



# TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR  
TORREY PINES  
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 493

September 2026

## 12,000 Years of “Material Culture” in San Diego

by Joan R. Simon

Adam Niesley is the Public Archaeology Director at the San Diego Archaeological Center in Escondido. At the August 8 general meeting, he told us about San Diego’s 12,000 years of native settlements and “material culture” – which he explained is just “a fancy word for artifacts.” But first he gave us a fascinating tour of early members of our hominin genus (*Homo*) and how people first came to the Americas.

The Pleistocene era – which went from 2.6 million BP (years before present) to 12,000 BP, when our current Holocene period began – experienced approximately 20 ice ages. During that time, humans were trapped for 10,000 years by two-mile-high glacial walls on either end of “Beringia,” a large land mass between the Asian steppes and Alaska, in the area of today’s Bering Sea.



## Torrey Pines Docent Beach Party!



Join us for a fun time at South Beach as we celebrate another great summer at the Reserve! This will replace our September TPDS meeting and a CEED-organized event.

**Date:** Saturday, September 12, 5:00–7:00 pm

**Location:** Torrey Pines South Beach near the stairs

[RSVP here](#) or email me with RSVP or questions.

We’ll provide deli sandwiches, salad, chips, and cookies.

Please bring your own drinks, beach chair or blanket, plate, and utensils. We’re going GREEN, so please bring reusable items whenever possible!

Come relax, enjoy some good food, and spend time with your fellow docents. Think about joining the sunset walk with our walk leader, <guess who> – come and find out!

— Barbara Gunning, Beach Party Planning Committee

When the glacial walls collapsed around 12,000 BP, people walked across the northern tundra-like region of Beringia into North America. But artifacts found in the western hemisphere predate the end of the last Ice Age by thousands of years, and it is surmised that much earlier humans used boats to get to the Americas, where they established settlements on the Pacific coast before moving inland.

Artifacts have been found in White Sands, NM (22,000 BP) and in Oregon (18,000 BP), where they were preserved by a Mt. St. Helens eruption. There are the multiple Clovis sites from 12,000 to 14,000 BP all across the country. (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

**Editors@torreypine.org.**

Please send postal/email address changes to:

Torrey Pines Docent Society

1155 Camino Del Mar #404

Del Mar, CA 92014

Attn: Membership or email to

**Membership@torreypine.org**

Web sites:

TP Docent Society: [torreypine.org](http://torreypine.org)

TP Conservancy: [torreypines.org](http://torreypines.org)

Visitor Center phone: **858.755.2063**

#### **TPDS Executive Board Members:**

President: Matt Xavier

Vice-president: Harry Proctor

Treasurer: Lynne Truong

Secretary: Ed Saade

Directors-at-large:

Robert (Bob) Friedman

Paul Howard

Mary Makowski

Mukesh Mehta

Jamee Patterson

#### **TPSNR Staff:**

**Supervising Ranger:** Stephanie Adams

**Rangers:** Kevin Escalante, Vince Gudenau, Kyle Knox

**Interpreter I:** Rowan Jackman

**Sr. Interpretive Park Aide:** Lila Beth Scott

**Sr. Park Aide:** Hanna Nason

© Torrey Pines Docent Society

Since 1975

All rights reserved

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

## **President's Message:**

### **Why Volunteering as a Torrey Pines Docent Matters**

**W**hen we volunteer as docents at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, we do more than donate time – we make an investment in one of California's most treasured natural landscapes and in our own personal growth. Every day, docents serve as ambassadors for the Reserve, helping visitors understand the remarkable ecology, geology, history, and cultural significance of this extraordinary place. Through meaningful conversations and guided experiences, docents inspire others to appreciate and protect our natural heritage for generations to come.



The impact extends well beyond the park itself. Visitors who leave with a deeper understanding of Torrey Pines often become stronger advocates for conservation, responsible recreation, and environmental stewardship. In this way, each docent plays an important role in preserving the Reserve's unique ecosystems and ensuring that future generations can enjoy them.

The rewards for us are equally significant. Volunteering offers continual opportunities to learn about the natural world, develop communication and leadership skills, and remain intellectually engaged. Every interaction with a visitor presents a chance to share knowledge while learning something new in return.

Perhaps most importantly, volunteering fosters a strong sense of community. Docents form lasting friendships with people who share a passion for nature, education, and service. Together we become part of a tradition dedicated to protecting one of California's most iconic coastal landscapes.

In the end, being a Torrey Pines docent is a mutually rewarding experience. The Reserve benefits from dedicated volunteers who enrich the visitor experience, while docents gain purpose, knowledge, friendship, and the satisfaction of making a lasting difference in a place we cherish.

Lastly, I want to extend individual recognition to several docents who have either emerged as new leaders or continue to serve with distinction even after a very long tenure as a docent. **Luz Chung, Dinah Carl, Jamee Patterson, Ed Saade, Mary Makowski and Mukesh Mehta** all represent vibrant energy, new ideas, and a vision for what comes next. For those docents who have served for many years, I particularly want to thank **Lynne Truong, Selma Torres, Gabriele Wienhausen, Harry Proctor, Bruce and Patty Montgomery, and Janice Barnard.** Please extend a word to thanks to these selfless docents.

*Matt Xavier*

*TPDS President*

#### **Contents**

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| Conservation Success Story   | 1  |
| President's Message          | 2  |
| In Memoriam                  | 4  |
| Meeting Minutes              | 5  |
| Docent of the Month          | 5  |
| What's On the Beach          | 6  |
| In My Back Yard              | 7  |
| Youth Program Letter         | 8  |
| Nature Journaling            | 9  |
| Lodge Entrance Final Plaster | 9  |
| Dark at the Park?            | 9  |
| Who Was Del Mar Man?         | 10 |
| Museum Shop                  | 10 |
| Fin Whale Skeleton Project   | 11 |
| The Shark Shack              | 11 |
| Bird of the Month            | 12 |
| Bee of the Month             | 12 |
| Book Club                    | 13 |
| Bird Survey                  | 13 |

(Cont. from pg. 1.)

