



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 461

December 2023

Hermit without a Permit

by Dan Hammer

We know that camping is strictly prohibited in TPSNR, but rangers tell us that people occasionally spend the night. If they are well hidden, some folks might even camp out for as long as a week. But *twenty years*?

Incredible as that may sound, Nick Connell did just that. From 1971 to 1990, Nick lived in a cave that he carved out of the sandstone in the cliffs above Flintkote Trail in the eastern part of the Reserve. And he didn't just camp out: Over the years, Nick created a two-room apartment with a carved-in bed, closet, and bookshelves as well as elaborate artwork.



Nick Connell was a religious mystic, champion bodybuilder, and self-taught painter who stumbled upon Torrey Pines and made himself thoroughly at home. We had heard a little about him when former ranger Bob Wohl shared various tales of the Reserve at our November 2013



Holiday Potluck Party



When: Saturday, December 9, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Where: North Beach Parking Lot, TPSNR. (After entering, make an immediate right turn.)

We hope you will join us for our annual holiday party and celebration of our new docent class of 2024, including a potluck lunch. Spouses and significant others are welcome.

Please bring a dish to share. Last name **A-I** for main dishes, **J-R** for appetizers/salads/sides, and **S-Z** for desserts. Some beverages will be provided, or if you wish, bring a beverage of your choice.

And please RSVP (including number of people and dish you intend to bring) to Ann Herbert (see Roster). As our guests, we are also inviting our rangers and park staff, including the maintenance workers. Please remember to welcome them.

See you there.

Connie Jaffe, Linda Brown, and Coach Vance for the 2023 Holiday Party Planning Committee.

docent meeting. And some of us had read the brief sketch that local author Jack Innis included in his book *San Diego Legends*. But Nick Connell, known as “the Torrey Pines Hermit,” remained a mystery. What was he doing here all those years?

At the November TPDS meeting, Jack Innis filled in some fascinating details about the hermit's life.

Nick was born in 1921 in Hudson, NH, a small mill town on the Merrimack River. He was a child of the Great Depression, when people had to “make something, make do, or do without.” (Cont. on pg. 3.)

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Editors@torreypine.org.

Please send postal/
email address changes to:

Torrey Pines Docent Society
1155 Camino Del Mar #404
Del Mar, CA 92014

Attn: Membership or email to

Membership@torreypine.org

Web sites:

TP Docent Society: torreypine.org

TP Conservancy: torreypines.org

Visitor Center phone: **858.755.2063**

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**FLASH - Don't forget to donate
your ZooNooz magazines to the
Museum Shop.**

President's Message

Happy Holidays. 2023 has been a banner year for our Docent Society. *Creating new resources and improving existing ones* would be a concise way to sum up the year. I want to thank the docents who consistently staff the Lodge. Those who worked more than 100 hours over the past year include: **Thomas Holland, Medi Denker, Selma Torres, Franne Fischman, Steve Neal, Gabriele Wienhausen, Joan Simon, Arlene Weinerman, Don McGuire, Ann Heinemann, Gary McCook, and Roger Isaacson.** We celebrated them on October 21 with a luncheon that I think should be an annual tradition. Please be sure to thank them for their service next time you run into them.

As you are aware, staffing the Lodge remains a high priority given its importance to the

Reserve. Our board is currently reviewing potential updates to the standing rules as well as vetting ideas with docents in order to ensure that adequate staffing levels at the Lodge continue. I strongly encourage those who haven't worked at the Lodge to consider working a shift or two next year.

Congratulations should also be extended to our two latest Docents of the Month, **Mukesh Mehta** and **Tony Mondini**. These gentlemen offer a ready smile and a positive attitude as they teach. They make us all better.

Please take the opportunity to visit the QR leaf trail challenge located on the Discovery Trail. This project was two and half years in the making thanks to **Jerry Trust** and **Mark Embree**. When we work a shift at the Reserve, let's encourage our visitors to try it out. It is certainly a fun and insightful exhibit for us to leverage as we educate others about the uniqueness of the Reserve.

Happy Holidays,
Matt Xavier
TPDS President



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(Cont. from pg. 1)

Nick's father held a job on the railroad, but the family barely scraped by. Young Nick hung out with a hobo at the city dump, where he was also fascinated by a hermit who lived in a 4-by-5-foot box and a miser who lived on next to nothing – both influences on Nick's later life in a cave.

