

# Amigos de Bolsa Chica

## THE

# TERN TIDE



Fall 2009

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### THE TERN TIDE

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## Science Symposium II - Bolsa Chica Restoration 2006-2009

By Dave Carlberg

A lineup of distinguished speakers updated about 80 attendees on the fiscal and biological state of the newly restored Bolsa Chica wetland on September 2 at Huntington Beach's Central Library.

Bob Hoffman, biologist from the National Marine Fisheries Service and original member of the Bolsa Chica Restoration Steering Committee started the meeting with a challenging and somewhat troubling discussion of the possible uncertain financial future of the Bolsa Chica restoration. When the cost of the recent restoration was first budgeted, out of the \$147 million that was received from the ports, bond issues, and other sources, about \$15 million was set aside for management and future maintenance, including dredging of the inlet.

Dredging was expected to be needed about every 2 years or so, and the reserve seemed more than adequate. By investing the \$15 million, the return was anticipated to provide most of the annual maintenance expenses. However, as we all know, investments of all sorts unexpectedly soured while costs soared, requiring expenses at Bolsa Chica to cut into the \$15 million reserve more deeply than expected. For instance, the cost of dredging had doubled over original estimates. Hoffman expressed the concern that the maintenance fund is in danger of becoming exhausted in just a few years. He suggested several possible fixes, including a single, more efficient dredging contract that would cover all of Southern California's wetlands rather than the piecemeal system that operates today. By instituting several similar cost-cutting moves, Hoffman believes maintenance costs could be reduced by 30 to 40 percent, protecting the reserve funds from further erosion.

The second speaker was Rachel Woodfield. Ms. Woodfield is a biologist for Merkel and Associates, the firm that is responsible for doing biological assessment surveys in the restored area. She reported on the third survey out of five that were scheduled for 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10 years following restoration. Bimonthly bird counts averaged about 8,600 birds per survey with highs around 40,000, representing 150 species. Of special interest was the endangered Belding's Savannah Sparrow. Prior to the completion of restoration, 143 breeding pairs were sighted in Bolsa Chica, whereas in 2007, one year following completion of restoration, 361 pairs were counted. The following year there were 193, and in 2009, 269. In spite of the fluctuations in counts, Woodfield felt that since the restoration was completed, there has been a significant improvement in the condition of the breeding colony of Belding's Savannah Sparrow in Bolsa Chica.

Fish diversity also has shown an increase. Using a *(continued on page 4)*

## 2nd Annual Wine Tasting Is for the Birds Fundraiser

**Saturday, October 24, 4:00 – 8:00 pm. at  
The Winery, 3379 Cerritos Avenue, Los Alamitos,  
CA 90720. Owner and winemaker Gary King.  
www.thewineryllc.com.**

Raise your spirits and help Amigos de Bolsa Chica raise funds to continue its mission to preserve and protect the Bolsa Chica and educate people about the importance of wetlands. The cost is \$20.00/Person (\$25.00 at the door) for this exclusive wine tasting with hors d'oeuvres. You can also purchase a bottle of wine with the Amigos logo for a souvenir or gift.

RSVP for the October 24 event by one of the following: on our web site at <http://www.amigosdebolsachica.org/join.htm>; at our regular Free Public Tour on Saturday, October 3 from 9:00 to 10:30 am; or contact the Amigos at [info@amigosdebolsachica.org](mailto:info@amigosdebolsachica.org) or 714 840 1575.

## Girl Scout Senior Troop Assists Amigos' Education Program

By Jennifer Robins

Girl Scout Troop #324 in Huntington Beach recently completed a project for Amigos' Education Program. They compiled a book with over 30 activities and games that can be used with K-12 students in conjunction with our Tour Program. The book contains the instructions and examples of uses for each activity or game.