## Clovis Points: ~14,000-12,000 BP

The shape and size of hunting points can aide in indicating the type of prey.



Large projectile points, used at the end of throwing spears called *atlatls*, have been found, indicating mastodons and other large animals were being hunted. Sizeable scrapers, common early tools used to clean animal hides, were also found.

As the glacial walls collapsed, there was a massive movement of population into North America and “that is where our story in San Diego kicks off.” Settlements in our area date back to the beginning of the Holocene era, 10,000 to 12,000 BP. The date might be earlier, but “we just haven’t found the evidence yet,” Adam said. We have bad soil with a lot of DG (decomposed granite) that might have ground up artifacts and washed them out to sea. Also, our coastline would have been a mile farther out to sea than it is today, so there could be village sites under the water (scuba divers have found metates half a mile from the coast).

The first artifacts come from the San Dieguito Lithic Complex and are characterized by scrapers and points the size of the earlier Clovis ones. These same tools have been found in Anza-Borrego, on the coast down into Baja, and all the way north to the Central Valley. This means that large animals were still in this area around 12,000 years ago. The painting here depicts what our area looked like in the early Holocene with large animals present and a much wetter climate, due to the abundance of water released at the end of the last ice age.

The environmental changes that occurred in San Diego between the Pleistocene and Holocene were great.

San Diego went from a lush wetland, to a far drier chaparral.



Painting by William Stout for the San Diego Zoo

The next period was the La Jolla Tradition during the Middle Holocene, 7500 to 3000 BP. By this time, the points have become smaller, indicating there were no longer large animals around. While they were possibly killed off by the native people, their demise might also have been environmentally caused. Since mastodons were designed for the extreme cold weather of the ice ages, they undoubtedly did not thrive in the increasingly milder climate that followed. The reduction in point size happened at the same time in settlements all across North America.

## Folsom Points: ~10,000-8,000 BP

The Holocene disappearance of Pleistocene megafauna meant smaller game.



As the larger point sizes started to disappear locally, animal bones’ density dropped and shell findings increased. Initially, heavy rocks were used to break open large abalone shells. Over time, the shell size became increasingly smaller, possibly indicating an environmental event. Medium-size animals, such as deer and horses, were probably scarce as well because of over-hunting; at the end of the period, they are gone.

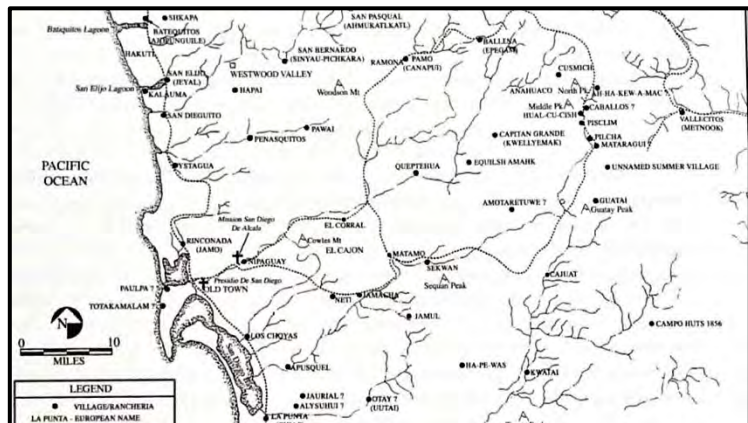
By 5000 BP, San Diego had a pretty similar environment to today. Arrowheads shrink in size and are suitable only for hunting small animals such as rabbits and birds. There are a lot of coastal sites, because residents were no longer following animals into the chaparral, but rather going to the beach to find their food. Fishing was the most “lucrative form of gaining resources during this period,” Adam said. Large metates begin to appear, used to grind up seeds and acorns.

Next came the Late Prehistoric Tradition from 3000 to 300 BP. At this time, settlement patterns were fixed; the people of San Diego had become very successful at living in this environment. These early San Diegans still engaged in seasonal migrations and would winter inland, at places such as Anza-Borrego, then come over the mountains to the beach in the summer. Hence, the metates were now smaller and more portable. By 3000 BP, arrows are being used here as well as all over the world in place of atlatls, as a more efficient way of hunting, and straightening tools to improve aim had

become quite sophisticated. In San Diego we have poor stone for arrowheads. Some of those discovered had wavy sides “almost like the cutting edge on a bread knife” and the stone heads were adjusted to the size of the animal’s hide, making them more efficient. The few finds of obsidian, which is absent locally, indicate there was trading between San Diego and Mammoth and Arizona. Pottery makes its first appearance during this period, as well as woven baskets and sandals, and many of the same techniques are still used by the Kumeyaay today.



This period ended abruptly 300 years ago when the Spanish arrived. They forbade the natives from making stone tools and their indigenous crafts, and from speaking their languages and practicing their religions. Fortunately, enough native peoples continued their culture far from the colonizers, and it is still preserved to this day. Before the Spaniards arrived, the native population was thriving. Each dot on the accompanying map represents a major Kumeyaay village site that held up to 10,000 people.



New construction and development never stops in San Diego County, and that is where most artifacts are found today. “Archaeologists work just ahead of the bulldozers,” Adam remarked, and 70% of archeologists today work at building sites. California law requires that developers work with archaeologists to protect these sites, although the relationship is not always harmonious.

