



# TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR  
TORREY PINES  
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 462

January 2024

## Successful New Venue for Docent Holiday Party

by Joan R. Simon; photos by Herb Knufken

What a difference a year makes! The sun was shining, and the temperature was delightfully warm as approximately 150 TPDS docents gathered on December 9 for our annual holiday potluck party. The parking lot at the North Beach, a new venue this year, was transformed into a festive party setting. Tables were decorated with centerpieces of pine needles, berries, and local plants, all beautifully arranged by **Gale Darling**. **John Bowe** played holiday and popular favorites on his keyboard work station and serenaded the group throughout the event. And then there was the food – not just plentiful but oh, so delicious! Everyone agreed the Holiday Party Committee from the class of 2023, spearheaded by **Coach Vance** (2022), deserved a big “thank you” for putting on such a wonderful event: **Linda Brown** and **Connie Jaffe** (co-leaders), **Bob Friedman**, **Alan Myers**, **Gale Darling**, **Santosh Nichani**, **Maurice Taitano**, **Ann Herbert**, and **Laura Jefferson**.

**Susan Elliott** thanked her fellow trainers: **Janet Ugalde**, **Myrna Trust**, and Interpreter 1 **Louis Sands**. Before introducing the 18 new docents, Susan told us a little bit about the 2024 class. More than half of them are bilingual and a few are multilingual, covering seven languages in all. Professionally, there are two deputy attorneys general, a nurse of 52 years, a computer professor, a marine geophysicist, a school bus driver, an aerospace engineer, two biologists, and a social worker. There are hikers, birders, marathoners, a horse rider (and a unicycle rider), a tango dancer, and a *plein air* artist. Receiving their docent badges were **Umesh Bellur**, **Susan Daniel**, **Ray DiEsposti**, **Karen Gordon**, **Brian Griffith**, **Allan Heryet**, **Dee Huang**, **Renata Janik**, **Sherry Ledakis**, **Carolyn MacLean**, **Mary Makowski**, **Barney Moore**, **James Moore**, **Olivia Ruiz**, **Ed Saade**, **Janice Taylor**, **Ann Tomczak**, and **CJ Vivona**.

(Photo of new docents on pg. 8.)

## Docent General Meeting [Via Zoom]

**Date:** Saturday, January 13, 9:00 am

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

**Speaker:** Chris Wagner, Cultural and Natural Resources Manager, March Air Reserve Base; Non Vascular Curator, UC Riverside

**Topic:** Lichens and Bryophytes of Torrey Pines.

Lichens, a partnership of fungi and algae, are typically the first life forms to colonize newly exposed rock. They thus play a vital role in initiating the growth and development of new habitats for plants and animals. February 2023 marked the start of a multi-year survey of lichens, as well as bryophytes (worts and mosses), at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve. Questions being addressed include the impact of climate change on the lichen and bryophyte populations in the Reserve and whether, as suggested by preliminary evidence, some lichens are already becoming extinct in San Diego County.

**Refreshments:** BYO; **February 10 Meeting:** T - Z

Park staff – including rangers, maintenance workers, and park aides – joined in the celebration. Ranger Stephanie Adams presented the Superior Achievement Award from California State Parks to **Lynne Small** for her highly successful leadership of the Whacky Weeders since 2011.



(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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Rodriguez

**Interpreter 1:** Louis Sands

**Sr. Interpretive Park Aides:** Vanessa  
Brock, Laura Chaing, Lila Beth Scott, and  
Zuzana Volny

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

## President's Message

**H**appy New Year, fellow docents! 2023 has been a banner year for our society in more ways than one. I plan to present the 2023 annual report at our *General Meeting* on January 13, which will be held via Zoom. Please mark your calendars!



I want to take the opportunity to talk about the Docent of the Year (DOY) for 2023, **Gabriele Wienhausen**. Six docents were nominated for the 2023 DOY Award. However, there were 15 written nominations for Gabriele to be considered for our most prestigious annual award. Five of those were lengthy and heartfelt rationales for nominating her. Her participation is felt in every corner of the Reserve, from Whacky Weeders to Lodge hosting to the Children's Program to public walks. She is indeed an extraordinary person. What sets her apart is her ability to collaborate with others to create new programs such as the WannaBees and the BLIK. I foresee future projects and programs that will also have her fingerprints on them. Her style is positive, thoughtful, kind and considerate. She is an inspiration to us all. In my humble opinion, she makes us all better. Please congratulate her the next time you see her.

