

# Mediterraneanews®

TERRA PENINSULAR'S QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

Volume 4 • Issue 17 • November 2019 • Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico

## Darkness, a Refuge for Wildlife

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by Fernando Ávila

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"A Rare Plant Nature Reserve" by Sula Vanderplank

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TERRA NEWS

"The Importance of Marine Conservation in San Quintin" by Ricardo M. Domínguez and Isabel Hernández



# 5th. San Quintin Bay Bird Festival

festival de las aves



The fifth edition of the San Quintin Bay Bird Festival took place on November 8 and 9, 2019.

This festival was possible thanks to the support of our sponsors, donors, local communities and volunteers.

See you in the next Bird Festival!



Campo Don Álvaro • Casa de la Cultura de Ensenada "Miguel de Anda Jacobsen" Ext. San Quintin • Escuela "Espacio de Arte Celeste" • Renta Fiestas Michelt

Guy Shelton • Gary Sequeira

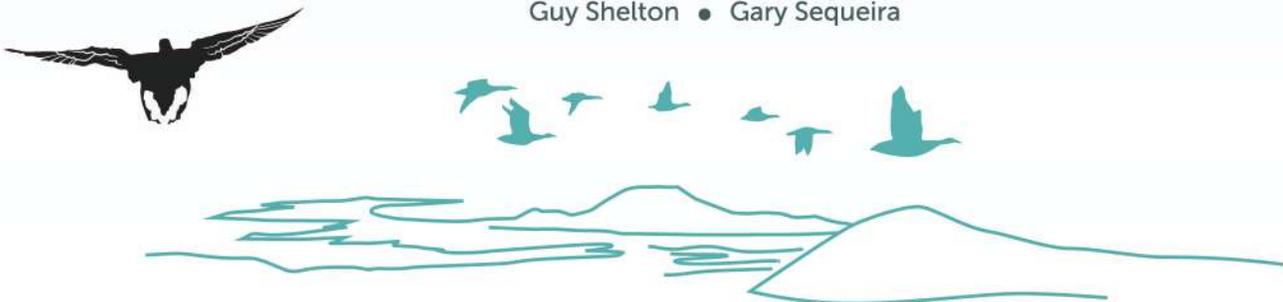




Photo: Mark Lee.

# Editorial

Dear readers,

2019 has been a great year for Terra Peninsular! I am very happy to share with you some of the most outstanding achievements of this year:

- Thanks to the Coastal Solutions program of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this summer we continued with the campaign “The beach belongs to everyone” to protect the snowy plover during the nesting season in Ensenada.
- Together with the Sonoran Joint Venture, we are working on a project to monitor wintering long-billed curlews in agricultural fields in Mexicali.
- We have maintained mammal monitoring in the Valle Tranquilo Nature Reserve using trap cameras.
- ¡We won an underwater drone! We will use it to capture aquatic images of the bay thanks to the initiative Open Explorer by National Geographic.
- We are currently working on a project to mitigate the effects of climate change in the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir thanks to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- The Huellas Volcanicas Photography Club presented their first exhibition in the United States and showed a selection of 25 photographs of San Quintín.
- Biology students from UABC and UDLAP did their internship at Terra Peninsular and helped us in different activities at the nature reserves.
- As every year, we did a beach clean up in Ensenada and San Quintín in which hundreds of volunteers supported us.
- For the fifth year in a row, we organized the San Quintín Bay Bird Festival together with local communities. More than 300 people attended this event!

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## Mediterranews.

### CREDITS

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I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our donors and volunteers for their great support and enthusiasm to protect the beautiful landscapes of our peninsula, as well as the incredible staff for their passion and dedication.

Let's protect Baja California!

**César Guerrero**

Executive Director of Terra Peninsular

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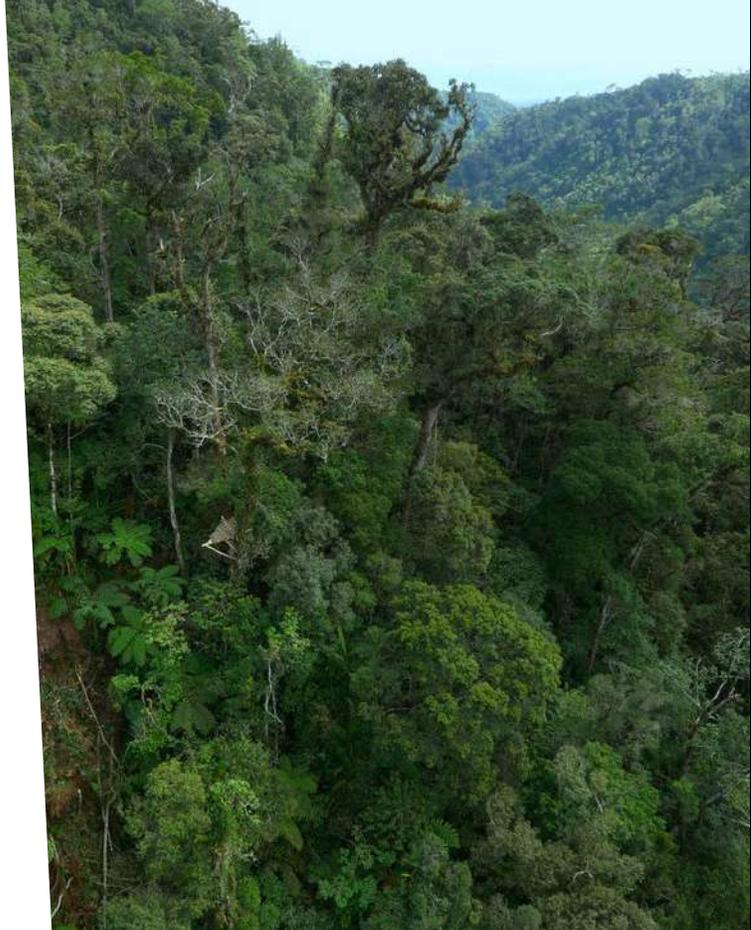
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 ”

