

TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 474

January 2025

Potluck Holiday Party and Graduation a Huge Success

by Joan R. Simon

Another year/another venue -- but this one may be a keeper. Docents gathered on Dec. 14 for our annual holiday potluck party and new docent graduation in the spacious Community Hall of St. James Catholic Church in Solana Beach. The 160 attendees relaxed in the commodious surroundings with plentiful food and drinks, including mulled wine. Thanks to **Mary Makowski** and **Carolyn Maclean** for spearheading the planning committee, which included **Umesh Bellur, Ray DiEsposti, Sue Daniel, Brian Griffith, Allan Heryet, Sherry Ledakis, Barney Moore, Jim Moore, Ed Saade, and Ann Marie Tomczak**. And also thanks to the Lodge decorating group that included **Dee Huang, Sue Daniel, and Barney Moore**.

Janet Ugalde, who led the docent training class this fall, welcomed the class of 2025 and thanked her team of trainers – **Dinah Carl, Ingo Renner** and **Janice Taylor** – as well as the assisting tech gurus, **Pao Chau** and **Dee Huang**. And thanks also went to the many docent experts and presenters and the 17 trainee mentors, as well as the training teams from the Lodge hosts, TIK, and BLIK; also representatives from the Walk Leaders, Children's Program, and CEED program who included trainees in their events. It truly takes a village!

Janet noted that “the class of 2025 is filled with superstars.” The 28 new docents are multilingual. “They are biologists, geologists, teachers, Girl Scout leaders, birders, techies, artists, and native plant enthusiasts.” Some are members of our fellow naturalist groups: San Elijo Lagoon, Cabrillo Monument, the Sierra Club, and the Falcon Naturalists. Three are married to TPDS docents. And four have worked with the Whacky Weeders.

Receiving their new docent badges were: **Guarav Agarwal, Leslie Allem, Olga Anson, Michel Bahrami, Pam Burdt, German Cervantes, Luz Chung, Kyle Gill, Kristi Griffith, Barbara Gunning, Julie Halter, Deborah Jones,**

Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, January 11, 9:00 am

Location: Sorry, on Zoom only, to be recorded

Speaker: Herb Knufken, photographer and TPDS docent since 2006

Topic: Peregrine Falcons at Torrey Pines

Herb will lead us through his images of Peregrine Falcons since 2004.

Herb was born and raised in Germany and moved to San Diego in 1980. His father had his own hiking group and helped instill in Herb a love of nature. Herb has been taking photos for the Docent Society and for the *Torreyana* for many years, and we are indebted to him for everything he has done for us. His data base of the birds and animals of Torrey Pines is a wonder.

Refreshments: Docents with last names beginning with **K, L, M, N** will be responsible for providing snacks for this meeting.

Eric Koliander, Cami McCook, Tulay Muezzinoglu, Lori Nichols, Robert Nydam, Jamee Patterson, Barry Pulver, Lynn Riedman, Marci Rimlinger, Terry Rodgers, Rachel Scherba, Barbara Scholz, Sally Stoffel, Alberto Trujillo, Elaine Vuong, and Christina Zilberman. See photo of class of 2025 on pg. 8.

Next to be celebrated were the 13 new Lifetime docents: **David Buffington, Paul Dunphy, Mark Embree, Jennifer Greenberg, Gail Gluckman, Dan Hammer, Allen Holden, Guy Lawrie, Don McGuire, Bruce Montgomery, Patty Montgomery, Steve Neal, and Harry Proctor.** See photo of Lifetime docents on pg. 4.

There were many more honors and awards to come. First among them was Docent of the Year, which went to **Selma Torres** for her outstanding leadership and management of Lodge Hosting as well as her long-standing work with the (Cont. on pg. 4.)

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 and Angela Bailey. 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 nature and conservation magazines to the Museum Shop.

President's Message

Happy New Year!

As 2025 begins, we have much to be thankful for as we reflect on 2024. Our Docent Society experienced another strong year according to metrics such as volunteer hours served in the Reserve, the number of volunteers involved in activities, the number of school children attending our Children's Program, and the number of visitors we interacted with. However, I think we should be most proud of a record number of trainees (28) enrolled in our docent training program. Let's be sure to thank **Janet Ugalde** and her team for organizing the effort to recruit and educate such an exceptional group of diverse individuals. Let's all welcome them with open arms as they begin working in the Reserve.

