



TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 492

August 2026

A Conservation Success Story

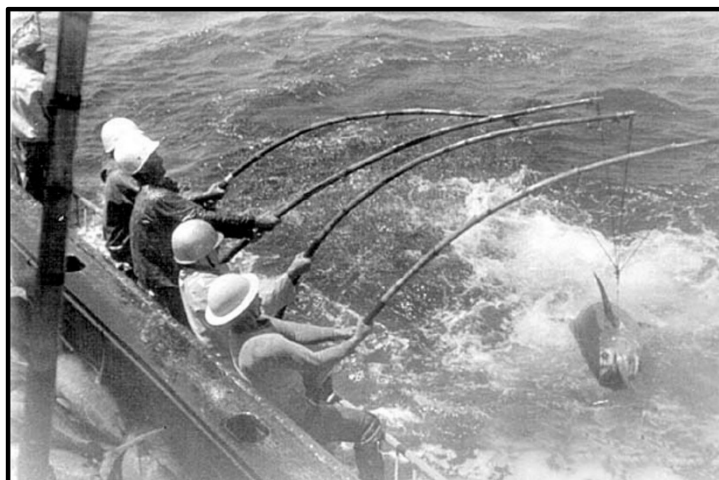
by Dan Hammer

With all the harm we humans do to our planet and its creatures, it's encouraging to hear how we can sometimes act together to protect a species that had been in peril. At the July TPDS meeting, Dr. Michael Scott told such a story.

In his presentation on "The Tuna-Dolphin Controversy," Michael explained how more than 100,000 dolphins each year once fell victim to commercial tuna fishing practices and how the international community came together to greatly reduce these "incidental mortalities."

Michael is a well-known expert on this issue. He was a senior scientist for the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), conducting studies to determine why dolphins and tuna swim together. He is a co-founder of the Sarasota (Florida) Dolphin Research Project and teaches a course on marine mammals at the University of San Diego.

In the years following World War II, there was a growing demand for canned tuna. Old Navy minesweepers and other ships were converted to tuna baitboats, and the San Diego fleet became "the center of the U.S. tuna industry." Crews fished for tuna by chumming with bait and using poles and



Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday, August 8, 9:00 am

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

Speaker: Adam Niesley, Public Archaeology Director at the San Diego Archaeological Center

Topic: *12,000 Years: The Interpretation of Material Culture in San Diego*

This presentation will explore how material culture reveals patterns of human adaptation, diet, mobility, and daily life, while also examining the challenges of preserving the archaeological record and highlighting the mission of the San Diego Archaeological Center in Escondido.

Adam Niesley has served as a volunteer field archaeologist with the Rio Frio Regional Archaeological Project in Belize and as an interpretive site steward for pre- and post-contact archaeological sites in the Anza-Borrego Desert through the Colorado Desert Archaeological Society. He is currently working on his MA in Classical Archaeology.

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

lines, sometimes joining up to four poles and lines to one large hook to reel in "the big guys."

Yellowfin tuna frequently swim with spotted and spinner dolphins in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP). Tuna fishermen have long taken advantage of that association by using the more easily sighted dolphins (which, being mammals, must surface often to breathe) to locate the tuna swimming below. Baitboat fishing practice posed no threat to the dolphins because the fishermen caught only the tuna.

In the late 1950s, with the invention of light-weight nylon nets and power blocks to reel in the nets, the fleet largely switched to purse seiners. The nets can be over a mile long and 600 feet deep. About 130 boats were based in San Diego, and it was a frequent sight to see seiners lined up along the Embarcadero. (Cont. on pg. 3.)

The Torrey Pines Docent Society publishes the *Torreyana* monthly, edited by Joan Simon and Dan Hammer and 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: Thank You, Janet Ugalde

Here is an excerpt from my speech honoring Janet Ugalde for her 12 years as director of the Youth Program. (See photo on pg. 9.)

Since becoming a docent in 2007, Janet has given our organization something far more valuable than her time. She has given us her heart, her wisdom, and her unwavering commitment to our mission. When I first met her she reminded me of George Patton, surely a strong leader but with a softer, pacifist side - think Mahatma Gandhi.



