



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

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Peaceful Co-existence

by Dan Hammer

Whether we're out on a trail or out in the yard, most of us encounter wildlife. How can we best behave in order to help them thrive, and what should we do if we find an animal in trouble? To answer these questions, Sasha Helm and Ashley Salazar of the San Diego Humane Society's Project Wildlife spoke to the January 10 docent meeting (by Zoom) about "Project Wildlife: Understanding & Co-existing with Wildlife."

They began by describing the history and mission of Project Wildlife, one of the largest wildlife rehabilitation programs in the U.S. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for local wildlife by serving as the region's primary resource for animal rehabilitation and public education. Through complex surgeries, lifesaving medical care, safe places to recover from illness, and enriched habitats to build survival skills, Project Wildlife not only offers healing but ensures that animals are prepared for success in their native environment. It collaborates on recovery efforts with a variety of local organizations and government agencies. It also conducts an extensive education program at Project Wildlife's two rehabilitation centers, out in public, and over the phone and internet. (For more background, click [here](#).)

Let's say you find a wild animal – what's next? In most cases, the best thing to do is nothing, even if it is a baby seemingly on its own. Unless an animal is injured, orphaned, or sick, its best chance for survival is with its parents, who can teach it the behaviors and provide the natural diet



Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, February 14, 9:00 am

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

Speakers: Alexandra Latona, Haley Calhoun, Rowan Jackman

Topic: *Cultivating Curiosity: Questioning Strategies in Environmental Education*

This presentation will introduce questioning strategies that encourage curiosity, engagement, and deeper learning in environmental education. The speakers will explore how purposeful questions can shift learning from simply delivering information to encouraging inquiry and helping learners make meaningful connections.

Alexandra Latona has served as California State Parks Interpreter III for the San Diego Coast District since January 2022. In this role, she manages education and interpretation programs across the district's 13 park units, including K-12 in-person programs, Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS), and campground programs, as well as interpretive programs at visitor centers, museums, and large special events.

Haley Calhoun is the K-12 Access Interpreter II for San Diego Coast District, where she develops curriculum, coordinates student programming across the district, and strengthens park offerings for K-12 audiences.

Rowan Jackman started as Interpreter I at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve in October. For the past 4 years, she has worked in environmental education in San Diego. (See her profile in November 2025 [Torreyana](#).)

Refreshments: Docents with last names beginning with **E, F, G, H** will be responsible for providing snacks for this meeting.

it needs to thrive. As Sasha said, "Healthy adult wildlife should not be easy to approach or handle, and parents rarely abandon their babies." So **wait and watch:** before taking any action, begin by asking questions such as "where might these babies' parents be?" and "how long have they been alone?" (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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FLASH - Don't forget to donate your nature and conservation magazines to the Museum Shop.

President's Message: The Foundation of Kindness

As we approach the final month of the Reserve's closure, I want to emphasize the value of kindness. Kindness is at the heart of effective docent service at Torrey Pines, shaping how visitors experience one of California's most treasured natural landscapes. Docents are often the first human connection guests have with the Reserve, and a kind approach sets the tone for learning, curiosity, and respect. A warm greeting, patient listening, and genuine empathy can transform a casual visit into a meaningful encounter with nature.



Torrey Pines welcomes people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and levels of outdoor experience. Kindness allows docents to meet visitors where they are – answering simple questions without judgment, guiding families with young children, and supporting those who may feel uncertain on trails or in unfamiliar environments. Through kindness, docents create a safe and inclusive atmosphere that encourages engagement and fosters appreciation for conservation.

Moreover, kindness strengthens the docent community itself. Collaboration, mutual respect, and support among docents enhance teamwork and morale, making volunteer service more rewarding and sustainable. When kindness is modeled internally, it naturally extends to the public.

Ultimately, kindness reinforces the Torrey Pines mission of stewardship. Visitors who feel respected and welcomed are more likely to care about protecting the Reserve. Through everyday acts of kindness, docents help ensure that Torrey Pines remains not only a place of natural beauty, but also a place of human connection and shared responsibility.

Let's continue to show kindness as we work with our new Interpreter 1, Rowan Jackman. Rowan's positive attitude, enthusiasm, and openness to new ideas are indeed contagious. We are grateful and fortunate that she has joined us at Torrey Pines.

Since I failed to recognize him at our last General Meeting, I would like to give a shout out to **German Cervantes**, our most recent Docent of the Month (see pg. 5). We are all lucky that this well-respected, upbeat and thoughtful person has decided to spend time with us at Torrey Pines. I just hope he can forgive me for my oversight!

See you on the trails soon!