This year is going to be another special one as our Docent Society officially turns 50 years old! Our organization has been able to exist and grow for so long because of the dedication and leadership of current and former docents. Many of our programs were created by new leaders who decided to turn a great idea into a reality. Some great examples are the BLIK and the Mindful Walks program. There are a few folks who deserve credit for taking initiative, such as **Ingo Renner**, who recently organized a moonlight hike attended by nearly 50 docents. A great horned owl was heard somewhere near the Children's Pavilion. It was a real hoot. The Trails Program Implementation Committee revamped the Roving Interpreter training program, which was attended by 20 docents. Let's thank the committee members **Bruce Gray**, **Gabriele Wienhausen**, **Bob Friedman**, **Dinah Carl**, and **Ingo Renner**.

Each year, a new crop of leaders emerges to learn how the Society operates. I would like to encourage anyone that has an interest in the internal workings of the Society to get involved! Please feel free to talk with a Board member or a program coordinator about issues of mutual interest.

Lastly, I want to commend **Mary Makowski** and **Carolyn McLean** for taking the lead on the Holiday Potluck. What a great event it was!

Matt Xavier
TPDS President

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Docent of the Year: Selma Torres

Photo by Herb Knufken

For years on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I walked up the park road in the Reserve and onto a couple of the trails in the early morning with three friends. After my husband passed away in 2010, I moved closer to work (at Qualcomm in Sorrento Valley) and continued the routine. In late 2011 or early 2012, I saw a banner at the entrance announcing the Docent Training class starting in February 2012. I looked into it and signed up. I didn't realize at the time that becoming a TP docent would be such a wonderful experience and crucial in easing my transition into retirement in 2018.

For the first six years, I could volunteer only on weekends and wanted to spend as little time in the sun as possible (there was no TIK at the time). So I signed up for Lodge Hosting and worked most of the required hours there. I loved, and still do, every minute of those hours.

It's an unexpected and surprising honor to be named Docent of the Year. Thank you, Board of Directors and fellow docents. Thank you, **Roger Isaacson**, for helping me keep the Lodge staffed; it can be challenging. I work with an exceptional Museum Shop team - **Nancy Walters, Mary Hohmeyer, Valerie Thomas, Dinah Carl, and Medi Denker** - and continually learn from them. This award caps a fantastic year for me! I feel very lucky!



(Selma has been Docent of the Month twice: [February 2015](#) and [December 2020](#))

Docent of the Month: Mary Makowski

Photo by Herb Knufken

What a nice surprise to be given the honor of Docent of the Month! It's like the old saying, "Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life." I love being a docent because I meet so many wonderful visitors from all over the world; I work with the most amazing, dedicated, kind and helpful fellow docents and park staff; and I get to be outside in a gorgeous setting! The icing on the cake is sharing the knowledge I've acquired with interested visitors.



When my husband and I moved here four and a half years ago to be closer to our son and his wife, I knew practically nothing of my new surrounding environment. I could name the sycamore and eucalyptus trees, a few flowers, a few birds, and that's about it. I had never seen a live bobcat, roadrunner, rattlesnake, or ground squirrel. I was fascinated, and the urge to know more led me to annoy others with a lot of questions. Because I asked so many questions at the TIK one day, I think the docents there took pity and suggested I become a docent myself. Thanks for the suggestion, whoever you are! Every time I work at the Reserve I learn something new from one or more of you, and that's like receiving a gift each time. Thank you all!

I grew up in New Jersey, have a degree in biology, and did research in immunology for about 18 years. When we moved to Minnesota, I wanted to have the same schedule as our young son, so I started teaching middle school math and tutored students in math and science for about another 18 years. I currently tutor students of refugee families in City Heights, and we occasionally take them on field trips to local parks. Being in a natural setting really can bring joy and fascination to these wonderful kids, and they love it. One of these days, we will bring them to Torrey Pines - my favorite idea for a field trip!

(Cont. from pg. 1.)

Museum Shop team. Docent of the Month was awarded to **Mary Makowski** for her active participation in the Children's Program and her co-leadership of the holiday party committee.

