



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

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September 2025

Water Circulation In and Out of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon

by Joan R. Simon

On August 9, Dr. Sarah Giddings, Associate Professor of Physical Oceanography at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, spoke to the Docent Society about water circulation and exchange between Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the coastal Pacific Ocean.

We were interested to learn that there are estuaries all over the world similar to our own lagoon that are *low-inflow*, meaning they have low freshwater inflow; and also like ours, they tend to close intermittently. Dr. Giddings first focused on the morphological changes to the lagoon's mouth, i.e., changes in sedimentation filling the lagoon, which cause mouth closures. She used images from a camera taking photos from the North Beach parking lot at 15-minute intervals to show us the changes that occur over a sample 14-day period. They illustrated how the channel migrated toward the south, with a berm to the north building up a half meter and slowly narrowing the mouth opening. Five days after this photo series, the mouth completely closed. Sedimentation buildup is caused by waves bringing sand and cobbles into the lagoon mouth; sometimes the current and sediment movement at the mouth "can be just really intense."



Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, September 13, 9:00 am

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

Speaker: Corbin Schuppert, CA State Parks Restoration Specialist

Topic: The Torrey Pines Lodge: Struggles in Conservation

Corbin Schuppert is a Restoration Specialist for California State Parks working on historical structures in the San Diego Coast District. Initially a member of the Torrey Pines Maintenance Department, he worked both on the Guy Fleming House renovation and on re-plastering the west wing of the Lodge. He is now overseeing the first phase of the Lodge reconstruction project, which started in early May. His team has shored up the pillars in the entryway and are now completing the re-plastering of the building's exterior. Corbin will talk about the work that has been accomplished and the challenges ahead. (See April, July, August *Torreyana*.)

Refreshments: Docents with last names beginning with **P, R, S** will be responsible for providing snacks for this meeting.

Why is it necessary to dredge open the lagoon if it closes? When the mouth closes, the lagoon fills with fresh water. Rain storms, of course, will bring in fresh water. But even without any rain, the closed lagoon will slowly fill with "urban drool," meaning the everyday use of water, such as washing your car or watering your lawn. That water slowly trickles into the watershed and eventually into the lagoon. When this happens, the water column becomes stratified, with the inflow of fresh water sitting at the surface. This cap separates fresh water at the top from salt water at the bottom, and it also inhibits vertical mixing such that oxygen is no longer being exchanged throughout the water column. The dissolved oxygen in the bottom saltwater layer (Cont. on pg. 3.)

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Editors@torreypine.org.

Please send postal/email address changes to:

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

Attn: Membership or email to

Membership@torreypine.org

Web sites:

TP Docent Society: torreypine.org

TP Conservancy: torreypines.org

Visitor Center phone: **858.755.2063**

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President's Message

The Benefits of Being a Volunteer Docent: A Rewarding Path

Volunteering as a docent at Torrey Pines is more than just giving time – it's about deepening your relationship with the natural world while enriching the lives of others. Whether you're leading a hike, pointing out a native plant, or answering a curious child's question, you're making a real impact.

One of the greatest benefits of being a docent is the *sense of purpose* it brings. Sharing your passion for nature helps others understand and care about the environment – and that ripple effect can be powerful. You become a bridge between people and place, sparking moments of connection that can lead to lasting awareness.

It's also a chance to *keep learning*. From training sessions offered through CEED and Oak Walks to time spent observing in the field as we rove, docents are always discovering something new. Nature constantly surprises us, and being in nature regularly keeps our minds and senses sharp.

There's a strong *social connection* as well. Docent communities are full of curious, caring, and like-minded people. The friendships formed while walking trails, prepping for programs, or just sharing a laugh after a shift are truly special.

And perhaps most meaningful of all, the *peace and perspective* that come from spending time outdoors. Being present in nature – listening, watching, reflecting – reminds us of the bigger picture and our place in it.

