



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 487

March 2026

Cultivating Curiosity in Visitors to the Reserve

by Joan R. Simon

Three San Diego Coast District interpreters led the March 14 docent general meeting: Alexandra Latona, Interpreter III, who manages education and interpretation programs across the district's 13 parks; Haley Calhoun, Interpreter II, who coordinates student programming for the district; and Rowan Jackman, Interpreter I, who has been working at Torrey Pines since November 2025 ([link](#)).

Through skits, examples, and audience activities, the three district interpreters demonstrated how outdoor educators such as Torrey Pines docents can successfully cultivate curiosity, engagement and wonder by skillfully using questioning strategies. They first introduced the difference between narrow and broad questions. Narrow questions are straightforward, e.g., "What is this plant called?" Broad questions spark curiosity and encourage higher-level thinking and closer observation. An example is: "What do you *notice* about this plant?"

Narrow questions can establish the knowledge base of a group and can help to explain relationships between things, but the downside is that they usually limit participation. Broad questioning leads to more engagement and helps participants observe their surroundings more closely. To demonstrate the difference, they presented two skits, both focusing on scat (probably from a coyote). The first skit showed the leader dominating the conversation and directing the discussion; there wasn't much engagement. Then three docents -- **Susan Elliott**, **Connie Jaffe**, and **Mary Makowski** -- were given a different script with broad, open-ended questions that showed how to better engage visitors. There were no right or wrong answers; the questions were open-ended and led to more interactions. There was even a bit of silliness. And sometimes the leader said, "I don't really know, I'm going to have to look that up" -- and the visitors might do the same when they got home.

Next we were introduced to three different *interprenalities*, i.e. interpreter personalities.

Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, March 14, 9:00 am

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

Speaker: Adam Young, Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO)

Topic: The Scripps Oceanography Coastal Observation Program

The Scripps Oceanography monitoring program for San Diego County is one of the most comprehensive shoreline observing systems in the world. This presentation will provide an overview of the program and associated applications with a focus on the Torrey Pines area. These observations have led to a better understanding of long-term and seasonal beach sand level changes, wave runup, coastal flooding, the fate of beach replenishment projects, coastal storm impacts, cobble movement, and cliff erosion. Recent work includes development of a real-time coastal cliff failure warning system and autonomous coastal hazard monitoring stations.

Adam Young is a Researcher and Principal Investigator of the Coastal Processes Group at SIO. He received his BS in civil engineering from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and his PhD from UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering.

Refreshments: Docents with last names beginning with I, J, K, L will be responsible for providing snacks.

The first is **The Machine**. These interpreters regurgitate information they've been taught and strictly follow a script. They do not welcome questions and ask listeners only narrow questions. They lack any kind of spontaneity and often leave their audiences feeling bored or unheard. They may be still learning about their subject and don't feel confident yet about what they know.

(Cont. on pg. 3.)

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FLASH - Don't forget to donate your nature and conservation magazines to the Museum Shop.

President's Message: King Tides Bring King Crowds

Having never visited the tide pools north of Scripps Pier at a low king tide, I brought my family to explore them. As we walked down the SIO campus and turned right as we hit the beach, what I saw stunned me. Hundreds of people on the rocks in all positions, trying to connect with tide pool life.

As we know, tide pools are small, fragile ecosystems that exist at the edge of land and sea, and their beauty naturally draws large crowds of curious observers. While public interest in tide pooling can foster appreciation for marine life, heavy foot traffic and overcrowding can unintentionally cause significant harm.

Many tide pool creatures are highly sensitive to touch, temperature changes, and other disturbances. When visitors step on rocks, lean into pools, or handle animals, they can crush organisms, dislodge them from protective surfaces, or expose them to predators and drying air. Even well-intentioned actions - such as gently lifting a sea star or turning over a rock - can cause stress or death if the organism is not returned properly. Sunscreen, sand, and pollutants carried on hands and shoes can also contaminate the pools.