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Photo: Bárbara Ramírez



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The articles represent their author's opinions, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Terra Peninsular.

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**ON THE COVER**  
 Starry night at Sierra de San Pedro Martir. Photo: Stephane Guisard



▲ Evening primrose (*Oenothera wigginsii*). Photo: Sula Vanderplank.



▲ Dunes in spring flower. Photo: Francisco Perera.



▲ *Nemacaulis denudata*, the coast woolly heads, a binational rare plant of young dunes. Photo: Sula Vanderplank.

# A Rare Plant Nature Reserve

By Sula Vanderplank  
Photos by Sula Vanderplank, Francisco Perera,  
Jorge Andrade and Antonieta Valenzuela

**M**any of the plants found in the borderlands between the US and Mexico are globally rare. Two hundred of California's rare plants (those listed as rare, threatened or endangered) are also found south of the US Border in Baja California. Of these, at least 22 reach the San Quintin valley.

In an effort to assist the conservation of these binationally rare plants, a new initiative recently emerged in a collaboration between the San Diego Natural History Museum and the San Diego Zoo Global, to seedbank around a third of these species for long term ex situ conservation. The focal species are all considered in danger of extinction and their seeds are sent to Mexico's National seed bank at UNAM. As part of this mission, on May 19th, 2019, I made a visit to the **Punta Mazo Nature Reserve**, in San Quintin.

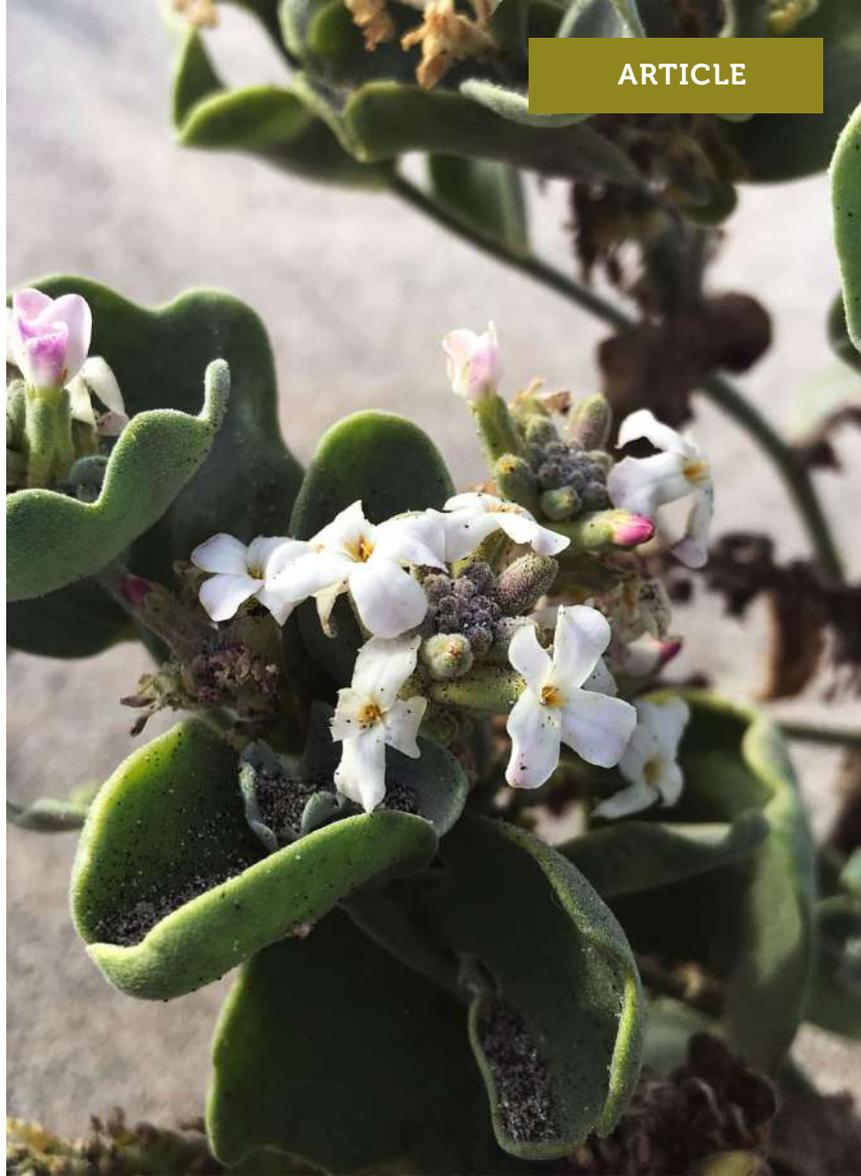
You will have already read about the beautiful salt marshes that surround the peninsula, and the very important