When his parents divorced after a stormy marriage, Nick joined the Navy to help support his mother but was soon discharged for "unsuitability." Back home in Hudson, he took odd jobs including quarrying and road work. From time to time, he got work with traveling circuses as a muscleman or aerial artist. He married the first of four wives and fathered the first of four children. Mostly, though, he became obsessed with religion, philosophy, and mythology. By his own account, he studied 250 religions before becoming a Mormon and moving to Salt Lake City.

There he was active in the Mormon church and held down a job, but his obsession with religious mysticism only grew. Every night after work, he came home and closed himself up in his room, working on a book that would encompass all of human knowledge and wisdom. His wife finally left him, saying, "Why don't you go live in a cave?" Which is exactly what he ended up doing.

In 1971, Nick headed west. On a bus ride from LA to San Diego, he sighted the cliffs below Torrey Pines Road. Checking into a seedy hotel, he dreamt of the cliffs and of an old man with a white beard and robes who invited him to live there. He rode a bus up to Torrey Pines, found his spot, and started digging with a Bowie knife and a screwdriver.



At first, Nick's cave was just a shallow shelter from the rain, but he kept digging (now with better tools) until he had built a home. Once he had carved his sandstone furniture, he began painting the cave using mostly bright latex house paint he had scrounged. His main artistic influences appeared to be religious paintings and brightly colored circus wagons.



Every morning, Nick rose early, walked up to Torrey Pines Road, and caught the first bus to Pacific Beach, where he worked out and hung out most of the day at a friend's gym. Sometimes he stopped in La Jolla at the D.G. Wells used bookstore to trade some of the many books he accumulated.

During the 1970s, few visitors found their way to Nick's cave. But eventually it became something of a tourist attraction; one month in 1989, more than 300 visitors signed Nick's guest book. Embracing the role of affable host, Nick was happy to talk philosophy or religion with his guests, though he never proselytized.

As TPSNR's only long-term resident, Nick played a long game of cat and mouse with the rangers. By his own admission, he "went too far" in developing his homesite, and his growing number of visitors littered and trampled the area. The rangers issued plenty of warnings but basically let him be. Ranger Bob Wohl was particularly friendly with Nick.

In 1989, a murder investigation brought Nick's idyll to an end. A man named Chuck Russ murdered his wife, Marilyn, for insurance money. He drove the body in her car down Torrey Pines Road, where he staged an "accident" to make it appear that she had gotten out to inspect a problem and then was run over when her emergency brake failed. But before Chuck fled the scene, he made a huge mistake: he

threw Marilyn's car keys over the cliff. When the police found no keys in the car or on the body, they rappelled down the cliffs and found Nick. When Torrey Pines rangers arrived, they found that police had signed his guest book.

The rangers asked Nick to vacate the cave, but he refused. Two years later, while Nick's friend Bob Wohl was on vacation, the supervising ranger had the cave nearly filled with cement. Before leaving the area, Nick crawled into the cave and rescued six murals by covering them with latex rubber; he then peeled off the latex, rolled up the murals, and took them back to New Hampshire, where he hoped to start a museum in his sister-in-law's back yard.

In 1993, he returned to our area and found a coffee shop/art gallery that displayed his art. He carved another cave in the sandstone cliffs, but it was destroyed in a fire. During this time, he kept in touch with folks in New Hampshire, writing a column called "View from the Cave" for the *Hudson News*.

Nick Connell died in La Jolla in 1994. He is buried in his hometown of Hudson, NH.



If you missed Jack Innis's presentation or want to see it again, [click here](#). If you want to buy his book on Amazon, [click here](#). To read Jeannie Smith's excellent article on Bob Wohl's Torrey Pines tales, [click here](#).

General Meeting Minutes: November 11, 2023

President **Matt Xavier** opened the meeting. More than 60 docents attended.

Speaker

Jack Innis told the story of Nick Connell, the Hermit of Torrey Pines. (See pg. 1.)

QR Code Leaf Challenge

Mark Embree and **Jerry Trust** explained a new interactive visitor activity which they have developed on the Discovery Trail (see pg. 6).

Docent of the Month

Anthony (Tony) Mondini is the December DOM. Tony frequently volunteers at the Lodge and the TIK (see pg. 4).

Birder Updates

David Walker announced the Audubon Society is taking reservations for their annual event. Sign up soon for activities by accessing the San Diego Audubon online as spots fill quickly. The annual Christmas Bird Count is on January 5 (see pg. 10).

