



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

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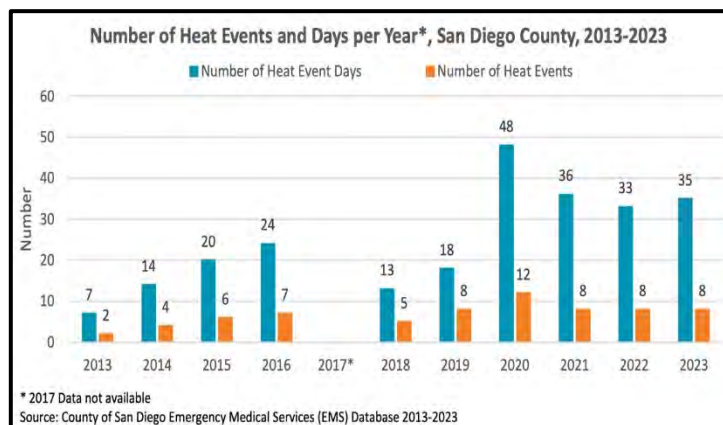
Climate Change and Public Health

by Dan Hammer

WARNING: Climate Change May Be Hazardous to Your Health.

That's the message that Erin Xavier brought to the July docent meeting. Erin, daughter of TPDS president Matt, holds a Master of Public Health in Environmental Health Sciences from UC Berkeley and currently works in the Government Relations Office at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. She outlined how extreme heat waves and poor air quality are fueling a public health crisis and offered suggestions on how to lessen these negative impacts on individuals and communities.

Erin focused on two of the main hazards connected with climate change: extreme heat and poor air quality. The two are often closely connected, particularly in San Diego County. Between 2013 and 2023, though the annual *number* of extreme heat events here remained fairly constant, the average *duration* of these events rose sharply. This has increased the risk of wildfires over a wider area: In recent years the county has seen a 26% increase in the "very high" wildfire hazard zone.



Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, August 9, 9:00 am

Location: St. Peter's Episcopal Church Parish Hall, Del Mar

Speaker: Sarah Giddings, Associate Professor at Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Topic: Water Circulation and Exchange between Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the Coastal Ocean

Dr. Giddings is a coastal physical oceanographer specializing in estuarine and coastal processes including how physics impacts important biological and chemical processes in the coastal environment. Her talk will highlight the importance of waves, freshwater runoff, outflow from the lagoon, sand/cobble movement near the mouth, and estuary mouth closures.

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

Smoke and ash from wildfires are major sources of air pollution in the county. A recent air quality report card from the American Lung Association gave San Diego failing grades in ozone and particle pollution, even though our day-to-day air quality is good. Short-term spikes in these pollutants – largely from wildfires – have severe negative

impacts on our public health.
(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 Angela Bailey and Roger Isaacson. Submissions are due on or about the 20th day of the preceding month and may be emailed to

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President's Message

Climate Change: Reading the Shifts in Our Natural World

As we volunteer at Torrey Pines as nature docents, many of us have walked the same trails for years. We've watched plants bloom earlier, birds arrive sooner or not at all, and seasonal rhythms shift in subtle but unmistakable ways. These are the fingerprints of *climate change*, written into the landscapes we love and teach about.

Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and more frequent wildfires are no longer distant projections – they're realities shaping the ecosystems we interpret. Species that once thrived may now struggle, while others expand into new territories. In coastal areas, sea level rise threatens habitats. In forests and hillsides, stress from heat and water scarcity weakens native plants, making room for invasives to take hold.

For docents, climate change is both a challenge and an opportunity. It challenges us to stay informed, acknowledge uncertainty, and avoid oversimplifying. But it also offers an opportunity to foster deeper conversations with visitors that move beyond doom and into dialogue about resilience, stewardship, and action.

We are not just interpreters of nature; we are witnesses to change. And we have the unique ability to connect people emotionally and intellectually to what's happening. When visitors see how climate change affects a favorite bird or wildflower, it becomes real.

Let's continue to be clear-eyed, compassionate, and hopeful. Nature is changing – but with awareness and care, we can help others see their role in protecting what remains and shaping what comes next.

Finally, I want to thank the gray whale excavation team, which had to encounter snakes, smelly mulch, and a relentless sun to gently uncover the skeleton (see article on pg.5).