populations of **salt marsh bird's beak** (*Chloropyron maritimum* ssp. *maritimum*), a plant whose story was beautifully told by Margie Mulligan in a previous issue of *Mediterranews* (see page 13 on the issue no. 14). But you might not know about some of the very rare plants of the sand dunes that are also preserved at the Punta Mazo Nature Reserve.

Sand dunes are very sensitive to human disturbance and very fragile habitats. California has impacted almost all of its coastal dune habitat, and **the dunes of San Quintin are some of the finest on the Pacific coast. They are also home to some of the rarest plants in North America.** There are several species that are narrowly endemic to (restricted to) the local dune fields including the **San Quintin dune milkvetch** (*Astragalus anemophilus*), the **dune birds-foot trefoil** (*Acmispon distichum*), and sometimes the showy **Wiggins' evening primrose** (*Oenothera wigginsii*) makes a show on stabilized sandy areas.

But this visit targets two other globally rare plants. The first, luckily is fairly locally abundant. It just needs quality dune habitat. Its name is the **coast woolly heads** (*Nemacaulis denudata* var. *denudata*), and it grows together with its sister, the **slender woolly heads** (*Ne-*



▲ The beach spectacle pod (*Dithyrea maritima*). Photo: Sula Vanderplank.



▲ *Dithyrea maritima*, the beach spectacle pod, one of the rarest bintational plants of sandy dunes. Photo: Sula Vanderplank.



*macaulis denudata* var. *gracilis*), which is also rare in California, but has fewer flowers, smaller heads and occurs further inland.

In California these plants occur along the coastal dunes from the border north to Los Angeles County. In Baja California they are found south to Guerrero Negro, and in the Punta Mazo Nature Reserve they co-occur together on the 3 miles of sand dunes on the peninsula growing flat -pressed to the sand below them.

Our next target was the **beach spectacle pod** (*Dithyrea maritima*), one of the rarest plants in our region. This species is known only from the San Quintin region in Baja California, on Punta Mazo and the El Socorro dunes. It is disjunct up to California populations, where more than half of the historical populations are now believed to be extirpated (locally extinct). The next extant populations are found in the Santa Barbara region up to Ventura and San Luis Obispo, and out on the California Channel Islands.

It can be notoriously hard to find this species, its habitat requirements are not obvious within the dune systems and it is only present above ground for short periods (in dry years it will not even sprout above the surface, it just stays underground as a storage organ).

One of the park rangers at Terra Peninsular led us across what feels like endless sand, to an amazing population of this critically rare plant. The stewardship of the reserve allows them intimate knowledge of some of these treasures of the regions natural heritage.

Thanks to the incredible efforts of the conservation team at Terra Peninsular, these dunes are now being cared for, and several sites are undergoing restoration. The new fencing and signage give me so much hope for the future and the importance of conserving these fragile coastal habitats cannot be overstated.

Thank you Terra Peninsular for protecting these treasures of the natural heritage of San Quintín.



▲ New fencing at the Punta Mazo Nature Reserve protecting dune plants from vehicular traffic. Photo: Jorge Andrade.



▲ New conservation signage at the Punta Mazo Nature Reserve. Photo: Antonieta Valenzuela.

### Read more about rare plants



Beach spectacle pod (*Dithyrea maritima*).  
Issue no. 12 on page 23.  
<https://issuu.com/terrapeninsular/docs/mediterraneanews-agosto-2018/24>



Salt marsh bird's beak (*Chloropyron maritimum* ssp. *maritimum*).  
Issue no. 14 on page 13.  
<https://issuu.com/terrapeninsular/docs/mediterraneanews-february-2019/14>

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## > The Last Frontier

By Bárbara Ramírez / Development and Communication Leader

**“Alaska. The Last Frontier”** I read on the license plates of the cars when I arrived, and suddenly I was overcome by the emotion of being at one of the edges of the world; a place that had remained in my imagination as a mysterious and somewhat exotic land, full of white landscapes, bears, moose, totems and the midnight sun.

Although its climate is cold even in May -or at least for a Mexican accustomed to the Mediterranean climate of Baja California- Alaskans are warm, smiling and very kind people. They made us feel part of the community right away.

But besides living an incredible experience so many miles from home, why did I go to Alaska? On this occasion, I **accompanied Terra Peninsular’s Executive Director**, César Guerrero, on a trip that had two main objectives:

- Participate in the **Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival**.
- Learn about the outdoor recreational activities of the U.S. Forest Service in **Cordova** and **Wrangell**.

▲ The Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival takes place in Cordova, Alaska. Photo: Bárbara Ramírez.



▲ Bárbara Ramírez, Vitza Cabrera, César Guerrero and Jim Chu in Cordova, Alaska. Photo: courtesy.