Cheers,

Matt Xavier
TPDS President

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(Cont. from pg. 1.)

When you see a nest, remember that the parents are likely still around. (“Wild parents run errands too!”) They might be out foraging for food or watching from a distance to avoid attracting predators. For example, rabbits visit their nest only twice a day, and hummingbirds spend just seconds feeding their babies. Give the animals ample time and space to go on with their lives. (If you’re concerned that a nest might be abandoned, you can surround it with a ring of flour or sticks and then return later to see whether these have been disturbed.) And don’t assume the worst if the babies are inactive: well-fed babies are usually content and sleeping or quiet; if they’re noisy, it’s usually to let their parents know they’re hungry.

With the best of intentions, people often “rescue” healthy babies and bring them to Project Wildlife. (Ashley called this “compassionate kidnapping.”) This needlessly exposes the animal to diseases from sick animals at the hospital and wastes Project Wildlife’s resources.

However, there are conditions in which it is best to intervene. Newborns, hatchlings, and nestlings are usually featherless or hairless and immobile, with eyes and ears closed. If you find any that have fallen on the ground, place them back in their nest; if the nest has fallen or been broken, you can fashion a makeshift nest and place it back in the tree.



How can you tell if babies have been orphaned? Generally, they are frantic, restless, and loud. After waiting and watching for parents to return, look for these signs of orphaned babies:

- nonstop peeping or crying for hours at a time;
- dull or pale appearance;
- lethargic or unresponsive behavior;
- nocturnal babies wandering during the day;
- diurnal babies crying all night.

If you observe any of these behaviors, call Project Wildlife at 619-299-7012 (press 1) or visit the [Wildlife Help Hub](#) to discuss next steps.

If you determine that intervention is necessary, what’s next? Keep the wildlife warm and in a dark, quiet environment such as a cardboard box (with holes for ventilation). Minimize handling to avoid *capture myopathy*, a metabolic condition resulting from prolonged pursuit, entrapment, restraint, or transport. This can manifest itself quickly and result in sudden death or impact an animal’s subsequent healing and response to treatment. All of the animal’s senses are vulnerable to stressors, so minimize its exposure to handling and to new sights, smells, and sounds such as loud talk or music. Ask any excited children present to “use their inside voices.”

Do **not** try to feed, give water to, or perform first aid on wildlife. Bring the animal(s) to Project Wildlife or other permitted wildlife rehab center as soon as possible. In general, act as if you’re assisting an injured person at the scene of an accident: you would call for help or take them to the ER rather than engaging in prolonged conversation or attempting surgery. (Moreover, it is illegal and inhumane to keep wildlife for more than 48 hours.)

Minimize handling wildlife not only for their safety but for yours. Wild animals see us as possible predators. They have teeth, fangs, beaks, talons or claws and will do anything they can do to defend themselves. When handling them, avoid contact with any injured areas and keep them away from your face. Wear thick gloves and/or a face mask. Use a barrier such as a blanket, jacket, or towel when carrying the animal; restrain and cover its head to reduce stressful stimuli.

Co-existing with Wildlife

Ashley then asked two questions: “How can we prevent animals from having to come into our care?” And “How can we better co-exist with wildlife in our yards and elsewhere?”

Many of Project Wildlife’s patients become sick, injured, or orphaned as a result of human impacts. Major threats to wildlife include urban development, cars, trash, rat and mouse bait, and pets.

Wild animals come into our spaces only if they are finding a resource such as food or shelter. If you’re experiencing issues with “invasive” wildlife, focus on what is attracting them and remove the source so they move along. Always seek out *humane* methods to deter wildlife such as

- properly securing and disposing of trash;
- securing access points to your home and yard;
- protecting growing plants with gopher baskets and chicken wire;
- harvesting fruits and vegetables regularly; and
- bringing pet food indoors at night.

You can also deter wildlife from entering your space with *gentle hazing*, which includes scattering cayenne pepper or cider vinegar, turning on ultrasonic devices or bright lights, making loud noises, or putting up fake owl statues (and moving them around from time to time).

Inhumane methods of deterrence include anything that causes harm, injury, or prolonged suffering to wildlife – often to unintended targets – without solving the root problem of what attracts them. If you find an animal in a glue trap or other instrument of torture, contact Project Wildlife. Also note that disturbing an active bird nest is illegal under federal law, and trapping and

relocating wildlife is illegal without a permit and guidance from California Fish & Wildlife.

Each year in the U.S. alone, about 1 billion birds die from *window strikes*. Window glass reflects foliage and the sky to look like a safe place to fly to or through. You can help prevent window strikes by using window decals, hanging wind chimes, keeping feeders away from windows, and minimizing light pollution.