So thank you for giving your time, heart, and voice. The benefits of being a docent are many, but the greatest one may be knowing you're making a difference, one story at a time.

The Board will conduct town halls in September for reviewing the Nominating Committee bylaws changes to be voted on in November. If you'd like to participate, please watch for the upcoming announcements. (See article in [August 2025 Torreyana](#))

On behalf of the board, I would like to thank the New Docent Training Committee for their focused work as well as their final report that will inform planning for the next training session. Members of the committee are **Pao Chao** and **Barbara Wallach** (co-chairs), **Gabriele Wienhausen**, **Susan Elliott**, **Julia Halter**, **Allan Heryet**, **Coach Vance**, **Cres Torres**, and **Ingo Renner**.

Matt Xavier
President, TPDS



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(Cont from pg. 1.) “basically goes to zero” and the water becomes hypoxic, which is a death sentence for many creatures living in the lagoon. The fresh, still water on the top also provides “a really great habitat for mosquitos to breed in.” And mosquitos carry diseases such as West Nile virus. A third reason to keep the lagoon open is flooding upstream with potential property and infrastructure damage. These three risk factors trigger the need for dredging the mouth of the lagoon.

As the surrounding infrastructure has continued to encroach on the lagoon, closures have become much more frequent. Left to its own devices, the lagoon’s mouth would naturally migrate, usually to the south until it found an outlet to the ocean. But at Peñasquitos this migration quickly runs into multiple infrastructure impediments and ultimately closes up. As a result, Los Peñasquitos needs to be dredged at least once a year, usually in the late spring.



Scientists study this phenomenon by using drones in the air and LiDAR mounted to trucks that drive along the shore (or onto drones), measuring the elevation of the sand and the marsh. This data is combined with measurements from in situ sensors for water level and sediment movement and provides a high spatial and temporal resolution which shows changes that can be up to 2 meters (six feet) elevation during an El Nino. Other measurements taken are salinity, temperature, flow rates in and out of the lagoon, pH, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen.

Dr. Giddings told us about an experiment that measures what happens to the biological community when an estuary closes.

Oysters were strapped on a pole mounted on a mooring, with some at the bottom and some at the top, along with sensors measuring salinity, dissolved oxygen,

temperature, and other metrics. Additional biosensors (in collaboration with Dr. Luke Miller at SDSU) measured the shell gape of the oyster, i.e., how much a shell is open. When feeding, oysters open their shells; when stressed, by pollutants



Note the handrail is almost completely covered by cobbles.

in the water or lack of oxygen, they barely open their shells at all. When they die, their shells open completely.

Next Dr. Giddings talked about the freshwater outflow from the lagoon to the coastal ocean. An experiment (PiNC 2023, Plumes in Nearshore Condition) was conducted where the lagoon water was dyed a bright pink color and the plume of fresh water that came out of the lagoon was tracked into the ocean. In addition to the usual sensors in the lagoon and offshore, more were added at the mouth as well as offshore, all the way out to a depth of 30 m. Measurements of salinity, water velocity, temperature, and dissolved oxygen were taken, along with turbidity, chlorophyll and the added pink dye. (Dr. Giddings thanked docents who were on the beach at the time of the experiment and explained to concerned onlookers that it was not a shark attack and the pink plume, pictured below, was caused by an environmentally safe dye.)



The distance and direction in which the plume moves determine where the sediment it carries is deposited. When the waves were coming directly onshore, the plume spread north and south evenly, tightly hugging the coastline and “trapped in the surf zone.” This is a good outcome if you need sediment or nutrient replenishment close to shore, but not when the water is polluted and interferes with water recreation. If waves come from the south, the plume spreads northward; if waves come from the north, the plume spreads to the south. When the flow coming out of the mouth is strong enough to overpower the waves, it escapes offshore. Usually a sharp dividing line, called a front, can be observed between the (pink) freshwater outflow and the ocean water. Five of six release events resulted in the freshwater plume being trapped, even when the waves were small; the discharge escaped at the mouth in only one of the six events. Rip currents are a very effective mechanism for pushing the plume offshore, and there is a pretty persistent rip current just north of the lagoon mouth (swimmers beware!).