President **Matt Xavier** thanked the outgoing Board members (**Lisa Kakone, Gary McCook, and Gabriele Wienhausen**), and Gabriele was given a gift certificate for her five years on the Board, including two as Secretary. Three new Board members were welcomed: **Umesh Bellur, Connie Jaffee, and Ed Saade**. **Steve Neal** was given a plaque for his five years as chair of the Nominating Committee.

BLIK high achievers were singled out: **Ray and Jane Barger** for starting the original BIK at the South Beach; **Kathy Dickey** for her monthly column "What's On the Beach?" in the *Torreyana*; and the docents with the most hours: **Malana Tabak, Ed Saade, and Rosemary Wareham**, the top participant, who was presented with a gift certificate.

Gift certificates were also given to docents who had the most hours in other important service areas – Children's Program: **Bruce and Patty Montgomery**; Lodge Hosting: **Medi Denker** (with special thanks to **Thomas Holland and Myrna Trust**); TIK: **Coach Vance*** (with special thanks to **Bob Friedman and Dee Huang**); Roving Interpreter: **Bruce Gray** (with special thanks to **Cres Torres**); and Special Walks: **Gale Darling** (with special thanks to **David Woo and Craig Carlisle**).

Kudos poured in after the party. "I've been a docent since 2008, and this was the best holiday party ever!" **Kathy Dickey** exclaimed. **Thomas Stehlik** agreed: "Everything about the event was exceptional – the spacious, sky-lit venue, the inviting round tables, the beautifully decorated buffet tables, and the delicious food and beverages." Many echoed **Jeannie Smith's** sentiment: "Thanks to the class of '24 for the splendid hosting job. Kudos to all, especially Mary and Carolyn."

*See **Coach Vance's** poem on pg. 8.

New Lifetime Docents



What's On the Beach? Ospreys

by *Kathy Dickey*; photo by *Herb Knufken*

A black hawk-like bird with a white head soars over the lagoon or shallow beach area. You'd be surprised at how many visitors think we have Bald Eagles here. Maybe...but unlikely. I tell them that 99% of the time those are Osprey. Only once have I seen an eagle over a coastal lagoon in San Diego, and that eagle was chasing the osprey to get its fish.

Ospreys are common in our Reserve year-round. **Craig Carlisle** said in October, "An Osprey frequently perches on the pole above the South Beach Lot Kiosk eating a fish. It was fun this morning to point it out to the many unsuspecting walkers going by."

Ospreys (also called fish hawks or sea hawks) are present on every continent except Antarctica. There are now an estimated 1.2 million of them worldwide. Their numbers were vastly lowered during the 1950s to 1970s due to DDT use. They are now protected by the Migratory Bird Act.

The Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) is an unusual raptor in that it is the only member of the Pandionidae family. About two feet long with over a six-foot wingspan, it feeds on live fish. It uses its feet in a dramatic fashion to catch its prey feet first, rarely needing to dive more than six inches deep into the water. As it flies away, it turns the fish with its feet until its prey is head-first and more aerodynamic.

Ospreys fly gull-like, with their wings held slightly arched. They have white and dark underparts and dark or black upperparts. At close range, you can see the white head cap, a dark eye stripe, and yellowish eyes.

Here are some facts about the Osprey you may not know:

- The most amazing thing about Ospreys is their feet. They have three toes forward and one toe back, but can move their smallest toe forward or back to help hold the slippery, wiggly prey. They have curved sharp talons up to an inch long. The bottom of their feet feels like sandpaper; the rough texture is due to spiky backwards-facing barbs called spicules.
- They can catch fish their own weight (up to 3.5 pounds).
- They live to be 15 to 20 years old and may migrate more than 160,000 miles during their lifetime. They can fly for days nonstop.
- They build amazingly huge stick nests, sometimes reaching 13 feet deep and five feet across. They often re-use them for years. Look for them on light poles, in boat harbors, and on man-made platforms like the ones across from the Del Mar Fairgrounds parking lot, along the San Dieguito Lagoon.



- Males and females sometimes “sky dance” in greeting as they hover over the nest, in preparation for mating.
- The male brings fish to the female at the nest site, and they copulate up to 20 times per day (10 to 20 seconds each) for about three weeks!
- The female lays two or three eggs, white with red or olive blotches, then incubates them for 30 to 40 days. The fledglings stay in the nest area for up to eight weeks.
- The female stays in the nest most of the day and night, but the male sometimes takes over to give her a break. The male brings fish to the nest while she is protecting the eggs and chicks. A brood of three requires six pounds of food per day. The male roosts nearby to protect the nest. Both parents can be very aggressive if a predator is nearby.
- The call of the Osprey is surprising for such a big, majestic bird. It is a high, whiney “pheu” sound.
- Like other raptors, the female is slightly larger than the male.