Janet has served with distinction as TPDS President and Treasurer, guiding the Docent Society with integrity, sound judgment, and a steady hand. She has chaired our Nominating Committee, thoughtfully identifying and encouraging the leaders who would carry our organization forward. She has also devoted countless hours to the New Docent Training, helping to prepare and inspire the next generation of volunteers who share our passion for Torrey Pines.

Janet's exceptional service has been recognized by her peers through two of our highest honors: Docent of the Month and Docent of the Year. These awards reflect not only her extraordinary contributions but also the respect and admiration she has earned from everyone fortunate enough to work alongside her.

Perhaps no role has reflected Janet's love of education more than her leadership of our Youth Program. For twelve years, she has helped thousands of young visitors *discover the wonders of nature*, creating experiences that spark curiosity, appreciation, and stewardship for our remarkable Reserve. The impact of her work extends far beyond our organization - it lives on in every child whose eyes were opened to the beauty of the natural world.

Janet, your leadership has strengthened our Society, your mentorship has enriched countless volunteers, and your dedication has inspired us all. Your legacy will continue to shape the Torrey Pines Docent Society for years to come.

On behalf of all the docents, thank you for your remarkable service, your friendship, and your steadfast commitment to preserving, interpreting, and sharing the extraordinary beauty of Torrey Pines.

Matt Xavier
TPDS President

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(Cont. from pg. 1.)



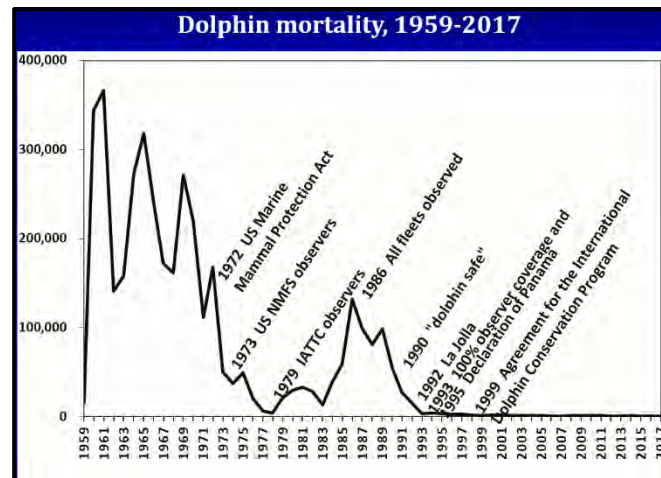
To begin a *set* (deployment of a net), a crew uses a helicopter to locate a pod of dolphins and speedboats to corral them along with the tuna swimming beneath. A skiff is dropped with one end of the net while the seiner encircles the running dolphins and deeper tuna. After the skiff returns its end of the net to the boat, the crew purses the bottom of the net, preventing the tuna from diving under the net. The crew hauls in two-thirds of the net and, in a practice called *backdown*, the seiner backs up, stretching out the net into a channel, while the force of the water sinks the net far enough for the dolphins to escape while the tuna remain lower in the net.



Unfortunately, not all the dolphins escaped: many were tangled in the net. In the 1950s and 60s, as the scale of tuna fishing rose dramatically, so did dolphin mortality, despite the effort of crew members to rescue as many as they could. After field research by biologist Bill Perrin revealed the extent of the carnage, public outcry led to passage of the 1972 U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act, which prohibited the hunting or harassment of any marine mammal and required fishermen to adjust their practices to protect these animals. Continued public pressure – and even boycotts of tuna – led to passage of the 1990 Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act and creation of the “dolphin-safe” tuna label.

By the end of the century, a series of international agreements enlisted all the ETP’s tuna fleets in marine mammal protection. Limits on incidental dolphin mortality were imposed on each seiner in the international fleet, and onboard observers from the IATTC

and the individual countries were placed on every purse seiner to monitor the mortality. (If a seiner went over the mortality limit, it was done fishing on dolphin-associated tuna for the year.) At the same time, fishermen have devised new ways to release the dolphins from the net unharmed. Incidental mortality has fallen from more than 100,000 to 1,000 or fewer per year while the ETP dolphin population has risen slightly to about 8 million.



The question remains: Why do tuna and dolphins associate together? “There are two basic hypotheses,” Michael said. “One is that you swim together to get lunch, and the other is that you swim together to avoid becoming lunch.” The feeding hypothesis cites the advantages of working together to locate and herd their prey. The predation hypothesis is based on the fact that dolphins and tuna have common predators, including sharks and small whales; by schooling together, they dilute the threat to each population and individual.