During high rainfall events, the plume pushes further offshore. At that point it is transported by winds more than waves and can reach depths of 30 m. In fact, the historic record shows that freshwater plumes from our lagoon frequently reached the Scripps Pier, which is 7.5 km away. The relative strength of the waves and river discharge as well as the mouth morphology dictate the surfzone escape location and mechanisms. The relative timing of storms and waves at the time of discharge will determine the ultimate fate of the freshwater plume.

To view Dr. Giddings full presentation, click [here](#).

General Meeting Minutes: August 9, 2025

Speaker: Sarah Giddings, Associate Professor of Physical Oceanography at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, on Water Circulation and Exchange between Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the Coastal Ocean. (See pg. 1.) About 62 docents attended.

Two Jr. Ranger Booklets: Senior Park Aide Lila Beth Scott explained that there are now two junior ranger booklets at the Lodge available to young visitors. The first is the booklet we have used for several years that children need to fill out with information specific to Torrey Pines. The second is a CA State Parks booklet that children take from one state park to another, which we need to stamp.

The business meeting was led by TPDS President **Matt Xavier**.

Docent of the Month: Arlene Weinerman, class of 2014, has worked in the Lodge for many years and participates in many other docent activities.

Shark Lab Visit: Cal State Long Beach Shark Lab will be at the BLIK on Saturday, August 16 from 10 to 3.

Bob Friedman, chairman of a committee to review the board selection process, spoke about their recommendations. Currently, a Nominating Committee (NomCom) proposes a slate of docents for the Board, with the possibility of additional nominations made from the floor at the annual meeting. The review committee suggests changing this to a more democratic slate with competitive elections.

In addition, new board members would be elected for two years; current board members could be re-elected for one additional year.

The bylaws would need to be changed at the annual meeting in November for any new procedures to take effect. Town halls to discuss these changes will be held in the fall.

See the [August 2025 Torreyana](#) for more details.

Youth Program: Patti and Bruce Montgomery will join Janet Ugalde in leading the Youth Program. All docents are invited to participate in the program. There will be an orientation on Tuesday, Sept. 9 at 10:00 am at the Pavilion (come to the Library at 9:30 for snacks before the meeting). (See pg. 7.)

Beach Public Walk: Bob Friedman announced that a group of docents has proposed giving beach public walks on select Saturdays and Sundays at 2 pm. Dates and signups, as well as specialized training, will be forthcoming.

State Parks Interpreter 1: Louis Sands's replacement as Interpreter 1 will be hired soon and could start working before September.

Gray Whale Skeleton Update: Docents made a site visit to Prof. Hildebrand's lab at Scripps Institution of Oceanography to see the whale skeleton. A 3-D printing of each bone is being made in order to construct a small model of the skeleton. Arrangements are being made to transfer the skeleton to CA State Parks and TPSNR. We are exploring several possible sites for the skeleton. A structure to protect the skeleton from the rain will need to be procured.

The **Utilities Project** hasn't begun yet, but it appears that two trenches will be dug on either side of the park road from the Lodge to the south entrance at the golf course. The **Lodge Renovations** are continuing. Project leader Corbin Schuppert will speak at our September General Meeting (see pg. 1).

Docent of the Month: Arlene Weinerman

Photo by Herb Knufken

Thank you, board members!
I came to Torrey Pines very late in life. Reflecting on my formative years, I was always outdoors playing with the neighborhood kids. The activities I engaged in, however, were mostly on asphalt and concrete. Nature? I was warned about poison ivy. Wildlife? The cockroach.