References available upon request.

New Ambassador Stations Program

by Gabriele Wienhausen

Just in time for enriching visitors’ experience during one of the busiest times of the year, we are excited to announce the launch of the first of the two new components of the Trails Program – the **Ambassador Stations Program!**

For pedestrians entering the Reserve, there are three distinct entrance points: South Beach Kiosk, Torrey Pines Golf Course, and – at low tide – up from the beach via the Beach Trail. The presence of docents at these entrances would be beneficial to visitors for multiple reasons. Acting as Reserve greeters and ambassadors, docents would be able to provide up-to-date information to visitors. This would include questions about trail selection, special events, and recent flora and fauna sightings in the Reserve. Docent ambassadors would also remind visitors to walk along the designated shoulder of the road, have tide information handy for beach walkers, and encourage them to maintain a safe distance from the bluffs. Lastly, Ambassador Stations are also ideal locations for telling visitors who are accompanied by their canine friends that dogs are not allowed in the Reserve.

An Ambassador Station is nothing fancy. It’s just a chair with an umbrella and a small table. But it’s sufficient for being recognized by visitors as a place that might have information of interest. We have outfitted the chair’s pocket with laminated informational material that will come in handy, such as a trail map that includes trail lengths and distances between locations within the Reserve, tide information, and locations elsewhere of dog-friendly beaches and parks.

Ambassador Station shifts will be available on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 9 to 11 am, 11 to 1 pm, and 1 to 3 pm. Please sign up via Better Impact. If you choose to work at the South Entrance near the Broken Hill Trail, you may pick up the chair and umbrella and drive down the park road all the way to the South Fork trailhead.

Bees of the Month: Mining Bees (*Andrena* spp.)

by Jess Mullins; photos by Craig Chaddock

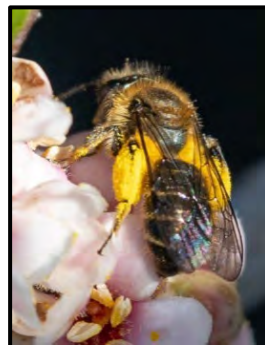
San Diego County is home to an incredible variety of native bees. Of the 702 bee species recorded, 108 belong to the *Andrena* genus! In our climate, we are fortunate enough to observe bees like *Andrena* as early as January.

Andrena earn their common name, “mining bees,” because all members of this genus nest underground. Each female “mines” her own tunnel, where she creates small chambers for her brood. In some cases, multiple bees will nest in close proximity, forming clusters similar to an apartment complex – separate units but close neighbors. Within each chamber, the female lines the walls with a special waxy secretion to keep pollen provisions and her developing offspring from drying out – an essential adaptation for surviving in dry conditions.

Unlike many other bees, *Andrena* spend the winter as adults nestled underground in their nests. This unique life stage allows them to emerge as some of the very first bees in early spring, just as the first flowers start to bloom. They are able to take full advantage of early-blooming plants like lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*) and wartystem ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*).



A male *Andrena* resting on the leaf of a lemonadeberry. Note the yellow coloration on his face. This photo was taken along the Marsh Trail.



A female *Andrena* visiting a lemonadeberry. Note the yellow pollen on her thorax as well as her legs.

Members of this genus vary widely in size, color, and hairiness. However, they share distinctive features that set *Andrena* apart from other bees, especially the females. These include pollen-carrying hairs on the back of their thorax – unusual among bees, as most carry pollen on their legs. Females also have two velvety patches of

hair on their face, called facial fovea, which sit parallel to their compound eyes. Males, though less conspicuous, may have subtle yellow markings on their faces. The sheer diversity coupled with the microscopic characteristics of this group (like the shape of individual hairs!) make them difficult to identify beyond the genus level. A clear photo of the face and legs and the floral host can help narrow down the mystery.

When the flowers begin to bloom this year, take a moment to observe them – you might just spot one of these underground pioneers hard at work.