Tree and bush trimming in the spring and summer is a major cause of orphaning birds that are nesting and feeding there. If possible, trim in the late fall and early winter – which is usually better for your trees and plants because less sap is lost during colder weather.

Pets can harm wildlife by exposing them to illness and disease through direct or indirect contact. Pets can fall prey to predators, and pets themselves can be predators. Cats are the worst: each year they kill about 1.3-4 billion birds and 6.3-22.3 billion mammals in the U.S. alone! To keep these killers at bay, keep



them indoors and improve their indoor activities. If you feel your cats must get outdoors, set up an enclosed “catio” or take them for supervised walks on a leash.

Many Project Wildlife patients have been infected or injured by a feeder or bird bath. You can minimize problems by filling feeders partially (using

local or native seeds and avoiding human food) and by cleaning and air-drying your feeder or bath every one to two weeks. Discontinue use if you find birds or other animals getting stuck or injured. And consider alternatives to feeders such as native plants and nesting boxes (for information on boxes, visit NestWatch.org).

To watch Sasha and Ashley’s presentation, click [here](#). To contact Project Wildlife, call (619) 299-7012 (press 1) or email info@sdhumane.org.



Welcome to our New Ranger, Emily Garcia

by Joan R. Simon

Our newest ranger, Emily Garcia, grew up in Carlsbad and remembers hiking at Torrey Pines and “scaling the bluffs.” Even her parents are local: they met at the South Carlsbad campground. Emily majored in environmental studies and minored in geography at Cal State San Marcos. During that time, she worked as a senior park aide at South Carlsbad and San Elijo campgrounds. After graduating from college in May 2021, she enrolled at the State Parks

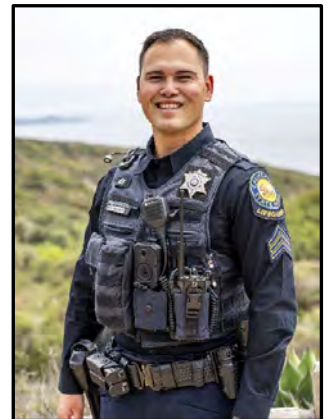


Ranger Academy at Butte College, north of Sacramento. She returned to southern California to work at the Colorado Desert District, which includes Palomar, Cuyamaca and Anza-Borrego state parks.

Emily has an eight-month-old son and has been on maternity leave since last April. Her husband is a firefighter with the Encinitas Fire Department. She was excited when the job opportunity came up at Torrey Pines and is thrilled to be back in her home area. She will be working two days a week until the end of April, when her regular schedule will be Wednesday through Saturday.

And welcome to Michael Lawrence

Michael Lawrence is the interim supervising ranger following Dylan Hardenbrook’s retirement at the end of 2025 (see January 2026 [Torreyana](#)). He is a lifeguard supervisor overseeing the campground operations at South Carlsbad and San Elijo state beaches and has a background in Parks & Recreation management. A permanent supervising ranger is expected to be named within a couple of months.



Docent of the Month: Germán Cervantes

Photo by Herb Knufken

I was born about 65 years ago in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mexico. It is a beach town and as I remember, I have always been in love with the beach. Fast forward 55 years, when a friend of mine started being a docent at Torrey Pines. Every time we'd get together he would talk about his volunteering work after retirement. I knew that becoming a docent at Torrey Pines would get me close to the sand again. Thanks to **Pao Chau** for introducing me to this amazing volunteer gig here at TPSNR.



General Meeting Minutes: January 10, 2026

by Joan R. Simon; photos by Herb Knufken

Guest Speakers Ashley Salazar and Sasha Helm from the San Diego Humane Society spoke on the subject of Project Wildlife: Understanding and Coexisting with Wildlife. 84 docents attended over Zoom. There was no in-person meeting in January.

Docent of the Month: Germán Cervantes from the class of 2025. He works as a Lodge host and public walks leader, as well as at the TIK and BLIK.

President **Matt Xavier** led the meeting.

The Reserve will definitely reopen on Sunday, March 1, 2026.

The BLIK will be open daily through this period, with sign-ups on Better Impact.

Guided Beach Walks on the weekends have been a success. There are many resources for topics and a script available to walk leaders. Contact **Bob Friedman** if you are interested in participating in this program.

Ambassador Stations: Docents are needed to staff the Ambassador Stations, situated at both ends of the Reserve, to detour trespassers during the rest of the closure period at the Reserve. Shifts are available Friday – Sunday on Better Impact.

South Beach Parking Lot Kiosk will not be staffed on weekdays through the end of the closure period. Drivers can use the parking machines for payment.