I was lucky enough to spend summers out of the city; my parents sent me to a sleep-away camp where the focus was on sports, not nature. College and graduate schools: inner city, no nature.

I eventually moved to Denver, Colorado. There was bicycling, tennis, volleyball (where I met my husband), skiing, hiking, and camping. Skiing, hiking, and camping introduced me to nature more than ever before. The beauty and awareness of the fragility of nature were awakened in me in a personal way.

My husband's job brought us to San Diego. I left my dear friends and beloved Colorado mountains and began to explore the beaches and trails of San Diego. Motherhood and working as a speech and language pathologist occupied the next decades. We hiked and camped but spent most weekends at competitive gymnastics meets and later at soccer games (attending to our daughter's passions).

Retirement activities included lectures at Osher, volunteering at Jewish Family Services, ushering at multiple theaters, and reading to children through Words Alive.

Years into retirement, my friend and neighbor Kathy Glasebrook invited me to hike with her at Torrey Pines. When we hiked the Guy Fleming Trail, she named every flower. I was totally impressed. We returned the next week and talked not only flowers but the extensiveness of the docent program. She was a good salesperson, and I immediately knew that this was something I wanted to do to broaden my horizons.

In the many years I have been coming to Torrey Pines, I have done Trail Patrol/Roving Interpreter and worked at the TIK. I have found my comfort level volunteering in the Lodge. There isn't a day that goes by when I am at Torrey Pines that I don't learn something new. My greatest pleasures are sharing what I have learned with visitors from all over the world and talking with my awe-inspiring fellow docents, rangers, and park aides.



All About Bats

This Q & A is based on the BLIK Learn at Lunch talk by Robert James on August 7. For the talk slides, click [here](#).

Where (and when) can I find bats at Torrey Pines SNR?

The North Torrey Pines Road Bridge over the railway tracks ("High Bridge") probably still has a bat roost, active in the spring and summer months. Also, the Peñasquitos Lagoon would be an excellent place to find bats near sunset; you could find Mexican free-tailed bats, Yuma myotis bats, and other bat species while they are hawking insects. ("Hawking" refers to bats foraging by actively pursuing and capturing flying insects in mid-air.) The Torrey sandstone cliff faces would also be a good place, as I suspect western pipistrelle bats use crevices within them. In fact, there have been three observations (two western pipistrelle) in iNaturalist of bats in the Reserve, all from the beach around sunset on the cliffs between the two overlooks on the Guy Fleming Trail.

What are the predators of bats?

There is limited, mostly anecdotal information, but many animals around the world are known to prey on bats (e.g., monkeys, raccoons, cats, snakes). In North America, hawks and falcons are known to hunt bats at colonies and capture them when they exit and return to the roost. The Peregrine Falcon is one bird that preys on bats, and this has been documented at the Reserve. In Britain, owls have been documented preying on bats, with some individuals taking large numbers.

In what position do bats give birth?

Bats can give birth in the head-down roosting position, but the majority of those studied were in a head-up or horizontal (cradle) position. The wings and tail membrane may be used to cradle the baby during birth.

Why do bats hang upside down?

The long leg bones of bats are lightweight, which facilitates their ability to fly. As a result, the legs of most species cannot support their body weight for sustained periods of time. Hanging also makes getting airborne easier and likely helps them roost in locations away from potential predators.



Mexican Free-tailed Bats. Photo: USFWS

Fire Followers in the Extension

by Alyssa Sandino, CA State Parks, SDCD

Chaparral ecosystems are adapted to fires. However, fires that happen too frequently, intensely, or out of season for an ecosystem's "fire cycle" can do irreparable damage. When fires occur at moderate frequency and intensity, some native wildflower seeds actually benefit, because they require smoke, char, and an open canopy to germinate. These plants are called fire followers.

