

# *Amigos de Bolsa Chica* THE **TERN TIDE**



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**THE TERN TIDE**

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## **35 Years of Free Public Tours**

(The President's Tern) By Jennifer Robins

Amigos de Bolsa Chica has been conducting free Saturday public tours for over 35 years. We began giving tours before we had officially formed as an organization in 1976. We have only missed having a tour on the first Saturday of the month due to inclement weather or a national holiday. Experienced and knowledgeable docents talk about Current Events, Birds, Endangered Species, Ecology, History and Restoration of the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. Visitors are from local high schools and colleges, residents of Orange, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego counties as well as throughout the United States and the International community.

Amigos docents come to us from a wide variety of backgrounds including the fields of education, medicine, business, science, legal and social work. The docents' backgrounds may be different but their desire to instill the importance of wetlands to visitors is seen and heard when they give their talks. The Saturday tour begins with docents setting up the blue canopy with the Amigos logo and arranging the merchandise and free literature for visitors to peruse. The docents gear up for their talks by getting their informational displays out and walking to their designated spot. Tours start at 9:00am and run approximately every 15 minutes until 10:30.

If you haven't taken a tour for a few years, you may want to reacquaint yourself with all that the Amigos de Bolsa Chica public tour has to offer. And when you come out for the tour bring along relatives and friends who haven't ever stopped for a walk around the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. We think you and your friends will learn something new and have a chance to visit an IBA site (see "Bolsa Chica - an Important Bird Area" on page 5 of this issue of the Tern Tide). If you are interested in becoming a docent read the article about the 2011 Docent Class on page 2.



## New Docent Training Classes Begin January 2011

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 2011.

Beginning January 5, 2011, a 5 week Docent Training Program will be held on Wednesday nights at Bolsa Chica State Beach Visitor's Center from 7:00-9:00 pm. Each week a different speaker will share with the class their extensive knowledge in their area of expertise. This training will also include two weekend field trips to Bolsa Chica. You will learn about the history, ecology, birds, endangered species, fish, and the restoration project of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands. Docent manuals filled with a wealth of information unique to the Bolsa Chica and a pictorial book of birds, fish and other information to use during tours are distributed to docents at the first class.

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

## Ralph's Shoppers - Renew Amigos as Your Community Contribution

Ralph's shoppers who designate the Amigos de Bolsa Chica as their Community Contribution partner allow Amigos to receive a portion of the money they spend at Ralph's when they use their Rewards Card. Ralph's requires everyone to designate their Community Partner annually on September 1st of each year.

Whether you are designating a partner for the first time or renewing, go to <https://customer.ralphs.com/Login.aspx> and follow the simple instructions. Amigos' number is 82972 or you can also type in "Amigos" and a list of 4 organizations will come up.

If you have trouble with the online method, please call Amigos Office Coordinator Laura Holdenwhite 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.

## Coastal Cleanup at Bolsa Chica

The 25th Annual California Coastal Cleanup took place on Saturday, September 25. Amigos de Bolsa Chica took part in the cleanup by working from the South Parking Lot of the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. We had 65 volunteers come out to help including some Amigos members who helped with setup and administration of the event. Laura Holdenwhite was the Cleanup Coordinator along with Margaret Carlberg, and Jim and Jennifer Robins. Docents who helped were Carol Rice, Gail and David Vize and Jerry Donohue.

Items collected included paper and plastic bags, balloons, beverage containers, bottle caps, food containers, baby wipes and 6,764 cigarette butts. Volunteers were boy and girl scout troops, high school students and members of the general public. Even though there are programs about proper disposal of trash we still find that many people are inappropriately disposing of their trash. You can help by example by bringing along a bag to use for picking up trash when you come out for your regular walks at the Reserve.



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## It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas - and Amigos Have the Gift Cards and the Gifts That Keep On Giving!