Youth Program will start on March 3; sign-ups are available on Better Impact (see pg. 6).

New Docent Training also begins on March 3.

Whale Watching Cruise is scheduled for January 29.

Tijuana Estuary Bird Watching CEED event is scheduled for February 28 (see pg. 9).

Next Reserve Closure. The next closure will be late summer 2026, but a fixed date has not been set. The docent hours' requirement for 2026 will depend on how long we are closed this year. Example: if we are open exactly 6 months, the annual totals will be set at 50% of normal (42 vs the normal 84-hour minimum; 10 vs 20 Lodge hours will be required).

North Beach Shed: Rosemary Wareham will be the manager of the North Beach shed; please coordinate with her prior to storing or taking anything from the shed. Volunteers to assist Rosemary are welcome!

Umesh Bellur will be organizing a docent group to support the San Diego Food Bank.

Program Leaders are urged to plan refresher training for docent volunteers (e.g., BLIK, TIK, Lodge, etc.).

Extension: Park officials have asked us not to over-promote the Extension as a hiking alternative to the upper Reserve.

Bird Count: David Walker reported 92 species that were identified by 16 volunteers during the Rancho Santa Fe Christmas Bird Count. He encouraged docents to join the monthly bird count, which occurs during the first week of every month.

Mediha Decker briefly described feedback and reactions from visitors at Ambassador Stations when discussing the Reserve closure. Everyone was reminded not to challenge those who break the law or are aggressive. If any serious trouble arises, call SURCOM (941-443-2969), and they will notify our rangers.

Nancy Novak reminded everyone that Mindful Walks are still ongoing.

Supervising Ranger: Matt reminded everyone that Dylan Hardenbrook has retired as supervising ranger (see January 2026 [Torreyana](#)); Michael Lawrence is filling in on an interim basis. (See pg. 4.)

North Beach Ramp: Rosemary Wareham alerted us that the newly rebuilt ramp at the main access point to the beach has been eroded due to recent weather conditions and there is a one-foot drop-off. San Diego City is responsible for repairing it.

Joan Simon announced that a new ranger, Emily Garcia, started at the Reserve in January (see pg. 4).

Docent Society Fashions

by Judy Schulman, TPDS Historian

Now that I am newly retired, I have time to do things that I have been putting off for a long time. One of those was to clear out my walk-in closet. I don't know why I call it a walk-in closet. Because of all the stuff I have in it, I can't get more than two feet inside it. About a quarter of my closet is dedicated to clothing items related to being a docent. I have over 40 T-shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, vests, and miscellaneous shirts with a Torrey pine on them. What is the story behind all of these items? Don't worry. I am only going to discuss the ones that are Docent Society-related. All information provided comes from looking through old *Torreyana* newsletters.

June 1977. The first reference I could find to a docent uniform was from an article about a June 1977 meeting when the majority of docents present expressed a desire for some optional uniform items. Volunteers were asked to investigate and report back on what they could find. By October 1977, there were some suggestions.

January 1978. The Docent Society purchased four green jackets (I remember them as windbreakers). These were to remain in the docent library and be used by docents on duty. Docents could also buy their own. Plans were being discussed to have some type of patch on them.



March 1978. Several new docent uniforms in the form of handsome green tunics were available. These were designed and sewn by docent Millicent Horger, with sewing help from docents Kathy White, Susan Altenbach and Jane Falvey.



November 1978. I special ordered some T-shirts from a local store. One featured a Torrey pines drawing by Mat, the other a photograph of the Reserve. For those who were interested in buying these T-shirts, a group order could be placed.



February 1983.

The Docent Society developed iron-on transfers of the Torrey Pines Docent Society logo. This way docents could wear their own T-shirts with a Torrey Pines logo. There were three transfer on a sheet, one large and two small, available for \$2.00.

October 2000. White polo shirts became available, with the pinecone logo and the words Torrey Pines State Reserve underneath. Later a light green version was also available.

There are a number of other T-shirts I have whose date I could not determine. My favorite one says "Ask Me" both on the front and back. On the front side it says "Ask Me" underneath a small circular green image of a Torrey pine. Above that it says Torrey Pines Docent Society. On the back, there is an enlarged version of the front image with the circular image of the tree in full color. Could this possibly be a T-shirt for Roving Interpreter members today? I found a reference in 2011 to this as a design for their patch.



The earliest reference to docents wearing vests was in 2007. Docents were asked to contact **Rick Vogel** if they wanted to order one. Some years later, **Sherry Doolittle** presented a new vest style which was modeled at a general meeting by **Jeannie Smith**. It came from the California State Parks website. It had 22 pockets, was a little longer than the previous vest, had a small California State Parks emblem, but did not have the volunteer stitching on the back.