Following the one-year anniversary of the 2024 Del Mar Fire in the Extension, our Natural Resources team surveyed the site for emerging plants. The most common fire follower in the Extension is the bush poppy (*Dendromecon rigida*), along with the giant-flower phacelia (*Phacelia grandiflora*), shortlobe phacelia (*Phacelia brachyloba*), and four-valved (wild) tobacco ('up is the Kumeyaay word for *Nicotiana* sp., *Nicotiana quadrialvis*). After a few years, these plants will appear in lower numbers as other native vegetation returns, with their seeds waiting in the soil for a chance to sprout.



Bush Poppy



Giant-flower Phacelia

Taking into consideration how delicate a post-burn ecosystem is during the recovery period and how ash and soot mixed with the loose sand erode easily with foot traffic, the Margaret Fleming Nature Trail remains closed during this sensitive time. We appreciate everyone's patience as we give the Extension time to recover and for fire followers to flourish.



Cacti at Torrey Pines

by Connie Jaffee

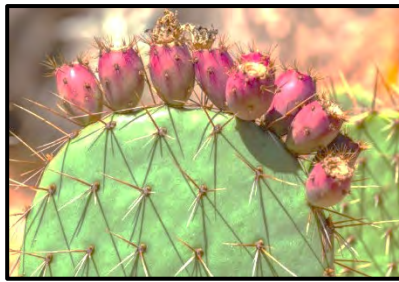
On July 14, I led approximately 30 docents on a cactus-focused OAK Walk at the Reserve. There are five main species of cacti at TPSNR:

1. Coastal prickly pear (*Opuntia littoralis*)
2. Indian fig (*Opuntia ficus-indica*), cultivated and easily hybridized with the coastal prickly pear
3. Coast cholla, aka jumping cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*)
4. Coast barrel cactus (*Ferocactus viridescens*)
5. Velvet cactus (*Bergerocactus emoryi*)

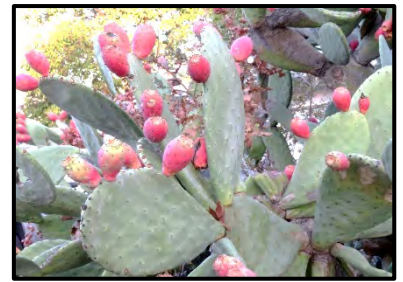
All these cacti have spines, which are modified leaves. All have flowers, and the coastal prickly pear and Indian fig also have fruit known as tuna. These two cacti have edible pads (also called stems), flowers, and fruit enjoyed by animals and humans. The coast barrel cactus produces a nectar that attracts ants, which harass invading insects.

The cacti protect and nourish themselves with varying types of spines and stem shapes. Spines and stems provide shade, reducing water loss through transpiration. The stems of cacti (and all succulents) also take over the function of photosynthesis. To reduce water loss, the microscopic openings called stomata close during the day, unlike plants with leaves that are open during the day. At night, the stomata open, allowing carbon dioxide to diffuse into the stem. The plant converts CO₂ into malic acid for storage at night. When the sun is out, malic acid is converted back to CO₂ for photosynthesis. This process is called reverse photosynthesis.

Each cactus in the Reserve is unique, so take a closer look at the different plants on your next walk. For more information go to torreypine.org/volunteering/docentlogin, docent document repository, OAKS Walks.



Coastal Prickly Pear



Indian Fig



Coast Cholla



Coast Barrel Cactus



Velvet Cactus

BLIK: Learn at Lunch

Date/Time: Thursday, September 4, 12 noon

Location: North Beach parking lot, docent shed

Speaker: Malana Tabak, Torrey Pines Docent

Topic: The Tides, Part 1

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

BLIK Learn at Lunch is the first Thursday of every month at noon at the docent shed, North Beach parking lot. All docents, park employees, and visitors are welcome.