Several studies have cast doubts on the feeding hypothesis. Notably, spotted and spinner dolphins and yellowfin tuna all feed at different times of day, at different depths, and on different prey. Other studies have shown that the tuna-dolphin association is determined by swimming depths: it is strongest where the *thermocline* (the water layer separating warm upper water from the colder water below) is relatively shallow, as in the ETP, and weakens as the thermocline falls to greater depths. (Climate change has expanded the areas of warm water, thereby strengthening the tuna-dolphin bond.) Overall, reducing predation risk best explains why the association occurs, but the evidence is not conclusive.

Whatever the cause of tuna-dolphin association, it has been harmful to dolphins, but that harm has been greatly reduced in recent years by international regulation and observation and by improved dolphin rescue practices. We might never reach the goal of zero mortality, but the goal of sustainability appears to have been achieved.

If you missed Michael’s “success story” or want to see it again, click [here](#).

General Meeting Minutes: July 11, 2026

Dr. Michael Scott gave a presentation on “The Tuna-Dolphin Controversy” (see pg. 1). There were 63 in attendance.

Docent of the Month: Craig Carlisle (class of 2022) is a member of the crew that cleans up the roads and beaches, including monitoring graffiti on the cliffs, and is also a frequent Roving Interpreter.

Matt Xavier, president of TPDS, led the business meeting.

Rowan Jackman, Interpreter I

New Chalkboard Signs, designed by **Ingo Renner**, will be installed at the TIK (already up), BLIK and the South Beach entry kiosk. The boards will have information on high and low tides, and air and water temperatures, to be filled in daily, plus space to add any interesting happenings. They will also include information on our regular programs, such as nature walks, mindful walks, and the Jr. Ranger programs, which the Interpretive Team will keep updated.

Reserve Closure Signs: New signs are being prepared to announce the closure of the Reserve, including a QR code that will give access to the most updated information. They will probably be located at the Lodge, TIK, BLIK and the South Beach entry kiosk and restrooms.

The Park staff is doing an inventory of the current signs at the Reserve.

Lagoon Pollution Signs: Rusty, from the Maintenance Dept., has long been concerned about the amount of pollution that flows into the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon from the showers. He has spearheaded signage for the North Beach that tells visitor that the use of shampoo, conditioner, body wash and other personal care products in the showers is prohibited.

Rowan thanked docents for using both the emergency and non-emergency numbers for SURCOM. She asked that we not share the number for the South Beach kiosk.

Jr. Ranger programs: There is a QR code at the TIK, BLIK, and Lodge if people are interested in these programs. Many of them are drop-ins where participants do not have to register.

Mindful Walks: **Santosh Nichani** reminded us that the walks are every Sunday at 9 am at the Guy Fleming Trail. She encouraged docents to become mindful walk leaders.

Malana Tabak, who organizes the speakers for the monthly general meetings, is looking for two people to take over the job. Contact her if you are interested.

September 12 general meeting will be a picnic at the South Beach.

North Beach parking lot: In mid to late August, the construction site will be broken down, freeing up more parking spaces.

Docent of the Month: Craig Carlisle

Photo by Herb Knufken

My family moved from Michigan City, Indiana to San Diego in the summer of 1967. Lake Michigan was great in the summer, but what a treat to enjoy the Pacific Ocean year-round with our mild weather here. I first went to UCSB for a degree in economics and then to graduate school in



geology, minoring in surfing and frisbee. While in Santa Barbara I spent a lot of time hiking the various trails up the Santa Ynez Mountains but probably could only identify about two plants (manzanita and poison oak).

After moving back to San Diego in 1989, I started surfing at Torrey Pines State Beach. I was very fortunate when **Nancy Richardson** told me about the Docent Society and its training program. The idea of hearing experts talk on a variety of topics sounded great, along with the opportunity to become a docent, especially as I was approaching retirement age.

The time I have spent as a docent has been very rewarding. First of all, getting to know many of the other docents has made me realize what an impressive group of people with amazing expertise in a number of areas we have here - quite a brain trust, and all that knowledge is available for us to tap. Secondly, I greatly enjoy meeting all the visitors. I soon realized that, unlike when encountering others on our crowded freeways and roads, virtually everyone we meet at Torrey Pines is happy to be here, and they are open to hearing a little information about our Reserve. That's a great opportunity for what someone coined as "micro friendships," described as "brief, everyday social interactions with acquaintances, service workers, or strangers." Psychologists have noted that these "snack-sized" exchanges "boost both parties' mood, build a sense of community, and combat loneliness."