Komen Walk for Breast Cancer

The Komen walkers will go through TPSNR on Friday morning, November 17, with docents monitoring the event. The San Diego walk is the largest in the country. The South parking lot and the park road will be closed (see pg. 9).

Mindful Walks

Docent **Santosh Nichani** is now a full-fledged Mindful Walk leader.

Holiday Lodge Decorations

November 28 is decorate-the-Lodge day. All docents are welcome to help. Contact Selma Torres for more details.

Committee Leaders

Kristine Schindler is stepping down from leading the Torrey Pines Road clean-up group and needs a replacement. Roving Interpreters also needs a new leader.

General Meeting Food

The November meeting had fabulous food -- thank you to all who provided it. Those with last names beginning with **T-Z** should bring food for the **January** meeting (the December meeting is our holiday potluck party).

Holiday Potluck Party

Instead of a December meeting, we will have a holiday party in the North Beach parking lot off Carmel Valley Road on December 9 from 11 to 1. There will be live music. Contact **Connie Jaffe** or **Linda Brown** if you would like to help or need more information (see pg. 1).

Next Monthly Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday, December 6

Time: 1 – 3 pm

Place: Children's Pavilion (or docent library, depending on weather or number attending)

Everyone is welcome, but please let a board member know if you're coming.

See pg. 2 for list of board members.

Docent of the Month:

Tony Mondini

Photo by Herb Knufken

I'm originally from New York City, but we moved to the south shore of eastern Long Island when I was a kid. I grew up in a small town on the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by woods, open fields, and the beach. No matter the season, I was often outdoors, exploring the countryside. A lifelong love of nature was inevitable.

I moved around a lot as a toy designer, mostly in California, and decided to retire to the San Diego area in 2017. From my home in La Mesa, I began learning about my new region. Hiking up Cowles Mountain was a favorite pastime. It took me a while to discover Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, visiting for the first time in 2019. What a beautiful and amazing place! I was hooked and came back to hike several more times, making sure to try every trail. It was on a visit in August 2022 that I spotted the Docent Training sign. After chatting with the docents at the TIK, I went home and signed up - one of the best decisions I've ever made!

Since graduating I've enjoyed working at the Lodge and TIK, and being a Roving Interpreter. Recently, I've started to do some Special Walks, which I really like. I'll add other activities in the coming months. Whatever I'm doing at the Reserve, the best part is sharing what I've learned with our visitors, helping to make them aware of what a special place this is. I love their reactions and questions, and it's fun to find out about them as well.

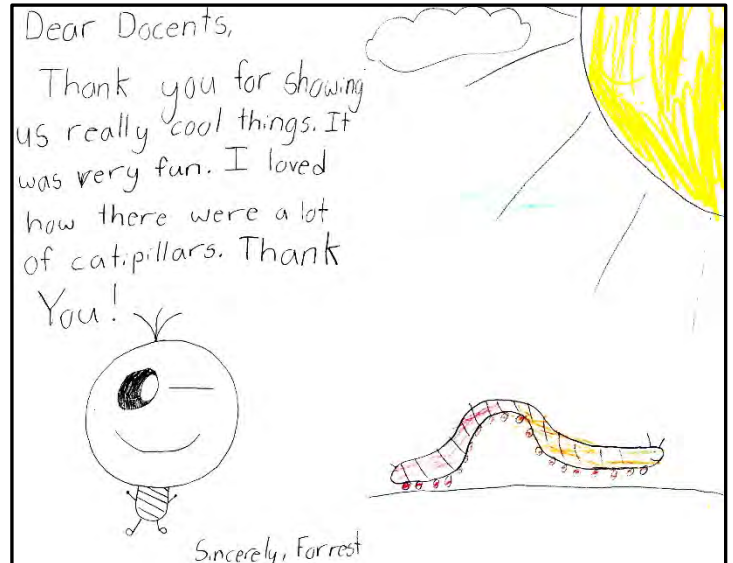
Many thanks to my mentor, **Patty Montgomery**, and all the other docents, park aides and rangers who generously shared their knowledge and enthusiasm. I also want to thank the board: I am honored and grateful, not to mention surprised, to be selected Docent of the Month.