▲ Bárbara Ramírez and Vitza Cabrera in Wrangell. Photo: César Guerrero.

The relationship between Terra Peninsular and the city of Cordova has a history. This city -mainly of fishermen and with little more than 2,000 inhabitants- is located in the Copper River Delta which plays a fundamental role for the survival of migratory shorebirds and it is the crown jewel -as the Forest Service calls it- of the migratory route of the western hemisphere.

Along this route, which runs along the western contour of the continent from Alaska to Argentina, there are several stopover sites used by birds to feed and rest. **Bahía de Todos Santos and San Quintín Bay, where Terra Peninsular works, are one of these stopover sites.**

These places are indispensable for the survival of migratory shorebirds, but unfortunately, they are disappearing due to the increase of urban development, land use change and pollution. That is why the **U.S. Forest Service created the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI)** in which the allies of the different countries along this migratory route joined forces -because nature has no borders- to conserve these places and thus guarantee the survival of migratory birds ●



▲ This trip was possible thanks to the US Forest Service and CRIMBI. Photo: courtesy.

Continue reading this story here  
<http://terrapeninsular.org/en/the-last-frontier/>



# Biology and Photography: Tools for Conservation

*My experience as  
field correspondent  
at Terra Peninsular*

**By** Carolina Mildred Rivera  
**Photos by** Oscar Hernández and Carolina Rivera

**A**lmost at the end of my university life, one of my dreams came true. For a long time, I have dreamed of traveling to little-known places to explore and marvel at nature, and at the same time, to show others what my eyes observed, just like in the nature and wildlife documentaries that I watched many times as a child.

I visited Baja California a year ago and met the staff members of Terra Peninsular. I was amazed at their activities and goals to protect nature, so I did not hesitate to go back when I was accepted to do my internship with them during the summer.

What I did not know about this experience is that it would represent a great challenge: to carry out a multidisciplinary task where in addition to learning and putting into practice my Biology career, I would be taking photographs and working together with the Department of Communication. My main task was to document all the experiences in the field.

Before Baja California, I did not have the basis of how to take a picture or edit videos for science communication purposes, which represented a professional weakness. Still, I accepted the challenge of learning and showing how conservation is done in Baja California.

This is how the task of learning the basic aspects of photography and video began with the help of my coordinator at Terra Peninsular, Bryan Gerardo, and my colleagues Alitzel, Sofia and Montserrat. After a few days, my fear of the camera was gone and we began preparing to start the work in the field. All the equipment they had provided me was ready to capture the most important moments of the monitoring and sampling activities.

▼ Sofia, Montserrat, Carolina and Alitzel. Photo: Oscar Hernández.





▲ Seagrass sampling. Photo: Carolina Rivera



▲ Montserrat analyzing samples. Photo: Carolina Rivera

The first adventure began with the monitoring of the snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) and the least tern (*Sternula antillarum*) in the Bahía de Todos Santos Shorebird Reserve.

At the beginning, I found it difficult to document. I wanted to take pictures of everything I saw, and that somehow interfered with the field work, since I wanted to be on both sides at the same time: take photos and participate in monitoring and sampling efforts.

At that time I believed that I should concentrate on a single task. As a biologist I wanted to learn as many field techniques as possible, but on the other hand, I had the mission of sharing what my colleagues were doing in order to perform effective conservation. That was the biggest challenge I had during my internship.

There were moments of great stress because I wanted to do two activities at the same time, frustration for not being able to successfully capture the images that my eyes saw, as well as despair when trying to walk through a



▲ At the end of sampling. Photo: Carolina Rivera

wetland with the mud up to the knees while carrying a camera and a tripod, and worried that something could happen to the equipment or myself.

Fortunately, nothing bad happened. On the contrary, at the end of the second sampling week, we had already formed a small team that eventually became a family. The days passed and there was always laughter at breakfast, lunch and dinner, the talks became more enjoyable, the field work was being carried out so effectively that it even gave us time to have fun at the end of each sampling.

The most important thing for me was to be able to capture spontaneous moments of tiredness when getting up at dawn and going out to the wetland or to the field to check the traps, the emotion of being

▼ Setting up a camera trap. Photo: Carolina Rivera.





▲ Álvaro receiving instructions to install a nesting fence. Photo: Carolina Rivera



▲ Sampling with camera traps in Valle Tranquilo. Photo: Carolina Rivera

able to hold a snowy plover chick or a San Quintin kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys gravipes*); as well as capturing funny moments, like when someone does not know what a choya is (*Cylindropuntia*) until she has one stuck on her foot, of feeling free and tiny surrounded by nature at Valle Tranquilo, or having a delicious coffee in front of the ocean after finishing the tasks of the day with colleagues and friends with whom you share the same interest of preserving and conserving nature.

With this experience I put into practice the four years of my professional career, I left my comfort zone, developed in new work areas and met prominent people in the area of Biology, which expanded my vision regarding the different ways in which conservation can be done.

At the end of my internship, I realized that it is not so relevant how much or little you know, but how committed you are to learning new things and taking advantage of the opportunities and challenges you have in front of you. I believe that conservation can go further when it goes hand in hand with other disciplines such as communication, and that without a doubt it is worth becoming multidisciplinary for a good cause, the cause in which you believe.



