

# Torrey Pines

## State Natural Reserve and State Beach



### Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(858) 755-2063**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

#### **CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS**

**P.O. Box 942896**

**Sacramento, CA 94296-0001**

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

#### **Torrey Pines SNR and SB**

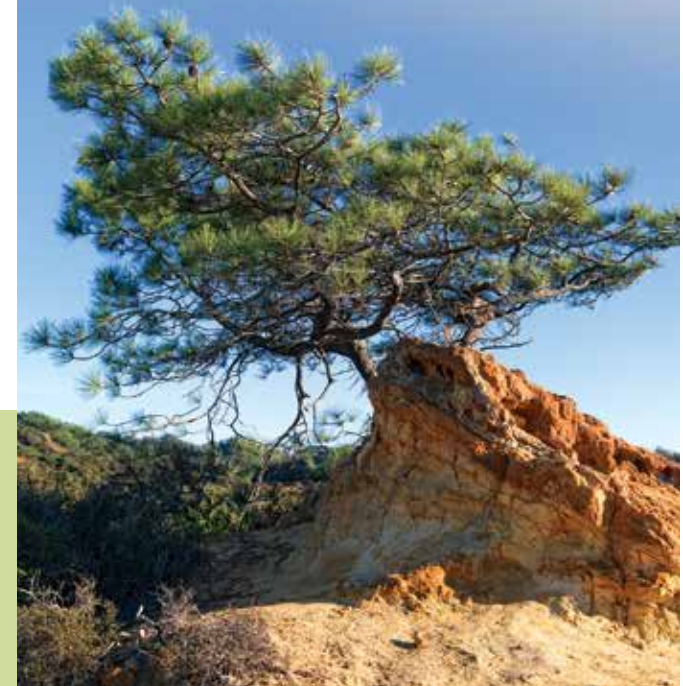
**12600 N. Torrey Pines Road**

**San Diego, CA 92037**

**(858) 755-2063**

© 2006 California State Parks (Rev. 2015)

*Land of carved  
sandstone, evergreen  
chaparral, and spring  
wildflowers, Torrey Pines  
State Natural Reserve  
preserves America's  
rarest pine tree.*



**T**orrey Pines State Natural Reserve is a majestic wilderness in the middle of a dense urban area. Its fragile environment of high, broken cliffs and deep ravines overlooking the sea is home to one of the world's rarest pine trees—*Pinus torreyana*. Torrey pines are believed to be the remnants of an ancient woodland that once flourished along the southern California coast, but now they grow naturally only on this small strip of San Diego coastline and on Santa Rosa Island. Here, trees cling to the face of the crumbling sandstone or stand tall in sheltered canyons.

Torrey Pines State Beach, adjacent to the reserve, stretches four and one-half miles from Del Mar past Los Peñasquitos Marsh Natural Preserve to Torrey Pines Mesa.

The sandy beach invites swimming, surfing, and fishing. Low tide—when the red-tinged bluff is reflected in the mirror-like expanse of wet sand—is a good time to stroll the beach.

Across the highway from the beach, Los Peñasquitos Marsh Natural Preserve provides a protected breeding ground for many species of birds and fish.

### PARK HISTORY

#### Human History

The Kumeyaay people who lived at Torrey Pines traveled in bands of extended families throughout the coast, mountains, and desert foothills. Their lands extended from the Pacific Ocean,