The San Diego Archaeological Center where Adam works has two million items on site, with another one million expected in the next ten years just from development locations. They work with local native communities to find where each item they find should go. Today there are 17 tribal governments on 18 reservations in San Diego County. We have more Indigenous reservations here than in any city outside of California, and our state has more recognized Indigenous groups than the rest of the United States combined.

In addition to its large collection of artifacts, the San Diego Archaeological Center offers adult lectures, children’s programs, hands-on lessons in native artstries and archery, and much more. There will be a CEED trip to the Center on September 23 (see pg. 10 for details). For additional information, go to [sandiegoarchaeology.org](http://sandiegoarchaeology.org)

To watch Adam’s full presentation, click [here](#).

## In Memoriam: Steve Rose

by Barbara Wallach

Lifetime docent Steve Rose passed away on August 4 with his family by his side. Docents will remember Steve for the many activities he participated in at the Reserve. Steve and Sharon became docents in 2004. In 2008, they were honored as Docents of the Month for their work on the restoration of the docent library. At that time, they served as librarians, increasing the library acquisitions and inventory during their tenure. Both Steve and Sharon participated in the Youth Program, leading school children on hikes in the Reserve for many years. Steve also served with the Seabees and was part of the recycling team. Steve always had a smile and friendly words for visitors and friends. He was soft-spoken and engaging, whether on the trails with children, adults, or docents. We will miss seeing Steve at our docent monthly meetings and in the Reserve but have many wonderful memories of times spent together. Thank you, Steve, for your contributions to the Docent Society and to the Reserve. Our warm condolences to Sharon and their family.



## General Meeting Minutes: August 8, 2026

Adam Niesley from the San Diego Archaeological Center gave a talk on the archeology of San Diego (see pg. 1). 55 persons attended the meeting. Robyn Davidoff from the Sierra Club Seal Society gave a brief presentation on their work protecting marine mammals in the La Jolla area (see the article in the August [Torreyana](#)).

**Docent of the Month: Brian Griffith** (2024) has been a frequent Lodge, TIK and Special Walks host, and WannaBee participant.

**September meeting:** Instead of a general meeting, we will have a **Beach Party** on September 12 (see notice on the front page). A sign-up link has been circulated by **Barbara Gunning**, who is organizing the event.

President **Matt Xavier** provided a brief update on the pending closure (no date is set yet, but it is expected to be in "early fall."). To get current updates on the closure, click [here](#).

**Mukesh Mehta** will be joining **Malana Tabak** in securing speakers for the monthly meetings. Suggestions are welcome.

### Board Updates:

**Finance Committee:** We have hired a bookkeeper who will transfer our system to an online version of QuickBooks.

Board members will be attending a second state-organized meeting at the end of August to discuss policy updates and additions.

**Updates from Interpreter I Rowan Jackman** (who could not attend the meeting):

**New Park Information Sheets:** Printed maps are available for visitors who need them, but please encourage use of the QR map code to help save paper.

**Lost & Found:** All lost and found items are now stored in the labeled locker in the staff office. Day-of keys and small items will be hung on the right side for easy access.

**Bear in Mind Training:** Check Better Impact (My Profile/Training) to see whether you need to take a refresher course.

**New State Parks Events Page:** Check out the updated events page to see what's coming up at the Reserve: [Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve Events](#)

### California Biodiversity Week (Sept. 5–13):

**iNaturalist BioBlitz Data Collection Day:** Join the project on Thursday, September 10 to help document biodiversity at the Reserve.

**Junior Rangers: Biodiversity at the Beach** on Sept. 5 at 10 am with Lila Scott and Rowan Jackman.

## Docent of the Month: Brian Griffith

photo by Herb Knufken

*First of all, thank you very much for this recognition! I love TPSNR and consider myself very lucky to have such a great place to volunteer my time.*

*I am originally from Valdosta, Georgia (about 20-30 miles north of the Florida-Georgia border) but mainly grew up near Atlanta. I moved to California after high school*

*to attend UC Berkeley, where I received a BS in Chemical Engineering in 1989, then worked as an engineer for three years before deciding to go to law school. I primarily practiced corporate law in the life sciences industry and retired from the practice of law in May 2026.*

*I became a docent three years ago as part of the class of 2023. Louis Sands suggested that I go through the training after routinely seeing me running (very slowly) or hiking the trails in the Reserve. Even though at the time I was still fully employed, I was excited at the prospect. Thankfully, the docent training in fall 2023 was held on the weekends, so I signed up and was able to attend the classes.*

*There are two things I love most about volunteering at TPSNR: (1) the beauty and wonder of the Reserve and (2) the people I've met, especially the other docents. Regarding the Reserve itself, I love its physical beauty and how it changes throughout the year. One of my favorite things to do is to hike Parry Grove Trail when the Reserve is fully enclosed in a thick marine layer. The mist covering everything hampers visibility but changes the trail into an ethereal experience. Water drips off the pine needles. Spider webs are alight with dew. It is magical. Another favorite is to hike the Flintkote Trail in early spring. That's when there are lots of flowers and bees, especially my favorite, the bumble bees. They buzz all over the place, frantically visiting all of the different flowers. I just get lost in the sound and the beauty.*

*As for the people, I love the knowledge, wisdom, and kindness that have been shown to me during my volunteer activities by **Steve Neal**, **Medi Denker**, **Ron Styn**, and **Matthew Xavier**, to name a few. Each has taught me so much. And the stories! Everyone has such great and interesting stories to tell. Hearing them adds a dimension to volunteering that I did not expect but that continues to make my docent experience all the more rewarding.*



## What's on the Beach? California Grunion

by Kathy Dickey

From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, my dad would take his waterskiing/fishing boat to San Diego Bay almost every summer weekend. We all had a blast. Once in a while, we would have a beach BBQ dinner on the bay side of the Silver Strand and stay up very late so we could cross over to the ocean side and maybe catch a “grunion run.” Ever seen one? They are magnificent!