Amigos de Bolsa Chica is utilizing the Visitor Center at the Bolsa Chica State Beach to develop an indoor educational program. The Girl Scout project is an important addition to this program. It will allow us to work with students on a one-to-one basis in a classroom atmosphere to teach the importance of

wetlands and the ocean in fun and creative ways. The Girl Scouts are all sophomores at Ocean View, Huntington Beach and Marina H.B. high schools and Cornelia Connelly in Anaheim. The leaders of the troop are Sandra Smallshaw and Maria Miyashiro. The scouts are Stevie Bowden, Sierra Christy, Laura Herman, Julie Miyashiro, Katie O'Connor, Lena Orbach, Ann Putman, Amira Shweyk, and Monica Smallshaw.

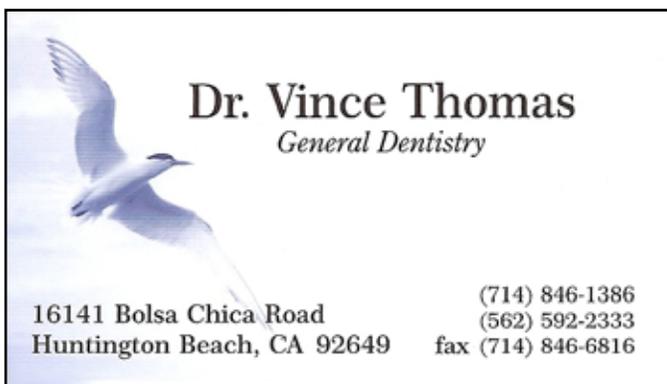
Most of the girls have been together since Kindergarten, with a couple joining the troop by about 3rd grade. One of the troop goals in the next couple of years is to complete the requirements towards their Gold Award, the highest award earned in Girl Scouting. They are off to a great start with the Activity Book for Amigos.

## Ralphs Rewards Donation Program New Term

Ralph's Stores have been very generous to us when our members link their Ralph's Rewards cards to the Amigos. Ralph's requires all of us to sign up again after September 1, 2009. **Participants will be required to register for the new term at [www.Ralphs.com](http://www.Ralphs.com) or by using the scanbar letter at the register after September 1, 2009.**

As many of you know the online method is laborious and time consuming so please feel free to give Amigos Office Manager, Laura Holdenwhite, a call and she will mail you the scanbar letter that you can take to Ralph's and the checker will scan it along with your groceries. Done! Call Laura at 714-840-1575 or email her at [info@amigosdebolsachica.org](mailto:info@amigosdebolsachica.org).

Ralph's Rewards card members do not need to be members of Amigos to participate with this program, so please encourage friends and other family members to sign up too. Thank you to everyone for taking the time to donate to Amigos by signing up for Ralphs Rewards program.



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## Light-footed Clapper Rail: Past, Present and Future

By Jennifer Robins

The Light-footed Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris levipes*) is a bird species rarely seen because it is extremely secretive and lives in thick vegetation. It only lives in wetlands along the coast of southern CA and northern Baja CA, Mexico. These birds depend upon one of the most productive habitats we have in southern CA, coastal salt marsh. By the late 1960s more than 70% of the coastal marshes in southern CA had been dredged for marinas or near-shore housing, or had been filled in and built upon. Most of the marsh acreage left was highly degraded and continues to be affected by the millions of people living on its very edge.

The Light-footed Clapper Rail was declared an endangered species in 1973. In 1985 the Clapper Rail Study Team was formed under the direction of Richard Zembal. The Study Team started by monitoring the rails through observation, trapping and banding and doing call counts. Since then it has expanded its work with a Captive Breeding Program. The team partners with Sea World and the Chula Vista Nature Center where the eggs are hatched and the birds raised until time to release them. The first captive rail was taken into captivity in 1998. Since then over 100 birds have been banded and released back into the wild.

The Clapper Rail Study Team has had many volunteers from many walks of life. Many going on into further collegiate studies, others pursuing other adventures in nature programs; but two are still active and help to train the newcomers. Susan Hoffman and Jim Robins continue to get up at odd hours of the morning to travel to Point Mugu, Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge, Upper Newport Back Bay, Tijuana Marsh National Wildlife Refuge or other southern California marshes. They put on their high boots and tromp into the marsh to track down an active nest or carry cages to set out and trap a rail for banding. They spend hours listening for the call or "clappering" of the birds



Emily Beck, left, nursery coordinator for the HBWC/OCRP, and Jim Robins band a Light-footed Clapper Rail.

or watching at high tide for an elusive bird to dart out of the tall cordgrass to hunt for a crab.

