

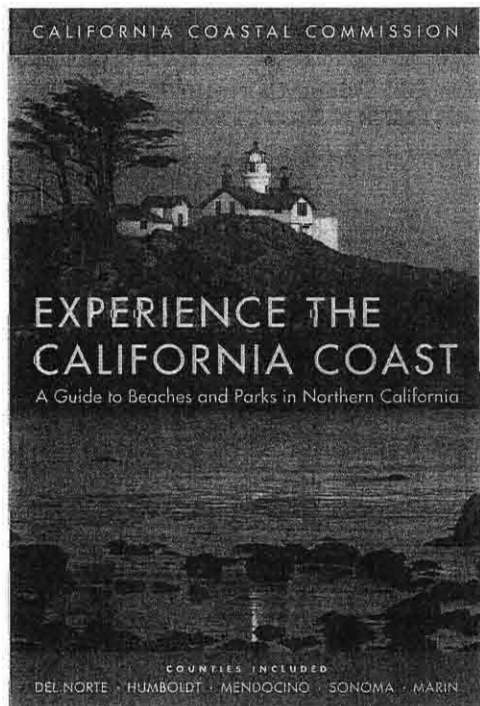
these photographs show is striking—indicative of the dynamism of this land on whose edge we seek to perch.

I found this book riveting for the areas I know well, and for the other areas I got a much better sense of land and of potential hazard. For anyone who lives near the coast, this book will prove illuminating. For anyone comfortable with the idea that life is uncertain, it will prove instructive. For anyone actually living on the shore, it might be imperative. For those who think that we humans have everything under control, it might prove frightening. I will just sum things up by saying, this book does have something for everyone. It is erudite, informative, meticulous, and good reading to boot.

—Anne Canright

MORE THAN JUST A GUIDE

Experience the California Coast: A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California, by the California Coastal Commission. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005. 320 pp., \$24.95 (paper).



IN THE 1980s the Coastal Commission produced, and the University of California Press published, the *California Coastal Access Guide* and the *California Coastal Resources Guide*, both of which became indispensable reference books

for anyone interested in visiting the coast or learning about it. They remain uniquely valuable, despite the fact that much has changed since they were published or, in the case of the *Access Guide*, last updated. Now comes *Experience the California Coast: A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California*, a delightful, richly informed, and user-friendly guide to the Pacific shoreline from the Oregon border to the Golden Gate. Nobody who lives in this area or means to visit it should be without a copy. The compact format makes it easy to stash in a glove compartment or backpack.

This book is a labor of love. It could only have been produced by people who know the coast intimately, are committed to protecting it, and want to make sure that others can enjoy and appreciate it. Just leafing casually through the book is inspiring, even if you think you know the coast well, because it is full of little revelations.

Written and edited primarily by Steve Scholl, who retired two years ago after 27 years on the Commission staff, the book describes more than 300 beaches, parks, nature reserves, campgrounds, hostels, and public paths to the shore, including both multi-use trails and hidden little trails that someone traveling along Highway One would be unlikely to find without help from a local resident or this guide. Coastal Commission staff know them because many of these accessways are open thanks to their efforts.

Take just one entry, "Garcia River Access," 2.4 miles north of Point Arena: "Unpaved Miner Hole Rd., impassable in winter, leads from Hwy. One along the south bank of the river to a turn-around just short of the road's end. Park at the turn-around, and look on the north side for a half-hidden path through a willow thicket to the riverbank, a popular fishing spot. Private ranch lands are located across the river; do not trespass. On the south side of the pull-out there is access through a fence to former Stornetta Ranch lands, now administered by the Bureau of Land Management." That kind of detail is invaluable, especially in places where free public access to the shore is scarce or hard to find.

The book has much more, though. It is cleverly designed to invite effortless

learning. It portrays common coastal plants, birds, and other life forms that you may have always meant to look up when you got home but never did. It is also enriched by brief items about geological features, pre-Columbian inhabitants, and odd bits of history and lore. Contributors are mostly long-time Commission staff, experts in various fields.

The color photographs, many of the 300 or so taken by Scholl, reveal the special character of different places. You will know what to expect on the trail north of Big Flat on the Lost Coast, for example, when you see the photograph. The 49 color maps, produced by Commission staff, include 42 color topographic maps created with ArcView GIS software. It's easy to see how rugged or flat the terrain is in any given place, as well as where roads and major trails run.

