

TORREYANA

THE DOCENT NEWSLETTER FOR
TORREY PINES
STATE NATURAL RESERVE

Issue 495 **November 2026**

A Close Watch on Our Coast

by Jeannie Smith and Mukesh Mehta

At the October TPDS meeting, Dr. Adam Young outlined his research on coastal erosion, geomorphology, and hazards – and of particular interest to us, the Scripps Oceanography Coastal Hazard Observation Program. According to Dr. Young, Principal Investigator of Coastal Processes Group at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the coast monitoring program along Torrey Pines is the most comprehensive shoreline observation system and most studied coastline in the world.

Factors contributing to bluff failures and landslides, such as waves, rain, groundwater and earthquakes are part of the natural system. They have shaped our coasts far longer than humans have been building on top of and close to the cliffs. Sand along the beaches, which can mitigate wave action on the bluffs, has been depleted by dams, land covered with concrete, armored cliffs and sea walls. All these factors along with climate change and sea level rise contribute to landslides.

The monitoring program uses a comprehensive coastal system approach that includes offshore, nearshore, and onshore observation. Beaches, cliffs, and waves have been monitored at select sites since 2001 using a range of in-situ instruments, GPS-equipped platforms, mobile and stationary lidar, video cameras, and photogrammetric unmanned aircraft systems. There are monthly data collections near the border from Imperial Beach to Coronado and in North County from Torrey Pines to Oceanside. Our Torrey Pines beaches have been the most intensely studied, with daily measurements since 2001; further north, weekly surveys have been conducted.

There are data from 50 to 100 days per year in North County, with over 2,000 days of data collected. Dr. Young showed us graphs that chronicle long-term decline in beach width from Torrey Pines to Encinitas.

To understand what happens beneath the sand, researchers tagged cobbles and planted them below sand, then used RFID (radio frequency identification) to watch the stones' curiously erratic movements under the sand during high wave action until they eventually came to rest at the top of the beach. A very cool video showing the movement of cobbles back and forth on the beach is here: siocpg.ucsd.edu/projects/cobble-tracking/

(Cont. on pg. 3.)

Docent General Meeting

Date: Saturday November 14, 9:00 am

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

Speaker: Ralph Keeling, PhD, Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO)

Topic: *Reflections on CO_2 and Climate Change*

The ongoing buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is a major factor driving climate changes around the world. Fossil fuel consumption is the main driver of the rise, which is also buffered by natural sinks for CO_2 in the oceans and land ecosystems. This talk will offer a few reflections on this problem in relation to what can be done to mitigate the rise and prepare for the inevitable but still uncertain outcomes, touching on both global and local issues.

Dr. Keeling's work centers on long-term measurements of the major constituents in air. He has been on the faculty at SIO since 1993. He was the first to demonstrate that the O_2 content of air is decreasing due to the burning of fossil fuels and has directed a program to track this decrease since 1989. Since 2005 he has also directed the Scripps CO_2 program, which sustains the iconic record of CO_2 at Mauna Loa and other sites begun by his father, Charles D. Keeling.

Refreshments: Docents with last names beginning with **M, N, O, P** will be responsible for providing snacks for this meeting.

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**.

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

President's Message: The Turkey Is Almost in the Oven!



As the holidays approach, we often find ourselves reflecting on the year behind us. To say this has been a challenging year for our docents would be an understatement. Between working with a new State Parks management team and navigating the partial closure of the Reserve, we have all had to adapt to change and unexpected challenges.

We volunteer at Torrey Pines because of our passion for preserving this remarkable place and educating visitors. Yet sometimes our own passion can get in the way of working effectively with others. During this time of transition, let's make room in our hearts for a little extra grace, patience, and understanding as we work with State Parks staff, fellow docents, and other volunteers.

Despite the challenges, many members have gone above and beyond. The Youth Program operated on a condensed three-month schedule thanks to the extraordinary leadership of **Janet Ugalde** and **Bruce** and **Patty Montgomery**, who overcame unexpected logistical hurdles. **Lynne Small**, who has led the Whacky Weeders for 15 years, continues to demonstrate patience and grace while working with State Parks' cultural and natural resource monitors. **Rick Vogel**, our former president, continues to serve the Society by leading the Seabees. Please thank these dedicated volunteers the next time you see them!