By Shirley Dettloff & Jennifer Robins

As we write this the temperature is in the 80's, but the calendar says that if you want to shop early for those special gifts, it's time to start thinking about what your favorite Aunt Sally would really like! Why not make Aunt Sally happy but also make your gift really count by shopping at Five Points in Huntington Beach. When you buy a Gift Card from the Amigos, which is good in any Five Points store - including Trader Joe's, you benefit the Amigos who get a percentage of every gift card. It costs you no additional money and you just buy the gift card and use it for those special gifts in any of the shops at Five Points Plaza. This is a win, win! You have the perfect gift and Amigos has money in the treasury which allows us to continue doing all we can for the Bolsa Chica. Also the city benefits when you shop in Huntington Beach. When you shop elsewhere those cities benefit. Let your tax dollars come to our city so we can take care of our beaches, parks, libraries, infrastructure - all those things we hold dear.

To order gift cards contact our Office Coordinator Laura Holdenwhite at [info@amigosdebolsachica.org](mailto:info@amigosdebolsachica.org) or by phone at 714 840-1575.

Also remember that the Amigos have many other kinds of gifts. We have T-shirts, sweat shirts, hats, and Amigos' Trail Map and Common Bolsa Chica Birds cards. A favorite for a thoughtful gift is the book, *The History of the Bolsa Chica* by our own Dave Carlberg. Many people want a meaningful gift to receive and I can think of none which would be better than a membership in the Amigos. The gift of membership comes with a beautiful Bolsa Chica pin. This is the gift that never stops giving! The Winter Holiday Celebrations may seem far away, but one day you will wake up and find that "yikes - tomorrow is the day for gift giving and I haven't bought a thing!" So let us know how you would like us to help you have a stress free holiday.

Vist the Join/Shop/Donate page of our website, [www.amigosdebolsachica.org](http://www.amigosdebolsachica.org), to see and purchase our merchandise, join, make a donation or renew a membership.

## Thank You to Amigos Docents at Recent Events

Along with dozens of docents giving public and private tours during the summer, many also volunteered to share their knowledge and time with visitors at the many diverse and successful summer outreach events. This is appreciated by the Amigos, the public who were encountered and the animals in the wetlands who are now better understood and respected.

Docents: Binaski, Bowman, D and M Carlberg, Davis, Dettloff, J and L Donohue, Drescher, Elder, Frampton, P and R Griswold, Holdenwhite, Leipzig, McCarthy, Murphy, Overley, J and J Robins, Smith, Stewart, Tafel, Vari, D and G Vize, and docent candidates Adelman and Starr.

Events: Aug. 6 - Orange County Fair, booth; Aug. 28 - Five Points Event, booth and activities; Sept. 18 - HB Green Expo, HB Pier booth; Sept. 23 - Golden West College Volunteer Opportunities Day, booth; Sept. 23 - Bolsa Chica Land Trust Town Hall, booth; Sept. 25 - Coastal Cleanup, lots of trash cleanup.



## Working Group Meeting News

By Thomas Anderson

The Working Group is a quarterly meeting of representatives from the Amigos de Bolsa Chica, the Bolsa Chica Land Trust, the Bolsa Chica Conservancy and the 2 Department of Fish & Game Managers, Kelly O'Reilly and Carla Navarro, who manage the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. The purpose of the meetings is to share news and information, to plan and coordinate our tours and events with utmost care for the sensitive habitat that is the Bolsa Chica. The most recent meeting was held on September 7 and the following is important news from the management team.

### *Tour Scheduling*

For the past several years, the 3 Bolsa Chica organizations have been maintaining a Master Event Calendar on behalf of the Department of Fish and Game of all the many tours of schools, clubs and organizations that come to experience the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. This calendar keeps multiple tours from being scheduled at the same time on the same day. As increasingly high numbers of groups are coming for a visit, overcrowding has become an issue. BCER has limited parking and restrooms and multiple large groups can overwhelm the facilities at the reserve and negatively impact the wildlife.

To promote a positive experience for all of the visitors and reduce impacts to BCER's wildlife, **the California Department of Fish and Game is requiring that all groups of 25 or more participants schedule their visit on the Master Event Calendar.** If your school, club or organization wishes to have a group tour of Bolsa Chica, it is highly recommended that you call one of the 3 Bolsa Chica groups and utilize their highly experienced docent-led tours. Each organization's docent-led tours promise your group a memorable and highly educational visit.

Please remember that no dogs or bicycles are allowed on the Reserve. The Department and the non-profit groups, the Amigos, the Land Trust and the Conservancy, appreciate your cooperation to help us balance public access and resource protection.