Matt Xavier

TPDS President



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(Cont. from pg. 1.) Climate change has a wide range of negative impacts on human health. For example, air pollution leads to increased incidences of asthma, allergies, and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases; extreme heat causes cardiovascular failure as well as heat-related illness and about 12,000 deaths per year nationwide (projected to reach 100,000 by the end of the century).

Climate change affects us all differently on both a community and individual level. As seen in the graphic below, communities are affected by *social determinants of health* –

exhaustion or even heat stroke. If you feel symptoms of heat exhaustion – including dizziness, thirst, heavy sweating, nausea, or weakness – you can adapt by moving to cooler areas, loosening clothing, sipping cool water, then seeking medical help if symptoms don't improve. For symptoms of heat stroke (such as confusion, extreme dizziness, or loss of consciousness), take these steps and call 911. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability without emergency care.

Communities build resilience to climate change through both mitigation and adaptation. *Mitigation* measures such as



that is, nonmedical factors that determine the impact of climate events on public health.

In most cases, because of these nonmedical factors – including fewer green spaces and more exposure to pollution -- lower-income communities experience worse health outcomes from a given climate event than their more affluent neighbors.

Some groups of people are more sensitive to climate events. For example, older adults are two to three times more likely than younger adults to die during a heat wave. Children are generally more vulnerable than adults to the health impacts of climate change; in fact, an estimated 88% of the global disease burden of climate change falls on children under 5 years old.

I was surprised to learn how vulnerable coastal communities are to extreme heat events. The average coastal dweller experiences negative health impacts at temperatures as low as 73°F, compared with inland (79°) or desert (90°) residents. As Erin explained, this is because fewer of us have air conditioning, and our bodies are less adapted to extreme heat. (The average adult needs two weeks to adjust to higher temperatures.)

Another concern is the recent rise in nighttime temperatures during heat events. Hot nights increase mortality risk during heat events by up to 50% compared to nights without extreme heat. This shows the importance of nighttime cooling in homes, as the body's inability to recover from daytime heat stress can have deadly consequences.

Individuals can protect their health by recognizing the effects of climate events and taking common-sense measures to adapt. For example, during a heat event, you might experience heat

reducing emissions and improving public transit reduce greenhouse gas emissions. *Adaptation* measures such as establishing cool zones and increasing green spaces help manage the risks of climate change impacts.

Erin defined green spaces as "land that is covered partially or completely by vegetation, with few or no buildings – such as parks, open spaces, community gardens, or [surprise!] cemeteries." At Torrey Pines, we can see the benefits of green spaces: Plants help clean the air by catching pollutants on their surfaces, blocking and filtering airborne particles, and changing the physical properties of pollutants. Trees and plants lower temperatures in green areas by providing shade, making ground surfaces 20-45°F cooler; and by "sweating," as water evaporating from leaves cools the air by 2-9°. Health benefits of green spaces include better pregnancy outcomes and birth rates, improved mental health and brain function, lower early death rates (especially from heart problems), and reduced risk of depression.

Erin concluded by offering ideas on what we can do to help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Start by staying informed through networks such as [Alert San Diego](#) and UCSD's [Southern California Extreme Heat Research Hub](#). Participate in local government, such as the County's [Community Climate Conversations](#) or the City of San Diego's [Climate Advisory Board](#). Climate change presents tremendous challenges, but by taking action we can make a difference as individuals and communities.

If you missed Erin's informative and compelling presentation, click [here](#).

General Meeting Minutes: July 12, 2025

Speaker: Erin Xavier from Scripps Institution of Oceanography on the health consequences of climate change (see pg. 1). About 65 docents attended.

Robert James introduced Austin Zhang, one of our grand prize winners at the San Diego Science and Engineering Fair. Austin's project combined drones and AI to improve vegetation health and mitigate wildfire risk at Black Mountain Open Space Park (see [July 2025 Torreyana](#)).

The business meeting was led by **Lynne Truong**, Treasurer.

The **Docent of the Month** is **Marci Rimlinger**, whose activities include the Whacky Weeders, bird survey, bird bath cleaning, and Lodge hosting.