Meanwhile, the board has been meeting with State Parks officials to develop a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document to improve park operations, making them more efficient and visitor-friendly. Once the document is drafted, Society members will have an opportunity to review it and provide feedback before the board formally approves it. Our cooperating agreement with State Parks will also be up for renewal.

Amid all the work and change, let's remember to make time for fellowship and celebration!

Matt Xavier
TPDS President

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(Cont. from pg. 1.)



Since 2023 there has been statewide monitoring in both spring and fall of cliff changes using planes with a variety of sensors. This program, along with others mentioned, is losing funding.

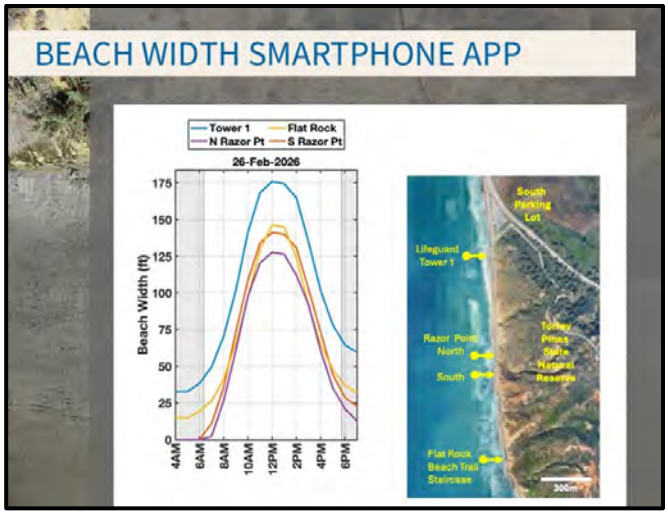
The Coastal Hazard Program has collected data before, during, and after several important events including energetic El Niño winters and beach nourishment activities. Seven autonomous stations from Scripps to Doheny State Beach use lidar, cameras and other sensors to record changes. These observations 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, with sensors embedded in the cliffs at observed potential problem areas at Beacon's Beach, San Elijo, and Del Mar. The sensors record ground tilt, and 10 events have been recorded showing that the degree of tilt is slight with gradual increase for a week or so before the event, then increases rapidly a day or two before the bluff failure. This work was funded by the state after the 2019 deaths of three people buried on an Encinitas beach. While these sensors promise the potential for early warning, what has yet to be determined is which agency or agencies would make the warnings and how. Moreover, future funding is uncertain. In California since 1941, 25 people have been killed by coastal landslides and bluff failures and 19 of those have occurred within San Diego County, likely because of our high sandstone cliffs and heavy beach foot traffic.

An important outcome of these studies for Torrey Pines docents is the finding that the mean "landslide runout," or the distance debris can fall, is about 20 feet; 90% of the failures ran out less than 43 feet. At Torrey Pines, because of the great height of the cliffs, the maximum distance was half the height of the cliff that failed. This data should help us in alerting visitors to stay clear of the bluffs and why.



Another great tool that has been developed by this research group, with data collected by docent **Bob Friedman,** is the Beach Width App, which uses current sea levels and beach height (lidar data) in addition to astronomical tide levels to predict the width of our beach at four stations – Lifeguard Tower 1, N Razor Pt, S Razor Pt and Flat Rock. The app shows an easily read graph and is a much better prediction tool for the safety of beach walks for visitors to Torrey Pines Beach than the tide charts alone. Dr. Young cautions that the app uses the most recent lidar survey, and if the beach has changed a lot since the last survey, the beach width estimate will be inaccurate to that extent until the next survey is conducted. Docents can find instructions on how to download the Beach Width App on the secure Docent pages, Document Repository, Trails Program Resources: torreypine.org/volunteering/docentlogin/docentdocs/.