Large crowds amplify these impacts. Repeated trampling erodes algae and invertebrate communities that form the foundation of the tide pool food web. Noise and constant movement can alter animal behavior, causing creatures to retreat deeper into crevices or abandon exposed areas altogether. Over time, heavily visited tide pools may lose biodiversity, becoming quieter and less-resilient ecosystems.

Should education and restraint become essential? Observing tide pools should emphasize looking rather than touching, stepping only on bare rock, and limiting group size. Could guided experiences and docent-led interpretation help visitors understand that protecting tide pool life sometimes means keeping a respectful distance? By balancing access with care, we can ensure that tide pools remain living classrooms rather than damaged exhibits, preserving their wonder for future generations.

Cheers,

Matt Xavier
TPDS President



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(Cont. from pg. 1.)

As interpreters get more comfortable with the knowledge they've acquired, they might move on to the next interperenality: **Sage on the Stage**. These presenters feel a need to share everything they know and tend to tailor the program to their own interests; they might be uncomfortable admitting they don't know an answer. As a result, audiences may be put off by not being able to expand the conversation beyond the interpreter's sometimes narrow focus, and the interpreter may not always "read the room" to see whether the audience is engaged or if the talk is going on too long.

The final teaching style, which builds from the first two, is **Guide on the Side**. These interpreters are the most successful. They see their audience as participants rather than passive listeners, use dialogue to invite participation, and are flexible and willing to deviate from their planned script to follow the group's interest. This allows audiences to develop a sense of shared discovery.

Learning successful interpretation usually follows a continuum through these three stages; you may not be at the final stage just yet, but it is a goal to work toward.

To watch the full presentation, click [here](#).

General Meeting Minutes: February 14, 2026

State Park interpreters Alexandra Latona, Haley Calhoun, and Rowan Jackman presented a program about questioning strategies that we can use when working with groups at the Reserve (see pg. 1). 76 docents attended the meeting.

President **Matt Xavier** conducted the business meeting before the speakers, because the projector malfunctioned and the speakers needed time to adapt their presentation without using their PowerPoint slides.

Docent of the Month: Angela Bailey, class of 2023, works at the Lodge and TIK and for the past year has been the primary formatter for the *Torreyana* (see pg. 4).

Water Fountain/Refill Station at the TIK: These are in in very poor condition. TPC is already moving forward with purchase of a replacement and the necessary construction to install new equipment in the next months. Please be sure to report any maintenance issues found in the Reserve so the proper repairs can be made.

A docent trip to **Santa Rosa Island** is under consideration. Contact **Carolyn Maclean**, **Rosemary Wareham**, **Olga Anson**, or **Mukesh Mehta** if you are interested in going and if you want to help plan the trip.

Earth Day will be celebrated at the Reserve on Saturday, April 25. Planning is starting now. Please contact **Lynne Truong**, **Mary Makowski**, or **Matt Xavier** if you want to be involved.

The Reserve will definitely reopen on Sunday, March 1.

- The TIK will likely start approximately two weeks later due to finalizing some construction activity in the West

parking lot. Please watch for additional announcements and scheduling changes. (See article below.)

- Youth Program starts March 3.
- New docent training (20 sign-ups!) starts March 4.

What to Expect When the Reserve Opens

by Rowan Jackman, *Interpreter I*

It's finally here! The Reserve is reopening on March 1. Here are a few things to expect as we prepare to welcome visitors back.

The construction equipment will be removed from the Lodge parking lot, but will remain in the West parking lot for the first two weeks after opening. After this period, additional parking for docents along the southbound side of the road from the West Lot will be available, as it has been in the past. The TIK will not reopen initially, but all the trails will be open. Porta-potties will be available as before. Construction of the new restroom facilities will take place in the later phases of the project.

The Children's Program will begin on March 3 and new docent training on March 4. Some visitors might be expecting the project to be fully completed upon reopening, including the installation of new restrooms. We will continue to inform them that this is a multi-phase project that takes longer because of its complexity and the challenges of working within a protected Reserve. Docents can also mention that construction is being done in phases to allow for partial visitation and to accommodate the nesting season of the endangered California Gnatcatcher, which runs from late February through August.