Now that I am done with my closet, it is time to look through the drawers of my armoire. I'm sure I remember having a couple of boxes labeled badges, patches, and pins! Perhaps an article for a future time?

Lodge Renovation Update

by Corbin Schuppert, CA State Parks Restoration Specialist

January saw a slight slowing of progress on the Lodge entrance, as cleanup and storm mitigation following our December rain event took precedence. While there was no water intrusion into the active repairs, high winds made a mess of several jobsites, toppling fences and ripping tarps apart. During the height of storm activity on Christmas Eve, I made an emergency visit to the Lodge, where I found scaffolding netting flying in the wind and the stockpile of plaster material open and awaiting the impending downpour. The timing was exceptionally close, as Torrey Pines maintenance worker Rusty Kent and I “battened down the hatches” and secured new plastic coverings to the jobsite minutes before heavy and sustained rain began to fall.



As the weather cleared in the new year, technical work resumed around the historic lighting features in the Lodge entryway. The process is slow going and delicate, but the end result will be well worth it as important pieces of buried history are revealed and displayed.

In the middle of January, I joined a week-long State Parks training in Marin County at the Marconi Conference Center State Historic Park, where we focused on the historic and abandoned buildings at that site. The contacts I made and the concepts we learned about will surely be beneficial as San Diego Coast District continues its efforts in historic structure stewardship.

Utility Project Update

by Rowan Jackman, Interpreter 1

The utility project is moving along. The 4-foot piping trench is now visible from the park road. Large trucks are entering from both entrances to the Reserve, delivering piping and other equipment and resulting in heavy traffic up and down the hill throughout the day. There are currently large piles of dirt in the Lodge parking lot, making parking very limited. The old restroom has been torn down.



What's on the Beach? Sea Cucumbers

by Kathy Dickey; photo from NOAA

It would be rare to find a sea cucumber on the beach, although big storms and king tides might wash one up onto the sand. Two docents at the BLIK did see one on the beach last summer. My son and I sailed to Catalina Island long ago and saw dozens when we snorkeled near a rocky area. A better place to find them locally might be the tidepools in La Jolla or Encinitas.

Sea cucumbers are echinoderms and are related to sea stars, brittle stars, and sea urchins. All of them vary in size and coloration, but locally they all look like fat sausages with leathery skin. They eat detritus in the sand or mud, using oral tentacles that also serve to add oxygen to the seabed. They breathe the ocean water through their anus.

There are three species that are most commonly found in the San Diego area:

The **giant red sea cucumber** (*Apostichopus californicus*) is a large (up to 20 inches by 3 inches), mottled reddish brown animal with soft projections along the entire body. They live from Alaska to Baja California in intertidal areas and as deep as 300 feet.

The **warty sea cucumber**

(*Parastichopus parvimensis*) is up to 10 inches long, chestnut

brown, with black-tipped projections on the upper side. They live from Monterey Bay to Baja California, from intertidal areas up to 90 feet deep.

The **sweet potato sea cucumber** (*Caudina arenicola*) is pinkish and mottled. It looks like a fat sweet potato with a tapered end and is seldom up to 10 inches in length. They live from Canada to Baja California. This species is more of a burrower in the sand or in areas of kelp, going down as much as 16 inches.

Sea cucumbers are harvested for food or medicine, especially in Asian markets.

An amazing thing about these creatures is that if they are bothered by a potential predator such as a sunflower starfish (or human), they stiffen, and if they feel danger, they may extrude their inner organs from their anus. Those sticky threads or organs often scare away predators. And believe it or not, they can regrow those inner organs in only a month or two!

References available on request.



Youth Program Update

by Janet Ugalde, Program Co-Leader

This school year the Youth Program will be limited to March 3 through May 21, because of the utility project construction.

Thanks to the many team members who responded to our survey by agreeing to serve additional days per week during this condensed schedule. Teachers have registered for every Tuesday and Thursday, the first three Fridays of each month, and some Mondays and Wednesdays. Thank you to docents who have already signed up to serve on Better Impact.

Available topics will include: Kumeyaay; Geology; Plants & Habitats; Ecosystems & Food Chains; and Ocean, Whales & Dolphins. San Diego County students in grades 2 to 5 are eligible to participate.

Thanks to the hard work of many docents, TPDS continues to offer generous bus grants to Title 1 schools.