Bird of the Month – California Gnatcatcher

by Robert James; photo by Craig Chaddock

This article resumes the popular *Bird of the Month* series authored by **Jack Friery**, which ran for six years until September 2022. I thought it would be interesting to begin with an uncommon, but important, species and include some firsthand experiences. The California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*) is a federally threatened bird species that is resident throughout the year in the Reserve. It is predominantly in Coastal Sage Scrub (CSS) habitat, usually seen in California buckwheat and California sagebrush. The species' range is limited, just north into Ventura County and south into Baja California.

As a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I was fortunate to conduct federal protocol surveys for this diminutive species and participate in regional conservation



planning. While I was at Caltrans, this species was also a major focus of our highway planning (and habitat restoration projects with SANDAG). The Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), established with various government and private partners, preserved and is enhancing large, interconnected areas of CSS habitat in San Diego County. These efforts, along with fire and non-native weed management, should allow for the continued survival of the California Gnatcatcher. The Reserve is an associated part of those lands.

The California Gnatcatcher, like most birds, has two molts per year. The breeding season molt for males includes a distinctive black feather “cap.” The high-pitched mewling songs and calls

(allaboutbirds.org/guide/California_Gnatcatcher/sounds), many much like a kitten, stand out (though not everyone can hear them). The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*), a more widespread species, looks silver-blue and has white feathers under the tail. At the Reserve, we tend to see the latter more in trees and denser vegetation such as scrub oaks, and their vocalizations are different.

Especially during the late winter and early spring mornings, California Gnatcatchers become more vocal as pairs are establishing territories. Recent bird counts at the Reserve have averaged about five per month, but since song playback is needed to best detect California Gnatcatchers, I suspect the actual number is at least ten pairs.

Some of the usual places I have encountered California

Gnatcatchers are the south part of the Mar Scenic Trail in the Extension and on the Marsh Trail along the Peñasquitos Lagoon near Flintkote Avenue. The fledglings of the year are often detected in the months of late summer into the fall, sometimes even in suburban neighborhood vegetation enroute to establishing new groups or maintaining existing populations. That dispersal is fortunate since it helps small coastal populations to persist.

If you have a bird that you would like featured in an upcoming month, please let me know!

References are available upon request.

New Residents at the Guy Fleming House

by Joan R. Simon

Tim Gunther and his family are the newest residents of the Guy Fleming House, moving in after the renovations were complete in October. Like his predecessor and mentor Ed Vodraska, Tim is a California State Parks Peace Officer Lifeguard. He started working here in 2009 after serving as a county lifeguard in Santa Barbara.

Tim graduated from UC Santa Barbara, where he majored in marine science. He then taught marine science for three years in San Diego. Tim spent two summers studying whale shark feeding mechanisms in Bahía de los Ángeles, Baja California. He received his master's certificate in science communication from UC Santa Cruz and completed an internship at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute on Cape Cod. Tim spent several years working as a freelance scientific illustrator with natural history museums, aquariums, scientific journals, and publishers throughout the United States, Europe, and Australia. His illustrations can still be seen at the permanent “Fossil Mysteries” exhibit at the San Diego Natural History Museum.

Tim is a thoroughly local guy. He grew up in Solana Beach and went through the entire Junior Lifeguard Program there. Tim's wife, Julie, is a teacher and has worked at every level from first grade to high school. She currently teaches 5th grade at The Rhoades School in Encinitas, where their six-year-old daughter, Finley, is in first grade.



When asked how he likes living in the Guy Fleming House, Tim said, “There's no way to describe it – it's mind-blowing.” While his wife and daughter are enjoying the plants and animals in the Reserve, Tim's eyes are quite naturally fixed on the ocean, where he delights in seeing dolphins, sea lions, all manner of fish, and the whale, squid, and sardine migrations.

January CEED: Kendall-Frost Marsh

Date: Thursday, January 16

Time: 10 am

Place: Kendall-Frost Marsh Reserve, located at the northern edge of Mission Bay.

Meet at 2055 Pacific Beach Dr; street parking, one ADA spot

Duration: 1.5 hours

Difficulty Level: easy walking; wear sturdy walking shoes

RSVP: Mukesh Mehta; limited to 30 docents

For more information: nrs.ucsd.edu/ See *Torreyana* article: San Diego's "Best-Kept Secret" [August 2019](#)

Children's Program

by Janet Ugalde, Program Director

We did it! Together we captivated and inspired hundreds of students this fall. We could not have succeeded without our super-faithful team members. Let's give kudos to pacesetters **Patty** and **Bruce Montgomery**.