The Torrey Pines staff can't wait to see all the docents back in the Reserve!



Youth Program

by Janet Ugalde, Program Co-Leader

On February 17, twenty-six enthusiastic docents met at San Elijo Lagoon for the kickoff to this year's Youth Program. A lot of hugging occurred, as friends and teammates reunited to plan this year's docent-led school program.

The event was hosted by team co-leaders **Patty** and **Bruce Montgomery**. They skillfully guided us through discussions on how to prepare to lead a walk, how to set the tone with a student group, and how to manage challenging situations on the trail. They also treated us to delicious homemade goodies and lots of relevant raffle prizes. THANK YOU Patty & Bruce!

Thank you to all who participated by sharing your ideas and experiences!

Our program will operate March through May this year, with our first event on March 3. Let's go awesome Youth Program team!

BLIK: Learn at Lunch

Date/Time: Thursday, March 5, 12 noon

Location: North Beach Parking Lot, Docent Shed

Speaker: Docent Robert James

Topic: Estuary and Nearshore Fishes of Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve

Bring your lunch, a chair, your curiosity, and any questions you may have about fishes and their habitats. 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.

CEED at the NAT

by Rachel Scherba

On February 9, sixteen Torrey Pines docents enjoyed a field trip to the Natural History Museum organized through CEED. We were lucky enough to have seven highly qualified NAT docents give us an almost-personalized tour of the Coast to Cactus and Fossil Mysteries exhibits. We also got to visit the basement to see many interesting fossils and speak with Chris Plouffe, a paleontologist and fossil expert.

What a joy this trip was! We learned so much about the various ecosystems from our coast to the deserts and the animals that inhabit them. The exhibits are beautifully designed with excellent descriptions in English and Spanish. We also learned about the now-extinct flora and fauna of our region. The docents who attended said this was among the best CEED trips they have taken and felt it gave them important insights and information that they can share when we reopen.

Docent of the Month: Angela Bailey

Photo by Herb Knufken

In February 2022, my mom Jean passed away after a very brief illness. I was shocked and heartbroken. In September 2022, I came to Torrey Pines with a friend and met **Coach Vance** at the TIK. Coach inspired me to apply for the docent program. Finding a little bit of positive purpose was just what I needed after many months of hard grief.



Neither retired nor a naturalist, I'm not the typical TPSNR docent. I grew up in Chula Vista (a fourth-generation Californian!), but my

first memory of Torrey Pines was a chilly beach birthday picnic in 2000. I can still feel those cold cobbles under my bum, taste the strawberries on my tongue, and hear the laughter of my friends in the wind. Most of my adult life I lived, studied, worked, and traveled in New York, Washington DC, Asia, and Africa. These opportunities have provided so much perspective on our complex, beautiful, troubled world. Every time I came home to visit San Diego, a walk at Torrey Pines was on the itinerary.

Now living in La Mesa after 25 years away, it has been wonderful to dive deep and yet barely scratch the surface of this rich Reserve - the history, the flora, the fauna, the visitors, and our fellow docents who are all bursting with wisdom, life, and personality. After working all week at my desk job, I love starting a beautiful Southern California Saturday morning at Torrey Pines. I love opening the car door and taking in the fresh morning scent of California sagebrush. For me, the best and most fulfilling way to start a weekend is working at the TIK with Coach Vance and **Debbie Sherman**, and then co-hosting at the Lodge with **Selma Torres**. I'm also so happy to collaborate with the meticulous and dedicated *Torreyana* team - **Roger Isaacson** is an absolute gem who deserves help! It is an honor and a privilege to make a very small contribution to our multigenerational effort to protect, celebrate, and document this special place. I'm looking forward to many more years of docent life with you all.

CEED: Docents Go Whale Watching

by Ray Barger

Torrey Pines docents experienced clear skies and light breezes aboard the *Legacy* on January 29. More than 40 docents and other guests joined the CEED whale watching cruise to see many local marine mammals and birds.