I certainly enjoy each visit to the Reserve and all the micro friendship exchanges with both regulars and first-time visitors. I also appreciate and want to thank the other docents for all the volunteer work that makes all this possible.

What's on the Beach? Between the Grains of Sand

by Kathy Dickey

When you walk on a beach with moist sand it might look empty, but did you know that beneath each footprint there is a complete ecosystem of tiny organisms called meiofauna?

Some experts say there could be 50,000 to 100,000 organisms in the sand or mud 2 to 10 cm below your footprint, of at least 100 different species. These are tiny creatures, much larger than bacteria or viruses but smaller than 0.5 mm. Some are about 45 microns (0.045 mm) in size. They live between the sand grains and often are each attached to one grain. They are not considered plankton because plankton drift in the currents and are generally larger.

Adrian Mason and Christopher Laumer of Hakaimagazine.com said, "It strains the imagination to fathom the sheer multitudes of these organisms thriving in a seemingly lifeless beach, but it's their diversity that's most impressive, challenging even that found on coral reefs, an ecosystem touted as the planet's most biodiverse. Today, of the 34 recognized phyla in the animal kingdom, 20 include meiofaunal organisms and five of those phyla are exclusively meiofaunal. These interstitial organisms form the ultimate beach-cleaning crew. Peering through an electron microscope unveils a world of stunning adaptations and body forms that help meiofauna cope with an environment that is both abrasive and dynamic. As crashing waves churn the sediment, meiofauna adapt in myriad ways – clinging to a grain of sand like a climber on a cliff, adopting elongated shapes to slip between the grains, or squeezing out a dollop of superglue to glom on tight."

How many species of meiofauna are there? At least ten thousand, but scientists are finding new species regularly because many of the marine environments have not yet been investigated. New amplification methods, eDNA, and bar coding are helping to define the species. The majority of meiofauna are various copepod and nematode species.

Nematodes (flatworm and roundworm species) dominate, with 60% to 90% of the total meiofauna. Highly flexible and mobile, they are blind but have acute smell and taste abilities. Flatworms are unsegmented and covered with cilia (tiny hairlike structures to help them move). They can use a glue-like substance to attach their



Marine nematode; flatworm Source: mcgill.ca/newsroom/channels/news/flatworm-inspired-medical-adhesives-stop-blood-loss-342730

prey (or themselves) to the sand particles. They use a suction area on the middle of their bodies to eat their prey. Researchers from McGill University in Montreal have developed a medical adhesive that could save human lives, modeled after structures found in marine animals like flatworms.

Harpacticoid copepods are the primary copepod, typically accounting for 10% to 40% of the total meiofauna. Their percentages drop drastically in polluted or low-oxygen environments. Their bodies are streamlined or flattened for crawling, and they have antennae. They also have specialized mandibles to scrape coatings off the sand, such as bacteria, microalgae, diatoms, and organic waste. There are at least three thousand species in this aquatic order of copepods.



Marine copepod Source: nathistoc.bio.uci.edu/crustacea/Copepoda/Copepod1/index.html

Other orders of animals are represented by about 1% each of the total meiofauna. The most interesting group are the marine tardigrades. Unlike their land cousins, known to survive in the vacuum of space, these animals are adapted to riding out the constantly shifting, abrasive sand. They can also handle dehydration, extreme heat and freezing. Less than 0.3 mm in length, they look like little stuffed "water bears" under the microscope, shuffling along on eight short legs and suction-cup feet. They have plates covering their bodies and long hair tubes extending from their face and sides like whiskers to feel their way between the sand. They pierce their prey with needle-like stylets in their mouth and use pharyngeal suction to consume their catch.



Marine Tardigrade, or "water bear." Source: techexplorist.com/tiny-water-bears-help-humans-protect-resources-mars/102150/

References available upon request.