Our kickoff meeting is open to all Youth Program docents – past, present, and future. It will be held at 9 am on **Tuesday, February 17** at the San Elijo Lagoon Conference Center. Team members will receive an invitation via email. Please email me if you would like to attend but didn't receive an invitation.

Ginormous thank you, faithful team members, and to all who contribute to our success!

TIK Reopens on March 1

In preparation for our March opening, your TIK committee has refreshed the photographs on the mapboard. Shifts for March are now available for sign-up on Better Impact. If you feel you need a TIK refresh, please contact any member of the committee: **Lisa Kakone, Allan Heryet, Gary McCook, Tony Mondini, Kathy Simmons, or Harry Proctor.**



CEED: Carmel Mountain Preserve Walk

by Ingo Renner

Substantial rain several weeks before our first CEED event of 2026 (on January 16) ignited high hopes for seeing oodles of San Diego fairy shrimp and western spadefoot toad tadpoles. Unfortunately, our hopes began to fade as we walked past one dried-up vernal pool after another. Where just one week earlier they had teemed with life, now there were only dried remains in shallow, muddy ruts. Luckily, the endangered fairy shrimp and western spadefoot toads have evolved strategies to ride out such years. Fairy shrimp eggs (known as *cysts*) can withstand extreme conditions, remaining dormant for up to 100 years! Western spadefoot toads can live up to 12 years, burying themselves three feet underground and reemerging with next rainy season.

On a brighter note, the Southern Maritime Chaparral was flourishing with new growth and early blossoms. Wart-stem ceanothus burst forth its scented, white, globular flowers. Mission manzanita and its cousin, summer holly (*Comarostaphylis diversifolia*), sported their pinkish urn-shaped flowers, patiently waiting for hummingbirds and bumblebees to sip their nectar. Fun fact: Bumblebees are known to use “buzz pollination” to coax manzanita flowers into releasing their pollen. Known as *sonication*, they vibrate their wings at the specific pitch of middle C, which in turn releases pollen from their flowers’ difficult-to-reach anthers.

Our event began at the trailhead to Del Mar Mesa, with leaders **Pau Chau**, **Barbara Wallach** and me giving an introduction to the cultural and natural history of Carmel Valley and Del Mar Mesa. Barbara brought a T-shirt made by docents about 30 years ago as a fundraiser to bring awareness to this 300-acre site. Luckily it was saved from development in 1999 and became the Carmel Mountain Preserve, protecting biodiversity and vernal pool sites for years to come.



BLIK: Learn at Lunch

Date: Thursday, February 5

Time: Noon

Location: BLIK at the North Beach parking lot (not at the usual location next to the docent shed)

Speakers: BLIK Team: Rosemary Wareham, Malana Tabak, Ed Saade, Gabriele Wienhausen

Topic: What's New at the BLIK

We'll introduce our new displays and show how they help us interpret the marine environment that the BLIK focuses on.

Bring your lunch, a chair, your curiosity, and any questions you may have about the BLIK. 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. All docents, park employees, and visitors are welcome.

CEED: Natural History Museum

Docent-led Tour of the Coast to Cactus and Fossil Mysteries Exhibits

Date: Monday, February 9

Time: Meet at the museum at 9:45 am; the tour starts at 10.

Place: Natural History Museum, Balboa Park

Duration: 2 hours, but docents can stay to visit the museum and/or watch a movie afterwards

RSVP: Rachel Scherba

Limited to the first 25 docents who respond

Parking: Balboa Park now charges for parking, so plan ahead: balboapark.org/plan-your-visit/parking/

For more information on the museum: sdnhm.org/

CEED: Tijuana Estuary Bird Walk

Date: Saturday, February 28

Time: 9:30 am

Place: Tijuana Estuary Visitor Center, 3rd Street and Caspian Way, Imperial Beach

Meet: In front of the Visitor Center

RSVP: Use this [link](#) to sign up and indicate whether you would like to carpool and if you are willing to drive a carpool.

Limited to the first 30 docents to respond. There is also a wait list.

A list of attendees will be sent out so that those who wish to can arrange carpools.