In the links below, you will find many of the graphs and videos that Dr. Young showed, along with non-technical text to explain them, including the "outreach" page, which has several videos of interest:
[Scripps Institution of Oceanography / UCSD Coastal Processes Group]

[NOAA Tides & Currents (La Jolla)]

[SIO/UCSD Coastal Landslide report]

General Meeting Minutes: October 10, 2026

Dr. Adam Young gave a presentation on the Scripps Oceanography Coastal Hazard Observation Program (see pg. 1). 55 docents attended.

Docent of the Month: **Rick Vogel**, class of 2002, for his current leadership of the SeaBees. He is also a Special Walks leader and has worked in many docent positions, including serving as president of the TPDS.

Treasurer **Lynne Truong** led the meeting in **Matt Xavier**'s absence.

Interpreter I Rowan Jackman provided two announcements:

On October 24, the Reserve will be hosting a **Halloween Creature Feature** event from noon to 2 pm at the concrete tables near the BLIK in the North Beach parking lot. It will include many taxidermy animals provided by the Natural History Museum. Please come help support the event.

The **Construction Project** is now well under way. The roadway has been torn up from the Maintenance shed to the golf course, which will impact our selection of where the Ambassador Station can be located at the South entrance.

Lisa Kakone led a discussion regarding the upcoming Board of Directors elections. The 2027 slate of candidates are:

- President: **Matt Xavier**
- Vice President: **Jamee Patterson**
- Treasurer: **Wayne Kornreich**
- Director- at-Large (choose 2)
  - **Linda Brown**
  - **Denise Davis**
  - **Bob Friedman**
  - **Brian Griffith**

The voting period is November 1 – 7 (online only). (See article on pg. 7)

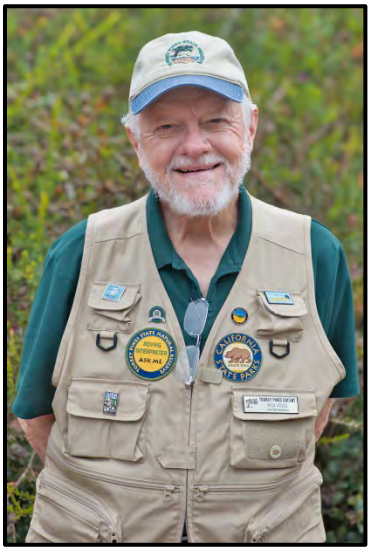
Lynne Truong and **Harry Proctor**, who will be leaving the board at the end of the year, were thanked for their many years of service. Members of the Nominating Committee were also thanked: **Lisa Kakone, Gary McCook, Roger Isaacson, Robert James,** and **Rosemary Wareham.**

Docent annual hours requirements are officially cut in half due to the Reserve closure.

The **Holiday Party** will be on December 12 (the second Saturday of the month) at the St. James Community Hall, the same venue we have used for the past two years.

Docent of the Month: Rick Vogel

Photo by Herb Knufken



In June 2002 I was a newly minted docent reflecting on the big changes in my life. I had just retired from a 30-year career as a tax lawyer/CPA for companies about as far from the State Park space as one would imagine: Getty Oil, Northrop Grumman, and (briefly) SAIC. (Let's see, an oil company and two government contractors.) Best decision I ever made, aside from marrying my wife, Marsha. As you can imagine, I had a lot to learn. It has been a thrill.

In many ways, my career as a docent is similar to what worked for me during my legal career: my knowledge is a mile wide and an inch deep. I can still dig a little deeper because of the resources we have and the people we can ask. I have told people who might be interested in becoming docents that it's like getting 200 new friends and some of the best people I have ever met.

My work with the Seabees began before there were Seabees at the Reserve. Park Ranger Gary Olson saw some maintenance issues we could address on a part-time basis. At the time we "unofficially" called ourselves the "Midnight Maintenance Crew." After we became the Seabees, we had some very significant impacts. We removed a lot of the rotten wood posts and cable and replaced them with the eye-rod and cable we now have on about 90% of the trails in the Reserve. (All of the materials for this work were paid for by the Torrey Pines Conservancy; I know this because I was the TPC treasurer and wrote the checks.) We have also repaired and maintained the system as required. The sense of accomplishment is wonderful, but my great joy is the fact that I can also engage with visitors. It's still a surprise that visitors will ask someone in a paint-spattered yellow vest for information about the Reserve and receive an intelligible answer. More fun than painting a bike rack or a bench. In 60s parlance, it's been a trip.