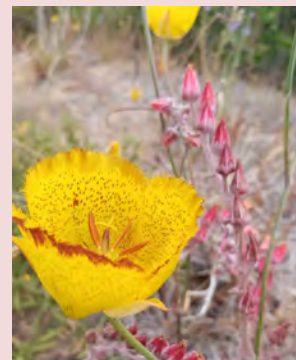
Children's Program

by Janet Ugalde, Program Director

Welcome, new docents! Please join us for the Children's Program spring kickoff on January 11, 2024 at 10am at the Children's Pavilion. Meet some of our seasoned team members and join us as we share tricks of the trail. Children's Program docents pay it forward with the students who visit our Reserve and are repaid tenfold in their kind words of thanks – as you can see below.



Wishing you joyful holidays!



Good Things to Come
by Rhea Bridy

Hope is an essential virtue.
Looking forward to seeing you,
Splendid Mariposa, in the spring. Your buddy,
Dudleya, too. May the winter rains be just
enough for you to razzle-dazzle us once
more. Many blessings will come in the new
year, many thanks.

2024 Dues Are Due!

by Jeannie Smith & Lynne Truong, Membership Coordinators

It's time to renew your membership with the Torrey Pines Docent Society (TPDS). You can leave a **\$25** check payable to TPDS in the Treasurer mailbox in the docent library (in the MEMBERSHIP DUES clasp envelope) or you can mail a check to TPDS, 1155 Camino Del Mar #404, Del Mar, CA 92014-2605.

Also, **be sure** to log your hours in Better Impact (BI) by Dec 31, 2023. Your 2023 service hours determine your membership status within TPDS.

Active: 84 hours

Associate: less than 84 hours - must fill out Associate Member Application

Friends: no service hours required, no parking sticker

If your current status is Active and you won't have 84 hours by the end of the year, you must submit an Associate Application for 2024 and pay your dues to get your parking sticker for 2024. [Click here](#) to download and fill out your application and email it to membership@torreypine.org

If you qualify, your 2024 Volunteers in Parks (VIP) pass will be mailed to you by California State Parks. The criteria and benefits:

VIP District park pass: 100 hours – free day use to all State Parks in the San Diego District

VIP State park pass: 200 hours – free day use at all CA State Parks

Note that your 2023 VIP passes are valid until **March 2024**, due to delay in issuing the VIP passes this year.

Discovery Trail Leaf Challenge

by Mark Embree

At the November general meeting, **Jerry Trust** and I unveiled the Discovery Trail Leaf Challenge. Based on the characteristics of a dichotomous key, the activity exposes Reserve visitors to a variety of leaf characteristics and adaptations. An introductory plaque, complete with a video, introduces participants to the techniques used by leaves to address an environment with limited annual rainfall. It provides instructions for completing each of the 14 stops on of the Challenge using modern technology, including QR codes. Each stop asks the visitor to explore, ponder, and draw conclusions about the leaves of a specific plant. (Subsequent information provides answers to these questions.) A “Fun Facts” section completes each stop.

Through engagement, exploration, and discovery, it is our hope that everyone who invests time in the Leaf Challenge will not only walk away with a greater appreciation for the role of leaves and plants in our threatened environment but also gain a clearer understanding of their role in protecting open areas and parklands for future generations.



Mark and Jerry on the Discovery Trail

What's New in the Reserve

by Louis Sands, State Park Interpreter 1

Vanessa Brock, Laura Chaing, Lila Scott, and Zuzana Volny. What on earth are these four new Senior Park (Interpretive) Aides up to? Once again, I say “Plenty!”

Our expanding State Parks’ interpretive team shares the same primary objective with the Docent Society: to connect visitors with our beloved Reserve. We will satisfy this objective not only by supporting existing interpretive offerings but also by developing new creative opportunities for visitor engagement.

Vanessa has crafted a new children’s coloring/information table at the Visitor Center entitled “Who Lives at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve?” Next time you’re there, please check out her work on the front porch. The kids love it!

Speaking of kids, Zuzana has revived our Junior Ranger program with a vengeance. With the intent of engaging as many children as possible, she has extended the program to include activity throughout the year – expanding access beyond the original schedule during school holidays only. Zuzana’s ultimate goal is to organize a group of Torrey Junior Rangers who will participate in various stewardship projects throughout the year, thereby creating a deeper sense of connection to the Reserve.

Lila has partnered with Docent Society leads to plan relevant continuing education opportunities. Docents who have participated in CEED programs this year know Lila means business ... and fun! But do they know that she's an awesome virtual interpreter, too? In fact, the entire interpretive park aide team presents the "Jaw-Some Great Whites" program four times each week via ZOOM. Through the PORTS (Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students) initiative they bring our offshore great white shark nursery to life for K-2 students throughout California!