Board Nominations: **Bob Friedman** spoke about recommended changes to the board nomination process and announced the members of the new nominating committee: **Roger Isaacson, Gary McCook, Lisa Kakone, Janet Ugalde, Ann Herbert, and Janice Barnard** (committee advisor). See article on pg. 8.

Lodge Hosts: More Lodge hosts are needed in the summer months. If there is a last-minute cancellation, please try to recruit a docent from the TIK to cover the Lodge shift. For all docent activities during the summer, you will need to allow extra time to enter the Reserve.

Peñasquitos Lagoon: It was noted by BLIK volunteers that there are multiple violations by visitors who enter the lagoon. **Matt Xavier** is working with the head Lifeguard to deter these trespassers.

Docent Training Class: The next docent training class will begin in the spring of 2026 on Wednesday mornings. **Pao Chau** and **Barbara Wallach** are leading the committee. Additional updates will be announced next month.

The Utility Project has been approved by the City of San Diego and is scheduled to start in August. See article on pg. 9.

BLIK and TIK: There is a new bird wingspan board at the BLIK and a new rattle snake model at the TIK. The skull models at the TIK have been cleaned by **Coach Vance** and are now in clear plastic cases to protect them from damage. See article on the TIK on pg. 9.

Mindful Walks will start from the Guy Fleming Trail on Sunday mornings. The new hours are from 9 to 11.

Docent of the Month: Marci Rimlinger

Photo by Herb Knufken

Thanks to all for this very surprising honor! I am a new docent from the class of 2025. I have been volunteering at Torrey Pines since February 2024, starting out as a Whacky Weeder. Thanks to **B.J. Withall**, I also became involved with maintaining the various animal watering holes, which are magnets for bird life.



*I have lived and worked in San Diego for 53 years; through my extended family I also have strong Midwestern ties. I am a graduate of nearby UCSD, and I retired from my 30-year career working for the San Diego Zoo's Safari Park (Bird Department) at the end of 2020. A former Zoo colleague, **Karen Lisi**, introduced me to the idea of becoming a docent. She shared with me that it was quite stimulating and rewarding. My passion for animals (especially birds), plants, and the outdoors made it a perfect fit for me. Every day there is something new and interesting to learn from the team of incredibly knowledgeable staff and volunteers. I appreciate the strong sense of community in being a part of this team. Everyone is so kind.*

I enjoy pointing out the often-small natural happenings or historical points to visitors, who might otherwise walk blindly by. (They are so often distracted by their workouts, family/friends, or phones.) Some of my favorite things are the sound of the wind in the pines, the fog, the smell of the sea, and the incredible sunsets. Whenever I drive south down 101 on my way in to work a shift, the view of the Reserve, often clouded in sea mist, puts a smile on my face. It is truly a natural beauty that I feel privileged to help support. Thanks again for this recognition.

“Work Party” at the Lodge

On July 16, twenty-two parks employees from the San Diego Coast District and Torrey Pines Maintenance gathered at the Lodge to work on the re-plastering phase of the Lodge restoration. They were guided by Corbin Schuppert, the state Restoration Specialist who is leading the Lodge reconstruction project (see the [April 2025 Torreyana](#) and [July 2025 Torreyana](#)). Participants included the administrative staff who have facilitated this project, as well as some workers who were at the site for the first time.

In a productive morning, the workers completed the preparatory adobe repairs necessary for a successful re-plastering of the porch exterior. The three-coat process (scratch coat, brown coat, and color coat) will continue in phases. The preservation materials require slow and controlled curing times – at least ten days between coats. Work will continue through August.



A Whale of a Project

by Ray Barger and Gabriele Wienhausen

During the week of July 23, Torrey Pines docents and volunteers assisted a Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) Project Team with the excavation of a juvenile Gray Whale skeleton at the UCSD Camp Elliott Field Station near Scripps Ranch.

The whale had been hit by a Navy ship off Mission Beach and subsequently transported to Camp Elliott. The SIO team then

covered the whale's carcass with mulch to allow natural processes to remove the organic matter. Our docents helped remove the mulch, leaving the skeleton exposed. Once the SIO team identified each piece, we helped them clean, photograph, and catalog the skeleton.

After the SIO team analyzes the remains, we will report back on their findings. At that point, SIO might donate the 26-foot reconstructed skeleton to TPSNR for display at the Reserve.