▲ Beauty in Valle Tranquilo, an *Agave shawii*. Photo: Carolina Rivera



▲ Waiting to install a camera trap. Photo: Carolina Rivera

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# Darkness, *a Refuge for Wildlife*

By Fernando Ávila  
Photos by Stephane Guisard

**O**ur planet was formed along with the solar system 4.5 billion years ago, and 3.5 billion years ago life appeared on Earth. Less than 150 years ago, the first incandescent bulb was lit to illuminate nights. These numbers are important to put into perspective a recent and silent problem called light pollution. Light pollution is an excess in the use of artificial lighting.

Initially, astronomers were the first to worry about its effects, noting that the skies where their large observatories were installed were no longer dark, and therefore it was more difficult to study not too bright or too far away objects.

Over the years it has been found that light pollution affects not only astronomical research, but also the biological processes of living things. Since life first appeared on Earth, it has evolved according to its local conditions, but the natural cycles of day and night were a constant throughout the planet. Some species adapted to have more activity during the day, others took better advantage

of the darkness of the night. In both cases, this daily sway of light and darkness shaped their resting, feeding, migrating and reproducing cycles. In particular, the natural pattern of the day-night cycle is called the circadian rhythm and regulates the sleep-wake hours.

The way in which light pollution affects different animal species is diverse. Some species of insects are attracted by artificial lights, leaving no nocturnal species such as bats and certain types of birds without food. In other cases, birds get dazzled by illuminated buildings, colliding with them and losing orientation. Unexpectedly, the reproductive cycle of the clownfish is affected, since the eggs placed in corals near the surface do not hatch when they are exposed to light sources at night. This is an increasingly common scenario on beaches with urban settlements.

Recently, a good number of cities have begun changing their public lighting to white light systems, either with mercury-vapor lamps, or LED systems. However, a proble-







matic point is the way in which living beings respond to the blue component of white light, since it confuses our eyes and brain, making our body believe that the blue sky of the day is still present. For this reason, we humans are also affected as blue light disrupts the pattern of sleep and rest through the interruption of the production of the hormone melatonin. Therefore, the American Medical Association (AMA) also published a report in June 2016 warning that this type of lighting increases the risk of cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

With this information, it will not be an exaggeration to say that life on Earth depends on maintaining the night darkness that shaped it for billions of years.

To recover dark skies, astronomers have approached the authorities to promote laws or regulations that indicate correct lighting practices in such a way that light pollution decreases, without neglecting security needs in the cities that lighting facilitates.

Previous regulations such as these can be found in places with large observatories such as Hawaii, Arizona, Canary Islands, Chile; in Mexico, there is an observatory in Baja California thanks to the work of the National Astronomical Observatory in the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir.

For more information on these regulations regarding dark-skies legislations (Ley del Cielo in Spanish), visit:

<http://leydelcielo.astrosen.unam.mx>

**//**

*Over the years it has been found that light pollution affects not only astronomical research, but also the biological processes of living things. Since life first appeared on Earth, it has evolved according to its local conditions, but the natural cycles of day and night were a constant throughout the planet.*

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# The Importance of Marine Conservation in San Quintin

By Ricardo H. Domínguez and Isabel Hernández  
Photos by Ricardo H. Domínguez, Luis López and Bryan Gerardo

**S**an Quintin Bay is one of the most studied and important bodies of water in Baja California (García-Esquivel et al., 2004). This ecosystem is located in the southern border of the Mediterranean region and it has one of the most extensive wetlands of the Pacific coast in the Baja California peninsula.

Due to its high productivity, the bay is considered an important and vital site for different species of migratory birds, among which we can mention the black brant (*Branta bernicla nigricans*), a goose that uses the bay's wetlands to feed during the winter (Aguilar-Rosas et al., 2005; Palacios et al., 2018). This species is listed by the Mexican government as threatened (NOM-059).

Similarly, this ecosystem is home to a great biodiversity of marine organisms, such as the **California mussel** (*Mytilus californianus*), the **red lobster** (*Panulirus interruptus*), the **purple sea urchin** (*Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*) and the *Chondracanthus canaliculatus*, to mention a few (Palleiro, et al., 2013). These species of macroinvertebrates and macroalgae are used by fishers from nearby towns, and these resources contribute significantly to the region's economy (López, et al., 2016).

Another species of great economic value is the **Japanese oyster** (*Crassostrea gigas*), whose cultivation is considered the main commercial activity in the bay since 1980 (García-Esquivel et al., 2004). This activity has an average production of 750 tons per year, this represents about 250 to 300 direct jobs and 2000 indirect jobs (SEPESCABC, 2018).

The bay has a considerable list of management and conservation tools, among which we can mention its designation as a Ramsar site (Wetland of International Importance), in addition to being part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), it was also designated as an Important Bird Conservation Area (AICA).



▲ Intertidal monitoring. Photo: Bryan Gerardo.



▲ Oyster farming in San Quintin. Photo: Ricardo Domínguez.