California grunion fish (*Leuresthes tenuis*) are about five or six inches long, slender, with green above and silver below and a broad band of deep blue along their sides. They have no teeth but feed on zooplankton using their sharp eyesight. They resemble top smelt, but their dorsal fin is further back. They live exclusively along the coast from Point Conception (north of Santa Barbara) down to Abreojos in Baja California. What is amazing about them is that sometimes hundreds or thousands of them leave the ocean at night to wriggle in the sand and spawn. It is a fish orgy.

The best spawning runs are from March through August, on three or four nights of the full and new moon. They usually last one to two hours and start after the highest tide of the night. The females twist to bury themselves tail-first into the wet sand and lay their eggs; only their heads remain visible.



Then one to eight males curve around each female to release their *milt* (seminal fluid) for fertilization (up to a million sperm each). Afterward, the female twists free of her hole in the sand and returns to sea, having released all her eggs (1,600 to 3,600); she may return again later in the season (up to six times) to release a new clutch. After spawning, the males may return on additional waves that night to mate again with another female.

The fertilized eggs incubate about 10 to 14 days, or until the next high tides come. As they incubate a few inches down in the sand, the eggs may be eaten by shore birds and invertebrates. The baby fish hatch and swim out to sea. After about one year, they are 5 inches long and ready to spawn.

The spawning season for grunion runs are February through September. Grunion are protected by law from fishing or catching during April to June due to depletion, but it is okay to observe them. It is best to always do it quietly and in the dark, so the fish do not get frightened and return to sea. Keep the flashlights pointed away from fish or use a red light. Do not bring pets or walk/run in a loud manner, and be careful not to step on them. Up to 30 fish may be caught for food during the open months, but only by hand (no nets), and a fishing license is required. After cooking, the fish taste very mild.

In July through September, the times vary but are generally from around 10 pm to after midnight. Use the websites below for the best dates and times. The best places in San Diego are said to be the Silver Strand, Coronado, La Jolla Shores, Black's Beach, Del Mar Beach, and Oceanside Beach near the pier. Unfortunately, some beaches use machinery to smooth the sand and may interfere with spawning or the eggs.

If you want to find out where and when to see a grunion run, go to:

[surffishingsocalsd.com/grunion-run-where-when-how-to/grunion.org/](http://surffishingsocalsd.com/grunion-run-where-when-how-to/grunion.org/)

[wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Ocean/Grunion](http://wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Ocean/Grunion)

Photo from: [surffishingsocalsd.com/grunion-run-where-when-how-to/](http://surffishingsocalsd.com/grunion-run-where-when-how-to/)

References available upon request.

### BLIK: Learn at Lunch

**Date/Time:** Thursday, September 3 at 12 noon

**Location:** Docent Shed at the North Beach parking lot

**Speaker:** Docent **Bob Nydam**

**Topic:** *Cabrillo National Monument Tidepool Protection, Education and Restoration Program (TPERP)*

Bob will discuss the development of the TPERP as well as its core mission and impact. He will help us appreciate the remarkable yet fragile ecosystem of the rocky intertidal zone and introduce us to some of its key inhabitants. We'll learn how these fascinating organisms survive – and even thrive – in one of the most challenging environments on Earth.

Bring your lunch, a chair, your curiosity, and any questions you may have about tidepools. You may claim one hour on Better Impact under Training, Continuing Education (up to 12 hours per year).

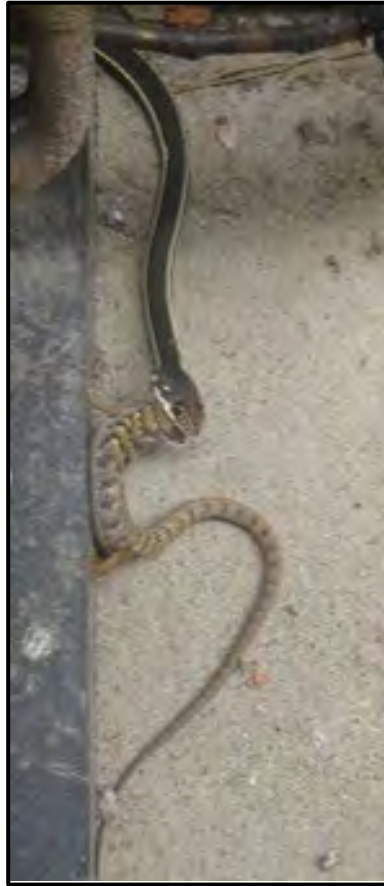
BLIK Learn at Lunch is the first Thursday of every month at noon at the North Beach parking lot shed. All docents, park employees, and visitors are welcome.

# In My Back Yard

by Barbara Wallach

"It was a draw!"

Once upon a time in my back yard, I witnessed an epic wrestling match that ended in a draw. The match was in progress when I happened to spot it at the side of my house. Two mighty fellows went at it for over 40 minutes before deciding that neither of them would win. One was a striped racer and the other an alligator lizard. They were locked together jaw to jaw, twisting and turning as they fought to gain an advantage. Both of these animals have very strong jaws. Periodically they would pause to rest; then one or the other would start the writhing and rolling again.



They were aware of my presence but were obviously not afraid of me. At one point, I left them and went into my house to get a different camera. When I returned, they were still in the heat of battle.

Eventually they wrestled each other behind an air conditioning condenser. Within a minute the lizard was on top of the condenser looking down for the snake, and the racer was on the ground and on his way.