The joy and thrill in working with the Study Team are the times they get to release a captive-bred rail into the wild for the first time. In late August of this year, 10 rails from the captive breeding program were driven from San Diego to Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge. Each in their own box, they were individually taken out and banded. Five of the birds were released at Seal Beach. Jim and I put the other five birds in their boxes into the back of his Explorer and off we went to Point Mugu. With the assistance of Martin Ruane and three of his biologists who all work on the Navy property, the other five were released. They flew low but far enough to get away from us and start a life we hope will be long-lived and their species expanded.

Salt marsh restoration is an excruciatingly slow process, as will be Clapper Rail recovery. However, the Clapper Rail Study Team will continue to watch, study, learn, and act on behalf of this little endangered champion of wetland wildlife. Please go to the team's website for further information, [www.clapperrail.com](http://www.clapperrail.com).

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*Science Symposium II - continued from page 1*

variety of capture techniques, thousands of fish were collected from the full tidal basin, speciated, weighed, and measured. The results showed an increase to 46 species this year, compared to 42 last year and 19 the year before. Juvenile forms were seen in nearly all the species, meaning the wetland is fulfilling one of its intended functions, a fish nursery. Benthic samples revealed a rich variety of invertebrate species, including crabs, octopus, shrimp, mussels, oysters, clams and other organisms that form the bottom of the wetland's food web.

Eel grass showed the most dramatic increase in the wetland's vegetation. In 2007 0.9 acres of eel grass were planted in the full tidal basin. By 2008 the plants had covered 2 acres and in 2009, 32 acres. Eelgrass is important for stabilizing the basin bottom sand and as nursery grounds for many species of fish and shellfish. Planted cord grass showed an 89 percent increase over last year, but as Woodfield pointed out, cord grass is a plant that is known for sudden bursts of growth after several years following planting. Cord grass is essential for nesting of California Light Footed Clapper Rails, another endangered species.

Kelly O'Reilly, Department of Fish and Game biologist and Ecological Reserve Manager, reported on the state of the endangered California Least Tern's nesting for the year. Three hundred and seventeen nests were observed in Bolsa Chica, from which 412 chicks hatched and as many as 363 fledglings resulted. O'Reilly mentioned that such figures are always estimates due to the difficulties in doing the counts. Loss of chicks was from a variety of causes, including being trampled by much larger Black Skimmers that share nesting grounds with the terns, and predation by crows, possums, brown rats, and the newest danger, gull billed terns.

California State University graduate students Thomas Farrugia and Mario Espinoza and research advisor Dr. Chris Lowe reported on the habits of certain sharks and rays that are numerous visitors in the Bolsa Chica full tidal basin. The students concentrated on two species, shovelnose guitarfish and gray smooth-hound sharks, representing 11.2 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively, of the 8 species of sharks and rays found in Bolsa Chica. They tracked the animals' movements by acoustic telemetry where signals from sonic transmitters attached to their subjects were picked up by receivers placed throughout the full tidal basin. The animals were seen to roam the entire full tidal basin, some staying for up to 3 months before returning to the ocean. A few of the tagged animals revisited the basin for a second year.

The speakers proposed several reasons for the wetland's popularity for sharks and rays. The water

is warmer than the ocean most of the year, there is plenty of food available, and the basin is free of predators, boats, and other disturbances. The speakers emphasized the enormous value of the Bolsa Chica as a research laboratory and thanked Kelly O'Reilly for the opportunity to work in Bolsa Chica.

Two graduate students from California State University, Fullerton, Jeanette Hendricks and Tyler Flisik and their research advisor, Dr. Michael Horn, presented results of a study on the feeding habits of elegant terns in Bolsa Chica. By using a variety of methods, it was possible to determine what types of fish the terns and their chicks were feeding on. Pipefish appeared to be the principal source of food for the terns. It was initially proposed that, due to their composition, pipefish would not be as nutritious as the second most common prey of the birds, northern anchovies. In controlled laboratory feeding experiments, there did not seem to be a significant difference in the growth of elegant tern chicks fed a partial diet of pipefish versus a total diet of anchovies. Further work is planned, including learning more about the bird's alimentary system.