Rick Vogel served as president of the Docent Society in 2009 and 2010. In 2003 he was named Docent of the Year.

What's on the Beach? Lots of Surprises!

by Kathy Dickey

As El Niño weather approaches, expect to see some new and amazing creatures on the beach or just off shore. The rise in ocean temperature has been moving north from Mexico and Central America and has already brought us tropical creatures that have rarely or never been seen before on our shores and local beaches, such as:

Yellow-bellied sea snakes: Two of these colorful yellow and black/brown snakes (*Hydrophis platurus)* have recently been seen on Orange County beaches. They were last seen in San Diego in 2016. Use care if encountered, because they are highly venomous.



Credit: animalspot.net/yellow-bellied-sea-snake.html

Olive ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*): For the first time in recorded history, two sea turtles have laid their eggs on West Coast beaches. The first was about 100 pounds and laid her eggs on September 16 on Seal Beach. The second was a few days later near Huntington Beach pier. Fortunately, to avoid high tides and upcoming large waves, the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach took the 200 eggs and are incubating them there for the next 45 to 60 days. They plan is to release the hatchlings on the same beaches where they were found. There is a good chance that other turtles could come to San Diego beaches as well.



Credit:oliveridleyproject.org/sea-turtles-of-the-world/olive-ridley-turtle/

Red shore crabs: Although not yet present, expect to see thousands of these 4-inch lobster-like crabs coming to shore like they did during previous El Niño events. They are also called tuna crabs or squat lobsters (*Pleuroncodes planipes*). I wrote about these in the April 2026 *Torreyana*.

Sharks: Surfers and paddle boarders near La Jolla have recently sighted endangered hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna lewini*) up to 8 feet long and huge 20-foot whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*). These are normally seen off of Central America. The hammerheads are chasing rays, and the whale sharks are chasing plankton.



Hammerhead; Credit: Click here



Whale Shark; Credit: Click here

Rays: Along our kelp forests, huge schools of 7-foot-wide sicklefin devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*) have arrived from as far away as Chile. They eat small planktonic organisms, including copepods, krill, and larval crustaceans.

Whales: A pod of 13 Orca whales (Eastern tropical Pacific orcas, *Orcinus orca*) was seen recently from a San Diego whale-watching boat. They are following the big rays, their favorite meal.

Fish: Strange orange fish, the long-finned bigeye *(Cookeolus japonicus),* are being caught off local piers. This species is 12 to 27 inches long, and its eyes are half the size of its head.

Just off San Diego, sportfishing boats are suddenly catching enormous counts of tuna, from just a few earlier to up to 150 per boat now. Also, within site of the shore, one fisherman caught a 648-pound marlin! Anglers are also catching mahi-mahi and swordfish.

Toxic Algae: The unusually warm ocean conditions can bring in massive blooms of *Pseudo-nitzschia*, a type of microscopic algae. These algae produce a powerful neurotoxin called domoic acid that kills fish and shellfish. Local marine mammals can become severely disoriented, sick, and may experience seizures. They are often stranded on beaches and rocky areas. Many die or are rescued by Sea World or NOAA.

References available upon request.

November CEED:

SD Humane Society's Ramona Wildlife Center

Date: Wednesday, November 11
Time: arrive by 9:45am; tour 10:00 to 11:30
Location: Ramona Wildlife Center
18740 Highland Valley Rd, Ramona, CA 92065
Limited to 20 docents; contact **Deborah Jones** to sign up.

Continuing Education at Torrey Pines: OAKS, CEED and More

by Joan R. Simon

Continuing education has been very important to the Docent Society, starting with OAKS walks in 2000. OAKS stands for "Optional Advanced Knowledge Sessions" and are walks taken at the Reserve, the Extension, Lagoon and occasionally adjacent locations. Sometimes they are led by docents who are experts in a specific field, but more often the walk leaders are docents who have studied up on a specific area or subject. **Barbara Wallach** and **Pao Chau** are currently spearheading these walks, but they also can be planned independently. They are announced through Google Groups and do not require participants to sign up in advance.