I want to also mention our Docent of the Month for January, **Susan Elliott**. Susan has been a top performer year after year, when she has contributed significantly to both the Children's Program and the Docent Trainee Program. She also finds time to volunteer at the BLIK, in the Lodge, and as a Roving Interpreter.

As we look forward, 2024 promises to be a year of renewal and change for our Society. Docents will be asked to vote on whether to approve a rule change that will keep our Visitor Center and Children's Program fully staffed. Stay tuned for a future email with the text of the new rule as well as the process by which to vote on it. Happy trails to you.

Cheers,

Matt Xavier

TPDS President

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**Susan Elliott** was named Docent of the Month for her work with the Children's Program and the docent training class over the past few years. **Gabriele Wienhausen** was chosen as Docent of the Year. She has been involved with practically every activity at the Reserve, from Lodge hosting and public walks to the WannaBees and Whacky Weeders.

President **Matt Xavier** had plenty of docents to thank and honor. First were the docent mentors who worked long hours assisting the trainees: **Steve Neal, Pao Chau, Matt Xavier, Dinah Carl, Coach Vance, Kathy Dickey, Cres Torres, Mark Lippard, Stu Rosenwasser, Ron Styn, Craig Carlisle, and Ingo Renner.**

Then the docents who have earned Lifetime awards were welcomed: **Marsha Arones, Jane Barger, Pao Chau, Allen Holden, Mona Kuczenski, Ingo Renner, Betsy Seible, and Arlene Weinerman.**

A bottle of wine was presented to docents who had the most hours in four important service areas – TIK: **Evelyn ("Coach") Vance**; BLIK: **Rosemary Wareham**; Children's Program: **Susan Elliott**; and Lodge hosting: **Medi Denker.**

The party ended with the goals for the event met: an outdoor venue with plenty of space for participants and their cars, a festively decorated setting, fabulous food, music (a first!), and an inclusive gathering that welcomed park staff along with docents.

On to next year!



## Docent of the Month: Susan Elliott

*Photo by Herb Knufken*

I am a California native who has been hiking in Torrey Pines, Yosemite, and the Sequoias since I was a small child. Dad would give us a canteen, an apple and a PB&J, and off we would go on the next hiking adventure. I loved going down the very narrow Fat Man's Misery Trail at Torrey Pines. My mom had her coffee thermos filled at the little cafe inside the Lodge. The fog was so enchanting. Some days it would barrel up the canyons dropping a silvery, mystical curtain over the trails.

After I retired, I became a docent at San Elijo with a lot of help from **Barbara Wallach**. She encouraged me to become a docent at Torrey Pines. It is a pleasure to work with the incredible people in the Docent Society. See you on the trails!



## Docent of the Year: Gabriele Wienhausen

Photo by Herb Knufken

**D**ocent of the Year: What an incredible Christmas present and huge surprise. (I still don't know how the Board managed to make this decision without my knowing it.) I am humbled and honored to receive this recognition. Thank you, fellow docents, for your nomination!



Receiving this honor is an invitation to reflect on the six-plus years since I became a docent in 2017. At that time, I was still working at UC San Diego. Every time I ran into Jeff Elman, he would cajole and encourage me to follow in his footsteps and become a docent. He thought that my excuse that "I am still working and don't have time" was just rubbish. Given my love of nature, I didn't resist for long. The docent training under **Jeannie Smith** was exciting and intellectually stimulating but also overwhelming. My mentor, **Peter Domaille**, generously shared his wisdom, knowledge, skills, and expertise.

I love the breadth of programs and activities in which Torrey Pines docents can get involved. Initially, leading a Public Walk or being a Lodge host was too intimidating to attempt. Instead, I began by working at the TIK, hoping to learn from experienced docents how to engage visitors. What I also learned, however, was how generous and welcoming docents are and how much they love to teach and mentor newly minted docents. I also learned a great deal from the excited and curious boys and girls in the Children's Program - they taught me appreciation for the simple things too easily taken for granted.