Many docents know our latest addition to the park aide team, Laura Chaing, as that amazingly talented docent artist who crafted those beautiful bookmarks for sale in the Visitor Center's gift shop. Stay tuned because Laura's creativity knows no bounds! She is in the process of bringing two new programs to our visitors: nature journaling and citizen science. Go, team!

What Might Have Been (and Fortunately Wasn't)

by Judy Schulman, TPDS Historian

This is the twelfth and final in a series of articles by Judy Schulman about Torrey Pines Lodge, whose 100th anniversary we celebrated this year.

We are lucky that we still have the Lodge today. Twice it has been threatened with removal. During the early 1970s, the Park System wanted to close the Lodge and build a new interpretive center at the southern end of the Reserve. In 1978, there were plans to remove all buildings and replace them with new public facilities at the entrance to the South Beach parking lot. In both cases, local opposition prevented this from happening.

In a 12/24/1978 article, James Britton II, architectural columnist for the *San Diego Union*, came up with his own unique plan. He suggested that the Lodge again become a restaurant, something like the Casa de Pico in Old Town State Park. He wrote, "The parking space in front of the Lodge could be converted to a dining plaza with tables, umbrellas, heaters, a glass fence – and, especially at Christmas time, garlands of tiny lights in the Torrey Pines." My first thought was he obviously wasn't concerned about fire danger with those heaters. My second thought was: Where would visitors park their cars? Britton suggested that all visitors park at the unused portions of UCSD and be shuttled by jitneys.

He also recommended that in 50 years, the Lodge should be torn down and replaced with a modern glass structure. The glass structure was recommended because Britton didn't think that the adobe structure had enough windows to show "superviews." Leaving aside vulnerability to earthquake damage, who would want to clean all those windows?

There have been two restoration projects at the Lodge – the first in 1969 and the second in 1986-87. In 2013, a comprehensive Historic American Buildings Survey was written by Ione Stiegler, a local architect nationally known for historic preservation. There are future plans to renovate again based on this work. Hopefully these new plans will keep the Lodge going so that in 2123 we can celebrate the 200th birthday of the Lodge.

Seabees News

Our volunteer maintenance group, the Seabees, has been busy flying around the Reserve working on a long list of "honey-do's." Recent endeavors have included repairing broken cable and eye-rod trail delineators, filling eroded steps with decomposed granite, maintaining benches, and modifying bicycle racks.

Even though it can be hard work at times, the Seabees do all this with smiles on their faces and laughter from their hearts. So, if you see them on the trail, give them a whistle to let them know you appreciate their work.

Active members: **Thomas Stehlik, Rick Vogel, Mukesh Mehta, Cliff Colwell, Frank Burham, Bill Eckles, and Ingo Renner.**



Thomas, Cliff, and Mukesh repairing eye-rod trail delineator damage *Photo by Ingo Renner*

Contact Ingo if you are interested in joining the group or find things in need of repair around the Reserve.

What's on the Beach? Giant Kelp

by Kathy Dickey

In the 1970s and 80s I used to watch as huge kelp-cutter ships from Kelco Company harvested giant kelp from the Cardiff Reef area offshore. They cut and collected only the top three feet, but that produced tons of kelp for the company, along with huge piles of smelly kelp that washed up on the beaches and attracted flies. At Kelco, the harvested kelp was processed into various kinds of alginates for use in products such as ice cream, cake, salad dressing, toothpaste, and many others. The alginates gave these foods a smooth texture and a uniform consistency. In beer, it helped the foam from collapsing. It was even used in the textile, paint, and ceramic industries. These days, those kelp-cutter ships are gone. So are much of the kelp forests in Cardiff, La Jolla, and Point Loma due to global warming, predators, and loss of nitrates. (If you want to learn more, see Jeannie Smith's article in the May [2021 Torreyana](#), "Endangered Kelp Forests.")

This article will focus on the giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) itself. If you stumble upon a fresh pile (wrack) on the beach, take a moment to explore it closely. You will find a fascinating habitat. It must be a fresh pile, however, or the birds, bugs and other animals on the beach will have picked off all the snails, worms, shark eggs, tiny fish and other bizarre creatures. As kids on the beach, we used to run up to the piles and jump on the pointed bulbs (or floats) to hear them pop. Now I know that they were releasing CO₂ gas.