The hundreds of walks since 2000 have covered such topics as sunflowers, insects, Flat Rock, lichens, beach cliffs, history, wild cucumbers, regrowth after the Extension fire, and so much more. For example, a recent walk about cactus was led by **Mary Makowski** and **Connie Jaffe** on September 3.

In 2015, CEED was added as a continuing education option. Started by former docent Joe Meyer, it stands for Continuing Education and Enhancement of Docents and involves monthly field trips to places of interest outside the Reserve. These off-campus trips are announced in the *Torreyana* as well as via Google Groups and require sign-ups, often with a limit to the number of docents who can attend. **Rachel Scherba**, **Mukesh Mehta**, and **Deborah Jones** are currently organizing these events. Trips this year have included visits to Peñasquitos Ranch House and to the Tijuana Estuary for bird watching.

The newest addition to our continuing education roster is Learn at Lunch in conjunction with the BLIK (Beach/Lagoon Interpretive Kiosk). In 2023 the BLIK team (**Gabriele Wienhausen, Ed Saade, Rosemary Wareham** and **Malana Tabak**) started this series where experts give presentations on subjects related to the beach, lagoon, or ocean. Docents are welcome to present a program on a marine-focused topic of their choice. Learn at Lunch is held at noon on the first Thursday of the month at the shed in the North Beach parking lot. Sign-ups are not required; just bring your lunch and a chair. Notices are run in the *Torreyana* and are sent around via Google Groups. Subjects that have been covered include mollusks, geology of the lagoon, kelp forests, and El Niño.

All three of these activities allow docents to record one hour per event under Training, Continued Education on Better Impact, for a total not to exceed 12 hours per year.

Yet another opportunity to expand our knowledge base is the speaker series at the monthly general meetings. **Malana Tabak** and **Mukesh Mehta** are in charge of finding speakers to present programs about issues related to Torrey Pines or on topics of concern to docents. Two hours can be taken for each meeting attended, in person or online.

All four of these opportunities for docents to learn more about Torrey Pines and related subjects will be available while the Reserve is closed this fall and winter. They are a great way not only to learn more about the Reserve and related environmental issues, but also to get to know and socialize with other docents.

There's yet another way to continue your education. Currently in the *Torreyana*, we have regular columns on birds (by **Robert James** and for six years before him, **Jack Friery**); bees (multiple authors); the beach (**Kathy Dickey**); and Torrey Pines history (**Judy Schulman**, who has been writing various columns on the history of the Reserve and the Docent Society for many years). Previously we've had regular columns on other subjects, such as plants (**Margaret Fillius**; **Donna Close**). If you have a special interest and would like to join this group of writers, please contact the *Torreyana* editors.

September CEED: San Diego Archaeological Center

by Rachel Scherba

Eighteen docents visited the San Diego Archaeological Center on September 23, and we were very happy we did! Our guide for the day was Adam Niesley, Public Archaeology Director for the center. Before entering the center, Adam pointed out the historical site of the San Pasqual Battlefield, where one of the most important and bloodiest battles of the Mexican-American War took place. Many of us had been unaware that so many places in San Diego were named for important figures from this battle. Felicita Canyon, Kearney Mesa, Beale and Fremont Streets were a few he mentioned.

After describing the battle and its impact, Adam led us into a classroom and told us about the work of the center and the archaeological history of San Diego. We learned the importance of preserving artifacts, of which the center houses over a million! The docents had many questions for Adam, who is a knowledgeable and engaging speaker. Then we were free to explore the well-designed exhibits at our own pace. Some of these focused on Kumeyaay cosmology, the Holocene period around the world, current hypotheses on how and when humans reached the Americas, and the socioeconomic lives of people who lived in downtown San Diego in the 1800s. I highly recommend the San Diego Archaeological Center to anyone who hasn't visited it.