Before departure from San Diego Quivira Basin, a curious Night Heron and sea lions were seen from the dock. Once underway, we saw many additional birds including Brown Pelicans, cormorants, egrets, and gulls along with more female sea lions stacked on harbor buoys.

Once beyond the Mission Bay breakwater, the *Legacy* crew set a course hoping to spot Eastern North Pacific gray whales on their southbound migration to the warm lagoons of Baja California. Although we didn't see gray whales this trip, about eight miles offshore the *Legacy* did encounter multiple pods totaling approximately 400 short-beaked common dolphins. To our delight, the dolphins surrounded the boat and exhibited jumping and wake-surfing behaviors.



With time running short, the *Legacy* turned and set a course back to port. To our surprise, many aboard briefly saw a lone minke whale surfacing ahead of the ship. Prior to arrival, **Debbie Buffington** and I, who were working the cruise as San Diego Natural History Museum “Whalers,” gave a presentation on whales, dolphins, and marine conservation to wrap up a beautiful day on the water.



What's on the Beach? Mermaid's Purse

by Kathy Dickey\; photos from CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

Question: what's a mermaid's purse? Hint: it has nothing to do with a mermaid or a purse.

There are more than 500 species of shark worldwide. Most sharks (over 70 percent) are *viviparous*, meaning they give birth to live young. The remaining 30 percent are *oviparous*; they lay leathery, dark egg cases called mermaid's purses.

It would be extremely rare to see a mermaid's purse on the beach in San Diego, unless it was after a huge storm with high tides. These are probably the egg cases of one of two species of unique local sharks, the California horned shark (*Heterodontus francisci*) or the swell shark (*Cephaloscyllium ventriosum*).

Swell sharks grow to about three feet and have yellowish-brown or gray bodies with dark and white spots and large mouths. If threatened, they can gulp water and "swell" to twice their usual size in a balloon shape, and they can wedge themselves between rocks to avoid predators. They have the most typical egg cases, being square to rectangular in shape, leathery, dark, thin, and three to five inches long. The corners of the egg cases have tendrils to attach themselves to kelp or rocks. It can take nine to twelve months for the baby shark inside to hatch, with no care from its parent.



Horn sharks grow from three to four feet long and have grayish skin with many dark spots.



They have rounded heads with appendages over their eyes that resemble horns. Each of their dorsal fins is preceded by a sharp, toxic spine. They are nocturnal feeders and seldom travel far from their favored home. Their egg cases are also dark, leathery and about three to five inches long, but their shape is like a corkscrew. The mother uses their shape to screw them into rock crevices. It can take six to ten months for the baby shark to hatch, with no care from its mother.

Each egg case has just one embryo that breathes using a small hole in the case. It gets all its nutrients from the yolk sack. Predators include crabs, seals, otters, and other sharks. Marine snails can bore holes into the case and suck out the egg. An estimated 90% of the eggs do not make it out alive. If you see a mermaid's purse on the beach, hold it up to the sun to make sure it is not still alive.

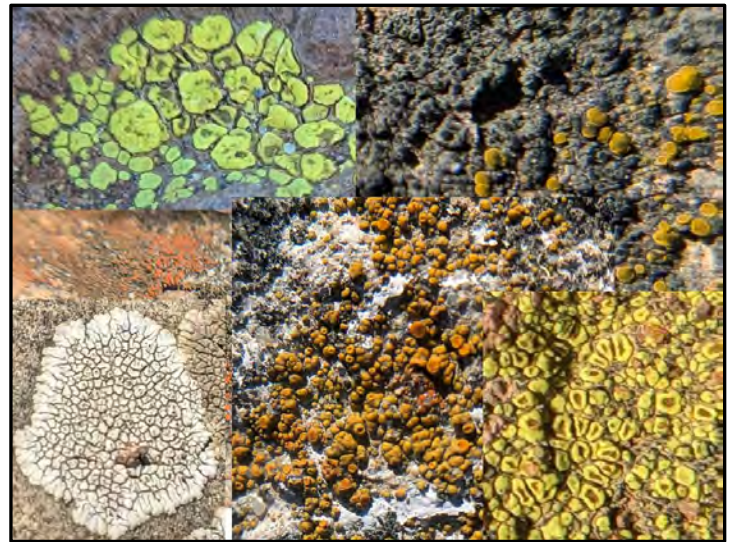
References available upon request.