Nevertheless, the bay is a vulnerable area that is subject to different threats, such as habitat fragmentation and destruction, the increase of invasive exotic species, overfishing, the decrease in water quality due to pollution, as well as increase in desalination plants that are designed to support agricultural activities (Aguirre-Muñoz *et al.*, 2000).

In order to contribute to the conservation of San Quintin Bay, in 2016 Terra Peninsular joined as a **member of the Waterkeeper Alliance**, which seeks the protection of bodies of water. the goal of this alliance is to guarantee drinkable, fishable and swimmable water. With this responsibility in mind, Terra Peninsular currently conducts biological monitoring in different marine environments in San Quintin Bay, such as the rocky intertidal and wetlands.

The rocky intertidal is home to a large number of organisms that are under particular conditions, such as waves, tidal change and desiccation, among others. In this environment, the characterization and register of the abundance of organisms has been carried out, these species are economically and ecologically important.



▲ Rocky intertidal. Photo: Ricardo Domínguez.



▲ Aerial view of the wetlands in San Quintin. Photo: Ricardo Domínguez.



▲ Photo: Bryan Gerardo

Similarly, the characterization of macroinvertebrates associated to seagrass beds has been performed in wetlands, as well as the estimation of its coverage. Monitoring this environment is essential, since it is a resting and feeding area for different species of migratory birds. Due to their proximity to human settlements and their easy accessibility, both environments are vulnerable to negative impacts that could affect the species which inhabit these areas.

It is important to understand that although there are tools for the conservation of this body of water, which is vital for the survival of the human being and for other species, it must be taken into account that these ecosystems are vulnerable to anthropogenic impacts, that is, caused by human activities. Therefore, it is important to implement responsible fishing practices, respecting closed seasons and established fishing sizes without over-exploiting the resources, as well as making rational use of the wetlands and resources to ensure long-term productive and sustainable activity in the region. In the same way, the generation of systematized scientific knowledge is fundamental to make decisions that do not negatively impact the health of the bay.

### About Waterkeeper Alliance

Waterkeeper Alliance is a non-profit organization established in 1999 in the United States that connects organizations worldwide in order to guarantee clean water. It currently has more than 300 members who protect rivers, lakes, bays and other bodies of water.



<https://waterkeeper.org/>

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# Up in the Sky: Bird of Prey

By Carlos R. Bañales / Imaginante Films

**I**n 1977, a small group headed by Neil Rettig, director of photography, ventured to the Philippines with the mission of recording for the first time one of the largest birds of prey in the world, known at the time as the monkey-eating eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*). Despite its size, this bird was rarely sighted, mainly because its habitat was concentrated in the deepest and highest areas of the jungle.

In this historic expedition documented in the episode *To Free an Eagle* (broadcast on January 11, 1981 by the BBC), not only was this majestic bird filmed in its natural environment, but also the first images of an eagle in its nest were captured, something exceptional that happens every two years. This event provided the opportunity for careful monitoring of the incubation, birth and breeding stages of this little known species.

This first approach helped the species to gain relevance inside and outside the country; its name even changed to great Philippine eagle through a presidential decree in 1978, and what was once con-

sidered a mysterious predator of the jungle was subsequently declared a national symbol.

Deeply convinced that images have the ability to affect the importance we give to nature and the environment, Neil Rettig decides to return to the Philippines 36 years later to film a new visual documentary driven by the imminent threat of extinction of the great Philippine eagle.

The documentary *Bird of Prey* is the result of this new expedition, where we witness the long-awaited reunion with this bird in a pristine place in the jungle, and the challenges of its monitoring over three months.

Many things have changed since their first visit in 1977. Not only Rettig is no longer 27 but 64 years old, populations such as the city of Davao went from 400,000 to more than 1.6 million inhabitants, and logging has left less than 2 million acres of forest. As a result, the fragile population of the Philippine eagle is now between 100 and 800 specimens.





Although the new landscape is not encouraging, important local efforts have emerged, such as The Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) established in 1987, and have injected new hope into the fight for the conservation of the species as well as its natural habitat through successful programs of captive reproduction, scientific research, community work, public education and sustainable management of the jungle.

There is a small margin to reverse the imminent result, but for small organizations like PEF and tenacious people like Rettig is enough time to do something against all odds, even if you are on the other side of the planet. This inspirational determination instills encouragement and invites you to look up at the sky.



This documentary directed by Eric Liner was premiered in Ensenada together with the short film *Voices of the Pacific Flyway* by the same director, this film shows the relationship between people and birds in three places located along the Pacific coast: Alaska, Washington and San Quintín. The latter is where the San Quintín Bay Bird Festival takes place.

The documentary is available for rent and sale on platforms such as Amazon Prime Video, iTunes and Vimeo •

Visit the official movie site for more information <http://birdofpreymovie.com/>





# FOUR DECADES OF PUNTA MAZO FROM TWO SURFERS' PERSPECTIVE

**By** Kevin Smith and Mark Van Slooten  
**Photos by** Kevin Smith, Nick Moeller, Lauren Smith,  
Nathan Petty and Mark Van Slooten

**W**e grew up at a time when finding the perfect wave was what every surfer dreamed of. Discovering such a wave was the pinnacle of the surfing experience. But wave searching in the days before Google Earth, cell phones, and wave forecasts required study, intuition and luck. We would examine magazines, study maps and marine charts and collect rumors. If no information could be found on a stretch of coast, and we could not find anybody familiar with it, and the topography looked promising, that is where we would explore and hope for a swell. This method often led us to Baja California. There we would occasionally find empty waves of quality, but we always found transcendent beauty in a land like no other.