I could not believe my luck when **Lynne Small**, during the COVID period, responded positively to my inquiry about joining the Whacky Weeders, one of the only groups to have access to the Reserve at that time. Lynne is truly an inspiring leader, spending countless hours walking the Reserve, identifying invasive plants, and developing response and removal plans for the Weeders.

A big shout-out to **Mark Embree**, who several years ago suggested developing a historical panorama walk. The

goal was to bring the history of the Reserve alive by impersonating Charles Parry, Ellen Browning Scripps, Guy Fleming, and Frances Burkholder, the first concessionaire of the Lodge restaurant. Together with **Barbara Wallach, Joe Meyer, Judy Schulman, Jerry Trust, Gretchen Embree, Kimberly Gambling**, and me, Mark led a year-long effort, culminating in a presentation to the 2019 docent training class.

More recently, I have had the opportunity to help launch three new programs: Mindful Walks, the WannaBees, and the BLIK. The first of these was inspired by the Mindfulness in Nature program designed by former docent Gloria Garrett. A group of us (**Cres Torres, Lynne Truong, Sandy Levin**, and I) envisioned a walk that would draw upon the elements of nature (for example, clouds, sun, air, flowers, insects, and water) and on the striking natural beauty of the Torrey Pines Reserve. Our goal was to bring conscious awareness to our senses, connect us to the present moment, and deepen our relationship to our surroundings. That was the birth of Mindful Walks at Torrey Pines.

In San Diego, the more than 700 different species of native bees have a vital role as pollinators but are threatened both by invasive species and by climate change. Although monitoring bees has traditionally involved systematic collection and microscopic examination, recent improvement in photography and increased knowledge of the physical features of native bees have enabled bee identification at the genus and even species level from photographs taken in the wild. As a result, in March 2022, a group of us launched a Citizen Science project: a Bee Monitoring Project run by the Torrey Pines WannaBees (docents **Robert James, Tina Tong, Karen Fraser, Cres Torres, Stu Rosenwasser**, and I, together with volunteers Scott Henry, Craig Chaddock, and Tom Barnes). We WannaBees track native bees by taking photographs of bees (and the plants they visit) and uploading them to the community science platform [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org). Just like the Whacky Weeders and the Bird Count team, the Torrey Pines WannaBees help to preserve and protect our Reserve.

This year I was part of the core team (along with **Malana Tabak**), under the leadership of **Rosemary Wareham**, that developed the Beach and Lagoon Interpretive Kiosk (BLIK) at the North Beach parking lot. The BLIK is teaching visitors about the ocean, the beach, and the adjacent Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and their resident creatures.

I am grateful every day for the many opportunities to contribute to the Docent Society, including serving on the Board. Reflecting on the Docent of the Year recognition is humbling, as individual recognition is impossible without acknowledging the contributions and accomplishment of the entire community of docents. As **Coach Vance** reminds us, "We are a team; it's a team effort." I am honored to count myself a member of the team.

## Children's Program Spring Kickoff

Thursday, January 11, 10 am  
Children's Pavilion  
Share "tricks of the trail"  
with seasoned team members

## BLIK Update

by Rosemary Wareham

BLIK is "going dark" for December and January. We will mostly be closed, but trained docents are welcome to open any time for special events or even if it is just a low tide and a nice day and you want to spend time at the BLIK. Please just let **Rosemary Wareham**, **Gabriele Wienhausen** or **Malana Tabak** know of your plans and record your hours in Better Impact.

We now have the following lineup for the BLIK series:

- Jan 4: Sue Smith – El Niño
- Feb 1: Mike Hastings – Los Peñasquitos Lagoon: Restoration status; Successes and Challenges
- March 7: **Malana Tabak** – Tides
- April 4: **Mukesh Mehta** – Geology of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon
- May 2: TBD. We hope to schedule one of our new docent graduates to speak.

Watch for more details just prior to each event.