A Sharky Summer

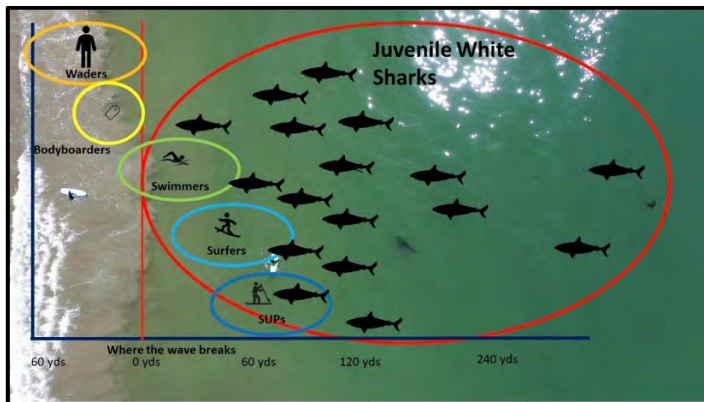
by Jeannie Smith

According to Dr. Chris Lowe, a “doozy” of an El Niño is coming soon and this will bring us a “Sharky Summer.” Chris is a professor in marine biology and director of the Shark Lab at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), where he and his students work with acoustic and satellite telemetry techniques to study the movement, behavior and physiology of sharks, rays and gamefishes. Of particular interest are juvenile Great White Sharks (GWS), which aggregate in nurseries along California shores until they mature and move to deeper waters and larger prey.

Torrey Pines Conservancy partnered with TPDS to bring Chris to St. Peter’s Episcopal Church on July 16 for an evening discussion of the Shark Lab’s research and education outreach. Before the talk began, there was a display of shark jaws, skin and other items, with Chris and two of his students explaining the exhibits and answering questions.

A large part of the lecture described the Shark Beach Safety Program, which consists of three major efforts: scientific research, education, and public outreach. All this is aimed at informing beach-goers about sharks and their importance in the ecosystem, and how to be safe while sharing the near-shore with their juveniles. Chris worked with a psychologist to develop signage that intrigues and informs rather than scares the public away from the beach. In addition, the Lab trains lifeguards in shark identification and behaviors, and educates Jr. Lifeguards and K-12 students about sharks and other near-shore organisms.

Female GWS deposit their young (4 ft long!) in warmer waters near the shore so that the pups won’t be subjected to a huge temperature change from the womb, thus creating shark nurseries. There are very many stingrays near the shore, so shark pups have plenty to eat. These nurseries, or aggregations, are in warmer shallow waters shared by swimmers, surfers and paddleboarders. An important part of the outreach and safety education is the observations via drones of sharks and humans together in the water. An interesting graphic showed the parts of the shore break used by swimmers, body-boarders, surfers and paddleboarders along with observed sharks in the same areas.



Most of the observations where sharks were near humans were at or offshore of the break – where mostly surfers and

BLIK: Learn at Lunch

Date/Time: Thursday, August 6 at 12 noon

Location: Docent Shed at the North Beach parking lot

Speaker: Docent **Jane Barger**

Topic: *Local Shells – BLIK Shells & Resources*

Bring your lunch, a chair, your curiosity, and any questions you may have about mollusks and their shells found along the San Diego shoreline. 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 North Beach parking lot shed. All docents, park employees, and visitors are welcome.

Don’t miss the **Shark Shack Mobile Exhibit**, which will be at the BLIK on Saturday, August 15 from 10 am to 2 pm. Visitors and docents can examine real preserved specimens, massive shark jaws, stingray barbs, and much more.

paddleboarders hang out. Although there are often sharks near humans in this zone, encounters are very rare – sharks do not consider humans to be prey, and while they may investigate, once they recognize the object is not delectable, they move on. It is important to note that while sharks have made a comeback in numbers over the last 10 years, the number of reported bites has not risen.

Chris described the many ways he and his students collect information on sharks, where they go and what they are doing. Many different sorts of tags are used to produce spatial and time data for individuals. A very interesting and informative animated graph produced by one of the graduate students showed via colors the daily and seasonal temperature changes along the shores and the reactions of individual sharks to those changing temperatures. We could “see” sharks fleeing from waters that warmed beyond their preferred upper limit of 82° F., and seeking the warmer waters when waters were too cool.