The Remarkable Symbiote: Lichen

by Suzan Potuznik

A lichen can survive many extremes, from the hot Sanora desert to the frozen tundra of Alaska, and it may live for thousands of years. Only requirements: air, water, minerals, and a substrate to call home. It is a self-contained symbiote – a stable symbiotic association of a *mycobiont* (fungus) and a *photobiont* (algae and/or cyanobacteria), which together create this new lifeform with unique physical and chemical properties. As of 2024, more than 160 species of lichen have been identified here at Torrey Pines by Chris Wagner and her team from UC Riverside, and the study is still ongoing (see article in February 2024 [Torreyana](#)).

Most lichens fall into one of three categories, all of which are found here at Torrey Pines: *crustose* (crust-like), *foliose* (leafy), or *fruticose* (shrubby/hairy) lichen. Collages of each type are shown below::



Crustose, foliose, and fruticose lichen

Hike any trail at Torrey Pines and you are likely to find a lichen. The branches of the maritime chaparral within Elfin Forest, just east of Red Butte, are covered with foliose lichen. As the path turns westward, a fruticose lichen finds a home in the crusty soil. As you reach Red Butte, you will find a multitude of crustose lichen communities on the sandstone of this Linda Vista formation. Back at the Visitor Center, the adobe walls and wooden walkway are a canvas of multicolored crustose lichen painting the surface with a palette of colors from pale beiges, greys and black to bright greenish yellow and



orange hues. Bring a magnifying glass and take a closer look at the variety of shapes of crustose lichen and find the whimsical pixie cup lichen hiding among a patch of moss.



A lichen is a tangle of fungi filaments (called *hyphae*) and algae, the common photobiont here at the Reserve. Algae provide the source of energy for the symbiote in the form of a carbohydrate formed by photosynthesis, converting carbon dioxide to a sugar, primarily ribitol. The mycobiont (fungi) converts the carbohydrate into a mannitol carbohydrate, preventing the photobiont from using up the sugar. The mannitol is a source of stored energy for the lichen and serves as a stress-protective agent, helping the lichen survive drying and rewetting cycles.

Lichens' resilience, and perhaps longevity, is largely due to their ability to produce secondary metabolites commonly known as lichen acids, which protect them against herbivores, pathogens, and intense sunlight and may provide the dominant color of the lichen. For example, in the fruticose lichen *Letharia vulpina*, vulpinic acid provides the vibrant green color and acts as natural sunscreen, absorbing both UVA and UVB.

Many lichen acids are toxic to most meat-eating mammals, as well as insects and mollusks, but some may be eaten by rabbits and mice. Here at Torrey Pines, woodrats and perhaps shrews may feast upon a lichen. Hummingbirds and gnatcatchers find foliose lichens to be an excellent substrate for building a nest.

Lichens also produce a simple organic acid called oxalic acid. This chemical weathering agent decomposes rock by dissolving the minerals. Lichens also apply physical weathering, using hyphae to penetrate and expand within a rock crevice. For example, lichens are the first life forms to cover newly formed lava rock, forming soil from the remaining dust and organic material of decomposed lichen.

As I start studying lichens, I've become fascinated by their biology and chemistry and have many questions yet to be

answered. How does a community of lichen expand and grow? What is eating the lichen here at Torrey Pines?

To guide you on your lichen quest, take a look at the "Oaks Walk" pages about lichen on our docent volunteer website. Other excellent resources include the [The British Lichen Society link](#) and Professor Wayne Armstrong's website "[Wayne's Word](#)" (recommended by Barbara Wallach).

