Tom Deméré, Curator of Paleontology and Director of Paleo Services at the San Diego Natural History Museum (SDMNH), came to the Docent Society online Zoom meeting on October 9 to present a very exciting discovery. Twenty-five years ago, Richard Cerutti, a construction site monitor for the museum, discovered a site, dated to 130,000 years ago, holding the remains of a single American mastodon (*Mammut americanum*). The Cerutti Mastodon (CM) site, on the SR-54 freeway between San Diego and National City, preserved evidence that ancestral humans, hominins, had used stone hammers and anvils to break the limb bones and molars of the mastodon. The results of their findings were published in April 2017 in the highly prestigious scientific journal *Nature*, and, as Dr. Deméré noted wryly, “it caused a bit of a stir in the archeological community -- to say the least.”

Dr. Deméré reviewed the current research on when humans first came to the Americas: -13,000 to -15,000 are among the earliest dates accepted by most archeologists. In September 2021, the discovery of ancient human foot prints was reported. These prints were first found in 2009 in New Mexico’s White Sands National Park and were recently dated to 23,000 years ago, supporting the hypothesis that humans arrived in the Americas at least 10,000 years before the commonly accepted date. However, none of these dates remotely approaches the -130,000 timeline of the CM site.

It is not the date of the mastodon site that is in question. The controversy surrounds the proposition that a pre-*Homo sapiens* species was living in the Americas at that time. Here is the evidence Dr. Deméré presented for this hypothesis.

The site preserved only parts of one animal. There were some complete ribs as well as some partial ones. There were various molars, a tusk and portions of both femur bones.

Docent General Meeting

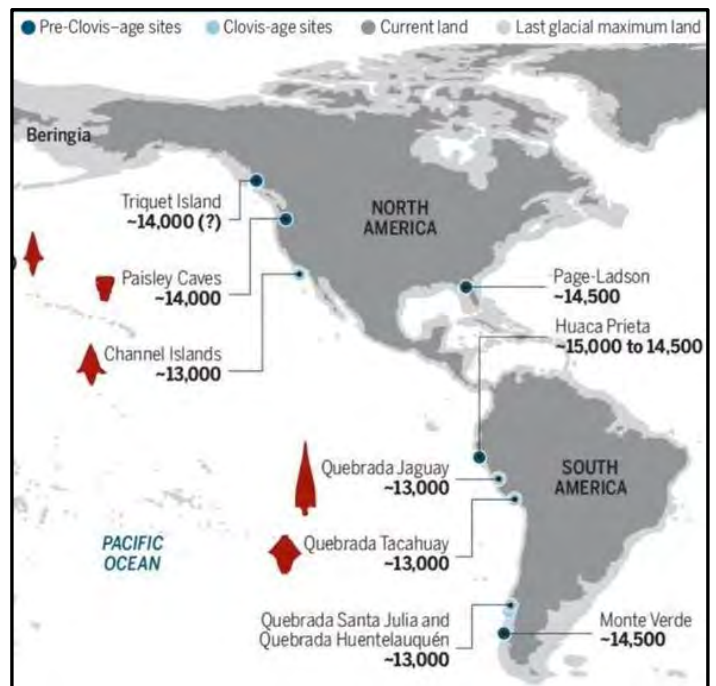
Date: Saturday, November 13, 9:00 am

Online via Zoom

Speaker: Botanist Fred Roberts

Topic: Oaks of San Diego County

San Diego County boasts one of the highest diversity of oaks in California, with ten known species ranging in form from the intricately and tangled-branched Nuttall’s scrub oak (which is present at TPSNR) to the California black oak, a mountain species with large, bristle-tipped leaves that turn yellow in the fall. Fred Roberts will introduce us to these and other oaks, as we tour our San Diego species, learning something of their ecology and how to tell them apart.



Map of when humans dispersed to the Americas
(Cont. on pg. 3)

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.

President's Message

As soon as volunteer restrictions were lifted by State Parks, docents started to come back to the Reserve. The weeders started weeding, more docents with their vests were spotted on the trails doing interpretative patrols, the TIK-talkers returned to their post at the head of the Beach Trail, guided public walks resumed, and the Lodge reopened for limited hours.