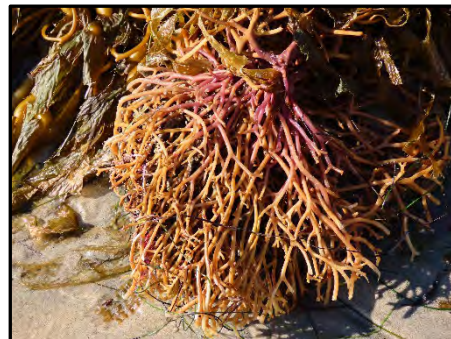


Giant kelp prefers rocky reefs to sandy-bottom sea floors. They begin as microscopic zoospores that develop into juvenile kelp and attach themselves to the sea floor using holdfasts that surround rocks. The kelp can grow up to two feet per day into ocean giants up to 100 feet high. Algae (including kelp) are not plants; they are Protista, although they do contain chlorophyll. They produce spores, not seeds. The algae are split into three groups: green (such as sea lettuce), red (such as coralline algae), and brown. Giant kelp (along with feather boa kelp, bull or Elkhorn kelp and others) are in the brown algae group. It is thought that land plants evolved from kelp. Sea grasses, however, are considered true plants.

The giant kelp's grooved leaves are called blades and its stems called stipes. The whole body of a kelp is the thallus. The hollow floats (also called pneumatocysts) on the kelp stipes and blades provide buoyancy and pull the blades toward the ocean surface to provide more sunlight and photosynthesis. Most interesting are the holdfasts, root-like structures that wrap themselves around heavy rocks to anchor the kelp to the bottom.

Kelp forests grow best where water temperatures remain below 70° F most of the time; 30° to 60° is best. Moderate waves and currents help the kelp community, but forceful ones are destructive. Kelp usually live about two or three years, but some can live up to eight years.

Rockfish, garibaldi, bass, abalone, spiny lobster, crabs, tiny shrimp, and many other creatures find a sheltered home in the kelp forest. Holdfasts (below), the convoluted structures that anchor kelp to the bottom, shelter more than 150 species of invertebrates seeking hiding places, food, and living spaces. Among these are hermit crabs, clams, mussels, worms, slugs, and many others. If you slice open a holdfast, you may find



some spider-like creatures called spiny brittle stars (*Ophiothrix spiculata*) inside. The net result is that more than 800 species have been identified in and around kelp forest communities of southern California.

But the giant kelp also has predators. Floating microscopic hydroids and bryozoans attach to the blades and form white or gray colonies. Marine snails and kelp crabs eat kelp, as do pink and purple sea urchins. The urchins are the worst predators and can denude entire forests. Unfortunately, the sea otter and sea star populations that once helped control the number of urchins have been reduced in California.

Kelp forests in California have suffered detrimental impacts over the last several decades, including dramatic losses in the past ten years, especially during warmer El Niño years. But there is some good news: a group called Sea Trees is working with scientists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography conducting research on the best methods to restore the kelp forests. They will test various transplant methods and identify more thermally tolerant strains.

I attended an excellent class called "Seaweeds" at Oasis adult school. Paul Detwiler gave me much of the information for this article. He told us that some algae can be farmed for biofuel and bioplastics and will produce 60 times more than plants. Kelp takes CO₂ out of the air and could offset all of U.S. carbon production if there were an area of kelp the size of Connecticut. Perhaps more urchin-eating sheephead fish could be introduced to lower the number of urchins. Another idea is to market the urchins to Asia.

References:

Judith Connor and Charles Baxter, *Kelp Forests*, 1989, Monterey Bay Foundation.

Ian Sheldon, *Seashore of Southern California*, 2007, Lone Pine Publishing.

San Diego to Bend

by Donna Close

Editor's note: Before Donna moved to Oregon, the TPDS Board presented her with a Special Heart Award as thanks for her many years of active contribution to the Reserve. One of our keenest observers of nature, she was a frequent contributor to these pages.

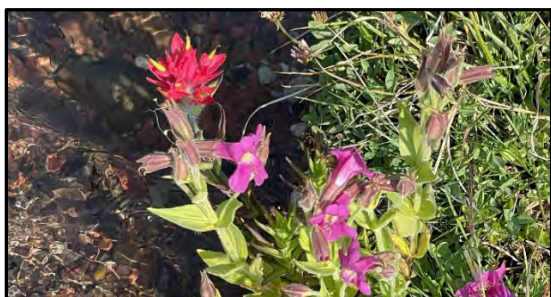
This summer my husband and I sold our home in San Diego and moved to Bend, Oregon. While technically the high desert, we are surrounded by ponderosa pines, with deer and even quail wandering in the neighborhoods.