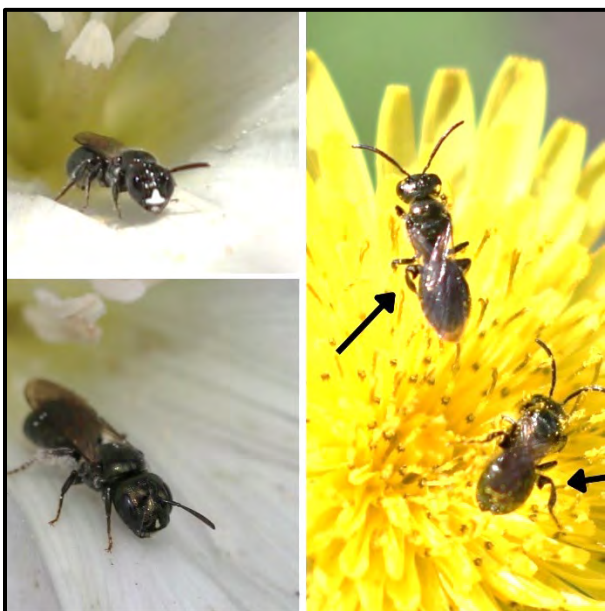
Bee of the Month: Small Carpenter Bee

article and photos by Cindy Pencek

All bees are sexually dimorphic, which means the males look different from the females. A minimum morphologic difference in all bees is that males have one more segment on their antennae (13 compared to 12 for females) and one more segment of their abdomen (7 instead of 6). Now, unless you're looking at a bee under a microscope, you probably won't be able to count the antennal or abdominal segments. But there are some other things you can see without magnification.

The easiest way to know you are looking at a female is seeing pollen being carried around; depending on the species it may be on the back leg, the underside of the abdomen, or both. The female bees move stray pollen and pile it on the location of choice, often sticking it into hairs on the back leg called *scopa*. So, if you see what looks like a purposeful patch of pollen, it's a female. It doesn't work the other way; you cannot know that you are looking at a male if you don't see pollen – it could be a female who is clean, a female who doesn't collect pollen (for example, a nest parasite or cuckoo bee), or a male. Males do not collect pollen or contribute to provisioning nests.

Our bee of the month, the small carpenter bee (*Ceratina acantha*), is a bee for which it is easy to differentiate the sex. The male has a quite large pale patch on its face, the *clypeus*, that looks a bit like a traffic cone. The female has a much smaller white mark that varies in shape and size. And the male has a unique leg shape that helps tell us that we are looking at *C. acantha*. If you see a spur on the hind femur, you can be sure you've found the *C. acantha*, not another similar *Ceratina* species. Females are generally not identifiable with a photograph.



Bird of the Month: Double-crested Cormorant

by Robert James; photo by Herb Knüfken

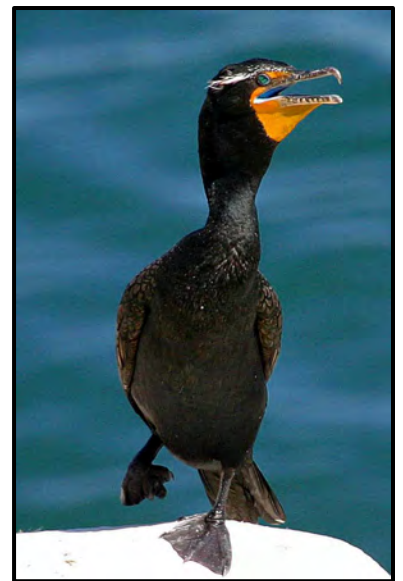
The Double-crested Cormorant (*Nannopterum auritum*) is an almost prehistoric-looking aquatic species in the pelican group of birds. They occur over most of North America as far south as Mexico. In San Diego County, they are most common in the fall and winter with the addition of northern migrants. At the Reserve, Double-crested Cormorants can be most frequently seen in the lagoon and nearshore waters, usually flocking with their fellows.

If you see a dark, sizable bird quickly flying by, a swimming bird with its head upturned in a snob-like pose, or a bird drying its wings on a mudflat, you are most likely looking at a cormorant. The Double-crested is one of three species that most commonly occur in our area, the others being Brandt's (*Urile penicillatus*) and Pelagic (*U. pelagicus*). The Double-crested is easily distinguished by its orange face, which can usually be seen, often with just the naked eye.

What about its name, you ask? The “double crest” refers to its paired head feathers; these develop in the breeding season and are shown in Herb's photo. In a sense, it is a misnomer, as we usually do not see these feathers. How about calling it “Orange-faced Cormorant”? Like some other birds' common names, they are not very descriptive or useful, but we still learn and communicate with them.

As an almost exclusively fish eater, the Double-crested Cormorant is vulnerable to biomagnification of environmental contaminants due to its lofty position in the food web. Also, it has been historically seen as competing with anglers and aquaculture farms, but there is protection provided by federal and state law. Successful conservation and education efforts over the years have also been important. After a population decline, the San Diego Bird Atlas has noted its increasing numbers in our area.

I mentioned the unusual wing-drying habitat of cormorants. The reason for this is that they have limited feather oils, so when they swim and hunt their feathers become wetter and require drying. However, their “wetable” and less-buoyant feathers probably give them an advantage in swimming and hunting nimble fishes underwater.