This temperature preference illustrates why a “sharky summer” is predicted. That “doozy” of El Niño we are expecting will warm temperatures in the Sea of Cortez and Baja Peninsula beyond the tolerance of sharks, causing them to move north and increasing their presence in our area. The scientists expect to see more juvenile GWS as well as species that do not normally frequent our waters as both the sharks and their prey move north because of this warming. Previous El Niño years have brought tiger and hammerhead sharks north. The latter can be much more aggressive than the juvenile GWS that usually ignore humans in the water.

An alarming and sad end-note is the all-too-familiar disappearance of funding. Until this coming fall, California and federal funding has supported this important research. Unfortunately, this support is soon to end. Check out the website for more information: csulb.edu/shark-lab

Lodge Entrance Prepares for Final Plaster Coat

by Corbin Schuppert, CA State Parks Restoration Specialist

With help from Old Town State Historic Park maintenance staff, the entrance to the Lodge is largely ready for its final coat of plasterwork. The second coat of a three-part plaster system, known as a “brown coat” or “leveling coat,” has been completed and is currently in the curing process. The brown coat follows the initial “scratch coat” and evenly flattens or levels the substrate beneath. As one moves through this process, irregularities, depressions, and high spots are successively tempered so that the final layer of plaster (known as the “color coat,” “skim coat,” or “finish coat”) can be applied and tooled to the desired effect with minimal effort.

During the initial ten-day curing process, fresh plaster is constantly monitored and kept moist by daily sprayings from a garden hose. Local weather conditions play a large role in this process, as dry, hot summer days can undermine the desired slow cure.

From *Building with Lime*, Stafford Holmes & Michael Wingate:

“There are two ways in which limes may set, either by a slow combination with carbon dioxide gas (a component of the air) in a process called *carbonation*, or by combination with silicates and aluminates in the presence of water in what is called *hydraulic set*. Nearly all limes set to some extent by carbonation. The hydraulic set is a property exhibited by limes which contain active clay impurities.

“There are various things which may be done to promote carbonation, but it is nearly always a slow process – continuing for months or for many years – and it occurs from the air surface into the joints. This means that the greater part of the mortar remains uncarbonated and may, in particularly unfavorable conditions, dry out with no cohesive strength at all.”

Let it be noted that the long, drawn-out process of this restoration phase of the Lodge is purposeful and in line with historic methods of construction practices. While the one-and-a-half-year process has been inconvenient to some of the daily routines of a functioning Visitor Center and Ranger Station, it is precisely this methodical and slow practice which will result in a robust and long-lasting exterior for the Torrey Pines Lodge.

To end this report on a bittersweet note, I extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Old Town State Historic Park Maintenance Worker Wes Stoudor, whose last day in San Diego Coast District was on July 22. Wes has accepted a transfer to Columbia State Historic Park in the foothills of the Sierras and will no doubt continue to be a leader and fine craftsman in another deserving region of the state. Wes played a critical role in all stages of the Lodge restoration thus far while facilitating adobe restoration in Old Town. I owe all my construction successes to the person who has without hesitation gone above-and-beyond his duties and jumped into any adobe-related task I asked of him. Good luck, Wes!



Wes Stoudor leads Old Town recruits through the “brown-coat” plastering stage.



A tight, wavy “key” is made in the “brown-coat” with finesse and a plaster-comb.



Old Town Maintenance Workers Wes Stoudor, Jacob Orner, and Joe Poma enjoy the lookout from the DAR Trail in the Extension after a grueling morning of plasterwork.

Sierra Club Seal Society in La Jolla: Volunteer Opportunities

by Joan R. Simon

The Seal Society, a part of the San Diego Sierra Club, is an all-volunteer group that educates the public about seals and sea lions in La Jolla and advocates for their protection. They are looking for volunteers.



Working with city and state officials, they have been able to secure a year-round closure for the sea lions who birth and raise their young on a rocky outcropping called Pt. La Jolla, next to La Jolla Cove. Thanks to their advocacy, rangers now manage La Jolla Cove to ensure it stays open year around. For the past three years, the Seal Society has trained over 60 UCSD students to be educators during the winter seal birthing season and daily at the Children's Pool.