Our winter/spring season begins January 14. We will offer field trips on Tuesdays, Thursdays – and some Fridays, especially for rainy-day make-ups.

It is now easy to sign up on Better Impact, but for program details you need to log in at

torreypine.org/volunteering/docentlogin Scroll down to **DOCENT-LED SCHOOL PROGRAM**, then "For a list of school programs by date, click here." An updated program list will be posted on this site in early January. Please email me if you have any issues or questions.

Welcome, Class of 2025! The first of your class to qualify as a CP walk leader is **Rachel Scherba**. She is already awesome! Class of 2025, please give us an opportunity to share with you the joys of being a student walk leader.



The Janus Tree

by Rhea Bridy

*The positions of January
On journey from past to future.
Whichever direction taken
May the path bring thee peace.*

Junior Rangers 2024 Recap

by Zuzana Volny, Senior Interpretive Park Aide

This was a milestone year for the Junior Ranger program at Torrey Pines, with 170 kids participating in 2024 – our highest attendance since restarting the program in 2022! This growth reflects the increasing enthusiasm and community interest in our program.

A key highlight was our new approach to lessons. During the late fall program, we ran two simultaneous sessions: new families joined **Bruce** and **Patty Montgomery** for "Mammals & Tracking," while returning Jr. Rangers explored a new lesson on Lichen with **Gretchen Embree** and me. This approach allowed us to serve 72 kids over just three Sundays, showcasing the power of creative planning and teamwork.

We're also excited to see our community grow, with more families subscribing to our email list and engaging with our programs. Our other programs in 2024 were: Flowers in March; Nature Journaling in May; and the two 5-day programs in July and early August.

Docents play a vital role in supporting our Junior Ranger program. My heartfelt thanks for all the docents who have contributed in 2024. Looking to 2025, we're excited to build on this momentum, continue refining our lessons, and engage with even more families. Here's to another year of growth, learning, and wonder with our Junior Rangers!



Ranger Stephanie Adams giving the oath to a Jr. Rangers class in the summer of 2024.

“I’m Never”: A Trainee’s Story

by Julia Halter

When we first began training twelve weeks ago, I was plagued with “I’m Nevers”: I’m *never* going to be able to tell the difference between a raven and a crow! And don’t get me started on all those little brown birds (LBBs)! I’m *never* going to be comfortable speaking in front of a crowd. I’m *never* going to tell the difference between a brown shriveled chamise and a brown shriveled buckwheat. Every bush looked brown to me. More LBBs, little brown bushes.

The truth is that most people look without seeing. My goal for the twelve weeks was to slow down and “see.”

As the weeks went by, I ticked all those “I’m Nevers” off my list. The difference between a toyon and a laurel sumac? No problem! A snowy egret and a great egret? Too easy! Linda Vista Formation? Got it! And now those darn ravens will forever be special to me because I know who they are.

I want to thank everyone who was on the new docent trainee committee. They tirelessly showed up week after week to encourage and mentor us. The program was so thoughtful and incredibly organized, just the right blend of detailed and professional presentations, homework, and engaging guest speakers. And every trail walk reinforced our learning. I tried to pick a different trail guide each week to experience different perspectives: Ingo, Gary, Dinah, Lynne, Pao, Gabriele.... Our mentors encouraged us every step of the way and calmed our fears about the sheer volume of information we were digesting. (Thank you, Dinah!) We had to learn to trust the process, to believe that we were absorbing and internalizing more than we thought we were. It really was sinking in.

Truth be told, the spontaneous presentations we had to give each week were challenging for me, but having to improvise on the fly with fellow classmates brought our cohort closer. Our camaraderie by the end was remarkable.

So, I’d like to thank all of YOU for this incredible experience. For teaching all of us to truly “see” the Reserve. We are all better humans for having finished this training. We are ready!