In July, we had our very first in-person board meeting in the back of the Visitor Center. It was wonderful to meet live, and discussions were lively and productive. We enthusiastically planned for the September potluck at the beach. We wanted the docents to have a fun chance to mingle safely outdoors and to show appreciation to the park staff. Just when we thought it was safe to gather outdoors, the Delta variant surfaced in San Diego and the board determined it was prudent to cancel the potluck. Fortunately,

we are getting good at dealing with unexpected changes. With little notice, **Gabriele Wienhausen** was able to get Darren Smith to be guest speaker at our September meeting and we met once again through Zoom. Thank you, Gabriele and Darren!

As we continue to pivot and adapt to slowly and cautiously restart the docent programs and activities at Torrey Pines, I want to sincerely thank all the program leaders and docents who put in many hours to enable us to volunteer safely.

I hope you can join us for two of my favorite events at the Reserve: the full moon hike on November 18 and the holiday potluck on December 11.

Lynne Truong

TPDS President

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(Cont. from pg. 1)

But where was the rest of the animal? If the mastodon had died and been left to decompose naturally, all of its bones should have been present.



Working at the site

Five large cobbles, up to 30 cm (1 foot) in diameter and weighing up to 15 kg (33 lbs.), were found dispersed in the fine-grained sediments preserving the mastodon remains. Normally such large rocks would not be found in such fine-grained deposits. A fast-flowing river can carry large objects, like these cobbles, but the fine particles, such as silt or clay, would only be deposited by a slow-moving body of water. Basically, it is anomalous to find cobbles in a fine-grained stratum. So the hypothesis posits that the cobbles were brought to the site.

There were bones with distinct breakage features, including spiral fractures and impact notches. The evidence suggests that the bones were broken by percussion while still fresh. In percussion, the break at the point of impact is small, but the exit deeper within the bone is large, as would happen with a man-made break. The investigators produced similar breakage patterns using a large hand-held cobble and the leg bones of an elephant, the closest living relative to a mastodon. They theorized that some of the cobbles were used as hammerstones and some as anvils. Bone residue was found on the cobbles with the residue facing up in the case of the anvils and facing down in the form of hammerstones, as would be expected if they were used as tools to break the bones of the mastodon.

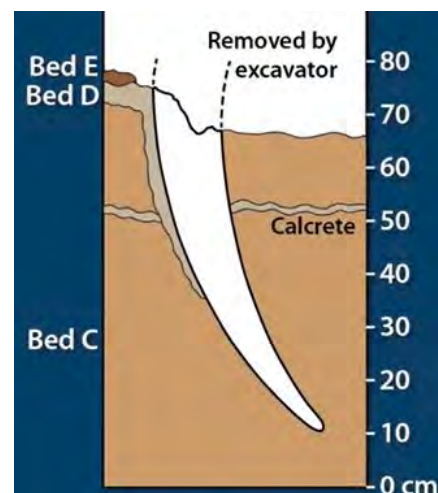
There was differential bone breakage. Fairly fragile bones like ribs were found unbroken, while more robust bones, such as femurs, were broken. If the breakage was caused by natural factors, you would expect just the opposite, with the fragile bones more easily broken and the sturdy ones intact.



Collection of bones and tusks/teeth

There were also rock, bone, and tooth remains that fit together, but lying sometimes meters apart. This pattern suggested to the researchers that the bones and teeth were broken and scattered when homins were processing the skeleton for thick pieces of bone from which to make tools.

The heads of both femurs were found beside each other, adjacent to one of the anvil cobbles and broken pieces of femurs. In addition, one of the tusks was discovered in a vertical orientation, extending 60 cm into the sand layer underlying the CM stratum. Together, this pattern suggests “purposeful” placement. “How do you get the heads of both femurs, detached from their shafts, sitting side by side?” Nor would a tusk be found naturally in a vertical position. “We can’t envision a geological process that could take a tusk and orient it vertically in 60 cm of soil,” Dr. Deméré remarked.



Tusk in vertical orientation

Arguments against this theory include:

- The absence of modified stone tools
- No cut marks on the bones
- No human remains

Beyond these, the arguments become weaker.

