

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



Since 1976

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*In this issue:*

**1  
Earth Days at Bolsa Chica**

**2  
Welcome 2008 Docents,  
Amigos to Host Docent  
League, Advertise in The  
Tern Tide**

**3  
Amigos' Docents at Seal  
Beach NWR, Donation  
Thanks**

**4  
One Muted Tidal Wetland  
Gets Seawater, HB  
Wetlands Restoration  
Begins in September**

**5  
Wintersburg Channel  
Upgrades, South Dune  
Restoration**

**6  
Bird Watch, Give Gift of  
Membership**

**7  
President's Tern**

## **THE TERN TIDE**

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## **Earth Days At Bolsa Chica**

***Saturday April 19, 9:00 am-12:00 noon, North Parking Lot  
(Warner near PCH)***

Please join the Amigos de Bolsa Chica and the Bolsa Chica Stewards in planting native shrubs and grasses on the mesa. There will also be public education about the benefits of using native plants and how to select these drought-tolerant plants for your own garden. A major environmental and educational art project on Water Use and Recycling will also be started by Girl Scouts during this event.

Contact Margaret (mcarlberg@ix.netcom.com) if you want to volunteer to help (with refreshments, planting or parking assistance), or just come and bring friends. This is an opportunity to personally help revive the area for wildlife and for people to enjoy. Refreshments will be served.

***Sunday April 20, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, North Parking Lot  
(Warner near PCH)***

The Amigos and the Bolsa Chica Conservancy are again co-sponsoring this day of Free Family Fun. Bring your younger family members and friends. There will be activities and demonstrations involving all aspects of the Bolsa Chica environment—soils, water, invertebrates, reptiles, mammals, plants, Birds and Tides, recycling, trail etiquette. There will also be nature art projects and refreshments all day.

Contact Margaret (see above) if you can volunteer to help Vic Leipzig with his creative study of bird habits as the tides change during this 5 hour event, or help with the arts and crafts, with the Amigos information booth, or refreshments.



*From the 2007 Earth Day planting. Photo by Julie Bixby*

## Welcome Class of 2008 Docents!

Seven enthusiastic new Amigos Docents completed their training January 28, and are eager to get out on the recently-repaired trails. We are attracting docents from far and near: Susie Grabel from Whittier, Sue McNulty from Downey, Karen Kyster from Cerritos, Beth Taormina from Long Beach, and Jim Marshall, Elissa Waranatz and Laura Holdenwhite from Huntington Beach.

Each of them has been on at least one private 'New Docent field trip' in the Bolsa Chica with Barbara Sentovich or Vic Leipzig. All have helped with our public or private tours, Education Committee meetings, or signed up to help with Earth Day. Every one has been approved to be ready to assist or give presentations on one or more topics. Please welcome them as they share their enthusiasm with the public.

Many thanks to the Amigos experts who were their teachers—Helen Higgins with History, Vic Leipzig with an expanded coverage on Ecology, and Barbara Sentovich with Birds and Endangered Species. At the last class Dave Carlberg presented Restoration and Management., and Jennifer Robins discussed tours and 'docenting,' followed by refreshments and presentation of Amigos docent vests and name badges. Margaret Carlberg facilitated the classes while Diana Lang, BCC board member, hosted the meetings at the revitalized Bolsa Chica Conservancy Interpretive Center.

## Amigos to Host O.C. Docent League Event

by Alma Bowman

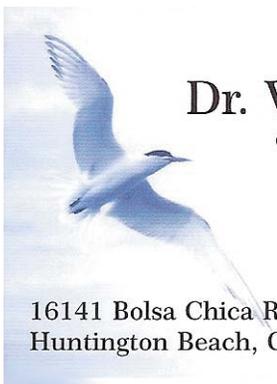
Docents of the Amigos are preparing to host docents from the Orange County Docent League on May 13, 2008. at 9:30 a.m. The event will be held at the Huntington Beach Yacht Club. Orange County Docent League brings together docents from thirty organizations in and around Orange County - from the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach to San Juan Capistrano Mission. Events are held twice a year which provide docents an opportunity to network and learn from each other.

The education committee and docents are planning a program which will present the history, ecology and restoration of the wetlands as well as information about the Amigos Docent training and programs. Tours of the wetlands will be held after lunch.

## Advertise in *The Tern Tide*

Amigos de Bolsa Chica is now offering all interested businesses the opportunity to advertise in *The Tern Tide* in order to assist with underwriting the increasing publishing costs (printing and postage) of this newsletter. Our rate for a "business card space" is \$100/year for 4 issues. Not only is *The Tern Tide* mailed to our members, it is also available online. Considering that we receive over 200,000 visitors a year to our website, this could be quite a bit of publicity for any advertiser. *The Tern Tides* have also been archived on our website since 2004.

So if you or someone you know is looking for a way to promote your business or specialization, this opportunity benefits both of us. Send your business card and payment to: Amigos de Bolsa Chica, P.O. Box 1563, Huntington Beach, CA 92647. Or, if you have a good resolution scan of your card in a jpeg, tiff or pdf format, you can email that to us at [info@amigosdebolsachica.org](mailto:info@amigosdebolsachica.org).