12 Fun Facts About Docents

by Judy Schulman, TPDS Historian

Here are some fun things to know about our docent group. Why 12? That's because things are cheaper by the "dozent."

1. The collective noun for docents is *trail*. A "trail of docents" was announced in the July 1988 *Torreyana* as the winning entry in a contest for naming what to call a group of docents. It was won by docent Millicent Horger.
2. Local mystery writer Abigail Padgett joined the Docent Society for one year to get information about the Torrey Pines area. Her book called *Turtle Baby* was published in 1995. One of her characters was modeled after docent Joan Nimick.
3. If you need a good recipe for dinner tonight, you can find it in the docent cookbook, *Torrey Treats*. It was compiled by docent Bonnie Hornbeck and went on sale in November 2011. It was inspired by all the wonderful food that docents contributed over the years to our annual holiday party. It also had articles about the Lodge's history as a restaurant.
4. Two docent-inspired cartoon series ran in the *Torreyana* during the 1980s. Created by docent June Warbuton, they were called "Judy on Duty" (anybody we know?) and "Torrey Titters."
5. The usually mild-mannered docents set up an informational picket on June 22, 2009 to protest against the potential closing of State Parks including ours. The picket line was in front of the entrance to the North Beach parking lot.
6. The docents went "Hollywood" twice. First when we appeared in a 1980 Year of the Volunteer commercial, which featured volunteers from different state park units, including six from ours. Then in 1983-84, we were involved with a cable TV series on State Parks hosted by our then Supervising Ranger, Bob Wohl.
7. In 2010, the Docent Society entered the modern era with the use of a computerized Point of Sale system for the Lodge. Prior to that, each sale had to be recorded by hand on a sales sheet.
8. The docents didn't always have monthly meetings at St. Peter's Parish Hall in Del Mar. Originally, from 1975 to 2005, we met at the Lodge. When we grew too big, we

moved to nearby National University and met there from January 2006 to February 2009.

9. The docents originally met on the third Saturday of the month. We changed to the second Saturday when we started meeting at National University. That was the only Saturday available to accommodate us.

10. In 1979, artist Mat (Tsuyoshi Matsumoto) gave signed photo offset lithographs of his work to docents in appreciation for the work they do in the park and for selling his cards and prints in the museum store.

11. Although the Docent Society had already produced small booklets, we went big time into the book publishing business in 1981 with State Park Naturalist Hank Nicol's *Notes from the Naturalist*. This was a compilation of the handouts he wrote for the public. We also published his second book, *Torrey Pines: Beyond the Trees*, in 1985. Our next publishing pursuit was Guy Fleming's *Writings and Related Articles 1916-1956*. Published in January 2004, it was edited by Marion Dixon and Kay Harry. Our most recent publication (2022) is *Along Torrey Pine Trails: Nature Writings from the Torreyana*. The editors were Kathy Dickey, Dan Hammer, Roger Isaacson, Peter Jensen, and Joan Simon.

12. One of the most unusual requests docents got from the ranger staff came in September 1983. Supervising Ranger Bob Wohl announced that they were running out of freezer space in the Lodge to store animal specimens that were eventually going to a taxidermist. He asked if any docents had any extra freezer space at home. I haven't learned whether anyone took a dead animal home.

Bee of the Month: Bare Miner Bee

by Gabriele Wienhausen; photo by Robert James

Although the recent record-high temperatures may put a true "superbloom" out of reach, Southern California is still set for a vibrant spring. Thanks to what is already the second-wettest October-to-September water year in the past 21 years, a burst of colorful wildflowers is expected from mid-March through April.

Hints of what's to come are already apparent: a walk along Torrey Pines Beach reveals bright yellow blooms spilling over the cliffs, with California bush sunflower and sea dahlia already in flower. These early bloomers are especially appealing to a tiny native pollinator: the bare miner bee (*Protandrena californica*), a species that specializes almost exclusively on plants in the sunflower family (Asteraceae).