- Did other predators do the damage? There is no gnawing on the bones, and no animal in that era was capable of breaking a mastodon's limb bones.
- Was the site initially discovered by CalTrans workers and inadvertently tampered with? Thanks to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), any excavation is required to have observers on site in case of just this kind of discovery, and in this instance paleontologists from the SDMNH were present from the beginning and excavated the CM site by hand over a five-month period.
- Could heavy equipment at the site have caused the breakage? The bones and stones occurred in a buried and previously undisturbed stratum. Also if heavy equipment had broken the bones, the breakage pattern would be indiscriminate and not consist of just the broken heavy bones and unbroken lighter ones. In addition, if the femurs were broken by equipment, all the pieces should be preserved. However, only a few femoral pieces were found, suggesting the rest were taken by hominids as material for bone tool production. Further, several examples of spiral-fractured bones were unearthed, indicating that breakage occurred while the bones were fresh.
- What about pre-burial trampling? Modern elephants are known to visit the skeletal remains of their relatives. There were no trample marks on the bones, and only the robust bones were broken.



Reconstruction of Mastodon at the SDMNH. Red circle shows the femur

The *Nature* article and follow-up research conclude that the CM location was occupied for a short period of time as a bone-processing site some 130,000 years ago. It suggests that the hominins involved likely were an early, failed non-*Homo sapiens* species. How and when they came to the Americas is not known and, to date, there have been no other discoveries that are this old. Dr. Deméré suggested the reason may be not because they don't exist, but because no one is looking for signs of hominid life in strata of the Americas that are this old.

Link to the mastodon info: tinyurl.com/sdnhm-mastodon

The video link is here: vimeo.com/627642086 (55 min)

General Meeting Minutes

The General Meeting was called to order at 9:05 am by board member **Cres Torres**, representing President **Lynne Truong**. The meeting was conducted via Zoom and was attended by 83 docents.

Invited Speaker

Dr. Tom Deméré, Curator of Paleontology and Director of Paleo Services at the SD Museum of Natural History, discussed the discovery of 130,000-year-old mastodon remains in November 1992. See article on pgs. 1 - 4.

TPDS Business

- **Docent of the Month**

Matthew Xavier was named Docent of the Month. Matt trained as a docent in the fall of 2019 and has been one of the most active docents signing up for Lodge Hosting in 2021. He also works at the TIK and is particularly helpful and friendly to visitors. Congratulations, Matt! (See article on pg. 6.)

- **Nominating Committee**

Ken King, representing the Nominating Committee, presented the slate for the 2022 TPDS board: President: **Lynne Truong**; Vice President: **Cres Torres**; Treasurer: **Janet Ugalde**; Secretary: **Matt Xavier**; Members-at-Large: **Roger Isaacson**, **Mark Lippard**, **Harry Proctor**, **Rosemary Wareham**, and **Gabriele Wienhausen**. This slate of directors will be voted on by the membership at the November annual meeting. Ken thanked all the current board members for their service and expressed his appreciation for the six docents who agreed to continue to serve on the board next year. For more information, see article on pg. 6.

- **Ranger Report**

Because Ranger Stephanie Adams was unable to attend the meeting, **Cres Torres** gave the Ranger report:

Susan G. Komen 3-Day Walk

The November 19 route includes hiking up the internal main road of the Reserve. To ensure that hikers will stay on the trail and to prevent littering, **Ann Smith Mercandetti** will again organize docents to be road monitors. Docents will hold up posters that support walkers' efforts while also asking them to respect the Reserve by not eating, littering, or playing loud music.

For the duration of the Komen Walk within the Reserve, the south beach parking lot will be closed for parking in the morning. It will be used as one of the Walk's staging places, providing refreshments and access to portable restrooms. A medical crew will be stationed there as well.

Any docents interested in helping should contact Ann Smith Mercandetti. (See pg. 7.)

Park Aides

Because of budget constraints, the aide positions vacated by Johnson Jou and Joy Inton will not be filled. With the departure of Cheryl Biernacki and Shawn Jacobs at the end of October, the number of park aides will be down to four: **Louis Sands, Jake Mumma, Ingo Renner, and Krista DeBusschere.**

- ***Upcoming Social Events***

Moonlight Walk

The Full Moon Hike on October 20 [rescheduled for November 18] has been approved, provided that COVID-related public health policies continue to allow organized outdoor gatherings. Specific information will be provided via an eblast.

December Holiday Party

The Board has submitted an application to the Park Administration to allow the annual holiday party to be held on December 11 in the area of the Children's Pavilion. The request is pending.

- ***Torrey Pines Conservancy Updates***

Harry Proctor, TPDS liaison to the Torrey Pines Conservancy (TPC), shared that TPC is creating a new website.