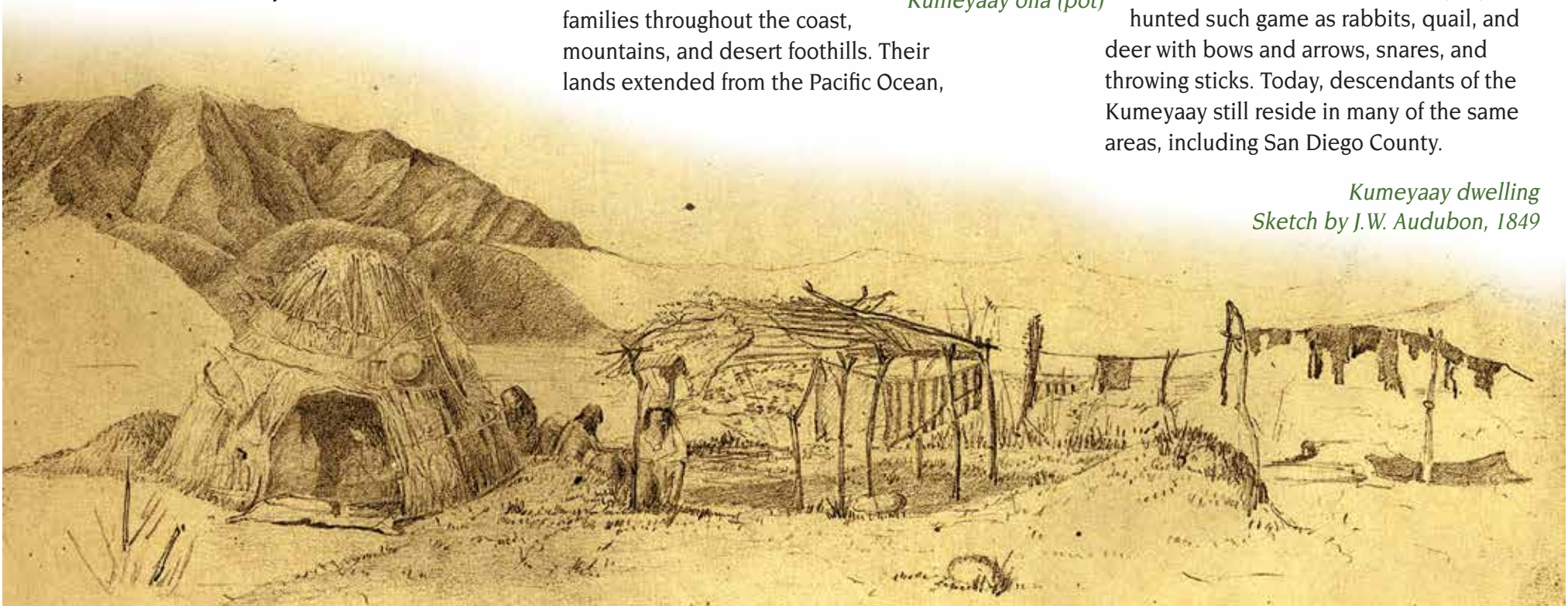
south to Enseñada, Mexico, east to the dunes of the Colorado River, and north through the Warner Springs Valley to what is now Oceanside. They lived in small dwellings and shade ramadas made of willow, oak, manzanita, deerweed, tule, chamise, and other local plants.

The Kumeyaay were seasonal hunters and gatherers. They collected roots, berries, nuts, and seeds—some of which were used for medicinal purposes—and practiced limited horticulture. Using fishhooks and nets, they caught a variety of sea animals, and picked up grunion, shellfish, and mollusks from the beaches. The Kumeyaay hunted such game as rabbits, quail, and deer with bows and arrows, snares, and throwing sticks. Today, descendants of the Kumeyaay still reside in many of the same areas, including San Diego County.



*Kumeyaay olla (pot)*

*Kumeyaay dwelling*  
Sketch by J.W. Audubon, 1849



## NATURAL HISTORY

Nearly a million years of rising and falling seas, heavy rains, and erosion by streams and creeks gradually formed the layered sandstone terraces that make up the present reserve. Some geological formations are more than 45 million years old, and some rocks have traveled from as far away as central Mexico. The continuous motion of the surf creates an ever-changing seascape—challenging artists and photographers to record its latest look.

Varying elevations have produced habitats that range from salt to fresh water, from coastal strand to sage scrub, from salt marsh to chaparral to conifer woodland.

The area's mild temperatures range from a January low of about 45 degrees to a typical August high of between 75 and 80 degrees. In June and July, coastal fog may last all day, enabling the Torrey pines to survive in this unlikely environment.