It was in the 1970's that we first explored the Punta Mazo area. We did not find perfect waves; but if you could see past the wind, rocks and cold water, there was some fun surf. What really set the San Quintín area apart from other surf destinations was the rugged geography and raw beauty. Punta Mazo's volcanoes, estuaries, sand dunes and beaches are a magnificent symphony to the senses, and we listened every chance we got.

We have camped, surfed, and enjoyed this coast for many years now and have seen a few changes. As young boy scouts, we were taught that you should leave an area cleaner than you found it. As aging surfers, we have always adhered to that philosophy and encouraged others to do the same. Sadly, this does not always happen.

Even in a place as beautiful as Punta Mazo and the bays of San Quintín, broken glass, festering rubbish, and dirt roads to nowhere frequently scarred the beautiful landscape. Far too often visitors, and even a few locals, dumped trash wherever it was convenient. Near the surf spots, you needed to walk carefully if barefoot or risk cutting your foot on broken glass. This stunning landscape sometimes lost its appeal upon closer examination.

The local residents and fishermen we have met through the years are honest, hard-working people who have a profound love for their coast and the living it provides them. The more popular harvests from the sea include clams, lobsters, mussels, oysters, seaweed, octopus and fish. However, effective resource management of this harvest has often been lacking—abalone and urchins have all but disappeared.

For example, one summer day, while watching a local fisherman pull a female lobster loaded with roe from his trap, we asked him if he was going to throw it back so that there would be more lobsters next year. He told us that if he did not keep it, somebody else would take it.

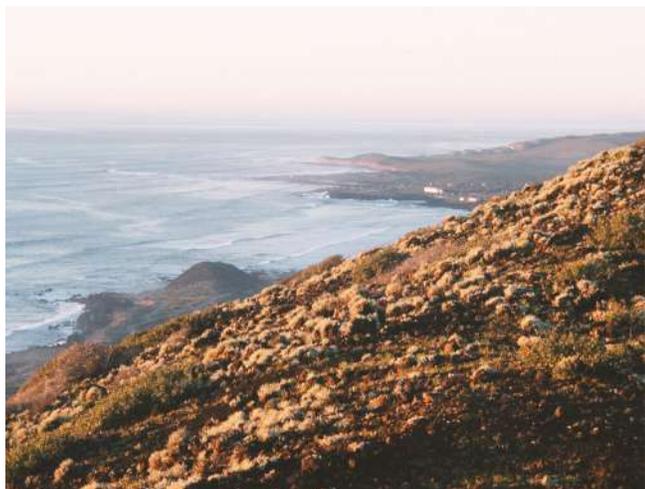
For many years a family from Rosarito would come down during spring tides and collect thousands of starfish each visit to dry and sell as tourist souvenirs. Eventually, the starfish almost entirely disappeared.



▲ Bird in the tidal zone. Photo: Laurie Smith

We started bringing our families to Punta Mazo in the early 1990s—yes even hard-core surfers can settle down to have families and careers. Our children grew up surfing and exploring this gorgeous corner of God’s creation and gained an appreciation for it.

Loving Punta Mazo drove us to want to give back by helping local families wherever we could. Over the years, we have performed dozens of charitable projects to help the local community providing medical supplies to the La Chorera dispensary, helping with *quinceañeras*, weddings, funerals, medical bills, etc. We have built houses, worked with a local church to



▲ View of La Chorera from top of Sudoeste volcano. Photo: Mark Van Slooten.



▲ Mark’s daughter, Jolie, surfing at Punta Mazo. Photo: Mark Van Slooten.

distribute donated clothing, computers and sewing machines, and even built a playground at the La Chorera kindergarten. Unfortunately, with all our good intentions, we never had the means to clean up all the ambient trash.

When Terra Peninsular invested in Punta Mazo in 2011, we were concerned with what its end goal might be. Many residents in La Chorrera had similar concerns. However, after meeting with Alan Harper, Cesar Guerrero and Enrique Alfaro of Terra Peninsular, it was clear that their vision was simply to restore the natural beauty of the area and protect it in perpetuity.



▲ Mark Van Slooten surfing . Photo: Nathan Petty.



▲ Kevin Smith surfing. Photo: Nick Moeller.

What we have witnessed in the ensuing years is beyond the experience of anything we have seen in Mexico. Unnecessary dirt roads have been blocked off so that the natural flora can recover the scarred land. Mountains of trash and debris have been hauled away, restoring the pristine beauty. Local residents have been offered many seminars and workshops educating on how to be effective stewards of the environment. Work, which is scarce around La Chorera, has been provided to many of the locals. Terra Peninsular has made a significant difference.

It is now been four decades since we first laid eyes on Punta Mazo. At this point in our lives, our visits are more about teaching our grandchildren to surf and just enjoying the beauty. We are encouraged by and grateful for the impact that Terra Peninsular has had on this crown jewel of Baja California.