Gabriele Wienhausen at the Whale excavation; photo by Matt Xavier



Our gray whale excavation team included docents **Gary McCook, Mukesh Mehta, Bob Friedman, Ray Barger, Tulay Muezzinoglu, German Cervantes, Kristine Schindler, Sherry Ledakis, Barbara Gunning, Christie Zilberman, Mary Makowski, Franne Fischman, Pam Burdt, Kristi and Brian Griffith, Steve Neal**, and us along with volunteers Scott Henry and JP Duvinage.

Red Ridge Fire Recovery Walk

by Ingo Renner

It has been one year since a fire burned 19 acres in the Torrey Pines Extension, so leaders **Pao Chau, Gary McCook**, and I took a group of more than 20 docents for an interpretive walk on the Red Ridge Trail to learn about the after-effects on the area. We were surprised to see many signs of new life sprouting in the burn areas.

The most prolific were the many hundreds of young bush poppies (*Dendromecon rigida*) carpeting the mesa. They are *obligate seeders*, which depend on their large and sometimes ancient (up to 100 years) seed banks for propagation, as the entire plant dies from the fire and cannot re-sprout. These seeds are triggered to open by heat and the chemicals from smoke and charred wood. Another obligate seeder is warty-stem ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*).



We also saw signs of *obligate re-sprouters*, sprouting from their root crowns. These depend on their deeper, larger root systems, which store water and nutrients so they can survive a fire. Their seeds often get burned in the fire or eaten by rodents and birds. Examples we saw are Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidgera*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and Nuttall's scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*).

The third group we witnessed are the *facultative seeders*. These plants have the advantage of being able to sprout from their seed bank, as well as from their root crown. Examples we saw are chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), and mission manzanita (*Xylococcus bicolor*).

We highly recommend visiting the Red Ridge Trail (accessed from the Mira Montana Drive cul-de-sac) to see the recovery of this beautiful chaparral area, and to see whether you can pick out any native plants exhibiting the three fire recovery strategies listed above.



Becoming 80

by Rhea Bridy

*After the July meeting,
I climbed the quiet trail.
Carefully.*

*So glad I still could.
So glad I did.*

In Memoriam: Wesley Farmer

Wes Farmer, 1991 docent, passed away on July 4 in Las Vegas. Over the years he served in almost every activity of the Docent Society, including public walks, the Youth Program, Whacky Weeders, Seabees, Science Fair judge, and even editor of the *Torreyana* in 1994. Wes photographed the cliffs at the Reserve as he searched for fossils, and many of his finds are on display behind the Lodge in the geology case. He was also a painter and sculptor; three of his whale pieces hang in our museum. He was especially fond of nudibranchs, and replicas he made of them out of Sculpey clay are currently on exhibit at Henderson (Nevada) City Hall and the Las Vegas Natural History Museum. Among the books he wrote are *Seashore Discoveries* and *Tidepool Wonders of the Sea of Cortez*. In 2017, Wes received the Exemplary Lifetime Service Award for his 26 years as a docent and over 8,000 volunteer hours.



What's on the Beach? Spiny Brittle Stars

by Kathy Dickey

It is rare to find a brittle star by itself on the beach, but I did see one flopping around one day, not far from a giant kelp holdfast (the “anchor” of the algae). Most likely it was trying to escape a crab or shorebird. If you see some fresh giant kelp on the beach, look for the holdfast and break it open. You will likely find tiny crabs, worms, and brittle stars moving around.



Brittlestar found by Kathy Dickey

Worldwide, there are more than two thousand species of brittle stars. At least eight species are found in the San Diego region; the most common by far is the spiny brittle star (*Ophiothrix spiculata*). This organism has a rounded central disc about ½ inch wide, with five slender legs about six inches long. The legs and disc are covered with tiny, fuzzy spines, including some hook-like spines at the ends of the arms (also called tube feet) that are used to help the brittle stars cling to surfaces of rocks, cracks, and kelp holdfasts. Each spine is also coated with tiny spinelets. Spiny brittle stars are mobile and considered the fastest of all echinoderms (sea stars, sea urchins, sand dollars, and more). Their color is usually brownish orange or green, but they are variable and in deep waters may be red.