He reported that TPC agreed to fund a new water filling station at the Guy Fleming Trail entrance. The hope is that this will help reduce the use of plastic bottles.

TPC has underwritten a geo-tech survey for the Lodge restoration and renovation. TPC will launch a major fundraising campaign to secure the necessary funds.

- ***Special Walks Committee***

Board member and Special Walks Coordinator **Stu Rosenwasser** informed the docents that the requests

for special walks are increasing. In a typical year, TPDS conducts more than 50 special walks, generating substantial income. Stu invited docents interested in leading special walks to contact him.

- ***Treasurer's Report***

Treasurer **Janet Ugalde** was unable to attend the meeting. **Cres Torres** provided the following update:

TPDS's fiscal situation: TPDS is in very good financial shape. In September the Museum Shop generated substantial sales.

2022 Budget Planning: To plan for the 2022 budget, all committee leaders will be asked to submit a proposed budget for the 2022 fiscal year. To help with this task, a special budget planning form will be sent out.

Committees are encouraged to review their current budget allocation and determine if it is appropriate and also aligned with future needs. Financial needs for new 2022 projects should be included in the request.

- ***Nature Discovery Series***

Cres Torres shared that the Community Outreach Program, headed by **Kathy Dickey**, will present a Nature Discovery Series on October 16 at 3 pm titled "Creepy Critters." Johnson Jou and Joy Inton will present.

- ***Bee Monitoring Project***

The October CEED event will be an opportunity to hone the skills necessary for becoming an effective bee monitor: learning how to take photos and practicing the monitoring protocol. Interested docents will meet at 9 am on Tuesday, October 12. Tom Barnes, a native bee expert and avid nature photographer, will lead a workshop for docents interested in joining the project.

- ***TIK Update***

Janice Barnard shared that, per Supervising Ranger Dylan Hardenbrook, the yellow plastic rope around the TIK counter must remain in place. Janice reminded us that it is a personal decision as to what docents want to set out on the TIK counter for engaging the public.

Janice and the TIK advisory group (**Annette Ring, Harry Proctor** and **Gabriele Wienhausen**) are teaming up with park aides and Ranger Stephanie Adams to come up with a plan for the west side of the map board. The goal is to develop a program to update the board on a quarterly basis with relevant (possibly seasonal) interpretative information.

- ***Mindful Walks at Torrey Pines***

Gabriele Wienhausen and **Lynne Truong** are co-coordinators of the Mindful Walks at Torrey Pines program. Gabriele shared that the program is off to a successful start. Fellow docents **Sandy Levin** and **Cres Torres** are also part of the team that conducts

these walks. Mindful Walks are docent-guided walks “where you can slow down, breathe in fresh air, use your senses, and be present.” Walks take place on the first and third Sundays of the month. The 2-hour-long walks start at the Lodge at 8 am. Docents interested in becoming walk leaders should contact Gabriele Wienhausen.

- **The 80+ Project**

Kristine Schindler, coordinator of the 80+ Project, asked fellow docents 80 years and older to contact her so that they will be included in this project. Interviews can be conducted in person, via the phone or via Zoom. Kristine also asked that any docents interested in contributing to the project as interviewers contact her.

The meeting ended at 10:45am

TPDS Board Nominations for 2022

The Nominating Committee, consisting of **Janice Barnard, Frank Burham, Medi Denker, Ken King, and Steve Neal** has selected the following docents to serve as 2022 board members for the Docent Society. They are:

President: **Lynne Truong**

Vice President: **Cres Torres**

Treasurer: **Janet Ugalde**

Secretary: **Matt Xavier**

Members-at-Large:

Roger Isaacson

Mark Lippard

Harry Proctor

Rosemary Wareham

Gabriele Wienhausen

This slate of directors was presented at the October 9 general meeting and will be voted on by the membership at the November 13 annual meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor at the meeting (with seven days' prior notice). A candidate nominated must be a voting member in good standing and consent to the nomination.

November CEED: Safari Park

Date: Week of November 15

Time: TBA

Place: San Diego Zoo Safari Park, 15500 San Pasqual Valley Rd, Escondido, CA 92027

Duration: TBA

Leaders: Joy Inton and Johnson Jou

Docent of the Month:

Matt Xavier

Photo by Herb Knüfken

Why did I become a docent? I should start by telling a story. Last Thanksgiving during a constant slow rain, I was into the sixth hour of my mushroom hunt in Cape Disappointment State Park in Washington, crawling on my belly through heavy brush, mud and what looked like some bear scat. I was looking for my next discovery. My mind was fully concentrated and immersed in my environment. My eyes sharply focused for shapes and colors that might be a mushroom. I was immune to the dampness, protected in rain pants, waterproof boots, and a warm jacket.