Read about Adam Niesley's presentation at the August 2026 docent meeting, see September 2026 Torreyana.

Reserve Closure Update

Construction at the Reserve is underway! Supervising Ranger Stephanie Adams took these photos of work along the park road and around the Lodge on October 17.

While the Reserve is closed, the park aide staff (Rowan Jackman, Lila Beth Scott, and Hanna Nason), will be working from the trailer in the North Beach parking lot. The maintenance staff is scheduled to join them soon.





Board Election

by Lisa Kakone and Robert James

The TPDS Board of Directors election will be held November 1 through 7. Traditionally, voting has occurred at the November General Meeting, where docents who are present were asked to endorse the slate of candidates by a show of hands. This year, voting will be done via electronic ballot. Your vote will be anonymous, and you can vote only once during the voting period.

Voting process. Docents in good standing and in an eligible membership category (active, lifetime, or associate) will receive an introductory email from Robert James explaining the voting process. This will be followed by an email from electionrunner.com that contains a link to your ballot. Please make your choices on the ballot and submit. You can use a computer, tablet, or phone. It should take just a few minutes. If you have any questions regarding this procedure or your ballot, please email Robert James.

This year, we are pleased to have candidates for all the open board positions. The positions and candidates are:

- President: **Matt Xavier**
- Vice President: **Jamee Patterson**
- Treasurer: **Wayne Kornreich**
- Directors-at-large (choose 2)
  - **Linda Brown**
  - **Denise Davis**
  - **Bob Friedman**
  - **Brian Griffith**

Initial Board positions are two years; subsequent terms in the same position are for one year. There are no term limits. To read candidates' statements, click here.

Returning to serve on the 2027 Board are: Secretary Ed Saade and Directors-at-large Mukesh Mehta, Mary Makowski, and Paul Howard.

What Are You Up To?

As you well know, the closure of the upper Reserve means that scores of bright, skilled, energetic docents may be looking for new opportunities to volunteer, socialize, or just commune with nature.

To help us keep in touch with each other and share ideas for alternate activities, the *Torreyana* staff would like you to tell us what you're doing during the closure. We'll compile your responses and publish them in a future issue of the newsletter. Send an email to editors@torreypine.org

Bird of the Month: Red-breasted Nuthatch

by Robert James; photo by Tsaiwei Olee

The Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) is a small, active songbird occasionally found at Torrey Pines during the fall and sometimes through the spring. Its distinctive facial markings and breast color are striking. Males have brighter red feathers than the female shown in the photo below. Red-breasted Nuthatches announce their presence with their humorous "tooting clown horn" calls. They primarily feed on various insects but will switch to seeds and are known to show up to bird feeders.

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is an *irruptive species*. Most migrating bird species have regular timing and are detected in consistent numbers. Irruptive species are different! The best-known example is the Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*), a bird of the Arctic and Canada, which infrequently disperses as far as the southeastern U.S. (to the delight of birders venturing there) when prey is less available.



Large numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches may appear here in certain years. This is attributed to a reduction in food availability in their nesting habitat. They breed most commonly in pine and mixed forests in Canada, along the west coast, and within the interior west. However, the Northern America Drought Monitor (published by NOAA) shows that most of North America is experiencing levels of serious drought this year, so the Red-breasted Nuthatch and other irruptive species have been on the move.

You may have recently heard more Red-breasted Nuthatches at the Extension and around our local area. In the last week of September there were a staggering number of observations reported in eBird in San Diego County – more than 900. In 2023, the most recent irruptive year, the high was about 500, but the typical peak number in other years is less than 80.

Viewing eBird data from spring 2024 in our county, I saw an interesting uptick in the number of Red-breasted Nuthatches reported compared to other recent years. This was also reflected at the Reserve in our monthly bird counts. You may surmise the likely reason: it was probably the high number of fall and winter 2023 migrants heading back north. It will be interesting to see whether this will also be the case in spring 2027.

Irruptive species have greater ability to adapt to variable environmental conditions. As predicted by climate modeling, greater variation in rainfall (directly linked to food availability) is expected going forward. Natural selection favors irruptive species in this circumstance. Red-breasted Nuthatches are common, and their populations have increased throughout most of their range between 1966 and 2019, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. It is certainly interesting to think how what we experience at the Reserve can be influenced by faraway events.