Photo: [NOAA](#)

Spiny brittle stars live from the intertidal areas to two thousand feet deep. Near the La Jolla kelp beds, they may congregate to dense numbers, in the millions. They are diverse feeders. Most of the time, they are suspension feeders. While keeping one arm anchored, they raise their other arms to collect plankton and detritus in the water using mucus secretions on their arms and spines. They then use their hooked feet to move the particles to their mouth on the underside of the disc. Sometimes the brittle stars scavenge the sea floor for leftover food. Rarely do they become active predators, consuming small crustaceans or fish. They use five jaws in the mouth to masticate the food. The sac-like gut has no anus, so any waste material is excreted from the mouth. The gut and the gonads fit inside the disc.

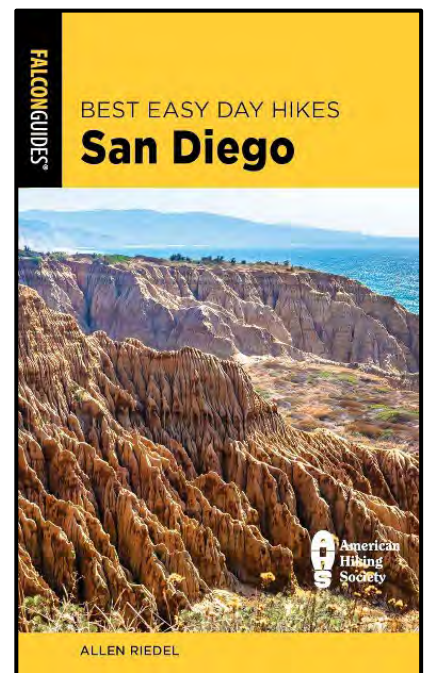
As they age and grow, brittle stars migrate into different environments. They leave the holdfasts to the smaller juveniles and attach to deeper rocks and crevices. Reproduction usually takes place in the summer months, when eggs and sperm are released into the water. Egg sacs may be seen between the arms on the disc. Fertilized eggs become free-swimming larvae that eat smaller plankton.

Predators include sea stars and fish. Though its arms are very flexible and mobile, the brittle star may suddenly drop an arm if threatened. The predator is left with a writhing arm, allowing the rest of the brittle star to escape. A new arm takes months to regenerate from the disc.

References available upon request.

Museum Shop Spotlight

Best Easy Day Hikes: San Diego is a small guide that fits easily in a large pocket or small pack. It is divided into coastal, inland, mountain, and desert hikes, and provides hiking maps and details about distance, time it takes to hike, elevation, terrain, accessibility, dogs, and more. It retails for \$12.95.



Rethinking How TPDS Elects its Board

by Bob Friedman

In his President's message in the June 2025 *Torreyana*, **Matt Xavier** mentioned the work of a committee that was tasked to "rethink" the way TPDS selects candidates for our Board. The committee included **Janice Barnard, Linda Brown, Santosh Nichani, Jeannie Smith, Myrna Trust, Matt, and me**. After reviewing and discussing our report, the TPDS Board approved a series of recommendations for further consideration by the membership. Several of these proposals require changes to the TPDS Bylaws, which to be adopted, must be voted on and approved by the TPDS membership at its annual meeting in November. Beginning in September, the Board will be holding a series of Town Hall meetings to explain these proposals, solicit docents' views, and perhaps modify these proposals prior to the November membership vote.

Currently, a five-member Nominating Committee searches for and then proposes candidates for nine Board positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and five At-large positions. An election is held at the November annual meeting, with an opportunity for any docent to add their name to the list of candidates. That said, in most years, the nine candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee have been the only names on the election slate. At its most recent meeting, hoping to encourage more docents to run for the Board, the Board approved an amendment to the TPDS Standing Rules to clarify that the Nominating Committee is not limited to nominating only nine names to stand for election.

But perhaps more is needed to update our Board member search and selection procedures. The review committee (along with the Board) is proposing several additional changes. To start, we recommend that the Nominating Committee act more like an executive search firm – i.e., identifying and screening candidates for competitive elections, which it would then oversee. The review

committee and Board are proposing to switch to online voting open to all docents, not just those who attend the annual meeting. To help ensure a fair process and consistency from year to year, the review committee recommended operating rules for the Nominating Committee. To give newly elected Board members more time to learn their job, first terms would be two years, followed by subsequent one-year terms if they choose to run again. Additional proposals are described in the review committee's report.