‘Twas the Night Before the Holiday Party

by Coach Vance

*‘Twas the night before the Holiday Party,
And all through the Reserve so still,
Not a woodrat was stirring, not a raven’s shrill,*

*The plans were made, the Lodge doors closed tight,
Hoping Selma would rest, at least for the night.*

*Mary and Carolyn, both running around,
Were still wondering what helpers could be found.*

*The new trainees, snug in their PJs with care,
Cried, “Hurry up, Party! We’re nearly there!”*

*We docents were nestled, all snug in our beds,
Full of excitement, hard to lay down our heads.*

*But wait! What’s that sound I seem to hear?
Is it Santa with coyotes, skunks, and reindeer?*

*No! It’s the pitter patter of Lifetimers, full of cheer,
Who finally reached their goal - ten whole years!*

Torrey Pines Docents: Class of 2025 *Photo by Janet Taylor*



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 if you need any extra help getting connected.

When: Tuesday, January 14, 1:00 pm

What: *The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year* by Margaret Renkl

Amazon says:

Margaret Renkl presents a literary devotional: fifty-two chapters (and 52 original color artworks by Billy Renkl, the author's brother) that follow the creatures and plants in her backyard over the course of a year. As we move through the seasons – from a crow spied on New Year's Day, its resourcefulness and sense of community setting a theme for the year, to the lingering bluebirds of December, revisiting the nest box they used in spring – what develops is a portrait of joy and grief: joy in the ongoing pleasures of the natural world, and grief over winters that end too soon and songbirds that grow fewer and fewer.

Along the way, we also glimpse the changing rhythms of a human life. The city and the country where Renkl raised her family transform a little more with each passing day. The natural world, now in visible flux, requires every ounce of hope and commitment. "Radiant things are bursting forth in the darkest places, in the smallest nooks and deepest cracks of the hidden world."

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

February 11: *A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future* by Sir David Attenborough



Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: December 2024

Number of species: 74

Gadwall 5	Ring-billed Gull 1	Say's Phoebe 7	Golden-crowned Sparrow 5
Mallard 14	Western Gull 22	Cassin's Kingbird 6	Savannah Sparrow 4
Northern Pintail 5	California Gull 4	Hutton's Vireo 1	Song Sparrow 68
Lesser Scaup 6	Royal Tern 2	California Scrub-Jay 21	Lincoln's Sparrow 1
Bufflehead 15	Pied-billed Grebe 1	American Crow 13	California Towhee 97
Red-breasted Merganser 8	Western Grebe 22	Common Raven 42	Rufous-crowned Sparrow 2
California Quail 2	Red-throated Loon 3	Bushtit 65	Spotted Towhee 16
Mourning Dove 44	Double-crested Cormorant 5	Wrentit 110	Orange-crowned Warbler 8
White-throated Swift 42	Snowy Egret 2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3	Common Yellowthroat 16
Anna's Hummingbird 23	Great Egret 4	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 4	Yellow-rumped Warbler 216
Allen's Hummingbird 6	Great Blue Heron 3	California Gnatcatcher 10	
Virginia Rail 1	Brown Pelican 43	Northern House Wren 3	
American Coot 35	Osprey 3	Bewick's Wren 5	
Black-bellied Plover 4	White-tailed Kite 4	California Thrasher 13	
Semipalmated Plover 8	Red-shouldered Hawk 5	Northern Mockingbird 1	
Long-billed Curlew 4	Red-tailed Hawk 7	Western Bluebird 10	
Marbled Godwit 2	Belted Kingfisher 1	Hermit Thrush 28	
Willet 3	Nuttall's Woodpecker 18	Scaly-breasted Munia 7	
Sanderling 27	Northern Flicker 2	House Finch 136	
Heermann's Gull 5	American Kestrel 7	Lesser Goldfinch 61	
	Peregrine Falcon 5	Dark-eyed Junco 3	
	Black Phoebe 11	White-crowned Sparrow 94	

Observers: Donna Mancuso, Kathy Estey, Manolo Turner, Robert Turner, Karen Masser, Tsaiwei Olee, Andy Rathbone, Gabriele Wienhausen, Sally Stoffel, Connie Jaffe, Robert James, Nancy Richardson, Marty Hales, Gail Gasior

The Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for January 4, 2025. To cover the entire Reserve in one day, we need as many birders as possible! Docents interested in joining should contact **David Walker** to be added to a group.

Herb Knufken's photo gallery includes many birds: pbase.com/herb1rm



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