Nature Journaling Update

We are happy to share the news that Nature Journaling will become a new program starting in November 2026. This activity will be open to the public and will take place on the second Friday of each month from 9:00 to 10:30 am.

Nature Journaling is a fun and engaging activity that fosters a sense of wonder. As this is a new program, the Nature Journaling planning team (**Luz Chung, Beverly Toth**, and Interpreter I Rowan Jackman) has developed guidelines for docents interested in leading Nature Journaling activities. Please contact Luz Chung if you would like more information.

Join us next time if you are interested in participating, or if you are curious about leading future Nature Journaling at TPSNR.

Date/Time: Friday, November 13, 2026, 9:00 am

Location: Torrey Pines Reserve Extension.

We will meet at the entrance to the Extension on Del Mar Scenic Pkwy (by the tennis courts).

Save the Date!

Torrey Pines Docent Society Holiday Potluck

Saturday
December 12, 2026

11am – 2pm

St. James Community Hall

625 South Nardo Avenue, Solana Beach



Invitation and potluck sign-up to follow.

Bee of the Month: Fine-striped Sweat Bee

by Julia Showalter

The fine-striped sweat bee (*Agapostemon subtilior*) is quite the jewel of a bee to find within the Reserve. Its mighty fine green color is certainly eye-catching and awe-inspiring! This beautiful bee was featured as Bee of the Month in 2024 and is making an appearance once again with an exciting new research update.

Female *Agapostemon subtilior* are completely metallic green with inconspicuous white hair bands, along with scopa on their hind legs to carry pollen. Males also have a striking green appearance, but with an extra flair – a combination of black and yellow stripes on their abdomen. Both males and females have large greenish-blue eyes.

Fascinating new research published in April 2026 found that *Agapostemon subtilior* can change color depending on the humidity level. In heightened humidity, color leaned toward a reddish-green, while in lower humidity the color leaned toward a more bluish hue. It is still unknown what exactly the biological advantage of this mechanism is.

This discovery highlights the importance of iNaturalist observations as they can provide valuable records of a species' appearance, location, and the environmental conditions in which it was observed. Combined with museum specimens, which preserve physical evidence that scientists can examine and study over time, these records can help researchers investigate patterns that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Every observation adds another piece to the puzzle, reminding us that our own photographs could contribute to a much bigger scientific discovery.

The genus name *Agopostemon* is derived from the Greek words *agapetos* meaning "beloved, fond of" and *stemon* meaning "stamen" (the part of the flower that produces pollen). This directly reflects their foraging behavior – visiting flowers for pollen. The species name *subtilior* stems from the Latin comparative adjective *subtilis* meaning "fine, thin, or slender," which refers to the delicate striped pattern on the back side of the thorax.

Agapostemon are solitary ground-nesting bees: each individual female builds her own nest in the soil. Their nest entrances are typically flat and a perfect circular shape. If you look closely enough, sometimes you can see a female peeking out waiting to fly off and forage.

This species can be found along most trails in the Reserve and on various flowers from late summer into fall but have been mostly observed on San Diego wreath-plant (*Stephanomeria diegensis*). The pollen of this flower is white, which makes for fashionable pollen pants on females!



Female showing reddish-green hue; photo by Cindy Pencek.



Male showing bluish-green hue; photo by Julia Showalter.

BLIK: Learn at Lunch

Date: Thursday, November 5, 12 noon

Location: North Beach Parking Lot, Docent Shed

Speaker: **Judy Schulman**, TPDS Historian

Topic: *Beachcombing for Torrey Pines Beach History Treasures*

Bring your lunch, a chair, your curiosity, and any questions you may have about the history of the Reserve, including the Lagoon and the Torrey Pines beaches. No need to register. You may claim one hour on Better Impact under Training, Continuing Education (up to 12 hours per year).