But again, these are proposals. The next step is an open discussion and debate by interested docents at Town Hall meetings. The review committee and the Board look forward to active participation by many docents over the coming months to together rethink the way TPDS elects its governing Board.

For those interested in examining the proposals in more detail, a summary of the review committee's report, text of proposed amendments to the Bylaws, and the full review committee report along with several appendices can be found on the TPDS docent website under [Proposal-to-Update-Board-Member-Search-and-Selection](#).

Youth Program: Kicking Off a New Season

by Bruce Montgomery

The past school year brought both challenges and accomplishments. Congratulations (though not without tears) to Louis Sands on his retirement, and a huge thank you to **Janet Ugalde** and the many docents who stepped up to deliver talks, work directly with teachers, and lead additional walks. For the 2025-26 school year, **Patty Montgomery** and I will join Janet on the program's leadership team.

Such years bring opportunities. They are the best of times for reexamining and reaching priorities. For that reason, a Town Hall was held in June, attended by many of the Youth Program docents. The input was broad based, thoughtful, and child centered. It was encouraging in both its dedication to and enthusiasm for ongoing improvement.

At the top of the list was a call to bring back the kickoff meeting before classes arrive in late September. It's a rare opportunity to meet the entire team and get details regarding the new year. It's also a chance to discuss priority topics: best practices in working with classroom teachers, parent chaperones, and our "priority clients" – the eager 7- to 11-year-olds from schools around San Diego County.

This kickoff meeting is open to all docents of the Youth Program – past, present, and future.

Date: Tuesday, September 9

9:30 – 10:00 am: treats in the docent library

10:00 – 11:00 am: meet at the pavilion

BLIK: Learn at Lunch

Date/Time: Thursday, August 7, 12 noon

Location: North Beach parking lot, docent shed

Speaker: Robert James, Torrey Pines Docent

Topic: Bats: Hunters in the Night

Robert will address: Why are bats ecologically important? How do biologists survey for them? What are the health concerns for people and bats?

Bring your lunch, a chair, your curiosity, and any questions you may have about bats. No need to register. You may claim one hour on Better Impact under Training, Continuing Education (up to 12 hours per year).

TIK Talk

by Lisa Kakone

You may have noticed a new friend at the TIK: our very own replica of a Southern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus hellerii*), the preeminent rattlesnake at the Reserve.

Our replica snake was handmade by herpatologist Steve Bledsoe. It was cast in urethane resin using a reusable mold made from a deceased specimen. The rattle was made using a transparent resin that lets light shine through for a realistic look. It was then hand painted. For more on Steve's reptile replicas, see sbrePLICAS.com.



The new snake replica was purchased using docent funds from our treasury. Special thanks to **Ingo Renner** for securing this great interpretive specimen. We will be retiring our aged rattlesnake skin, which is flaking beyond repair.

In other TIK news: When you visit the TIK, you might see that our animal skull models are now well protected in their own plexiglass boxes; this should spare them from all too many visits to the repair shop. The museum-quality casing of these specimens was done by **Gary McCook** and **Tony Mondini**.

You might also notice the extraordinary restoration of the turtle shell completed by **Coach Vance** with guidance from the Birch Aquarium.



If you have any questions, suggestions, or possible additions for the TIK, please contact me or another member of the TIK Advisory Committee (TAC): **Allen Heryet, Gary McCook, Tony Mondini, Kathy Simmons**, or Ranger Stephanie Adams.

New Restroom and Upgraded Utilities Approved for Construction

The California Coastal Commission has given approval to a two-year project to restore restrooms and provide new utility lines at Torrey Pines.

In addition to a 750-square-foot "comfort station," the project includes an upgraded septic system, new water lines connected to the City of San Diego water system, repaved sidewalks, utility hookups for park facilities, additional disability-accessible parking spaces in the Lodge parking lot, new benches and water fountains, and enhanced electrical and telecommunications conduits across the site.

To minimize disruptions, construction will take place in two phases: August 2025 to February 2026 and August 2026 to February 2027. The schedule also will avoid overlapping with the breeding season of the endangered California Gnatcatcher.