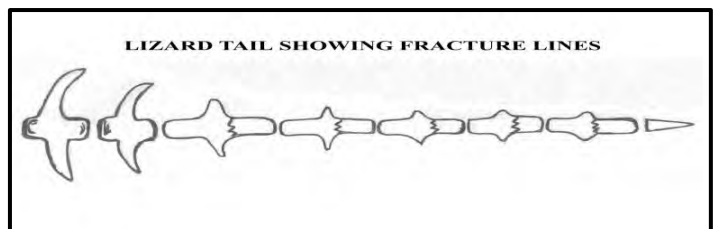
Striped racers are very fast movers, as their name implies. They are also known as whipsnakes. They look superficially like the common garter snake, but the racer has two yellow to cream stripes along either side of the body and a creamy yellow underside. It has a white stripe between the nose and eye on the head. (The garter snake has three yellowish stripes with one down the middle of the back and one on each side; it lacks the white marking on the head.) The racer can measure as long as 40 inches and has a very long tail.

Alligator lizards have long bodies and very long tails. The male lizard uses its strong jaws during mating to hold onto the female. I have also seen this on the patio. They can remain in this position for hours and again were not distracted by my presence.

Survival is a constant battle. Not just for humans but for all the critters in our environment. Note that the dominant lizard in the embrace below has lost his tail.



Lizards, at least most of them, can regenerate their tail should they detach or drop it. This action is called caudal autotomy, literally meaning to self-sever or amputate. A lizard's spinal column extends into the tail. The vertebrae in the tail have fracture marks that allow the lizard, when in distress or under attack, to detach from the tail and make an escape while the tail wiggles and twists, distracting the attacker. The twisting and twitching of the severed tail can last for quite some time; I've seen one continue to move for 30 minutes after detaching. The length of time for the regeneration of the tail varies, depending on where along the tail the detachment occurred. If a lizard detaches the tail at the joint with the body, regeneration starts at that point. New vertebrae do not develop in the regenerated tail; thus there are no fracture marks that would allow the lizard to drop the tail again. However, if the break occurs in the middle or near the end of the tail, the lizard still has vertebrae with the fracture marks and can thus drop the tail from any of those vertebrae. The new tail is composed of long tubes of cartilage and muscle. Regeneration can occur in one month in salamanders and leopard geckos but takes several months in other lizard species.



This letter was sent to Janet Ugalde from three third-grade teachers at Solana Highlands Elementary School, thanking her and the Youth Program docents.

5/19/26

Torrey Pines State Reserve  
12600 N Torrey Pines Rd,  
La Jolla, CA 92037

Dear Volunteer Coordinator and Wonderful Docents of Torrey Pines State Reserve,

Thank you so much for the amazing experience you provided for our third graders during our field trip on May 14, 2026. Our students came away excited, inspired, and full of stories to share with their families.

From the moment we arrived, your kindness, organization, and enthusiasm made the day feel special. The docents did such a wonderful job connecting with the students and bringing the reserve to life through engaging conversations, hands-on learning, and meaningful experiences along the trails.

The children especially loved learning about the plants and animals native to the reserve, the fascinating geology of the cliffs and canyons, and the history of the Kumeyaay people. Seeing the beautiful Torrey pine trees in person was a highlight for many students, and the hike sparked so much curiosity and wonder about the natural world around them.

We truly appreciated how patient, knowledgeable, and encouraging each docent was with our students. It is clear how much care and preparation goes into creating such an enriching experience for visiting classes. Because of your efforts, our students were fully engaged, smiling constantly, and making memories they will carry with them long after third grade.

Thank you again for sharing your time, talents, and love of nature with us. Experiences like this help children develop a deeper appreciation for science, conservation, and the beauty of our local environment. We are so grateful for all that you do and hope to visit again next year!

Warmest regards,

Debra Mulvaney  
Lisa Kelley  
and Nicole Maxwell

Third Grade  
Solana Highlands Elementary

## Nature Journaling

by Luz Chung; photo by Herb Knufken

Everyone is invited to join our monthly Nature Journaling get-togethers. Currently, they take place on the second Wednesday of each month from 9:00 to 10:30 am. Nature Journaling is an engaging activity that fosters a sense of wonder. It encourages us to take pause, and to “use words, pictures, and numbers to collect and record – observations, questions, connections, and explanations” ([Wild Wonder Foundation](#)). As docent **Beverly Toth** explains, “Nature Journaling is such an easy yet profound mindful experience” as it does not require any art background or any experience with any type of journaling. It is inclusive and open to everyone.

At our August get-together we were joined by three visitors who shared their insightful observations and reflections of the Reserve’s ecosystem. By joining us, they also reminded us of the powerful role that TPSNR plays in bringing people together to learn and to appreciate nature.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about our Nature Journaling monthly gatherings.



Here are our three August visitors plus docents (left to right) Luz Chung, Barbara Gunning, Caroline Ruiz, Beverly Toth, Torrie Forbess, and Lisa Lomas.

## Lodge Entrance Prepares for Final Plaster Coat on September 2

by Corbin Schuppert, CA State Parks Restoration Specialist

On Wednesday, September 2, a large-scale plastering event will take place at the front entrance of the Lodge. The second coat of plaster that was applied last month has finished its “slow cure” process, and much of the final “color coat” is scheduled to be applied during a district-wide work day. Park maintenance workers from Old Town, Torrey Pines, San Elijo, and Carlsbad as well as other volunteers are scheduled to arrive early Wednesday morning and work into the afternoon.

A majority of the entryway will receive a technical and colorful plaster treatment, in line with the exterior plasterwork that was applied to the Supervising Ranger’s office at the west

wing of the Lodge last year. Though a culminating event and one in the making for the last 18 months, this will not be the end of a restoration presence at the front of the Visitor Center. The main header above the entryway will be addressed after the completion of the color coat, and finishing details such as lighting grills are yet to be fabricated.