Maintenance Update

by Chad Van Doren, Torrey Pines Maintenance Chief

Our Torrey Pines maintenance crew has been working on road brushing on Carmel Valley Road, which involves vegetation management along roadsides to improve clear sightlines for drivers and pedestrians. We plan to start this work on the south end of the park road soon. We have also been busy maintaining the park during the high summer visitation months. We will soon be losing Jeffery (Rusty) Kent and Gisele Murillo at the end of their seasonal employment and will be welcoming three new seasonal staff: Connor Sadler, Robert (Bobby) Moeller and Veronica Ness.

Upcoming projects include receiving and installing 20 new park benches, more road and trail brushing, and maintenance and repair of the park residence on Flintkote Avenue.

What's on the Beach? Wavy Turban Shells

article and photo by Kathy Dickey

The largest shell you might find on our beach is the wavy turban (also called wavy-top turban shell or wavy-top



snail). I've seen various scientific names for this snail-like gastropod, with *Astraea undosa* starting in 1828 by Wood; however, the current name has been updated to *Megastraea undosa*. There are seven other species of turban shells in the San Diego area, but they are smaller (less than 4 cm) and have different coloration. The wavy-top turban is by far the most common. This shell is up to 4 cm in the intertidal zone, and larger to 5 or 6 cm in deeper water down to 250 m.

These animals are found from San Luis Obispo County to Baja California and are particularly abundant in kelp forests, where they may migrate up the kelp at night to escape predators. They feed on plankton and diatoms using a file-type tongue to scrape the food off kelp and rocks.

Wavy turban shells are often covered in reddish or brown algae when alive. They have a conical shape with heavy, undulating horizontal ridges. Their operculum (or "trap door") is thick, with rough ridges, and can be closed tightly if the mollusk is threatened. The interior of the shell is similar to mother of pearl.

Much of their muscle (foot) is edible and tastes somewhat like abalone. It has been a staple for native Americans and some Mexicans for many centuries. These days, it has a small market and is called "wavalone."

Predators include various types of sea stars, lobsters, whelks, octopi, and fish. The empty shells of turban snails are used as protective armor by hermit crabs.

The wavy-top snail population has not been evaluated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Therefore, the current status of the population is unknown.

References available upon request.

Youth Program

by Janet Ugalde, Program Co-Director

Youth Program signups for teachers begins September 8. This school year, our program will be available on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the first two Fridays of each month, from 10 am to 12 pm. Available topics will include: Kumeyaay; Geology; Plants & Habitats; Ecosystems & Food Chains; and Ocean, Whales, and Dolphins. San Diego County students in grades 2-5 are eligible to participate. Thanks to the hard work of many docents, TPDS continues to offer generous bus grants to Title I schools.

Our kickoff meeting is open to all docents of the Youth Program – past, present, and future – on Tuesday, September 9: from 9:30 to 10:00 am, we'll have treats in the docent library; at 10:00 am, we'll meet at the Pavilion for an hour.

Program details and Better Impact signups will be posted and updated on our website after September 8.

Go to: torreypine.org/volunteering/docentlogin. Scroll down to:

DOCENT-LED SCHOOL PROGRAM – Schedule your services

For a list of school programs by date, click [here](#).

Thanks to our faithful team members, and to all who contribute to our success. We can't wait to see you in September!

Docent Annual Beach Party

When: Wednesday, September 10

Time: 5:30 to 7:30 pm

Where: Torrey Pines State Beach, below the stairs

What: Pizza and beverages provided

Please bring the following:

- A chair
- Your own plate, cutlery, and cup
- If you would like, a dessert to share with others

We are expecting a low tide of 0.39 feet at about 6:00 pm. Come and enjoy some pizza and watch the sunset with your fellow docents.

You may bring one significant other.

You do NOT need to RSVP.

Send questions to Lisa Kakone.

Sponsored by the CEED Committee.