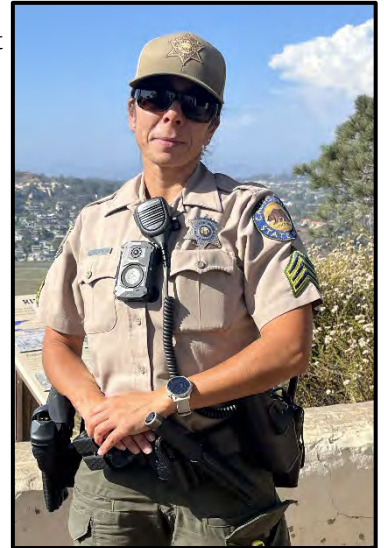
With the upcoming six-month closure of the Reserve, the Seal Society is offering Torrey Pines docents volunteer opportunities with their group. They include educating the public about seal and sea lion behavior at the Children's Pool, La Jolla Cove and Pt. La Jolla, and counting the marine mammals at these locations as well as analyzing previously accumulated data. Training for these positions requires three 2-hour training sessions, with training manuals provided. The minimum commitment is two hours per week for three months.

Robyn Davidoff, chair of the Seal Society, will be giving a short presentation at the August 8 general meeting. For additional information and to fill out the volunteer form, go to sandiegosierraclub.org/seal-society. For questions, email scsealsociety@gmail.com.

Celebrating Stephanie Adams, Our New Supervising Ranger

by Joan R. Simon

Stephanie Adams, a ranger at Torrey Pines for the past 6½ years, was appointed Supervising Ranger on July 1, succeeding Dylan Hardenbrook. She came to the Reserve at the beginning of 2020 from Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes, where she was a supervisor. During her tenure at Torrey Pines, Stephanie worked very successfully in the position of liaison to the Docent Society, and many docents have come to know her and appreciate her dedication and sense of responsibility.



With the recent arrival of Vince Gudenau and Kevin Escalante, the ranger staff is just one position shy of being complete. (See pg. 9 in this issue and the [July 2026 Torreyana](#) for profiles of the new rangers.) Stephanie said she hopes to have the fifth ranger position filled sometime this fall.

When asked what changes she has noticed since coming to Torrey Pines, she immediately said “the steady increase in the number of visitors.” She noted that, as is often the case with State Parks, the ongoing challenge is accomplishing more with limited funding. However, she said the renewed energy within the San Diego Coast District – including the newly hired rangers and support from the Natural Resources, Maintenance, and Interpretive teams – has her optimistic that they will accomplish great things.

When Stephanie learned of her promotion, she wrote: “I’m thankful for this opportunity and for everyone’s support. I’m excited to guide the team and look forward to supporting the staff, encouraging teamwork, and achieving our goals together.”

For a profile of Stephanie when she first came to Torrey Pines, see the [February 2020 Torreyana](#).

August 13 CEED Event: Los Peñasquitos Ranch House

Date: Thursday, August 13

Time: 11am to 12 noon

Place: Los Peñasquitos Ranch House and Canyon Preserve, 12122 Canyonside Park Drive, San Diego 92129

Limited to 20: email **Rachel Scherba** to sign up.

Join us for a guided tour of the Ranch House (mostly indoors). Docents are welcome to explore the area on their own after the tour. For further information, click [here](#).

Welcome to our Second New Ranger, Vince Gudenau

by Joan R. Simon

Vince Gudenau joined the Torrey Pines ranger staff on July 1. He grew up in Oceanside and went to Cal State San Marcos. After graduating, he was a state parks seasonal lifeguard in San Diego from 2015 to 2021, working at times with former head lifeguard (and Guy Fleming House resident) Ed Vodrazka. He then attended the state parks ranger program at Butte College in Chico. After graduation, Vince worked for two and a half years as a ranger/lifeguard at Leo Carrillo State Park in Malibu. In December 2024, he transferred down to Silver Strands State Beach in Coronado.

An avid surfer, Vince is “passionate about aquatic safety.” He also enjoys camping, hiking, free diving, and traveling. He will be working at the Reserve every Wednesday through Saturday. Vince lives in North County.



Museum Shop Spotlight: New Mat Prints

The museum shop team has assembled 20 each of the two new 8x10-inch Mat prints in 11x14-inch black mats. They are available now in the shop at a retail price of just \$25, and the 20% docent discount can be applied. There are also additional copies available that are not on display.

In addition, **Deborah Jones** has designed a new collection of six folding notecards featuring her original photographs from throughout the Reserve, priced at \$5.95 each.



Thank You, Janet Ugalde

These are the docents who attended the celebration of **Janet Ugalde's** 12-year tenure as director of the Youth Program.