As in San Diego, I live near a park. Shevlin Park has miles of biking and hiking trails. Though the park has no ocean view, it does have Tumalo Creek running through it. The lower trail along the creek is lined with quaking aspens, and watching them turn color was a treat. Both upper and lower trails have ponderosa pines, Douglas fir, western larch, juniper, and spruce. The western larch is unusual in that it grows only in the mountains of north-central and eastern Oregon and is one of the only cone-bearing trees to drop its needles every year (they are turning yellow and standing out now that the aspens have lost their leaves).



Ponderosa pines and western larch

Green-leaf manzanitas, wax currants, white ceanothus (snowbrush), snowberry, and Douglas spirea all grow near the larch. Arriving in mid-August, I missed out on the peak bloom time and look forward to seeing what pops out in the spring and early summer.



Giant red Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*) and Lewis' monkeyflower (*Erythranthe lewisii*)

When we first arrived here, before the weather turned cold, I got in a few hikes in the nearby mountains, up to 7,800 feet in elevation. I found subalpine monkeyflower and Lewis' monkeyflower as well as sulphur buckwheat, cobwebby paintbrush, and Tolmie's saxifrage, to name a few. On my many hikes here, I will say that unlike in California, there is no trash along the trails. Of course, the number of people using them is a tiny percentage of those visiting Torrey Pines and other California parks.



Green-leaf manzanita

We were fortunate to find a home across the street from a park with a large pond and trails that connect to miles of others. I can sit on my front porch and watch not only people but also Red-wing Blackbirds, Canada Geese, and Mallards. With a water feature in our new yard and a hill with natives behind us, we have been able to enjoy American Robins (feeding on the abundance of juniper berries), California Quail, Golden-crowned Sparrows, American Goldfinch, and Dark-eyed Juncos. I am curious to see who stays and who migrates this winter.

As I write this, it is early November and nighttime temperatures have dropped into the 20s. A little frost and a brief dusting of snow have already occurred -- though this being Bend, it will most likely warm up in the coming weeks. We definitely are not in San Diego anymore.

Komen Walkers Enjoy a Sunny Day at Torrey Pines

by Ann Smith Mercandetti

Joan Simon, Lore Heath, Mediha Denker, Marian Edelbrock, Gabriele Wienhausen, Rosemary Wareham, Sandy Levin, Irene Larrimore, Lynne Truong, Rosemary Smith, Karen Gordon, Carolyn MacLeane, Myrna Trust, Janice Barnard, Darlene Farnes, Santosh Nichani, Laura Jefferson, Betsy Seible, Thomas Holland, and Jean Kelleher volunteered to be at the Reserve by 7:30 am on Friday, November 17, to greet and monitor the participants in the Three Day Komen Walk for Breast Cancer as they came through TPSNR. Early weather reports had predicted rain, but it turned out to be a beautiful, sunny morning at the Reserve.

After three years of observation, from 2010 to 2012, docent monitoring of this event began in 2013. Before that, feathers, food (a banana peel was even draped over a young

Torrey's branch), and trash had been left along the 1½ mile park road. In the intervening years, California State Parks in Sacramento have also become more aware of our situation. When walkers from across the United States come to participate in the Komen Walk in San Diego these days, Torrey Pines docents greet and educate them. Most walkers have no idea the Torreys are our nation's rarest pine trees.

Many, many thanks to this year's early-rising docents!



Photo by Marian Edelbrock



Photo by Evelyn Vance

The Christmas Bird Count

by David Walker

Since 1900, the National Audubon Society has sponsored the Christmas Bird Count. By setting it in the winter, the populations of endemic and migratory birds can be estimated. A circle with a diameter of 15 miles marks the boundary of each count area. San Diego residents participate in one or more of seven different counts across the county between December 14 and January 5. The Docent Society participates in the Rancho Santa Fe count, which includes the Reserve. Last year a total of 105 people participated in this count and observed 181 species of birds.

This year, this count will take the place of our regular January bird count and is scheduled for **January 5, 2024**. More details will follow!