Bee of the Month: Masked Bee

by Robert James; photo by Phil Roullard

Masked bees (*Hylaeus*) are different in appearance from the other native species we have written about in the *Torreyana*. I find them eerie and reminiscent of the evil Cylons from the fictional sci-fi universe of *Battlestar Galactica*. Yes, masked bees earn their name from those diamond-shaped



markings on their face. They look like small wasps (about the size of a grain of rice), usually have white/yellow leg markings, and can be a rewarding photography challenge. Using a small hand magnifier is a fantastic way to see them well and a

wonderful interpretive technique to employ for our visitors.

Interestingly, masked bees also lack body structures such as hair to carry pollen outside their bodies as most other bees do. Instead, they carry pollen in their crop and place it into the nest cell, where it will be used as larval food. Like other bees in the Colletidae family, they seal their provisions inside a membranous, cellophane-like cell lining. This includes substances that protect the eggs from fungi and other pathogens.

Masked bees most commonly fly in the spring, and that is the case at the Reserve. In fact, nearly half of the observations from the Reserve in [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) are from March. However, they have been observed here almost every month in smaller numbers by the WannaBees. Masked bees are considered generalists, visiting a variety of flowers for nectar and pollen, and I have even spotted them on leaves. They have been seen throughout much of the Reserve, commonly at the Extension and along the North Fork Trail, which are more densely vegetated areas. These observations align with their Latin name, *Hylaeus*, which means “of the woods.”

A current challenge with masked bee identification is that there is much variation in characteristics within a species. There also seem to be many undescribed species in the western U.S. Until updated work is done by entomologists to specifically describe masked bee species, most observations posted in iNaturalist in our area are only to the genus *Hylaeus*.

Another key element of masked bee life history that differs from most of our native bees is their nesting in dead twigs, plant stems, or other cavities. They lack strong mandibles and other adaptations for digging, so masked bees are reliant on available materials. Leaving behind dead suitable plant material, as well as providing bee houses with the needed habitat features, will benefit native bee conservation.

Bird of the Month: Heermann's Gull

by Robert James and David Walker; photo by David Walker

Many gulls can be challenging to identify, but the Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*), which occurs at the Reserve, is distinctive and easy to recognize, as they are noticeably smaller than our common Western Gulls (*L. occidentalis*). Longish wings and a buoyant flight pattern can also help distinguish them from other gull species here. Mature Heermann's Gull adults have a white head, red bill, and greyish, un-patterned plumage, with the birds in their first winter plumage being entirely dark brown.



They breed in a few colonies in Baja California and disperse northward along the Pacific Coast, which is a “backwards” migration from the usual seasonal bird pattern. Heermann's Gulls have the greatest numbers in San Diego County in the late summer and fall, mirroring the abundance pattern of Brown Pelicans. The reason for this is that these gulls will follow and attempt to steal fish from pelicans. The behavior of procuring resources in this manner, called *kleptoparasitism*, is exhibited by several other marine bird species.

Our monthly bird counts are generally similar to the broader distribution pattern with seasonal abundance peaks and lows, and some presumed non-breeding birds can be seen all year at the Reserve. (We often see them at the beach or lagoon.) Additional observer reports posted on eBird show the same arrangement along the Pacific Coast. Also, Heermann's Gulls can rarely be seen at some inland lakes in our region.

Heermann's Gulls have a broad diet, which includes small crustaceans, mollusks, shrimp, and squid. They also forage for small fishes such as anchovies and sardines in nearshore ocean waters. Since there is variation in prey availability, this can make them vulnerable. In addition, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) considers the Heermann's Gull a “near threatened” species since 90% of the species breeds on a single island in fluctuating numbers.

The next time you are at the beach or lagoon, especially this time of year, look around for Heermann's Gulls. You will not have to search for long. Phil Unitt in the *San Diego County Bird Atlas* describes them as “this most distinctive and attractive of North America's gulls,” and we are sure that you will agree.

Torrey Pines Book Club

We will have a hybrid meeting this month: you can attend either via Zoom or in person. Please notify **Annette Ring** if you plan to participate or if you need any extra help getting connected.