I approached a fallen spruce tree and lifted my head to spot my 32nd species of the day, splash cups, a type of bird's nest fungus. I stood up, and as I snapped some pictures, I looked down at my muddy, smelly, soaked pants. I asked myself “how did I get here?” Upon reflection I realized it began with my dad, Ron, and it was later encouraged by a high school biology teacher, Ed Holm. My dad, a teacher, tried his best to impart his love of the outdoors on his children. One summer during a three-week-long camping trip in a VW camper van, we had finished setting up our tent somewhere east of the Grand Tetons. He plopped himself tiredly in his chair and told us to discover the wonders of nature: “Just be back before it gets dark,” he muttered. My siblings and I spotted river otters at play, a large but shy bull elk, and bull frogs ringing a pond. Nature had revealed itself on this glorious, sunny day. My love for nature began on this day.

It was my teacher Ed, though, who sparked my intellectual understanding of the interconnections of life. Ed would take our class on field trips in the San Mateo foothills. During these trips, he would point out every wildflower, plant and tree to us. As the hike progressed, he tested us. He was so passionate about what he was doing, it became infectious. He would point at a plant and look at a student and expect that person



to name it instantly. He taught us how to "look and see." He had a big smile and a great sense of humor. He was a true prankster who was effective in his methods. Every spring break, he led 30 students on a bus trip to Joshua Tree National Park for a week-long series of lectures, hikes and fireside chats. I was fortunate to be able to join one of these adventures. The desert was so much more than what we thought it was. It was surprisingly alive with blooming wildflowers, roadrunners, tortoises and snakes. We just had to take the time to look to understand. Through his teaching style, he spent his career creating lifelong learners who became dedicated to understanding and protecting natural world.

Thank you, Ron and Ed. And thank you to all our teachers past and present. I am grateful for this wonderful recognition.

Komen Walk is Back at Torrey Pines

by Ann Smith Mercandetti

The 3-Day Komen Walk for Breast Cancer is a GO this year, with walkers coming through the Reserve on Friday morning, November 19. So it's time to get moving on this! As usual, we will meet at the Reserve bright and early (usually by 7 am) and will probably be finished by 11:00 am at the latest.

We need at least 20 docents, working in twos, at ten different locations along the road through the Reserve (we cannot have too many monitors!). Docents who have helped in the past know that volunteering for these events has made an *enormous* difference in the amount of trash, food, and feathers left in the Reserve after the groups have left. Also, we will be using Herb's photos for the second time. There will be a lot of "educating," as many who see his photos stop to ask questions. Walkers come from all over the United States, and many have no idea they are walking amidst our nation's rarest pine trees! I understand this is the only complete, three-day Komen Walk to be held this year.

Contact **Ann Smith Mercandetti** if you can help monitor this event.



Komen Walk, November 2019

Museum Shop Highlights for November

by Nancy Walters

The gift shop has recently received a number of new ceramic items from Laird Plumleigh Studios, including a few we haven't carried before. So if you're shopping for that unique item for holiday gifting, come in and check out these beautiful creations!



Also, look for these new wooden magnets next to our standard 3D Torrey Pines magnets.

They're made from sections of Torrey pine branches that were donated and sliced thinly by our favorite woodworker, **Ingo Renner**. It's a perfect small gift to fit in a suitcase and remind one of a day at our Reserve!



Wild Morning Glory

by Rhea Bridy

Good morning, my dear.

No need to hide within the

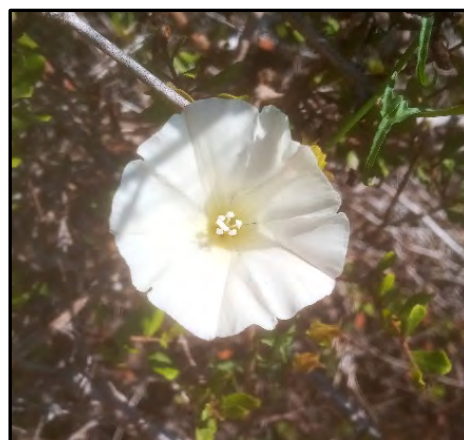
Honeysuckle anymore.