Photo courtesy of the Scripps College Archives, Denison Library



*Ellen Browning Scripps*

## A RARE TREE SAVED

Early Spanish explorers named the grove of trees in the area *Punto de Los Arboles*, or “Point of Trees.” The trees served as a landmark for sailors navigating off the coast. In 1850—the year of California's statehood—botanist Charles C. Parry identified this pine as a unique species and

named it after his friend John Torrey, a leading botanist of that time.

When Dr. Parry returned to the area in 1883, he was distressed over the lack of protection for the trees. He urged the San Diego Society of Natural History to save them from extinction. In 1885, San Diego officials offered a \$100 bounty for anyone caught vandalizing a Torrey pine tree. Other threats included clear-cutting the trees to use the land for cattle grazing. The San Diego City Council passed an 1899 ordinance that set aside the initial 369 acres to be used as a public park.

Concerned newspaperwoman and philanthropist Ellen Browning Scripps purchased land slated for subdivision and donated the North and Parry Groves to the people of San Diego to protect the Torrey pines. In 1916, Guy Fleming, a botanist working for

the San Diego Society of Natural History, reported damage to the trees by heavy public use. Miss Scripps stirred citizen interest in protecting the trees. In 1921 she and the City Park Commission appointed Mr. Fleming custodian of Torrey Pines Reserve. By the time of her death in 1932, Miss Scripps had contributed significantly to the establishment of the reserve.

## THE RESERVE

Today's 2,000-acre reserve contains about 300 endangered and protected species of native plants. These vanishing habitats are home to sand verbena and beach primrose in the coastal strand areas, as well as California sagebrush, California buckwheat, black sage, and coastal barrel cacti in the coastal sage scrub community. The mesas and other high elevations are host to the chaparral community of plants, including chamise, manzanita, ceanothus, California scrub oak, toyon, and mountain mahogany.

Torrey pines have extensive root systems to hold them in this generally poor soil and arid climate. The variety of pine shapes is dictated by the elements—dwarfed and gnarled where most exposed to wind and salty air, or taller and more upright where shelter is better.

## NATURAL PRESERVES

Two outstanding areas have been designated as natural preserves by the State Park and Recreation Commission. Ellen Browning Scripps Natural Preserve is the area around Parry Grove and Guy Fleming Trails. Los Peñasquitos Marsh Natural Preserve is one of the last remaining salt marsh areas and



*Striated sandstone cliff*

waterfowl refuges in southern California. Home to several rare and endangered species of birds, the reserve provides a vital stopping or nesting place for migratory waterfowl. Trails in the reserve may be closed to allow the natural features to recuperate from abuse, overuse, or natural disasters.



Visitor Center (Lodge)

## WILDLIFE

The intertidal zones are rich in sea life: limpets, shore crabs and hermit crabs, mussels, barnacles, sea anemones, and various species of snails and cast-off shells. High above the sea, the bluffs offer excellent vantage points to watch the annual gray whale migration. Seals, dolphins, porpoises, and sea lions may be seen year round.

About two hundred species of birds are protected at the reserve, including migratory waterfowl. Resident shore birds include brown and American white pelicans, black-bellied and snowy plovers, American avocets, western sandpipers, willets, whimbrels, sanderlings, great egrets, and longbilled curlews. Inland, brown towhees, Nutall's woodpeckers, Anna's hummingbirds, California quail, and mockingbirds may often be found.

Occasionally, visitors may see gray foxes, bobcats, coyotes, and mule deer. Reptile residents include rattlesnakes and various other snakes and species of lizards, including the endangered horned lizard.

## RECREATION

For current trail maps and trail status, visit [www.torreypine.org](http://www.torreypine.org).