Many thanks to Vic Leipzig for organizing the symposium and making it run so smoothly. Also thanks go to greeters Laura Holdenwhite and Patty Overley, and to Margaret Carlberg and Fran Pike who saw to it that the symposium nourished the body as well as the mind. And of course to the speakers we offer our deepest thanks for a totally fascinating and informative program.

## **Bolsa Chica Breeding Birdlife 2009**

by Peter Knapp & Margaret Carlberg

The most obvious breeding birds at Bolsa Chica during the spring and summer are the terns. This year five species of terns were successful nesters: Caspian, Royal, Elegant, Forster's and Least. Black Skimmers were also successful breeders. Four species of terns, although not breeding at Bolsa, put in an appearance: Gull-billed, Common, Sooty, and Black. Ducks were also successful breeders including Mallard, Cinnamon Teal, Redheads, Ruddy, American Coot, and Gadwall. Canada Geese nesting in the seasonal ponds and muted tidal areas has been increasing in recent years, and was at its highest level this year.

Representing shorebirds the following breeding species were successful: Western Snowy Plover, Killdeer, American Avocet, and Black-necked Stilt. Great Blue Herons and Green Herons bred successfully, but highly visible species seen at Bolsa including Great and Snowy Egrets and Black-Crowned Night Herons do not nest within the Bolsa perimeter. Raptor nesting was limited

to Cooper's Hawks. Owls were not confirmed. Other species nesting were Anna's Hummingbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Yellowthroat, Belding's Savannah Sparrow, Great-Tailed Grackle, Horned Lark, Double-Crested Cormorant, House Wren, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove and California Towhee. Birds previously nesting but not seen this year: Least Bittern, White-Tailed Kite, Red-Tailed Hawk, American Kestrel and Loggerhead Shrike.

## Another Great Celebration Picnic

By Margaret Carlberg

On the balmy Sunday afternoon of August 23, 2009 in Lake Park, Huntington Beach, the Amigos celebrated the third anniversary of the opening of the ocean Inlet and the maturing of the restored Bolsa Chica Wetland. Most of the 15 Amigos Board members were present and provided delicious desserts and beverages for the 68 attendees of the picnic. Assorted delicious gourmet sandwiches and salads were again provided by Suzanne's Catering.

The Carlbergs, Dettloffs, Bauers, Mary Ellen Houseal, Linda Moon, Charles Falzon, and Betty Karbo, all members since Amigos' inception, enjoyed having so many friends join us as we celebrated the accomplishment of the 33 year struggles toward our dream come true. We were pleased that there was a mixture of old and new Amigos members, some currently active and some not, and some were visitors. Guests enjoyed messages and photos mounted in a scrapbook from dozens of members about experiences in the Bolsa Chica or with the Amigos over the last three decades.

More than 100 Thank You letters and artwork from Garfield Elementary School students in Long Beach, individually thanking 8 Amigos docents for their tour in May, made a colorful display that was enjoyed by everyone. Most of the 25 T-shirts from the Amigos 'Running is for the Birds' 10K races were displayed on a line which served as a backdrop to the speakers' stage. Jim Robins led the team of 10 or more tall Amigos and guests to set up and disassemble that unique and now-traditional decoration.

Amigos President Dave Carlberg reported on a variety of current and future activities and projects. Vic Leipzig repeated the 'Toast' which he had given at 5:55 am on August 24, 2006, as the backhoes removed the last sand bar to create the Ocean Inlet into the re-created wetlands. Vic and Dave re-emphasized the importance of continuing to work together for the environmental treasure we have helped create here in the Bolsa Chica

Kelly O'Reilly, the Department of Fish and Game

manager of The Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, gave a report on recent progress and maintenance activities. It was good hearing from Peter Knapp about the greater success of the California least tern and the snowy plovers in this third season after restoration. He also listed the great variety of over 30 bird species that have been breeding in the Bolsa Chica in the year.