When: Tuesday, September 9, 1:00 pm

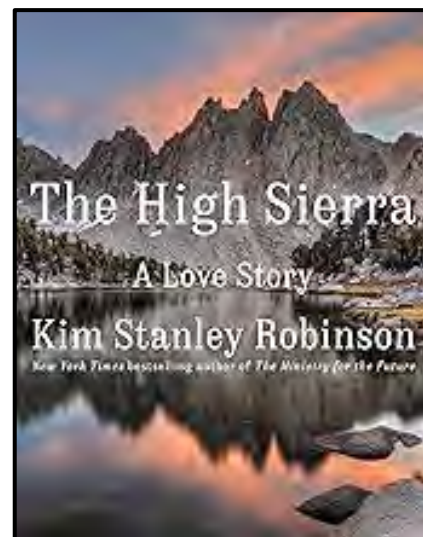
Where: White Sands La Jolla, 7450 Olivetas Ave., La Jolla

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

Amazon says:

Kim Stanley Robinson first ventured into the Sierra Nevada mountains during the summer of 1973. He returned from that encounter a changed man, awed by a landscape that made him feel as if he were simultaneously strolling through an art museum and scrambling on a jungle gym like an energized child. He has returned to the mountains more than a hundred times and has gathered a vast store of knowledge about them. *The High Sierra* is his lavish celebration of this exceptional place.

Over the course of a vivid narrative, Robinson describes the geological forces that shaped the Sierras and the history of its exploration, going back to the indigenous peoples. He celebrates the people whose actions protected the High Sierra for future generations and his book is filled with maps, gear advice, and more than 100 breathtaking photos



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

October 14: *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: August 2025

Number of species: 62
(+3 other taxa)

California Quail 4
Mourning Dove 65
White-throated Swift 5
Anna's Hummingbird 14
Allen's Hummingbird 20
hummingbird sp. 14
Whimbrel 109
Long-billed Curlew 6
Willet 1
Least Sandpiper 2
Parasitic Jaeger 4
Heermann's Gull 8
Western Gull 32
California Gull 2
gull sp. 2
Black Skimmer 2
Caspian Tern 6
Royal Tern 6

Pied-billed Grebe 1
Black-vented Shearwater 2
Double-crested Cormorant 28
Snowy Egret 12
Great Egret 3
Great Blue Heron 2
Brown Pelican 185
Osprey 2
White-tailed Kite 2
Cooper's Hawk 2
Red-tailed Hawk 4
Nuttall's Woodpecker 10
American Kestrel 3
Western Wood-Pewee 1
Black Phoebe 7
Ash-throated Flycatcher 7
Cassin's Kingbird 4
Cassin's/Western Kingbird 3
Hutton's Vireo 1
California Scrub-Jay 20
American Crow 5

Common Raven 54
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 7
Cliff Swallow 1
Bushtit 45
Wrentit 98
Swinhoe's White-eye 2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 2
California Gnatcatcher 3
Northern House Wren 3
Bewick's Wren 12
California Thrasher 19
Northern Mockingbird 2
Western Bluebird 2
Scaly-breasted Munia 22
House Finch 135
Lesser Goldfinch 80
Dark-eyed Junco 2
Song Sparrow 31
California Towhee 111
Rufous-crowned Sparrow 1

Spotted Towhee 17
Yellow-breasted Chat 3
Hooded Oriole 10
Orange-crowned Warbler 5
Common Yellowthroat 7
Black-headed Grosbeak 3

Observers: Donna Mancuso, Nancy Richardson, Nancy Stalnaker, Paul Mullholland, Dinah Carl, Robert James, Kathy Estey, Robert Turner, Karen Turner, Lily Tang, Pam Burdt, Manolo Turner, Dylan Hardenbrook, Nancy Novak, Luz Chung, Gale Darling, Tsaiwei Olee

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



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