By March, when the Reserve's trails reopen, the canyons and slopes along the Guy Fleming Trail will be carpeted with wildflowers. As you pause there or along Razor Point to admire the sun-loving sea dahlia, take a closer look at the gentle buzz around the blossoms. Chances are, one of those visitors is the bare miner bee, collecting pollen primarily – and often only – from plants in the sunflower family. A member of the miner bee family (Andrenidae), this species is among the first to emerge from underground once soil temperatures warm to 58–60°F. In Southern California, that usually means late February or early March, with activity continuing into late spring.

At first glance, bare miner bees are easy to miss. Both males and females are tiny – about 6 millimeters long – dark in color, and nearly hairless. Look closely, though, and you'll notice striking green, blue, or grayish eyes. Their common name fits them well. Bare miner bees prefer nesting in "bare," lightly vegetated ground – sunny, sandy, or well-worn soil. The term "mining bee" comes from the females' behavior of digging underground tunnels, where they form an individual chamber for each egg. These bees often nest in groups, with many nests clustered together in one small area.

The care that goes into each nest is impressive. Females waterproof their egg chambers to protect developing young from soil moisture. Each chamber is stocked with a ball of agglutinated pollen – that is, pollen mixed with nectar into a moist clump – before a single egg is laid. The larva feeds on this provision, pupates in the chamber, and finally emerges as an adult the following year.

If you're lucky, you might also witness one of the bare miner bee's more amusing behaviors. Mating often happens right on the flowers, and the male is known for its "comically stiff" posture, tucking in his legs as if trying not to inconvenience his mate while she continues to forage. It's a small, charming moment – easy to miss, but a delightful reminder of life unfolding among the spring blooms.

Bird of the Month: Canvasback

by Robert James; photo by Herb Knüfken

The Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*) is the largest diving duck in North America. Its triangular-shaped head, canvas-colored and textured back, and sloping black bill serve to distinguish it from the more common Redhead (*A. americana*). Known as “the aristocrat of ducks,” the Canvasback is certainly regal in appearance and is a favorite of duck hunters and birders.

Although Canvasbacks occur over most of North America including Mexico, in San Diego County they are mainly an uncommon and irregular wintering species on coastal lagoons and inland lakes. During winter, they feed heavily on the roots and tubers of aquatic plants. Canvasbacks also consume snails, clams, and insect larvae, likely incidentally as they feed on plants.

On our [February bird count](#) of the estuary, **Steve Neal** was the first to spot a group of six male and female



Canvasbacks. Our winter bird counts have typically tallied five to twenty each winter, and in February 2013 a monthly high of a dozen were observed. (The seasonal total is likely an overestimation as the same individuals were probably reported in following months.) In alignment with other nearby observations, there are occasional records and photos posted on eBird and iNaturalist.org.

Canvasbacks usually leave by March or early April to fly to their breeding grounds in the famous North American prairie potholes, where many of our waterfowl species reproduce. They also breed in seasonal wetlands in Canada and Alaska. As these areas have been subject to habitat impacts, Canvasback numbers have fluctuated, but the numbers have rebounded with conservation efforts that include international cooperation. Hunting limits are also adjusted to better ensure a sustainable population.

You may know that Eurasian Wigeons (*Mareca penelope*) occasionally winter in our area. Conversely, a few Canvasbacks have been known to “take a wrong turn” from their North American breeding grounds and cross the Atlantic, with several sightings recorded in the United Kingdom. Storms blowing migrating birds off course could explain some cases, but what is happening with other wayward birds to seemingly disrupt their navigation is a story for another day.

Borrego Springs
Henderson Canyon,
famous for its wildflowers.