Many thanks to the committee organizing this Third Inlet Anniversary Picnic which included Betty and Ed Murphy, Barbara and John Binaski, Maria and Mike Buhbe, Jennifer and Jim Robins, and Margaret and Dave Carlberg. Others helping with the setup and cleanup included Tom Livengood, Fran Pike, Julia Tafel and Ron Davis, Brian Westcott, Tom Anderson, Craig Frampton, Jim and Sirkka Aldridge, Marvin Carlberg, Kim Nguyen, and many other guests.



## New Docent Training 2010

The Amigos de Bolsa Chica is looking for enthusiastic individuals with a love of nature to lead weekday and/or weekend tours at Bolsa Chica Wetlands. Interested individuals should enjoy working with children and will need to be available for one tour per month in 2010.

Beginning January 5, 2010, a 5-week Docent training program will be held on Tuesday nights at the Bolsa Chica State Beach Visitor's Center from 7:00-9:00 pm. This training will also include two weekend field trips to the Bolsa Chica. Each week a different speaker will share with the class their extensive knowledge in their area of expertise.

You will learn about the history, ecology, birds, endangered species and the restoration project of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands. Docent manuals filled with a wealth of information and a pictorial book to use during the tours are distributed to each new docent.

To register for the program or for more information contact the Amigos office at (714) 840-1575 or [info@amigosdebolsachica.org](mailto:info@amigosdebolsachica.org).

## The Environment and the Economy

By Shirley Dettloff

For too many years the environmental community and the business community came from very differing points of view. The business community saw themselves as the driving force for a healthy economy and the environmental community was fighting to save many natural resources in face of this opposition. We saw this at Bolsa Chica when the development community fought to develop acres of this resource in the name of its benefits to the economy of the region. On the other hand the environmentalists fought to save an irreplaceable resource which they also saw as contributing to the economy through improved fishing, protection of property during floods, tourism benefits and others.

Gradually we started to see a change in this philosophy as tourism became more and more important to the economy of the state. Tourism is #2 as the second largest industry in the economy of the state, coming in just after agriculture. What would we do without Yosemite, the Redwoods, and the coast of California to just name a few? Gradually the importance of forests, wetlands, deserts became more important in any discussion of protecting the environment and what that meant to the economy of the state.

Right here in Huntington Beach which is known for its environmental activism, the work continues. Recently the Marketing and Visitors Bureau became involved when they put together a new committee called Sustainable Tourism. Amigos President Dave Carlberg serves on this committee with Shirley Dettloff acting as its chair. The purpose of this committee is to ensure that tourism include all of our natural and cultural resources. Also included are the hotels and restaurants which provide so many services to the visitor.

Many of our hotels already provide "green" service to their guests with recycling and water conservation to name a few. Our restaurants also follow good

practices, such as conservation of water, serving local products, following sustainable fishing rules. Although we are finding out that many "green" practices already take place, we must not only continue what we now do, but find other ways to be more environmentally friendly.

The environmentalists who are members of the committee are putting together programs which will allow our visitors to see the many wonderful natural resources right here in Huntington Beach. They are working closely to develop programs which will include the hotels and the local environmental organizations. Amigos de Bolsa Chica offers a new "tours of the Bolsa Chica on-demand" program through the Waterfront Hilton, Hyatt and Shorebreak hotels, and through the HB Visitor and Conference Center kiosk at the pier.

A very important part of this program is the City of Huntington Beach. When a program is developed we want people when they think about Huntington Beach to think well beyond Surf City. We want people when they see our name to know that we are more than just beaches, but have many other resources to offer the visitor. We want our hotels, and restaurants to be a part of this vision and our city to be known as a city which also embraces good environmental practices through recycling, water conservation, and energy conservation which all of our citizens participate in and support.

## President's Tern - Sustainability

By Dave Carlberg

Sustainability is one of those terms that has many definitions. One that I like is: "...actions that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". It's an admirable goal, but a lot of writers say that total sustainability is impossible to attain. They point to the primary example of this: fossil fuels. We are using them at a rate that future generations won't even know what "oil" means. It will be some archaic word found only in dictionaries and history books. It's pretty clear

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the development of alternate sources of energy is one of our most pressing issues. Margaret and I decided to do our part toward sustainability, albeit minuscule compared to the rest of the world. Recently we signed a contract for installing a solar power system for our house. We've already had a solar water heating system on our roof for many years, supplying us with plenty of hot water (over 160F during the summer). I worry every winter that our regular water heater won't kick in after several months of inactivity.