**On September 2, access to the front of the Lodge will be restricted; the primary access will be through the back door** via the Discovery Trail. Signage will be posted in the parking lot at the paved walkways, and visitors will be notified of the temporary entrance when they drive in at the South Beach kiosk.

San Diego Coast District Restoration thanks everyone who has been patient and accommodating during the long-term presence of scaffolding at the Lodge entrance. We hope our restoration efforts will be appreciated.

## Dark at the Park?

by Tom Polakiewicz

With the proposal to make daylight saving time permanent winding its way through Congress, it might be worthwhile to consider how that change would affect Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve.

Older docents may remember that in 1973, at the height of the first Energy Crises, the nation tried year-round daylight saving time as a way to save energy. It was thought that having later daylight would mean that people would not have to turn on their electric lights as early – and so would consume less electric energy. No one gave much thought to the fact that mornings would be darker, and people would have to light up their homes earlier – and so consume more energy. Nor did anyone consider that in many places it would be dark when school children were on the streets riding their bicycles to school, waiting at bus stops, or just walking on the sidewalk. When the unintended consequences of the change became apparent, Congress scrapped the idea and returned to the twice-a-year change to daylight saving time and back to standard.

Permanent daylight saving time now would have a similar effect at TPSNR. In the darkest days of winter, near the winter solstice, sunrise in 2026 will occur at 6:50 am Pacific Standard Time. Permanent daylight saving would make that 7:50 am – some 35 minutes after the current Reserve opening time of 7:15 am. But, you say, it gets light before actual dawn. That is true. “Civil twilight,” the time when the sun is 6 degrees below the horizon and there is enough natural light to see without artificial light, would start at 7:23 am PDT – 8 minutes after the Reserve opening. People could still be entering the Reserve in the dark.

Would the Reserve have to delay opening during the winter months for safety? or to avoid interference with the early morning routine of the wildlife? We won’t know unless it happens. But we can be sure that permanent daylight saving time would bring about a change to the Reserve.

## Who Was Del Mar Man?

by Judy Schulman, TPDS Historian

Was he a tourist who decided to stay? Perhaps a racetrack aficionado who got lost? No, he is an archeological find that became controversial and younger over the years.

In 1929, Malcolm Rogers, an archeologist with the San Diego Museum of Man (now the Museum of Us), was investigating sites along the Pacific Coast near Del Mar. At the northwest point of the San Dieguito River inlet he found two middens. One was at 70 feet above sea level, the other 30 feet lower. A skull and some skeletal bones were found at the lower site. It was determined that these were from a male between 20 and 40 years old. No artifacts were found. At that time, there were no means for determining exactly how old the bones were, but they were thought to be between 2,000 and 9,000 years old.

In July 1974, Del Mar Man made the news again when Dr. James Moriarty of the University of San Diego excavated the site. Despite a great deal of erosion since the original findings, he was able to find chopping and scraping tools, a variety of local seashells, and the possibility of a firepit. That same year, SIO geochemist Dr. Jeffrey Bada used a technique called amino acid racemization to estimate the age at 48,000 years old, but his method and conclusion were controversial. It meant that human migration to the New World would have occurred earlier than previously thought.

In 1981, scientists at the University of Arizona determined that Del Mar Man was 11,000 years old using a method called uranium series radiocarbon dating. But over the next two years, James Bischoff of the U.S. Geological Survey determined the age to be 4,900 years old using direct amino acid and accelerator radiocarbon dating. In 1984, using advanced accelerator mass spectrometry testing, Bada amended his original research technique and determined the age to be 5,400 years old.

Del Mar Man was taken off display in the mid-1980s. He is currently in a section of Museum of Us called The Willows, which is a secure, climate-controlled storage space. Along with other ancestral remains, Del Mar Man is part of the museum's ongoing participation in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

*References available upon request.*



## September CEED Event: San Diego Archaeological Center

**Date:** Wednesday, September 23

**Time:** 10:30 am

**Place:** San Diego Archaeological Center, 16666 San Pasqual Valley Road, Escondido

**Limited to 40:** email **Rachel Scherba** by September 15 to sign up or if you have any questions.

Following his presentation at the August general meeting (see pg. 1), Adam Niesley graciously agreed to host a visit to the Center. He will give us an orientation in a classroom; then docents can take a self-guided tour. For further information, see [sandiegoarchaeology.org](http://sandiegoarchaeology.org).

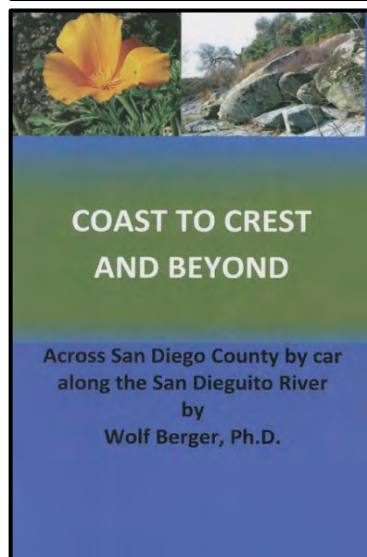
Parking at the Center is free. There are three designated Handicap spaces near the entrance plus a back lot for those who can't use stairs.

**October 22 CEED event:** Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College

## Museum Shop Spotlight

We now sell an all-denim ball cap in addition to the khaki one. Both are priced at \$16.95.

*Coast to Crest and Beyond: A Resource for Exploring San Diego's Natural History* is a compact 148-page book offering an enjoyable journey through the San Dieguito River Park – and at the same time a useful resource for understanding the natural history of our region. It is newly available at the Museum Shop for \$12.95.