### *Muted Tide Gates Opened Then Closed Again*

It has taken several years for all three muted tide gates to be opened. These tide gates allow for partial tidal flushing in the back part of the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. At the request of Aera Oil, the company that operates the oil production in the muted and future full tidal areas of the reserve, the gates were automated on a computer schedule. This was to ensure greater safety and efficiency in closing the gates in the event of an oil spill.

The automation was completed this year and the gates

were opened earlier this summer. The gates functioned as designed, but according to Kelly O'Reilly, BCER Manager, Department of Fish and Game, they soon had had to be closed again. The problem was due to the silting of the ocean inlet: the full tidal basin is becoming somewhat of a muted tidal area itself and is not functioning optimally. This meant that the water was flowing into but not properly draining out of the muted tidal areas. Too much water, salt or fresh, can harm the pickleweed and other plants that need tidal flushing. It was decided that the gates should be closed until the ocean inlet can be dredged. Dredging is scheduled for later this year.

## U. S. Army To Search Bolsa Chica for Remnants of World War II Munitions

By David Carlberg

Apparently under the banner of "Better Late Than Never", the U. S. Army has announced that it will begin searching the Bolsa Chica mesa for munitions or other hazardous matter left over from the time the mesa was a World War II coastal defense installation. When the U. S. entered WWII following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the threat of a strike from the sea aimed at Los Angeles/Long Beach harbors and our local oil fields was considered real. Due to its strategic location, the Bolsa Chica mesa was considered the perfect location in which to place coastal defense guns. In 1942 the Army acquired about 600 acres from the Bolsa Chica Gun Club and filled them with massive underground concrete bunkers, observation towers, tunnels and gun emplacements. The club's landmark hunting lodge was converted into the site's headquarters.

At the war's end, the artillery and other structures were removed, but two circular, concrete platforms known as "Panama Mounts" that are near the mesa overlook and the bunkers remained. By 1949 the property was returned to the land owners, except for about 20 acres, including the Goodell parcel, which were retained for a Nike missile site. Those plans were eventually dropped and that property reverted to its rightful owners. The largest bunkers were demolished in the 1990s to make way for residential development.

Now, some 65 years later, the Army has launched a study to determine if parts of the mesa might contain live munitions or hazardous chemicals left over from WWII days. This is part of a nation-wide study of "Formerly Used Defense Sites" to check for the presence of such dangerous remnants that may have been left behind when the sites were abandoned. Field analysis at Bolsa Chica is scheduled to begin in January of 2011 and a final report should be completed by the end of 2011.

## Round Stingrays of Southern California Visit Bolsa Chica

By Kady Lyons (*MS candidate CSULB*)

During the summer months, the Round Stingray (*Urobatis halleri*) is one of the most abundant fishes seen in local bays and estuaries in southern California. They range from the Gulf of California to Santa Barbara. The Round Stingray prefers the calm habitat offered by estuaries such as Bolsa Chica and feeds on small invertebrates, such as clams, worms and small crustaceans. These rays can range considerably in color pattern and degree of pigmentation, as many visitors to Bolsa Chica have noted. It has been hypothesized that the rays may darken when in shallow water to further increase their solar warming capabilities and to deal with UV light exposure. It is thought that they enter estuaries in summer months to take advantage of the warmer water conditions where mating occurs. Recent studies have indicated that Round Stingrays are already the most abundant large fish in the Bolsa Chica Full Tidal Basin, particularly during summer months. Pregnant females remain in estuaries throughout the summer, where it is thought the warmer water may actually speed up their gestation. Females will give birth to live young in late September – early October to litters of up to 8 pups.



Round Stingray numbers are historically known to be high along coastal beaches, such as Seal Beach, where warmer water conditions at the mouth of the San Gabriel River prevails throughout the year. More stingray-related injuries to beachgoers are reported at Seal Beach than any other beach in the country. It has been suggested that the stingrays are attracted by the heated effluent from local power plants and the Alamitos Bay jetties and the Long Beach breakwater, which have created calm conditions that mimic an estuary. However, studies by CSULB researchers have indicated that rays do not remain more than a few days at Seal Beach before moving on. And when water temperatures begin to drop in the mid fall, rays move offshore to more stable conditions and return the following year. Photo by Juhong Lee.