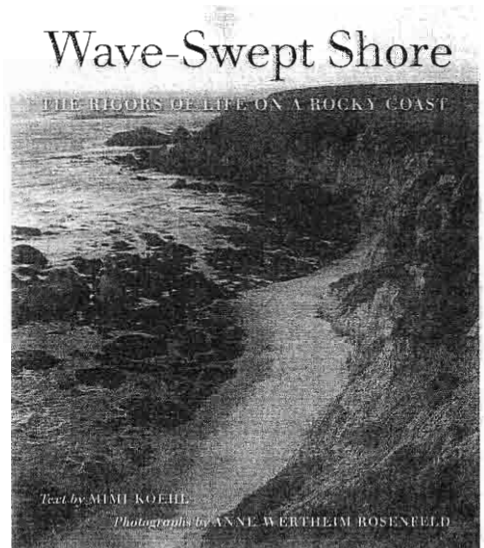
This volume, the first of four scheduled regional coastal guidebooks, is a treasure.

—RG

LIVING IN THE SURF

Wave-Swept Shore: The Rigors of Life on a Rocky Coast, text by Mimi Koehl, photographs by Anne Wertheim Rosenfeld. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006. 200 pp., \$39.95 (hard cover).

IN *WAVE-SWEPT SHORE*, Mimi Koehl, a professor of integrative biology at the University of California, Berkeley, looks closely at one stretch of rocky northern California shoreline less than a kilometer long (the location is not identified). She examines how plants



and animals there are adapted to live with the often violent forces of water, wind, and weather that act upon their intertidal habitat.

The intertidal zone of a rocky shoreline is a web of microhabitats defined both by the contours of the shore and by the elements affecting it. Small variations—in wave action, for example—can create distinct habitat niches that are close together or even intermingled. Snails that would be dried out by exposure to sun and wind on rock faces at low tide, for example, can survive by crowding together into crevices. Koehl explains clearly how various species cope with these dynamic environments: how they keep from being washed away, how they feed and eliminate wastes, reproduce, maintain sufficient moisture, and generally how they manage to live in a place that's hostile to both land-dwelling and undersea life.

Wave-Swept Shore is a beautiful book that feels good in one's hands. The photographs by Anne Wertheim Rosenfeld show the rich textures life creates as it crowds into crevices, caves, and pools or clings to rock faces. They combine with Koehl's lucid explanations to make scientific principles easy to understand, and help the reader to see how life and place are integrated.

—HMH

HABITAT-ORIENTED GUIDES

Introduction to the Plant Life of Southern California: Coast to Foothills, by Philip W. Rundel and Robert Gustafson. *California Natural History Guides 85*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005. 300 pp., \$50 (hard cover), \$18.95 (paper).

Introduction to California Bird Life, by Jules Evens, photographs by Ian Tait. *California Natural History Guides 83*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005. 280 pp., \$45 (hard cover), \$16.95 (paper).

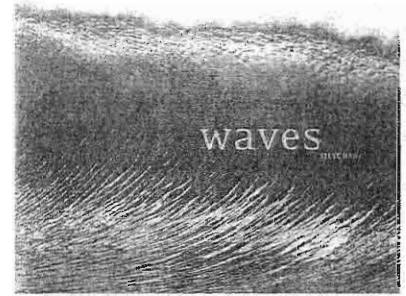
ALONG WITH DESCRIPTIONS and photos of plant species, *Introduction to the Plant Life of Southern California* presents in-depth discussions of habitats and ecological processes that put plant diversity in meaningful context. Organized biogeographically, the chapters cover coastal dunes, bluffs, and terraces; coastal and interior sage scrub; chaparral; woodlands; grasslands; wetlands; and riparian environments from

Santa Barbara County south to the Mexican border, as well as habitats of the Channel Islands. There are also sections about the relationship between plants and fire, invasive non-native plants, and preserving biodiversity. This habitat-oriented approach helps the reader to understand how individual plant species fit into the complex web of life.

Introduction to California Bird Life is also organized by habitat, in this case for the entire state, encompassing the marine environment, shoreline, coast ranges, the Central Valley and Delta, mountains and foothills, the Great Basin, and deserts. It describes physical environments, climate factors, and food webs, and their relationships to bird species distribution and behavior.

Though the habitat-oriented approach may be less useful for identifying individual species in the field, it provides much greater understanding of the lives of its subjects. As much as we may love the beauty or uniqueness of particular plants and creatures, knowing how they live in relation to others and their environment much enhances our appreciation.

—HMH



THROUGH SURFERS' EYES

Waves, by Steve Hawk. Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 2005. 132 pp., \$29.95 (hard cover).

SIT DOWN AND LEAF through this book slowly, and you will find yourself surprisingly refreshed and inspired. Such is the power of the 100 photographs here, almost all taken by professional surf photographers and gathered by Steve Hawk, life-long surfer and former editor of *Surfer* magazine. "Their bond with the sea pervades their work, and they appreciate, perhaps more than anyone, the aesthetic potential of waves," he writes in the introduction. Passion and intimate knowledge of ocean waves—from New Zealand to Hawaii, from Fiji to Ventura and San Francisco's Ocean Beach—shines through on every page.

—RG