Your tender, fluted petals may greet a new day.

You may climb among the leafing sages and sunflowers to your heart's content.

Come out and greet the bees, the softer sun, and the scented coolness of autumn wind.

Dazzle me with your softest whites and that touch of secret nectar yellow.



Time to Renew Your Membership

by Lynne Truong

To retain your membership in the Torrey Pines Docent Society for 2022, you will need to have fulfilled your minimum 84 service hours **and** pay your \$25 dues by December 31, 2021.

There are three different membership levels based on your service hours in 2021: Active, Associate and Friends:

ACTIVE is for docents who logged 84 hours or more service hours. Active Docents will get a 2022 parking pass for Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve.

ASSOCIATE is for docents who did not fulfill the minimum service hours in 2021 but want a chance to do so in 2022. Associate Docents will get a 2022 parking pass. Just for 2022, the board has waived the required Associate Status Request form. If you pay your dues and your 2021 service hours are less than 84, you will automatically get Associate status.

FRIENDS is for docents who want to support the TPDS without the need to log service hours. Docents with Friends status receive the monthly newsletter and can attend lectures, meetings and special events. Docents with Friends status do not get a parking pass for 2022.

A special **LIFETIME** membership status is given to docents who have been ACTIVE docents for a total of 10 years. Lifetime docents do not need to pay membership fees and will get a LIFETIME parking pass.

TPDS docents may also qualify for the CA State Parks Volunteers In Park (VIP) parking passes for 2022 based on service hours at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve.

The green District VIP parking pass is for docents who logged a minimum of 100 hours. This pass is good for parking at any CA State Park in the San Diego District.

New for this year, CA State Park reduced the service hours requirement for the Statewide VIP parking pass from 200 hours to 175. This pass is good for parking at any CA State Park.

The TPSNR 2022 parking sticker and VIP passes will be available at the beginning of the new year.

Dues Payment Methods:

1. \$25 check to TPDS, mail to 1155 Camino Del Mar #404, Del Mar, CA 92014.

2. \$25 check to TPDS, put in DUES envelope in the Membership Mailbox in the library at the Lodge.

3. **\$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 email membership@torreypine.org if you have any questions.

80+: A Conversation with Ann Heinemann

Tell us about your childhood.

I was born in Boston and grew up in Cambridge and environs with a few early years in Virginia. We had fun frolicking around Harvard (and bugging labs for chemicals for short-lived chemistry clubs), playing softball games my dad organized with the neighborhood kids, hiking, beach trips and roaming around the countryside.

What about your schooling?

After briefly attending Macalester College in Minnesota, I went to secretarial school and worked as such for a few years. Since having kids, I have been a volunteer for many community activities: PTA, youth sports, Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, Salk Institute activities, and politics.

What brought you to San Diego?

We moved to La Jolla in 1970 when my husband joined the Salk Institute. I had been to San Diego and Tijuana once before during a cross-country trip in 1955 that my family took on our way to a year in Japan. The journey continued around the world a year later by freighter and passenger ship with a car tour of Europe in between the boat trips.

Why did you become a docent?

After 30 years of going to Torrey Pines, mainly to the beach with family and friends, we took over a 200-year-old former farm in Vermont and began spending summers there. My beach bum days were over and I missed Torrey Pines, so I took the docent training in 2006, encouraged by **Nelson Brav, Ken King and Fran Doolittle**.

As a docent, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

Although I've spent time on various projects like Art in the Pines, I mainly have staffed the Lodge, which I really enjoy -- just being under the pines when the Lodge is not busy and chatting with the visitors, staff and docents. However, my biggest contribution may be the small part I played when my sister **Joan Simon** became a docent. She is a volunteer *extraordinaire*, working on many docent projects, and is the co-editor of the *Torreya*.

What makes you happy these days?

I love nature, plants, gardening, animals (we currently have two dogs), friends and family (my 5 kids and 12 grandkids all live in the SD area). Over the years we've camped across the US, Canada, Baja and mainland Mexico. I've traveled all over the world, but I think my traveling days are over



beyond getting to Vermont in the summer. My last major trip was a sojourn through the Panama Canal to celebrate my 80th birthday.

[Ed. Note: Ann did not sit for a live interview; instead she answered the interview questions via email. This is an option for other docents who would like to participate in the 80+ program.]