Many people are wary about solar power for their homes from a purely financial angle, noting that it doesn't pay for itself for many years. That's true to various degrees, depending on the system and the usage for a particular home. But rebates and tax incentives do reduce the capital costs, and the short term savings are seen on your monthly electric bills, which can be reduced by 60 percent or more. And it's true that at times when you are generating more electricity than you are consuming, your electric meter actually runs backwards, erasing previous power usage. Interestingly, the electric company discourages people from approaching too close to 100 percent offset because if your annual average happens to go over 100 percent, the simple answer is that it complicates Edison's bookkeeping. And in case you were wondering, they don't pay you for the excess electricity you generate.

Another financial angle that we considered is that if one were to invest the cost of a solar system, say \$10,000, in a 12 month CD, paying an annual rate around 2 percent, the return would be about \$200 (probably taxable). If instead you installed a \$10,000 solar system that reduced your monthly electric bill from \$100 to \$40, that would represent an annual saving of \$720. That is, at the end of the year, you would have at least \$520 (not taxable) more in the bank than if you had invested the \$10,000. Of course all this higher math assumes a solar system would be operating at peak efficiency year 'round, rain or shine. Surprisingly, solar panels do generate electricity even on cloudy days, though obviously not as much as on a sunny day. While solar power at the present provides a mere 0.25 percent of California's electrical consumption, it's still a good feeling to know we've reduced our personal carbon footprint and perhaps a few reading this might take the plunge as well.

Earlier this year we had our front lawn removed and planted with low water native plants. Once the plants are established, which appears imminent, we can switch our watering cycle from twice a week to once a month. Not only have we cut the water consumption of the area that was once our front lawn by 88 percent and eliminated the cost of maintaining the lawn, the front yard is now a profusion of blue, red, white and yellow blooms rather than the boring green and brown

colors of ordinary grass. Planet Earth has essentially the same amount of water it had when it was formed 5 or so billion years ago (97 percent of which is now saltwater, and if the glaciers continue to melt, it will be close to 99 percent), whereas the water needs of its human population continue to rise. While our personal water savings are a drop in the bucket (you saw that coming), if enough people followed suit along with the introduction of other water saving strategies, we might be able to avert the drastic water restrictions that are expected, and there might even be enough water to go around for future generations.

Finally, there is a move afoot to point the city of Huntington Beach in a more sustainable direction. A committee consisting of the Huntington Beach Marketing and Visitors Bureau together with the city and business and environmental groups is launching a campaign to encourage greater sustainable practices within Surf City. The draft Vision Statement of the committee is, "...in 5 years Huntington Beach will be a city that will have programs in place to conserve and protect its natural and environmental resources which include clean water, healthy beaches, clean air, productive habitats, reliable energy, and enriching cultural resources while strengthening the economy". Guidelines are under development that will be distributed to businesses and organizations to lead Huntington Beach in achieving the reputation of being one of the greenest cities anywhere.

## Joyce Zuck Memorial

By Mary Ellen Houseal

Donations to the Amigos have been received in memory of Joyce Zuck who passed away in August after a long illness. She was a teacher and an active member of the Huntington Harbour community for 4 decades. She was a valuable member of the Amigos serving in many capacities, including help in the office for mailings. She became a docent in 1989, and was outstanding and active for many years. One year her house was 'donated' for the Amigos de Bolsa Chica display for the Huntington Harbour Boat Parade, and won a prize!

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**AMIGOS DE BOLSA CHICA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

I support the specific and primary purpose of Amigos de Bolsa Chica, which is to advocate the preservation, restoration and maintenance of the Bolsa Chica, to encourage the public acquisition of all the wetlands and sufficient surrounding open space to create a viable ecosystem, and to provide education about the importance of wetlands.

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