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▲ A few of the ever-diminishing lobster population. Photo: Kevin Smith.



▲ Trashed boat. Photo: Kevin Smith.

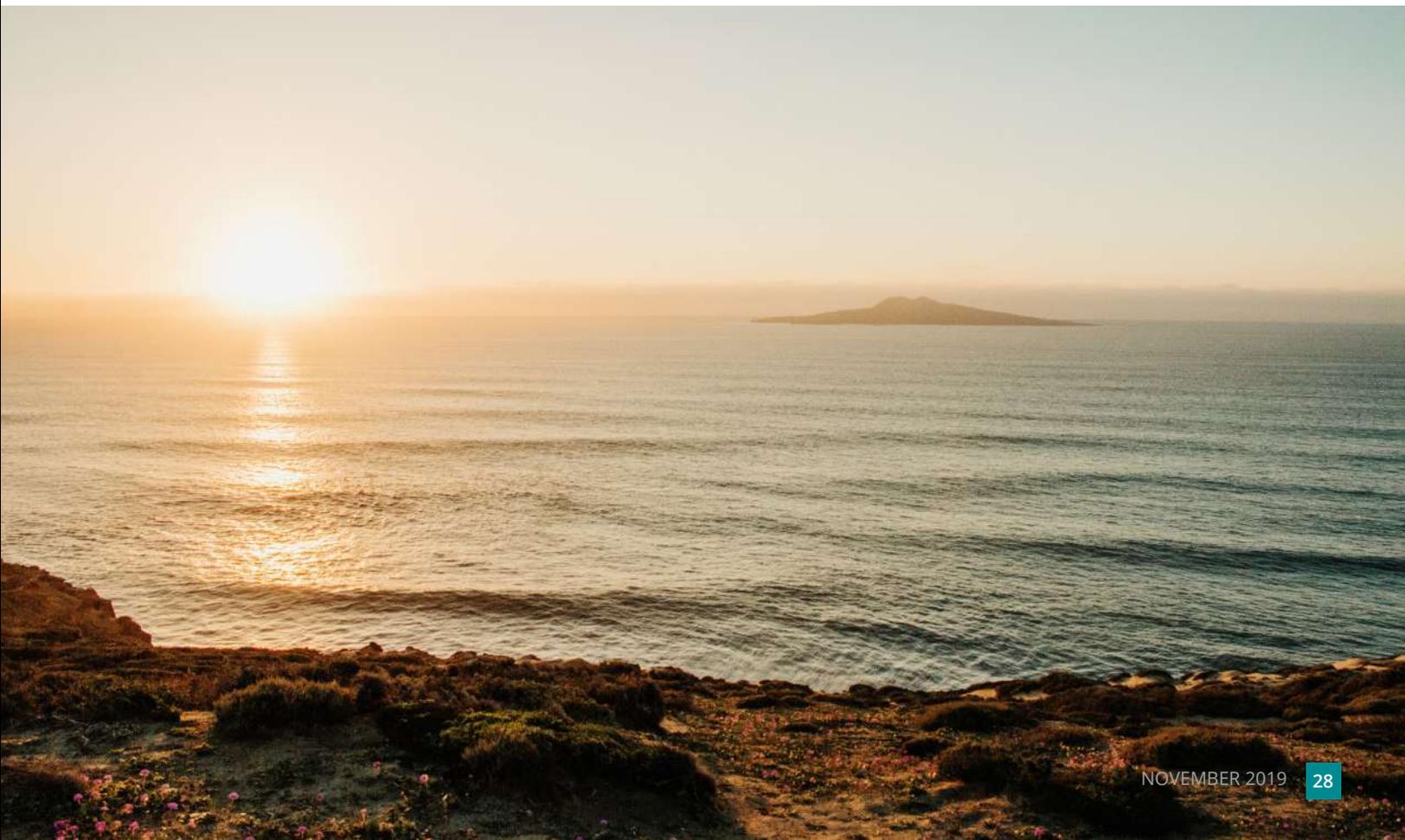


# Sunsets in San Quintín

Photos by Mark Lee



<http://marklee.com>





# ENVIRONMENTAL DATES

## NOVEMBER

- 1 World Day of Ecology
- 15 World Clean Air Day
- 20 Revolution Day (Mexico)
- 27 International Conservation Day

## DECEMBER

- 5 International Volunteer Day
- 11 International Mountain Day
- 29 International Day for Biological Diversity

## JANUARY

- 4 Journalist's Day (Mexico)
- 5 World Environment Day
- 25 Biologists' Day (Mexico)
- 26 International Environmental Education Day

## FEBRUARY

- 2 World Wetlands Day
- 11 International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- 13 Golden Eagle Day (Mexico)
- 14 World Energy Day

See the full calendar of events at <http://terrapeninsular.org/en/events-calendar/>





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TO ALL OF US.  
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BELONGS TO  
ALL OF US.**

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plants and animals.

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**THE NICE THING ABOUT  
 TEAMWORK IS THAT YOU  
 ALWAYS HAVE OTHERS  
 ON YOUR SIDE //**  
**MARGARET CARTY**



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