Please note that if and when the construction affects any Docent Society programs, information about the timing and extent of the work will be shared as soon as it is available.

August CEED: Scripps Pier

Date: Thursday, August 28

Time: 10:00 am

Place: Scripps Pier. We will be hosted by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Special thanks to Gabriele Wienhausen for providing this contact.

Meet at: various locations to carpool due to limited parking near the pier.

Duration: about 1 hour

RSVP to Lisa Kakone. Limited to 25 docents. We will send out a list of attendees so that those who wish to can arrange carpools and meeting places.

September event: Mark your calendars for the annual TPDS beach/pizza party on Wednesday, September 10 from 5-7:30 pm. Stay tuned for more details.

Bird of the Month: Common Poorwill

by Robert James; photo by Kristen Sweeney

In past months we presented species that are common along with others that are rare and endangered. This month's bird, the Common Poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), is not often seen but can be heard at the right times. Inspiring this article, **Mary Makowski** told me about hearing one recently at home, and when **Ingo Renner** let us know about the [posted trail cam footage](#) with a poorwill calling in the background, I thought folks might want to learn more about a species that may be more common at the Reserve than we appreciate.

The Common Poorwill is a nocturnal resident bird that occurs throughout western North America (including southern Canada), frequently in desert and chaparral habitats. It is part of a larger group of similar species known as nightjars. Another example is the Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles aculipennis*), which I remember seeing years ago from the Guy Fleming Trail. The Common Poorwill's camouflaged plumage allows it to blend into the surroundings as it waits for insects to emerge at night. To cope with low temperatures, the bird employs a physiological sleight of hand: it can go into a state of torpor when conditions are harsh and food is scarce, saving energy until conditions improve.



Since this bird is typically only found by hearing its "poorwill" call at dusk and at night, it is undoubtedly overlooked. The San Diego County Bird Atlas noted it as "perhaps the bird most poorly sampled" and believed it is widespread but limited along the coast. Our monthly bird surveys (mostly in the mornings) have not recorded it, but there are observations from the Reserve in eBird and in iNaturalist.org (including a [photograph](#) from Broken Hill Trail). There are also reports from reliable observers in eBird from nearby areas of natural open space such as the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve.

This bird made me think back to when the California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*) was federally listed. In addition to habitat threats, that species was thought to be uncommon, but the more we surveyed for them (especially with call playbacks), the more we encountered, even in small habitat patches. Being curious, **Tina Tong** and I recently walked the park road to the North and South forks of the Broken Hill Trail. Although we did not hear any during our dusk walk, with the areas of suitable, undisturbed habitat in the Reserve, as well as nearby occupied habitats, I believe it is likely they regularly occur.

Myths and Facts about Bees

by Jess Mullins; photo by Craig Chaddock

If you joined Learn at Lunch on July 3, you heard from native bee expert and UC Irvine PhD student Jen Schlauch Saiyawong that the Marsh Trail is buzzing with native bees, and none of them make honey! In this month's article, we're busting common myths that we WannaBees often hear from visitors and pairing these with facts. Many of these stem from confusion of native species with the western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*), a non-native species brought to the Americas in the 1600s for wax and for crop pollination. Today, honey bees are widespread and often outcompete native bees for nectar and pollen resources. The photo below shows a honey bee (right) compared to a common native, the masked bee (*Hylaeus* sp.).

Myth: There's only one kind of bee.

Fact: There are over 20,000 bee species globally, with the greatest diversity found in deserts. There are 700+ species in San Diego County. We've detected 72 species (and expect many more!) at the Reserve so far.

Myth: All bees make honey and live in big hives.

Fact: About 90% of bees are solitary and don't make honey or live in hives. Most nest underground (~70% of all species), some digging more than 10 feet deep! Others nest in pithy stems; they are cuckoos in the nests of other bees, or they build nests out of pebbles and mud on the sides of rocks.

Myth: Honey bees are in decline.

Fact: Managed colonies that are used for crop pollination are in decline due to pests like Varroa mites. These pests are becoming resistant to pesticides. Unmanaged (or feral) honey bee populations are stable here. In fact, in San Diego, 80% of flower visits are by honey bees.