## Fin Whale Skeleton Excavation Project

by Julia Halter

July 14 was a typical San Diego “July Fry” kind of day, hot and humid, as I headed towards Elliott Field Station to volunteer for Scripps Institution of Oceanography’s Fin Whale Excavation Project. It was 8:30 am.



I had been warned that there might be rattlesnakes or scorpions when we removed the tarps from the mounds of mulch covering the marinating whale. What they didn’t warn me about was the sheer number of cockroaches (which of course makes sense since they are doing the job of cleaning bones) but still ... cockroaches are not my jam.

SIO’s Margaret Morris and John Hildebrand were leading the charge, with about 20 students eager to do hands-on research. The morning began with a fascinating lecture about Cultural Anthropology, asking the question of “why” we excavate things. In the case of a dead whale, perhaps sometimes it’s best to let lifeguards drag it out to sea and create an ecosystem providing food to all kinds of sea life with the whalefall rather than moving the whale carcass inland and collecting the bones. Especially if the final excavated skeleton is going to be stored in a museum basement somewhere and never displayed.

So who is going to get this glorious fin whale? Readers may remember the grey whale that docents helped excavate last summer; its skeleton has been promised to TPSNR, though it may take years to implement. The fin whale’s final resting place is still under negotiation.

After the lecture, we split into two teams: one to remove the giant mounds of mulch from around the bones, and another to photograph each vertebra and create models of the bones via photogrammetry.

This whale was thought to be a young male, about one year old, that was killed by a Navy ship strike. The damage to its ribs and other bones is testament to the trauma. The vertebra caps that were not fused yet to the vertebra were a clue to his age, like rings on a tree.

I was on the mulch removal team of eight people, shovels and rakes in hand. The whale’s head and vertebrae had already been unearthed, so we moved mounds of mulch to reveal a few more of the ribs and tried to locate the right fin with its *phalanges* (vestigial fingers). It was dusty work, and we were

moving earth at a pretty good clip. But the minute we got close to uncovering the fin, the work slowed to a crawl. No more rakes and shovels; out came the dental picks and toothbrushes to painstakingly remove bits of dirt from around delicate phalanges. Only two people could fit in the space to work on the phalanges, so the rest of us watched in awe as the little bones were revealed one by one. The smallest was maybe three inches long.

It was an incredible experience, and I’m glad to have had the opportunity to be around this majestic animal. I thanked the whale for his contribution to science and wished him peace on his journey to his final resting spot. I appreciate the Docent Society for giving us these special opportunities.

## The Shark Shack Visits Torrey Pines

by Ray Barger

The CSU Long Beach Shark Lab student team set up their Shark Shack exhibits and displays at the North Beach on Saturday, August 15. Positioned next to the BLIK, the three Shark Lab students provided beach visitors and docents with information and literature on sharks and stingrays, and displayed drone and shark tracking equipment used in their marine studies. In addition, Interpreter 1 Rowan Jackman hosted an interactive children’s exhibit on sharks and stingrays. There were 379 visitors who attended the displays.



## Bird of the Month: Great-horned Owl

by Robert James; photo by Herb Knüfken

People use a variety of collective nouns to describe different bird species, often with a whimsical perspective, such as a raft of ducks, a covey of quail, and a charm of goldfinches. One noun you may not have heard is a *parliament* of owls, to reflect owls' association with wisdom and knowledge, as this can match their apparent proud bearing while roosting. Owls, as a group, are well known for their seemingly mysterious nocturnal habits. The wing feathers of most species have specialized adaptations for silent flight that likely help mask their presence to prey (mainly mammals and birds) and enhance the owl's hearing abilities to locate food.

The Great-horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) is one of three species known from the Reserve, with the others being the Barn Owl (*Tyto furcata*) and Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). See the taxidermy mounts of the first two in the Lodge to appreciate their large size and robust body form, especially their relatively sizeable eyes that are helpful in hunting. The Great-horned Owl is a resident species ranging over most of North America and into Central and portions of South America.



Being a crepuscular (twilight) and nocturnal species, they are not seen as often as other birds, and this underrepresents their true abundance in the area. In fact, eBird includes many Great-horned Owl observations in and around the Reserve. On our monthly bird surveys, you may have seen us meticulously scouring for birds and we sometimes see

one, such as a roosting owl in the canyon behind the Lodge spotted last month by volunteer Andy Rathbone.

In general, wildlife biologists use multiple methods to survey and monitor wildlife. While direct observation of a Great-horned Owl is wonderful, indirect evidence (such as owl pellets and feathers) is also valuable, so explore near likely owl roost locations such as under Torrey pines. Perhaps surprisingly, a lot of feathers are identified on [iNaturalist](#) by knowledgeable folks, and there is even a dedicated project, [Found Feathers](#).

Many of you, especially teachers, know about the value of owl pellets (containing regurgitated bones of prey) as a tool for teaching both biology and environmental science. A colleague of mine used them in a creative way. He collected pellets and identified the small mammal bones by species to supplement his live trapping survey for the endangered Pacific pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris pacificus*). Not finding evidence of the mouse in the pellets, or in his conventional trapping effort, served to support a negative finding.

## Bee of the Month: Cuckoo Bee

by Julia Showalter

At first glance, you may think this is a wasp – but it is actually a bee! Specifically, this photo is of *Nomada formula*, a species of nomad bee and type of cuckoo bee (pronounced coo-coo) in the genus *Nomada*.

*Nomada* is the largest genus of cuckoo bees and they are cleptoparasitic, meaning that females do not build their own nests and instead lay their eggs in nests already provisioned by another bee (the host bee).

*Nomada* females do not gather pollen. Their eggs hatch before the host's eggs, and the larvae consume all of the pollen stored by the host mother. Known hosts found at the Reserve include ground-nesting bees such as mining bees (*Andrena* spp.) and green sweat bees (*Agapostemon* spp.).