### Trails

- 0.6-mile Guy Fleming Trail offers two scenic overlooks with panoramic views and the reserve's greatest variety of wildflowers, ferns, cacti, and pine trees.
- 0.4-mile Parry Grove Trail has dramatic ocean views. Steep stairs form the head of this trail. Most of its Torrey pines fell victim to a bark beetle infestation in the 1990s. Ecologists now monitor beetle population using traps on downed pines.
- 0.7-mile Razor Point Trail meanders through coastal sage scrub, with views of sculptured sandstone, gnarled trees, and the surf 150 feet below. Yucca Point Overlook, accessed from both Razor Point and Beach Trails, features yucca flower displays in spring and eroded sandstone patterns called *tafoni*.
- 0.1-mile High Point Trail offers a 360-degree panorama of the reserve and ocean.
- 0.75-mile Beach Trail is a rustic footpath through the upper reserve to the beach 300 feet below.
- 1.3-mile Broken Hill Trail offers views of eroding sandstone; its north fork passes an elfin forest of dense chaparral before joining Beach Trail near Flat Rock.
- 1.5-mile Marsh Trail goes along the southern edge of Los Peñasquitos Marsh Natural Preserve. The trailhead is on the east side of North Torrey Pines Road opposite the South Beach lot.

## Trails in the Northeastern Extension

- 0.5-mile Mar Scenic Trail follows the seasonal creek through the extension.
- 0.5-mile Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Trail offers views across the marsh to the main reserve and to the ocean.
- 0.75-mile Margaret Fleming Nature Trail leads through coastal sage scrub.
- 0.3-mile Red Ridge Loop Trail offers views of the lagoon, the main reserve, and spectacular geologic formations.

## INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

- The visitor center (Lodge) features exhibits on local wildlife, flowers, and geology; it also displays a selection of interpretive publications.
- Free trail maps are available at the visitor center or at most trailheads.
- The reserve has two native plant gardens: one is at the front of the visitor center and another (the Whitaker Garden) at the Parry Grove trailhead.
- Information and schedules for park programs and activities are available at the visitor center or [www.torreypine.org](http://www.torreypine.org).
- Docent-led nature hikes for individuals and families are offered on weekends and holidays. Check [www.torreypine.org](http://www.torreypine.org) for scheduled times.
- Make group and school program requests at least three weeks in advance at



Brown pelican



[www.torreypine.org](http://www.torreypine.org) or by emailing [torreypines@parks.ca.gov](mailto:torreypines@parks.ca.gov).

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- The visitor center is generally accessible. A captioned video is available. Nearby parking and restroom are accessible.
- South Beach restroom and parking are accessible. The path from the lot is sloped; assistance may be required.
- North Beach parking, restrooms, and paths to beach may need assistance.
- A beach wheelchair is available for loan.
- Trails to West Overlook, Ellen Browning Scripps Overlook, the Discovery Trail, South Fork of Broken Hill Trail and the upper park road are accessible.
- Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, call (916) 445-8949 or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

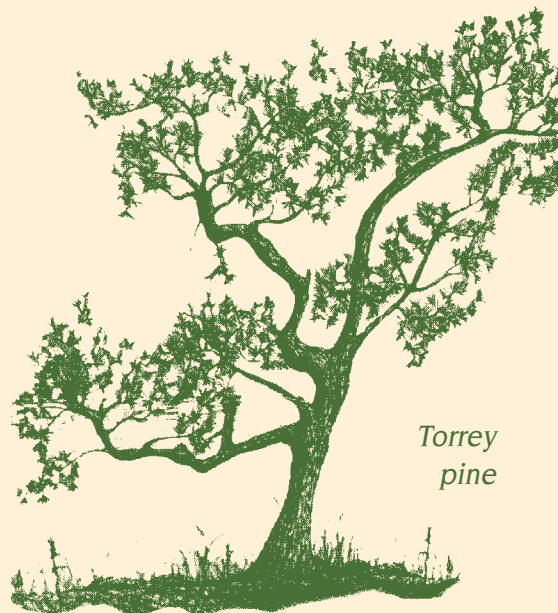
### NEARBY STATE BEACHES

- Cardiff State Beach, 2488 Highway 101 Cardiff-by-the-Sea 92007 (760) 753-5091
- San Elijo State Beach, 2050 Highway 101 Cardiff-by-the-Sea 92007 (760) 753-5091



Of nearly 300 units in the State Park System, only 14 are set aside and protected as State Natural Reserves. Help safeguard this beautiful area.