## Bolsa Chica - an Important Bird Area

by Sylvia R. Gallagher

The term Important Bird Area (IBA) is not just a casual description. Instead it has international significance. The Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve has been designated a part of the Orange Coast Wetlands globally significant IBA. This IBA includes estuaries along the north Orange County coast from Upper Newport Bay to the Los Angeles County line, but several of these sites, including Bolsa Chica, would easily qualify for global IBA status all on their own.

Who designates a site as an IBA? Conservationists from all over the world have come together and formed the organization, Bird Life International (BLI). Respected bird conservation organizations in each country constitute the membership of BLI. In the United States, National Audubon Society is the member organization and has been working since 1995 to determine which areas in our country qualify as IBAs.

What are the criteria? In order for a site to be recognized as an IBA, it must meet certain requirements. The global criteria are recognized world-wide, but individual national organizations can also establish less stringent criteria for local recognition. In the U. S., we have national and state IBAs, as well as over 400 global ones. A qualifying site must meet at least one of these criteria:

- 1) Have one or more globally threatened species.
- 2) Be part of a suite of sites critical to the survival of species of restricted range.
- 3) Have exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory species.

Each of these criteria has been spelled out quantitatively in great detail. Bolsa Chica easily meets all of them, not just one.

Why should we care if a site is an IBA? The reasoning behind the program is that if a site has national or international recognition, it should be easier for a local advocacy group to gain protection for the area than if it just had the say so of a bunch of people protective of their favorite birding grounds. This recognition, if well publicized, also attracts visiting birders from afar, who would patronize local businesses.

For members of support groups like Amigos de Bolsa Chica, just the knowledge that the site that they have worked to protect for so many decades truly is a globally Important Bird Area is confirmation that all that effort really was worth while. (For on-line information on our IBA, just search for Orange Coast Wetlands IBA).

## California's New Budget and Protecting Our Resources

By Mel Nutter

Early on the morning of October 8, the Legislature presented the Governor with a State Budget 100 days after it was due. Because the Governor can veto any line item in the budget that he does not like, as of this writing it is impossible to know what the budget for the Coastal Commission or other Resource Agencies will be for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

If there is any good news concerning the budget, it is this: rather than suffering the direct cuts that some State programs will experience, agencies and commissions under the umbrella of the Resources Agency will be favored with mere "across the board" cuts unless the Governor does exercise his line item veto power. On the other hand, the resource agencies always hurt disproportionately when compared to larger governmental operations because they have no fat left to trim.

As far as the Coastal Commission is concerned, it is in deep financial trouble. From 1980 to 2010, while inflation has increased 164 percent, the Commission's total funding has risen only 21 percent, from \$13.5 million to \$16.3 million. The Commission's full-time staff has been cut from 212 in 1980 to 125 in 2010. Now, it appears the Coastal Commission will sustain a funding cut of well over 10 percent compared to last year.

In 2001, the Legislative Analyst's Office identified a significant increase in workload over the preceding decade, and significant shortage of staff at the Coastal Commission to carry out basic planning and permitting functions. The Office recommended that the Commission's staff be increased by 14.5 positions (\$1.4 million) just to conduct LCP reviews, more than 90% of which were out of date, saying, "Failure to review can weaken coastal protection...leave(s) the state susceptible to litigation...(and) can impede local planning and development". A conservative internal estimate of total staffing needs that same year revealed a need for 26 additional positions to implement the regulatory program adequately (permits, appeals, vested rights claims, waivers, amendments and condition compliance.) For instance, the enforcement division now has over 1,500 backlogged cases that would take more than 150 years to resolve at the current rate.

In short, the resources to protect our resources are really short.

## Renew Your Amigos Membership Today

One of Amigos' most important goals is to provide education about the importance of wetlands. Between our free public tours and the schools, clubs and organizations that take advantage of our docent-led tours, we provide wetland education to approximately 3,000 people every year. We are also developing new educational outreach programs. Your continued membership is an integral part of the support needed to continue to this service. Amigos de Bolsa Chica, with your help, has educated countless thousands of people over its 34 years of existence. The challenges to the maintenance and protection of the wetlands also continue and monitoring wetland management, providing information resources and communication with decision makers is an ongoing necessity. Through its educational programs and tours, Amigos can develop new generations of protectors of the Bolsa Chica.