Cuckoo bees such as *Nomada* spp. play many important ecological roles: – They help control host bee numbers and maintain biodiversity by keeping one species from taking over. They are indicators of a healthy habitat because there is enough of a host population to support their role in the complex community. They also challenge host bees to develop better nesting habits and defenses, and to get smarter at hiding and guarding their burrows! Perhaps the kind of tough love that host bees didn't know they needed?

Although *Nomada* do not collect pollen, adults visit a variety of flowers to drink nectar and inadvertently pollinate flowers while moving through the landscape. *Nomada formula* is mostly observed on flowers in the Asteraceae family such as telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*), and San Diego wreath-plant (*Stephanomeria diegensis*). You can also look to the ground and find them seeking a nest to parasitize. They are active from April to October but are mainly seen in August and September.

*Nomada* spp. can be tricky to identify. Typical sizes of *Nomada* range from small to medium (8-12mm). The body is wasp-like with a sleek and armored appearance. Females lack a scopa (pollen-collecting hairs) on their hind legs and do not have much visible hair.

I was amazed when I first discovered the world of cuckoo bees, and I hope this sparks your curiosity about the incredible diversity we can find right here in the Reserve!



## 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, September 8, 1:00 pm

**What:** *The Voyage of the Beagle* by Charles Darwin

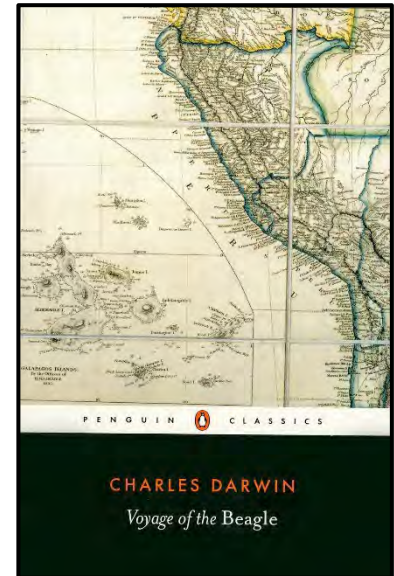
*Amazon says:*

Charles Darwin's account of the momentous voyage which set in motion the current of intellectual events leading to *The Origin of Species*. His journal, here reprinted in a shortened form, shows a naturalist making patient observations concerning geology, natural history, people, places and events. Volcanoes in the Galapagos, the Gossamer spider of Patagonia and the Australasian coral reefs - all are to be found in these extraordinary writings.

Note that there are many editions of this book varying in length and price.

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

**October 13:** *The Emerald Mile* by Kevin Fedarko



## Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: August 2026

**Number of species:** 72  
(+1 other taxa)

|                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mallard 3                  | Heron 2                   |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove 2   | Snowy Egret 5             |
| Mourning Dove 58           | Great Egret 3             |
| Anna's Hummingbird 16      | Great Blue Heron 2        |
| Allen's Hummingbird 19     | Brown Pelican 40          |
| hummingbird sp. 7          | Turkey Vulture 1          |
| Virginia Rail 1            | Osprey 4                  |
| Hudsonian Whimbrel 5       | White-tailed Kite 2       |
| Long-billed Curlew 4       | Cooper's Hawk 1           |
| Wilson's Snipe 1           | Red-shouldered Hawk 2     |
| Heermann's Gull 4          | Red-tailed Hawk 1         |
| Ring-billed Gull 3         | Great Horned Owl 3        |
| Western Gull 7             | Downy Woodpecker 2        |
| Royal Tern 8               | Nuttall's Woodpecker 14   |
| Pied-billed Grebe 2        | American Kestrel 2        |
| Black-vented Shearwater 2  | Peregrine Falcon 1        |
| Brandt's Cormorant 9       | Western Flycatcher 2      |
| Double-crested Cormorant 5 | Black Phoebe 9            |
| White-faced Ibis 6         | Say's Phoebe 2            |
| Black-crowned Night        | Ash-throated Flycatcher 4 |
|                            | Cassin's Kingbird 1       |
|                            | Hutton's Vireo 1          |
|                            | California Scrub-Jay 26   |

|                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| American Crow 19                |
| Common Raven 27                 |
| Northern Rough-winged Swallow 8 |
| Cliff Swallow 15                |
| Bushtit 50                      |
| Wrentit 122                     |
| Swinhoe's White-eye 2           |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 5         |
| California Gnatcatcher 3        |
| Northern House Wren 9           |
| Bewick's Wren 17                |
| California Thrasher 31          |
| Northern Mockingbird 6          |
| Western Bluebird 6              |
| Scaly-breasted Munia 28         |
| House Finch 103                 |
| Lesser Goldfinch 38             |
| Dark-eyed Junco 2               |
| Savannah Sparrow 3              |
| Song Sparrow 18                 |
| California Towhee 81            |
| Spotted Towhee 12               |

|                           |
|---------------------------|
| Yellow-breasted Chat 2    |
| Hooded Oriole 2           |
| Red-winged Blackbird 3    |
| Brown-headed Cowbird 1    |
| Orange-crowned Warbler 16 |
| Common Yellowthroat 4     |
| Northern Yellow Warbler 1 |
| Western Tanager 3         |
| Black-headed Grosbeak 3   |

**Participants:** Donna Mancuso, Nancy Richardson, Marty Hales, Dinah Carl, Luz Chung, Robert Turner, Kathy Estey, Manolo Turner, Chris Roberts, Nancy Novak, Andy Rathbone, Pam Burdt, Steve Neal, Stephan Freeman, Karen Messer, Sara Lipperts, Amal, Robert James, David Walker

Herb Knufken's photo gallery includes many birds: [pbase.com/herb1rm](https://pbase.com/herb1rm)



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