Back Row: **Matt Xavier, Annette Ring, Janet Ugalde, Dan Ugalde, Bruce Montgomery, Alberto Trujillo, Gary McCook, Mary Friestedt, Paul Howard, Rachel Scherba, Wayne Kornreich**

Front Row: **Lynne Truong, Barbara Gunning, Mary Makowski, Patty Montgomery, Suzan Potuznik**

Bird of the Month: White-tailed Kite

by Robert James; photo by Herb Knüfken

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet famously says “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” meaning that the labels we use are not as important as what something truly is. The White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) is a perfect example in our human construct of the bird world. Its accepted common name has morphed from White-tailed to Black-shouldered (which I learned in college) and then back to White-tailed in recent years!

Of the 225 or so bird species documented in the Reserve, it is one of our most stunning raptors (birds of prey), with its contrasting black and white coloration, yellow bill, and red eyes. Except for the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), our smallest falcon, it is the only bird in our area that can be spotted hovering (“kiting”) for protracted periods while hunting.

The White-tailed Kite is a resident species ranging along the U.S. Pacific coast, throughout Mexico, and in much of South America. It is most often associated with grasslands, but also marshlands such as Los Peñasquitos Lagoon in the Reserve. The White-tailed Kite primarily feeds on small mammals but also birds, lizards, and insects. Since it is higher in the food web as a secondary consumer of other animals, there are fewer White-tailed Kites compared to seed-eating birds such as towhees and finches. In fact, our monthly bird counts usually record just one or two.

Monitoring surveys such as the Christmas Bird Count have assessed populations of the species range as declining overall. In fact, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has listed it as a Fully Protected Species in the Fish and Game Code. We should support the conservation and recovery of the White-tailed Kite by maintaining undisturbed habitat for foraging, roosting, and nesting; educating visitors to the Reserve on the importance of raptors in ecosystem functioning; and reporting observations in community science platforms used by researchers such as [eBird](#).

As fellow docent **Luz Chung** says, the species is known by different names in various Spanish-speaking regions. Two names that she favors are gavián maromero and elanio



coliblanco, which refer to the species acrobatics and white tail, respectively. So, certainly this rose of a bird remains sweet.

Meet the Ligated Furrow Bee: A Tiny Pollinator with a Big Impact

by Gabriele Wienhausen; photo by Cindy Pencek

If you spot a medium-sized bee with striped bands visiting flowers at Torrey Pines during spring or summer, chances are you've found the ligated furrow bee (*Halictus ligatus*). While nearly 100 bee species live in the Reserve, this is one of the most common and one of the most important.

A member of the sweat bee family (*Halictidae*), *H. ligatus* is slightly smaller than a honeybee. Its dark brown to bronze body is decorated with pale hair bands across the top of the segments on the abdomen – the “ligatures” that inspired its name. Females also have broad, blocky heads and distinctive thorn-like projections on their cheeks, visible in close-up photos.



H. ligatus is one of the most widespread native bees in the Americas and thrives in both wild habitats and urban gardens. It is a true generalist, collecting nectar and pollen from a remarkable variety of flowers. At Torrey Pines, it especially favors yellow daisy-like wildflowers.

H. ligatus is a primitively eusocial species. This means the queen uses aggressive behavior to stop female workers from laying eggs. From March through October, a queen starts a nest underground and raises the first generation of daughters. Once they emerge, the daughters take over nest maintenance and flower collecting while the queen focuses on laying eggs. By late summer, the colony produces new queens and males. After mating, the old queen, workers, and males die, while the newly mated queens spend the winter underground, ready to begin the cycle again the following spring.

Not every colony follows the same script. About one in eight nests is founded by several queens working together. One becomes the primary egg-layer while the others forage much like workers. Depending on weather, food availability, and body condition, females can switch between worker and queen roles – a unique flexibility that helps the species thrive in changing environments. Because of this remarkable behavior, Prof. Kenta Asahina of the Salk Institute is using *H. ligatus* as a model organism to investigate the evolutionary origins and neural basis of social behavior.

The ligated furrow bee's social flexibility, ability to nest in many places, and knack for utilizing nearly any type of flower have made it one of North America's most successful native bees. The next time you see a small striped bee busily moving from flower to flower, take a closer look; you may be watching one of the Reserve's hardest-working pollinators.



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