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.

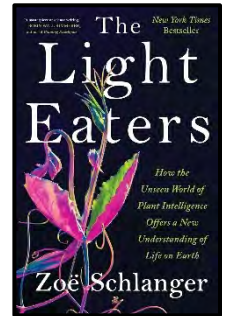
When: Tuesday, February 10, 1:00 pm

What: *The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth* by Zoë Schlanger

Amazon says:

It takes tremendous biological creativity to be a plant. To survive and thrive while rooted in a single spot, plants have adapted ingenious methods of survival. In recent years, scientists have learned about their ability to communicate, recognize their kin and behave socially, hear sounds, morph their bodies to blend into their surroundings, store useful memories that inform their life cycle, and trick animals into behaving to their benefit, to name just a few remarkable talents.

The Light Eaters shows that plants, rather than imitate human intelligence, have perhaps formed a parallel system. What is intelligent life if not a vine that grows leaves to blend into the shrub on which it climbs, a flower that shapes its bloom to fit exactly the beak of its pollinator, a pea seedling that can hear water flowing and make its way toward it? Zoë Schlanger takes us across the globe in this award-winning bestseller, digging into her own memories and into the soil with the scientists who have spent their waking days studying these amazing entities up close.



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

March 10: *The Life Impossible: A Novel* by Matt Haig

Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: January 2026

Number of species: 92
(+2 other taxa)

Blue-winged Teal 2	Ring-billed Gull 16	Red-shouldered Hawk 3	Scaly-breasted Munia 56
Cinnamon Teal 2	Western Gull 46	Red-tailed Hawk 7	House Finch 68
Northern Shoveler 2	California Gull 47	Great Horned Owl 1	Lesser Goldfinch 25
Gadwall 20	gull sp. 53	Belted Kingfisher 1	Dark-eyed Junco 5
American Wigeon 25	Forster's Tern 1	Downy Woodpecker 1	White-crowned Sparrow 37
Mallard 19	Royal Tern 5	Nuttall's Woodpecker 16	Golden-crowned Sparrow 13
Northern Pintail 16	Pied-billed Grebe 8	Northern Flicker 2	Savannah Sparrow 6
Green-winged Teal 4	Western Grebe 52	American Kestrel 8	Song Sparrow 55
Canvasback 2	Clark's Grebe 1	Black Phoebe 10	Lincoln's Sparrow 1
Lesser Scaup 10	Western/Clark's Grebe 22	Say's Phoebe 8	California Towhee 57
Surf Scoter 4	Red-throated Loon 4	Cassin's Kingbird 10	Spotted Towhee 19
Bufflehead 25	Pacific Loon 11	Hutton's Vireo 6	Red-winged Blackbird 8
Hooded Merganser 1	Common Loon 7	California Scrub-Jay 14	Orange-crowned Warbler 14
Red-breasted Merganser 5	Black-vented Shearwater 500	American Crow 38	Common Yellowthroat 8
Ruddy Duck 2	Brandt's Cormorant 12	Common Raven 21	Yellow-rumped Warbler 146
California Quail 1	Pelagic Cormorant 1	Barn Swallow 3	
Mourning Dove 36	Double-crested Cormorant 14	Bushtit 67	
White-throated Swift 26	cormorant sp. 200	Wrentit 52	
Anna's Hummingbird 39	Black-crowned Night Heron 2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 2	
Allen's Hummingbird 28	Snowy Egret 12	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 3	
American Coot 6	Great Egret 13	California Gnatcatcher 4	
Long-billed Curlew 10	Great Blue Heron 4	Northern House Wren 4	
Willet 5	Brown Pelican 108	Bewick's Wren 24	
Heermann's Gull 1	Osprey 2	California Thrasher 19	
	White-tailed Kite 2	Northern Mockingbird 4	
	Sharp-shinned Hawk 3	Western Bluebird 6	
	Cooper's Hawk 1	Hermit Thrush 7	
	Northern Harrier 1	Cedar Waxwing 23	

Participants: Nancy Richardson, Donna Mancuso, Paul Mullholland, Robert James, Dinah Carl, Gale Darling, Luz Chung, Gary McCook, Steve Neal, Tsaiwei Olee, Kathy Estey, Robert Turner, Caroline Xu, Lily Tang, Ruslan Balugansky, David Walker

This count was part of the Rancho Santa Fe Christmas Bird Count (a 15 mile diameter circle with Torrey Pines at the bottom) The preliminary total for the entire count was 191 species. Final results will be sent to all the birders.

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



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