Museum Shop Spotlight

by Nancy Walters

Once again, a group of crafty docents has created a collection of mini basket ornaments for sale in the shop. Each basket is woven with the same coiling technique used by the Kumeyaay people, which takes several hours. The baskets are then uniquely decorated with nature themes and put on a tree in the shop for sale. We will have more coming in December, but these basket ornaments sell out quickly so come in soon to see them!



Torrey Pines Book Club

We will continue to meet via Zoom at our regularly scheduled time: the second Tuesday of each month at 1 pm. Please notify **Annette Ring** if you plan to participate or need any extra help getting connected.

When: Tuesday, December 12, 1:00 pm

What: Dec. 12: *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese

Amazon says:

NATIONAL BESTSELLER From the author of *The Covenant of Water*: An enthralling family saga of Africa and America, doctors and patients, exile and home. "Filled with mystical scenes and deeply felt characters.... Verghese is something of a magician as a novelist." — USA Today

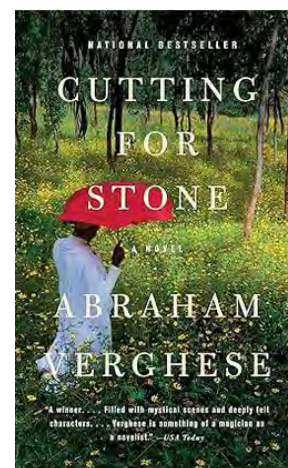
Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash British surgeon. Orphaned by their mother's death and their father's disappearance, bound together by a preternatural connection and a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution.

Moving from Addis Ababa to New York City and back again, *Cutting for Stone* is an unforgettable story of love and betrayal, medicine, and ordinary miracles—and two brothers whose fates are forever intertwined.

This sweeping, emotionally riveting novel "shows how history and landscape and accidents of birth conspire to create the story of a single life" (Los Angeles Times).

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

January 9: *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art* by James Nestor.



Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: November 2023

Number of species: 75
(+1 other taxa)

Greater White-fronted Goose 4	Caspian Tern 2	Loggerhead Shrike 3	Lincoln's Sparrow 7
Cinnamon Teal 7	Black-vented Shearwater 200	California Scrub-Jay 25	California Towhee 87
Gadwall 1	Brandt's Cormorant 32	American Crow 39	Spotted Towhee 12
American Wigeon 12	Double-crested Cormorant 5	Common Raven 35	Western Meadowlark 2
Mallard 21	Brown Pelican 17	swallow sp. 2	Red-winged Blackbird 4
Bufflehead 5	Snowy Egret 12	Bushtit 77	Orange-crowned Warbler 23
Red-breasted Merganser 6	Green Heron 1	Wrentit 87	Common Yellowthroat 27
California Quail 5	Great Egret 1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 4	Yellow-rumped Warbler 122
Eared Grebe 1	Great Blue Heron 1	Red-breasted Nuthatch 4	
Western Grebe 27	White-faced Ibis 8	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 3	Observers: Andy
Mourning Dove 18	Turkey Vulture 1	California Gnatcatcher 4	Rathbone, Donna
White-throated Swift 20	Osprey 1	House Wren 35	Mancuso, Lisa Kakone,
Anna's Hummingbird 38	Cooper's Hawk 4	Bewick's Wren 17	Robert James, Tsaiwei
Allen's Hummingbird 12	Red-shouldered Hawk 4	California Thrasher 17	Olee, Kathy Estey, Debbie
Virginia Rail 1	Red-tailed Hawk 9	Northern Mockingbird 2	Regottaz, Steve Neal,
Killdeer 5	Belted Kingfisher 2	Western Bluebird 3	Robert Turner, Manolo
Semipalmated Plover 10	Nuttall's Woodpecker 10	Hermit Thrush 2	Turner, Gary Grantham,
Long-billed Curlew 2	Northern Flicker 4	Scaly-breasted Munia 12	Reed Buell, Dylan
Heermann's Gull 26	American Kestrel 8	House Finch 114	Hardenbrook, Monica
Western Gull 29	Peregrine Falcon 5	Lesser Goldfinch 34	Stupaczuk, David Walker
	Black Phoebe 20	Dark-eyed Junco 8	
	Say's Phoebe 10	White-crowned Sparrow 70	
	Cassin's Kingbird 15	Savannah Sparrow 2	
	Hutton's Vireo 1	Song Sparrow 41	

View this checklist online at ebird.org/checklist/S152636255

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



Torrey Pines Docent Society
1155 Camino Del Mar #404
Del Mar, CA 92014
(858) 755-2063
torreypine.org