## The New Junior Ranger Activity Book

by Zuzana Volny

As we have all seen, kids and parents are enthusiastically inquiring about Junior Ranger activities at Torrey Pines. This includes our new Junior Ranger activity book. We have long distributed the handbook provided by California State Parks, and while sufficient for a general understanding of our state and its parks, it lacks facts and information specific to our park.

Given the unique setting of our Reserve, nestled in a biodiversity hotspot in San Diego, I recognized early on in my role as a park aide the need for a more tailored and unique experience.

Drawing inspiration from other parks' Junior Ranger books, I took the initiative to write a book that goes beyond the ordinary.

The vision for this project took a significant leap forward when Senior Park Aide Vanessa Brock joined our team earlier this year. Observing her incredible artistic talents first hand, I realized we had found the perfect illustrator to bring this activity book to completion. After weeks of dedicated effort and collaboration, we now proudly present the finalized copy, ready to ignite the curiosity of our Junior Rangers.

This initiative isn't just about a book; it's an exclusive journey into the fascinating world of Torrey Pines. Designed for ages 4-15+, it offers captivating exercises tailored to specific age groups, making learning both fun and meaningful.

Next time you step into the Lodge, take the opportunity to pick up a copy and let the exploration begin!



Vanessa holding the Jr. Ranger Booklet





Senior Interpretive Park Aide Zuzana Volny is shown reciting the Junior Ranger Pledge with two boys who completed filling out the new Junior Ranger booklet on December 10. These new activity books are another way for children who are not able to participate in one of our regular week-long programs to learn more about the Reserve. The boys in the photo, grandsons of docent Joan Simon, were visiting from out of town. They learned a lot and had a great time!



Cloth patch award for Jr. Rangers



### Grateful

by Rhea Bridy

It's that time. Winter-Spring.  
The sage scrub rejoices.  
Renewal is at hand.  
Grateful.

## What's on the Beach?

### Pacific Sand Crabs

by Kathy Dickey

On a warm day I was on the beach at low tide with my grandson, age 6. As the waves receded, we were searching along the wet sand for little Vs along with lots of bubbles. When we found evidence of sand crabs, we dug into the sand about four inches down with our little shovels and flipped the sand into our buckets. We had no luck about 90% of the time, but if we did get one, we examined it carefully before we put it back in the water and watched. It surprised us by swimming down into the water and then into the sand *backwards*. Not far away, shorebirds were probing in the wet sand in the same general area, looking for their sand crab breakfast.



Photo of sand crab from Shutterstock

Sand crabs (*Emerita analoga*) are about 1.4 inches long, gray in color and shaped like a flattened football. These fascinating creatures have no claws, but they have five pairs of hairy legs and three swimmerets (pleopods). They prefer sandy beaches with no rocks. The females are larger than the males, and they often carry clusters of orange eggs (up to 45,000!) beneath their reflexed tails. With each wave, the sand crabs move a short distance to a new spot and burrow backwards quickly, facing the sea, leaving only their eyes (on stems like periscopes) and their V-shaped breathing antennae showing above the sand. A second pair of antennae collect plankton and detritus as the wave washes over them. There is just enough time before the next wave arrives to withdraw the antennae and remove the food into the mouthpart. Sand crabs reproduce in their first and second year and have a lifespan of up to three years. They molt every year or so, so you might find their exoskeletons on the beach.



Photo by Kathy Dickey

Like many ocean animals, sand crabs have good years and bad years. They live in colonies and move closer to the surface of the sand during warm-water months. Huge waves can suck the little crabs out to sea. Predators include many surf fish, such as the barred surf perch and corbina. Shorebirds can deplete the colonies. Sand crabs are also commonly used as bait by fishermen.

#### References:

Pacific Coast Crabs and Shrimps by Gregory Jensen, 1995.