Distance to the Horizon

by Cresencio Torres and Stu Rosenwasser

Have you ever been on an interpretive hike and stopped at the West Overlook, Red Butte, Razor Point, or Yucca Point when a visitor asked you the question, “How far can you see to the horizon?”

Stu Rosenwasser and I were leading a hike a few months ago, and a hiker at Razor Point asked us that very question. Of course, we both responded with our best-educated guesses, and in retrospect, our “guesstimation” was slightly off. But, as any good researcher knows, there is always a well-agreed-upon answer to questions people ask. So, we investigated further, looking for the precise answer to the question.

We found it not surprising that there is a mathematical solution to the question and it’s simple. The formula for finding distance to the horizon is the square root of height x 1.17. If you want to know the distance to the horizon from sea level, you need to know your own height. Once you know your height, you can put that data point into two formulas. The first is a simple solution that is acceptable for discussion on the hiking trail; the second is the precise answer for you scientists and purists.

An example for the simple solution: if you are 6 feet tall (standing on the sand looking at the horizon), all you do is find the square root of 6, which is 2.44, which translates into 2.44 viewing miles to the horizon. So the precise answer is to multiply 2.44 miles by 1.17, which is 2.85 viewing miles to the horizon.

If you are at the following points in the Reserve, the distance to the horizon is as follows:

	Height: Feet	Viewing Distance: Miles
West Overlook:	341	18.4
Red Butte:	311	17.6
Razor Point:	128	11.3
Yucca Point:	101	10.1

This information is just one more data point to add to your docent interpretive toolbox.

Creepy Critters

by Kathy Dickey

Docents and members of the public, including several children, enjoyed the latest Nature Discovery Series lecture and live insect demonstration at the TPSNR Pavilion on October 16. Johnson Jou and Joy Inton’s presentation of “Creepy Critters at Torrey Pines” was fun and engaging for all ages. Hanging spider decorations added to the spookiness.



The speakers partitioned their lecture into different scary topics. The “Vampires” section included mosquitos and the blood-red pigment from cochineal. Did you know that mosquitos prefer to bite people with type O blood, females, people out exercising and those with increased carbon dioxide? Van Gogh’s red pigment for his paintings was made from cochineal. The red carminic acid pigment is normally used by the insects to repel ants.

The “Ghosts” section included monarch butterflies, and the focus of the “Demons” section was the diabolical ironclad beetle that has the toughest exoskeleton of all the insects. It can survive having a car drive over it!

Trapdoor spiders and antlions were the characters in the “Jump Scares” section, with some scary videos too. “Pain” had harvester ants, velvet ants, and the tarantula hawk wasp, the worst pain inducer. Did you know that a velvet ant’s legs can open a lizard’s mouth?

“Curses” and “Psychological Creepiness” was filled with arachnids. The black widow spider prefers to live near wood and stays away from anything white so it can hide. It tends to live on a messy web near the ground. Researchers are investigating the venom as a treatment for Alzheimer’s disease. Tarantulas are scary looking, but they are actually quite fragile and timid.

At the end, Johnson and Joy shared some of their live creepy critters with the audience.

Next month, in honor of Native American Month, we are very lucky that the Nature Discovery Series will be hosted by Stan Rodriguez, a Kumeyaay elder of the Santa Ysabel band and a professor at Cal State University San Marcos and at Kumeyaay Community College. We will meet at the

Pavilion on November 20 at 3 pm to hear his fabulous Kumeyaay stories and songs.

We take a break in December, and then in January will enjoy Jane Barger's Gray Whale presentation on the 15th at 3 pm.



October CEED Event: The Bee Monitoring Program

by Cresencio Torres

The fifth CEED event of the year, the Bee Monitoring Program, brought together small teams of TPDS docents who were tasked with walking predetermined transects within the Reserve to determine the start and endpoints and identifying plant species along the trails that attract bees. In addition, Tom Barnes presented a short bee monitoring workshop and distributed bee pictures for identification purposes. A special thank you to **Gabriele Wienhausen**, Heather Henter from Scripps Coastal Reserve, and everyone who supported this event.