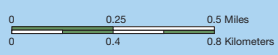
- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.
- Stay on the trails. Walking off-trail causes erosion, tramples plants, and frightens wildlife.
- The cliffs are unstable and dangerous. Do not climb or walk on or near the cliff tops or bases.
- Picnicking is allowed on the beach. **No food is allowed in the reserve or on the trails** (water is permitted).
- To maintain the natural experience for all, no amplified music is allowed. Drones and remote control vehicles of all kinds are prohibited.
- Alcohol may not be consumed within park and reserve boundaries.
- Pack out all trash from the reserve. Use the beach trash receptacles provided on the beach areas.
- Smoking is prohibited at the beach and in the reserve.
- Fires are prohibited. Personal portable barbecues are permitted only on the beach. Place hot coals in the hot-coal containers provided.
- Domestic animals are prohibited at the reserve or the beach. Visitors with service animals should contact park staff on arrival.
- All types of vehicles are prohibited on trails; bicycles may use only a paved road uphill from the beach to upper lots—no downhill biking.
- Due to the sensitive ecological environment, the number of visitors and vehicles may be limited. If the reserve is full, visitors may be asked to check in later or visit another day.
- Park only in designated spaces. Stopping or parking on road shoulders is not permitted.



*Torrey pine*

This park receives support in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact: Torrey Pines Docent Society, P.O. Box 2414 Del Mar, CA 92014 • (858) 755-2063 [www.torreypine.org](http://www.torreypine.org)

# Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve/State Beach



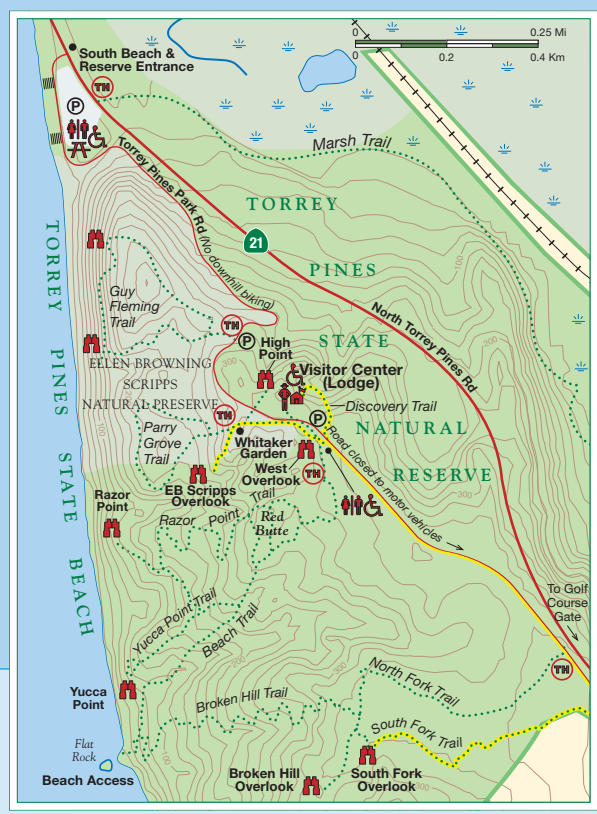
### Legend

- Paved Road
- Trail
- Accessible
- Railroad
- State Marine Conservation Area
- Accessible Feature
- Beach Stairway
- Locked Gate
- Marsh
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Ranger Station
- Restrooms
- Trailhead
- Viewpoint

© 2006 California State Parks (Rev. 2015)



SAN DIEGO-  
LA JOLLA  
UNDERWATER  
PARK AND  
ECOLOGICAL  
RESERVE



TORREY PINES STATE BEACH

SAN DIEGO-  
SCRIPPS  
COASTAL SMCA