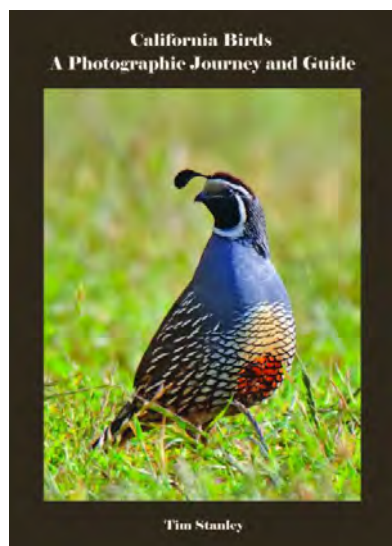
Sam Hinton, Seashore Life of Southern California, 1969, U. of Calif. Press

[wildcoast.org/week-5-pacific-sand-crab-emerita-analoga/](http://wildcoast.org/week-5-pacific-sand-crab-emerita-analoga/)

## Museum Shop Spotlight

by Nancy Walters

The shop would like to introduce you to our most recently added book: *California Birds: A Photographic Journey and Guide* by Tim Stanley. This book has gorgeous photos and notable descriptions that our visitors and docents will want to explore. A perfect gift for any bird lover!



## Creature Feature: San Diegan Legless Lizard (*Anniella stebbinsi*)

by Laura Chaing

[This is the first in a series of columns featuring creatures that Senior Interpretive Park Aide Laura Chaing sees along the trail.]

Hiking at Torrey Pines SNR is always full of surprises! Don't forget to look down at the sandy trails for little reptiles like this lovely fellow: the San Diegan legless lizard. Though legless lizards typically live underground as a strategy to hide from predators, on rare occasions they can be found under logs or leaf litter as well. I was lucky enough to find one in the middle of the Guy Fleming Trail loop during a Children's Program



hike with a group of hawk-eyed fourth graders. Imagine my surprise when they called out and pointed at a "baby snake!" and this little one was slithering in the sand.

Legless lizards are small reptiles, and as their name describes, do not have legs! The San Diegan legless lizard is quite small, perhaps 4 to 7 inches long from snout to vent. Just like lizards, they can lose and regrow their tails to aid in escape from predators. Other traits that distinguish legless lizards from snakes are eyelids – lizards have eyelids and will blink, while snakes do not. Our local species enjoys coastal sand dunes, rocky hillsides, lowland grasslands, and woodlands, searching for spiders and insects (adults and larvae) to snack on. As with many of our other native species, the range of San Diegan legless lizards is threatened by habitat loss. The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) has not assessed this species for its Red List, but just like many of our threatened and endangered plants, the San Diegan legless lizard's range is restricted to Southern California and Northern Baja California and may be at risk of extinction.



Michelson, M. (2013, September 17). *California legless lizards*. California Academy of Sciences. Retrieved December 20, 2023 from [calacademy.org/explore-science/california-legless-lizards](http://calacademy.org/explore-science/california-legless-lizards)

Schechter Natural History. (n.d.) *San Diegan legless lizard*. Schechter Natural History's Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians. Retrieved December 20, 2023 from [schechterguides.com/herp-guide/species/anniella-stebbinsi](http://schechterguides.com/herp-guide/species/anniella-stebbinsi)

## TPDS Graduating Class of 2024 at the December 9 Holiday Party



### Front row:

Barney Moore, Mary Makowski, Sherry Ledakis, Susan Daniel and CJ Vivona

### Second row:

Via Ruiz, Ann Tomczak, Janice Taylor, Carolyn MacLean, Dee Huang, Karen Gordon, Umesh Bellur

### Third row:

Jim Moore, Ed Saade, Allan Heryet, Ray DiEsposti

### Missing:

Brian Griffith and Renata Janik

### Christmas Bird Count

The January bird count will be held on January 5 in support of the Rancho Santa Fe Christmas Bird Count. All of our groups will count birds on the same day instead of spreading days out over a week. Consequently, we may need more folks to help as some of the leaders normally handle more than one area. Please let **David Walker** know if you are interested in helping on this count.