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, November 9,
1:00 pm

What: *How to Be a Good Creature: A Memoir in Thirteen Animals* by Sy Montgomery

Amazon says: Understanding someone who belongs to another species can be transformative. No one knows this better than author, naturalist, and adventurer Sy Montgomery. To research her books, Sy has traveled the world and encountered some of the planet's rarest and most



beautiful animals. From tarantulas to tigers, Sy's life continually intersects with and is informed by the creatures she meets. This restorative memoir reflects on the personalities and quirks of thirteen animals — Sy's friends — and the truths revealed by their grace. It also explores vast themes: the otherness and sameness of people and animals; the various ways we learn to love and become empathetic; how we find our passion; how we create our families; coping with loss and despair; gratitude; forgiveness; and most of all, how to be a good creature in the world.

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

December 14: *End of the Megafauna: The Fate of the World's Hugest, Fiercest, and Strangest Animals* by Ross D E MacPhee and Peter Schouten

Bird of the Month: American Avocet

by Jack Friery; photo by Herb Knüfken

Our featured bird this month is the **American Avocet**, *Recurvirostra Americana*. This long-legged wader is 17 or 18 inches long, and weighs 10 to 12 ounces. During breeding season, the American Avocet gains a lovely rusty-colored head and neck (see the bird pictured). In winter, the rusty coloration changes to a grayish white. The American Avocet is commonly found foraging in shallow wetlands, sweeping its upcurved bill side to side through the water to capture aquatic invertebrates.

The American Avocet has a number of unusual characteristics. Although we usually see it near the coast, it retreats to the interior of North America to nest and breed. Speaking of nesting, the female may sometimes lay her eggs in the nest of another bird species (brood parasitism), leaving the care of the egg to the foster parents. And speaking of chicks, American Avocet chicks leave the nest within 24 hours of hatching and can immediately walk, swim, and even dive to escape predators. Finally, the term “avocet” may derive from the dialectal Italian word *avosetta*, and that word ultimately traces to the Latin word *avis*—meaning bird!



Sources: Choate, *The Dictionary of American Bird Names*

allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Avocet/overview

audubon.org/field-guide/bird/american-avocet

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avocet>.

Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: October 2021

Number of species: 73
(+4 other taxa)

Gadwall 6
Mallard 31
Surf Scoter 2
Pied-billed Grebe 1
Western Grebe 1
Mourning Dove 45
White-throated Swift 2
Anna's Hummingbird 17
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird 7
hummingbird sp. 6
Whimbrel 5
Long-billed Curlew 6
Marbled Godwit 3
Least Sandpiper 19
Willet 4
Heermann's Gull 18
Western Gull 16
California Gull 2
Caspian Tern 26

Royal Tern 244
Elegant Tern 186
Common Loon 2
Brandt's Cormorant 300
Double-crested Cormorant 4
Brown Pelican 18
Great Egret 4
Snowy Egret 4
Black-crowned Night-Heron 1
Osprey 3
White-tailed Kite 3
Cooper's Hawk 4
Red-shouldered Hawk 1
Broad-winged Hawk 1
Red-tailed Hawk 8
Nuttall's Woodpecker 14
Northern Flicker 1
American Kestrel 10
Peregrine Falcon 4
Pacific-slope Flycatcher 7
Black Phoebe 22
Say's Phoebe 9
Cassin's Kingbird 10

Hutton's Vireo 1
California Scrub-Jay 15
American Crow 17
Common Raven 9
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 22
swallow sp. 13
Bushtit 46
Wrentit 78
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 5
California Gnatcatcher 13
House Wren 13
Bewick's Wren 12
wren sp. 4
California Thrasher 17
Northern Mockingbird 2
Western Bluebird 4
Hermit Thrush 4
Cedar Waxwing 24
Scaly-breasted Munia 12
House Finch 85
Lesser Goldfinch 26
Dark-eyed Junco 2

White-crowned Sparrow 10
Song Sparrow 19
Lincoln's Sparrow 2
California Towhee 62
Spotted Towhee 14
Western Meadowlark 10
Red-winged Blackbird 10
Orange-crowned Warbler 6
Common Yellowthroat 16
Yellow-rumped Warbler 43
Black-throated Gray Warbler 1
Wilson's Warbler 2
Western Tanager 1

Observers: Marty Hales, Andy Rathbone, Steve Neal, Nancy Richardson, Kathy Dickey, Kathy Estey, Manolo Turner, Robert Turner, Gary Grantham, David Walker, Deborah Walker

View this checklist online at ebird.org/checklist/S96485028

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



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