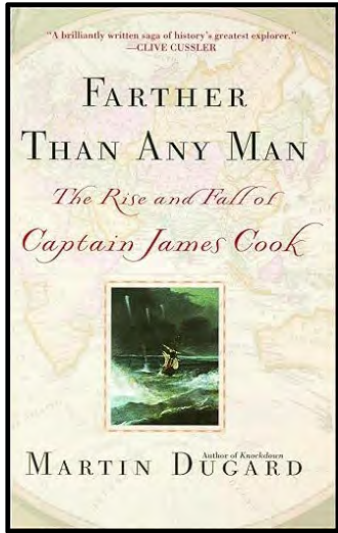
Native bees exhibit remarkably diverse life history patterns, with each species playing a unique and important role in the environment. We can better support them by providing two key resources: habitat and food. Since most native bees nest underground, leaving some bare, undisturbed soil helps them build their nests. For cavity-nesting bees, avoid removing all dead plant stalks. Because different bee species are active at different times of year, it's important to have a variety of flowering plants that provide nectar and pollen.

The Xerces Society, an invertebrate conservation organization, offers a [plant list](#) tailored to the Southern California coast to support pollinators.



Torrey Pines Book Club

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



When: Tuesday, August 12, 1:00 pm

What: *Farther Than Any Man: The Rise and Fall of Captain James Cook* by Martin Dugard

Amazon says:

This is the true story of a legendary man and explorer. Noted modern-day adventurer Martin Dugard, using James Cook's personal journals, strips away the myths surrounding Cook's life and portrays his tremendous ambition, intellect, and sheer hardheadedness to rise through the ranks of the Royal Navy – and by his courageous exploits become one of the most enduring figures in naval history.

Full of realistic action, lush descriptions of places and events, and fascinating historical characters such as King George III and the soon-to-be-notorious Master William Bligh, Dugard's gripping account of the life and death of Captain James Cook is a thrilling story of a discoverer hell-bent on going farther than any man.

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

September 9: *The High Sierra: A Love Story* by Kim Stanley Robinson

Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: July 2025

Number of species: 65
(+2 other taxa)

Mallard 1
Mourning Dove 35
White-throated Swift 23
Anna's Hummingbird 9
Allen's Hummingbird 9
hummingbird sp. 1
Whimbrel 2
Long-billed Curlew 13
Heermann's Gull 4
Western Gull 40
California Gull 2
Caspian Tern 4
Royal Tern 15
Western Grebe 1
Black-vented Shearwater 200
Brandt's Cormorant 1
Pelagic Cormorant 1
Double-crested Cormorant 3
Snowy Egret 4

Green Heron 1
Great Egret 4
Great Blue Heron 1
Brown Pelican 150
Osprey 3
White-tailed Kite 4
Cooper's Hawk 1
Red-tailed Hawk 4
Nuttall's Woodpecker 19
American Kestrel 3
Peregrine Falcon 4
Western Flycatcher 3
Black Phoebe 5
Say's Phoebe 1
Ash-throated Flycatcher 22
Cassin's Kingbird 9
California Scrub-Jay 20
American Crow 8
Common Raven 16
Tree Swallow 1
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 23

Cliff Swallow 2
Bushtit 44
Wrentit 71
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 1
California Gnatcatcher 3
Northern House Wren 5
Bewick's Wren 4
wren sp. 1
California Thrasher 10
Northern Mockingbird 8
Scaly-breasted Munia 9
House Sparrow 1
House Finch 87
Lesser Goldfinch 42
Dark-eyed Junco 5
Song Sparrow 30
California Towhee 69
Rufous-crowned Sparrow 3
Spotted Towhee 13
Yellow-breasted Chat 12
Hooded Oriole 5
Red-winged Blackbird 1

Brown-headed Cowbird 2
Orange-crowned Warbler 9
Common Yellowthroat 15
Yellow Warbler 1
Black-headed Grosbeak 2

Observers: Donna Mancuso, Nancy Richardson, Paul Mullholland, Dinah Carl, Robert James, Kathy Estey, Robert Turner, Karen Turner, Lily Tang, Pam Burdt, Manolo Turner, Marty Hales, Steve Neal, Nancy Novak, Gabriele Wienhausen, Debbie Regottaz, Tsaiwei Ole

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



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