## Torrey Pines Book Club

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

**When:** Tuesday, Jan. 9, 1:00 pm

**What:** *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art* by James Nestor

Amazon says:

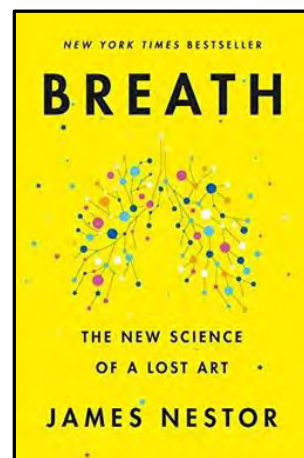
There is nothing more essential to our health and well-being than breathing: take air in, let it out, repeat twenty-five thousand times a day. Yet, as a species, humans have lost the ability to breathe correctly, with grave consequences.

Journalist James Nestor travels the world to figure out what went wrong and how to fix it. The answers aren't found in pulmonology labs, as we might expect, but in the muddy digs of ancient burial sites, secret Soviet facilities, New Jersey choir schools, and the smoggy streets of São Paulo. Nestor tracks down men and women exploring the hidden science behind ancient breathing practices like Pranayama, Sudarshan Kriya, and Tummo and teams up with pulmonary tinkerers to scientifically test long-held beliefs about how we breathe.

Modern research is showing us that making even slight adjustments to the way we inhale and exhale can jump-start athletic performance; rejuvenate internal organs; halt snoring, asthma, and autoimmune disease; and even straighten scoliotic spines. None of this should be possible, and yet it is.

All TPDS docents are welcome. Meetings usually last an hour and a half.

**February 13:** *The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet* by Jeff Goodell



## Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: December 2023

Number of species: 76  
(+4 other taxa)

American Wigeon 38  
Mallard 17  
Northern Pintail 54  
teal sp. 12  
Lesser Scaup 8  
Bufflehead 14  
Hooded Merganser 1 two  
found in lagoon  
Red-breasted Merganser 3  
California Quail 2  
Pied-billed Grebe 4  
Eared Grebe 1  
Western Grebe 87  
Mourning Dove 12  
Anna's Hummingbird 31  
Allen's Hummingbird 7  
hummingbird sp. 2  
American Coot 23  
Long-billed Curlew 3  
Willet 2

Heermann's Gull 40  
Ring-billed Gull 10  
Western Gull 38  
California Gull 15  
Brandt's Cormorant 4  
Double-crested Cormorant 11  
Brown Pelican 26  
Snowy Egret 4  
Great Egret 2  
Great Blue Heron 3  
White-faced Ibis 1  
Osprey 3  
White-tailed Kite 2  
Cooper's Hawk 1  
Red-shouldered Hawk 4  
Red-tailed Hawk 7  
Belted Kingfisher 1  
Downy Woodpecker 1  
Nuttall's Woodpecker 11  
Northern Flicker 7  
American Kestrel 6  
Peregrine Falcon 3  
Black Phoebe 11

Say's Phoebe 11  
Cassin's Kingbird 22  
Hutton's Vireo 2  
California Scrub-Jay 14  
American Crow 16  
Common Raven 24  
Bushtit 47  
Wrentit 81  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 10  
Red-breasted Nuthatch 2  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 6  
California Gnatcatcher 4  
House Wren 20  
Bewick's Wren 6  
wren sp. 2  
California Thrasher 7  
Northern Mockingbird 2  
Western Bluebird 3  
Hermit Thrush 3  
Scaly-breasted Munia 10  
House Sparrow 1  
American Pipit 1  
House Finch 62

Lesser Goldfinch 62  
Dark-eyed Junco 8  
White-crowned Sparrow 52  
Golden-crowned Sparrow 2  
Savannah Sparrow 6  
Song Sparrow 41  
Lincoln's Sparrow 3  
California Towhee 63  
Spotted Towhee 9  
new world sparrow sp. 1  
Western Meadowlark 8  
Red-winged Blackbird 55  
Orange-crowned Warbler 5  
Common Yellowthroat 12  
Yellow-rumped Warbler 124

**Observers:** Andy Rathbone,  
Donna Mancuso, Karen Gordon,  
Robert James, Tsaiwei Olee,  
Kathy Estey, Steve Neal,  
Robert Turner, Manolo Turner,  
Gary Grantham, Dylan  
Hardenbrook, Nancy Richardson

View this checklist online at [ebird.org/checklist/S156561805](https://ebird.org/checklist/S156561805)

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



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