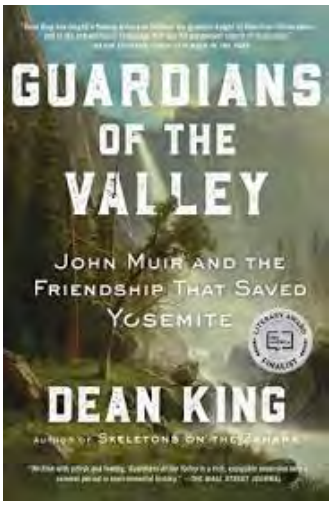
BLIK Learn at Lunch is the first Thursday of every month at noon at the docent shed, North Beach parking lot. All docents, park employees, and visitors are welcome.

Torrey Pines Book Club

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

When: Tuesday, November 10, 1:00 pm

What: *Guardians of the Valley: John Muir and the Friendship That Saved Yosemite* by Dean King



Amazon says:

In June 1889 in San Francisco, John Muir meets face-to-face for the first time with his longtime editor Robert Underwood Johnson, an elegant and influential figure at *The Century* magazine. Before long, the pair, opposites in many ways, decide to venture to Yosemite Valley. Upon their arrival the men are confronted with a shocking vision, as predatory mining, tourism, and logging industries have plundered and defaced "the grandest of all the special temples of Nature." While Muir is devastated, Johnson decides that he and Muir must fight back. The pact they form marks a watershed moment, leading to the creation of Yosemite National Park.

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

December 8: *The Girl Who Drew Butterflies* by Joyce Sidman

Torrey Pines Docent Society Bird Survey: October 2026

Number of species: *74 (+3 other taxa)*

Gadwall 4
American Wigeon 2
Mallard 18
California Quail 1
Mourning Dove 30
Greater Roadrunner 1
White-throated Swift 3
Anna's Hummingbird 16
Allen's Hummingbird 16
hummingbird sp. 3
Black-bellied Plover 2
Killdeer 3
Hudsonian Whimbrel 3
Long-billed Curlew 10
Marbled Godwit 3
Red-necked Phalarope 4
Willet 14
Sanderling 2
Heermann's Gull 6
Western Gull 29
California Gull 1
Caspian Tern 1
Royal Tern 5
Pied-billed Grebe 2
Western Grebe 2
Common Loon 1
Brandt's Cormorant 34
Pelagic Cormorant 2
Double-crested Cormorant 5
Snowy Egret 6
Great Egret 11
Great Blue Heron 6
Brown Pelican 19
Turkey Vulture 1
Osprey 1
Northern Harrier 1
Red-shouldered Hawk 1
Red-tailed Hawk 5
Downy Woodpecker 1
Nuttall's Woodpecker 11
Northern Flicker 1
American Kestrel 10
Peregrine Falcon 1
Western Wood-Pewee 1
Black Phoebe 19
Say's Phoebe 4
Cassin's Kingbird 7
Cassin's/Western Kingbird 1
Hutton's Vireo 1
California Scrub-Jay 17
American Crow 39
Common Raven 6
Barn Swallow 1
swallow sp. 1
Bushtit 46
Wrentit 57
Swinhoe's White-eye 19
Red-breasted Nuthatch 5
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 4
California Gnatcatcher 1
Northern House Wren 19
Bewick's Wren 8
California Thrasher 12
Northern Mockingbird 3
Hermit Thrush 1
Scaly-breasted Munia 17
House Finch 148
Lesser Goldfinch 42
White-crowned Sparrow 75
Savannah Sparrow 5
Song Sparrow 30
California Towhee 43
Spotted Towhee 11
Western Meadowlark 1
Orange-crowned Warbler 6
Common Yellowthroat 19
Yellow-rumped Warbler 12
Black-headed Grosbeak 5

Participants: *Donna Mancuso, Nancy Richardson, Paul Mulholland, Luz Chung, Robert Turner, Chris Roberts, Lily Tang, Andy Rathbone, Steve Neal, Sue S., Tsaiwei Olee, Robert James*

At this time, our January bird count will take place on one day, January 3, 2027 which is a Sunday. Our count is added to the regional Rancho Santa Fe count. More info to follow.

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

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