If you have renewed your Amigos membership, thank you. To renew your membership, you can send a check to: Amigos de Bolsa Chica, P.O. Box 1563, Huntington Beach CA 92647. \$10 Student, \$20 Individual, \$30 Family, \$50 Patron, \$75 Sponsor, \$100 Sustaining, \$300 Life Member. Contributions to Amigos de Bolsa Chica are tax deductible.



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## Oil and Wetlands – Part 2

By Dave Carlberg

In the last issue of the Tern Tide, we covered the kinds of damage that an oil spill can inflict on the plants and animals of a wetland. We'll now look at how the wildlife at Bolsa Chica is protected from a possible oil spill.

The Bolsa Chica wetland has been the site of a major oil field since the 1940s. While a number of oil wells was removed as part of the recent restoration, those that remain in the Muted Tidal and Future Full Tidal sections are isolated into numerous cells surrounded by levees. Thus if a leak should occur from one well, it would be confined and prevented from spreading to other parts of the wetland. The culverts that allow water from the Full Tidal Basin to enter the Muted Tidal sections have gates that can be closed to prevent any oil from entering the basin. The majority of the oil wells in the Bolsa Chica wetland are operated by Aera Energy, a consortium of Shell and Exxon/Mobil companies. The company has established an extensive number of protective measures that minimizes the possibility of a spill. For example, older well heads have been replaced with ones of simpler design to reduce the chance of a leak; that is, fewer parts mean fewer failures. Shields have been installed at the flanges (connections) on the pipes that crisscross the oil field to deflect any leaks into trenches below that are separated from the surrounding wetland. In addition, oil company employees undergo twice a year training for oil spill prevention and intervention.

Many off-site sources of oil could enter the wetland via flood control channels. Fortunately there are no similar channels that drain into the newly restored wetland, but the Wintersburg Flood Control Channel, which receives runoff from some 27 square miles of north Orange County, has been the source of oil spills into outer Bolsa Bay. The last major spill involving the channel happened in 1998 and originated in Garden Grove. The Coast Guard quickly called on outside specialists, Foss Environmental and Infrastructure, a private hazardous waste management services company, which deployed oil booms to prevent the spread of the oil beyond the channel outflow gates and absorbent pads to

help remove the oil from the wetland. The rapid response did not, however, prevent some birds from becoming oiled. Fortunately the nearby Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center was prepared to treat the affected birds.

There are a number of oil platforms off our coast that could be a source of an oil spill. While this might be reminiscent of the Gulf oil spill, it should be mentioned that the conditions that are present on nearby platforms are nowhere near the same as those that were involved in the Gulf of Mexico. The platforms off our coast are in fairly shallow water and due to the length of time it has been tapped, the oil pool is under relatively low pressure. But should a spill occur offshore of Bolsa Chica, the operators of the offshore oil platforms have trained oil spill teams that are ready at a moment's notice. Platform Emmy, which is 1.3 miles off our coast and operated by Aera, is only a producing platform. It has not been involved in more accident-prone drilling for 15 years. The platform's automated Emergency Shut Down System can cut oil flow immediately in the event of a leak. The system, which is tested monthly, can be activated either from the platform or from the shore if need be. Fifteen hundred feet of oil booms and a fast response boat are at the ready on the platform. On September 28, the Huntington Beach Fire Department Hazardous Materials Response team participated in a semi-annual off shore oil spill drill at Platform Emmy. The drill was conducted under the auspices of the California Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR). Observing the drill were representatives from the United States Coast Guard, California State Lands Commission, California Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources. In addition, on the land side, both the state and Aera have emergency booms stored near Bolsa Chica's ocean opening and can be deployed in a short time to prevent any oil from entering the full tidal basin.

Thus the threat of an oil spill and its effect on wildlife in the Bolsa Chica wetland have been greatly reduced by numerous preparations put in place by both city and state agencies and the oil company.


*Thanks to Susan Hersberger and Corbin Weed for providing information about how Aera Energy is prepared to deal with oil spills should they occur in Bolsa Chica.*



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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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*Return application to: Amigos de Bolsa Chica, P.O. Box 1563, Huntington Beach, CA 92647*