Photo by Herb Knufken on Feb.12, 2026

Torrey Pines Book Club

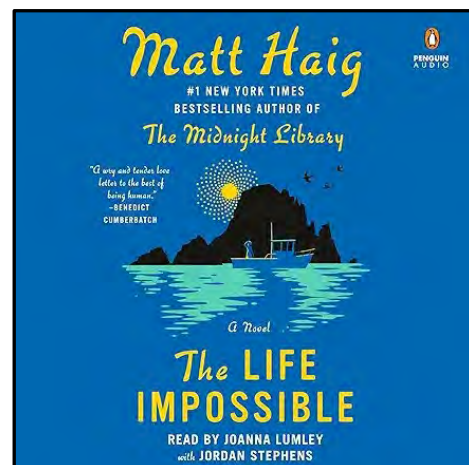
We will meet via Zoom at our regularly scheduled time. Please notify **Annette Ring** if you plan to participate or if you need any extra help getting connected.

When: Tuesday, March 10, 1:00 pm

What: *The Life Impossible: A Novel* by Matt Haig

Amazon says:

When retired math teacher Grace Winters is left a rundown house on a Mediterranean island by a long-lost friend, curiosity gets the better of her. She arrives in Ibiza with a one-way ticket, no guidebook and no plan. Among the rugged hills and golden beaches of the island, Grace searches for answers about her friend's life, and how it ended. What she uncovers is stranger than she could have dreamed. But to dive into this impossible truth, Grace must first come to terms with her past.



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

April 14: *The Reign of Wolf 21: The Saga of Yellowstone's Legendary Druid Pack* by Rick McIntyre

Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: February 2026

Number of species: 83
(+5 other taxa)

Cinnamon Teal 4	Hudsonian Whimbrel 1	Red-tailed Hawk 10	Scaly-breasted Munia 7
Northern Shoveler 1	Long-billed Curlew 18	Belted Kingfisher 1	House Finch 126
Gadwall 20	Willet 14	Nuttall's Woodpecker 13	Lesser Goldfinch 45
American Wigeon 6	jaeger sp. 1	Northern Flicker 2	Dark-eyed Junco 7
Mallard 9	Heermann's Gull 3	American Kestrel 8	White-crowned Sparrow 48
Northern Pintail 26	Ring-billed Gull 5	Peregrine Falcon 1	Golden-crowned Sparrow 5
Green-winged Teal 2	Western Gull 29	Black Phoebe 9	Savannah Sparrow 6 4 were
Canvasback 7	California Gull 15	Say's Phoebe 2	Beldings Savannah Sparrow
Lesser Scaup 7	Royal Tern 1	Cassin's Kingbird 26	Song Sparrow 54
Greater/Lesser Scaup 25	Pied-billed Grebe 3	Hutton's Vireo 5	California Towhee 56
Surf Scoter 2	Western Grebe 22	California Scrub-Jay 20	Spotted Towhee 20
Bufflehead 8	Clark's Grebe 4	American Crow 9	Western Meadowlark 3
Red-breasted Merganser 12	Western/Clark's Grebe 3	Common Raven 18	Orange-crowned Warbler 23
Ruddy Duck 6	Red-throated Loon 4	Bushtit 51	Common Yellowthroat 21
Mourning Dove 36	Common Loon 2	Wrentit 49	Yellow-rumped Warbler 74
White-throated Swift 27	Black-vented Shearwater 1000	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3	
Anna's Hummingbird 33	Brandt's Cormorant 2	California Gnatcatcher 2	Participants: Nancy
Rufous Hummingbird 2	Double-crested Cormorant 23	Northern House Wren 9	Richardson, Donna
Allen's Hummingbird 23	White-faced Ibis 15	Marsh Wren 1	Mancuso, Marty Hales,
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird 1	Snowy Egret 9	Bewick's Wren 30	Robert James, Dinah Carl,
hummingbird sp. 3	Great Egret 5	European Starling 2	Kathy Estey, Sue S, Robert
American Coot 33	Great Blue Heron 3	California Thrasher 19	Turner, Manolo Tutner,
	Brown Pelican 12	Northern Mockingbird 6	Karen Turner, Pam Burdt,
	Osprey 1	Western Bluebird 2	Steve Neat, Gale Darling,
	White-tailed Kite 2	Hermit Thrush 8	David Walker
	Northern Harrier 1	Cedar Waxwing 25	

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



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