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## Amigos' Docents Visit Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge

By Barbara Stewart

On March 3rd a group of enthusiastic docents, including several from our latest docent class, attended our quarterly docent outing. The tour visited the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge, located within the U.S. Naval Weapons Station. There we were treated to a docent led tour that included highlights of an up close view of a Peregrine Falcon, a flock of Black Brant, a marauding coyote, and the refuge's native plant garden in spring colors. Attending this event and looking forward to the next outing were Beth Taormina, Jim Marshall, Elissa Warantz, Ron Davis, Fran Pike, Dave Carlberg, Bob Johnson, Al Vari, Frank Stewart, Barbara Stewart, Laura Holdenwhite, Chuck Drescher, Barbara Sentovich, and Helen Higgins. Following the tour, most of the group gathered at Hennessey's Tavern in Seal Beach for lunch and lively conversation.



*Amigos docents enjoy lunch and relaxation following a tour of the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge. Left to right are: Chuck Drescher, Ron Davis, Al Vari, Barbara Stewart, Helen Higgins, Frank Stewart, Fran Pike, Beth Taormina, Barbara Sentovich, Laura Holdenwhite and Elissa Warantz.*

## End of Year Donation Thanks

The Amigos Board of Directors thanks these and many more end-of-year donations to Amigos which arrived after the last Tern Tide deadline:

Ralph and Charlene Bauer, E. Bolinger, Dale and Sharon Sherik, Sue Gordon, Marvin Carlberg, Virginia Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Goodwin, and Sally Spotts.



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## Wetland Updates . . .

### One Muted Tidal Wetland Finally Gets Tidewater

By Dave Carlberg

The historic restoration of nearly 600 acres of the Bolsa Chica wetland was begun in 2004 and essentially completed with the opening of the ocean inlet on August 24 of 2006. On that same date, the connections between the full tidal basin and the three muted tidal wetlands were scheduled to be opened as well. However, as you may recall, those openings were delayed for a number of reasons too numerous to list here.

One year rolled around and still no tidal water entered the muted tidal wetlands (except the pocket wetland, which received tidal water in 2006).

Finally on March 5 of this year, Bolsa Chica wetland biologist Kelly O'Reilly pushed a small gray button, causing a control gate to open the connection between the full tidal basin and the western-most muted tidal wetland. But the action was more symbolic than hydraulic. It was low tide, so no water entered the wetland. One had to wait until the next high tide to watch tidal flow enter the wetland for the first time in over a century.

During the next several days, by adjusting the opening, Kelly must now fine-tune the movement of the tides in and out of the muted tidal wetland so that just the right amount of water enters to sustain optimum growth of the pickleweed and other wetland plants.

Unfortunately the two other muted tidal wetlands will have to wait a few months before they are flooded; it is getting too close to the Belding's Savannah Sparrow nesting season and there is the danger of inundating nests if the gates are opened too soon.



*Fish and Game Biologist Kelly O'Reilly prepares to open the tide gate to allow tidal flow into the west muted tidal wetland. The water in the background is natural ground water that has accumulated during wetland restoration.*

### Huntington Beach Wetlands Restoration Begins in September

By Tom Livengood

On March 11, 2008 the Huntington Beach Planning Commission approved the Conditional Use Permit for the restoration of 130 acres of the Talbert, Brookhurst and Magnolia Marshes that make up the Huntington Beach Wetlands. Amigos President Dave Carlberg spoke in favor of the project. The wetlands stretch from Newland Street to the Santa Ana River along Pacific Coast Highway. The non-native plants along PCH will be removed and restored with native plants, and a trail from Newland to the River will also be constructed. The Talbert Ocean Inlet will be dredged and the channel cleared. The project will grade and dredge approximately 290,000 cubic yards of sediment.

Overseeing the project is the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy. Target start date is September 2008. The project will take three years to complete. The second year no work will be done to allow habitat establishment. Magnolia will be restored in the third year. The project is now being submitted to the Coastal Commission. Tours are now being conducted the second Saturday of the month. Tours start at the Wildlife Care Center at Newland and PCH and end at Magnolia Street.



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## Wintersburg Channel Fixes May Cause Loss of Access

by Dave Carlberg

Emergency repairs on the north levee of the Wintersburg flood control channel levee are now complete and the Orange County Flood Control District is now directing its attention to improvements to other nearby sections of the levees that are in and around Bolsa Chica. The major impetus for the work is the federal mandate to bring the channel up to 100 year flood requirements. Presently, the channel is far below FEMA standards, requiring the channel to be widened and its levees raised. The improvements near Bolsa Chica and those planned for upstream sections of the channel will take the surrounding neighborhoods out of flood danger and eliminate the need for flood insurance.

Because of the narrowness of the district's Wintersburg right-of-way, widening the channel will require a new design involving vertical sides, which it seems, will offer a greater risk to the public using the levees as trails, according to Paul Jones, district design manager. That means those of us who enjoy walking from Graham Street and adjacent access points may no longer be able to get to the Bolsa Chica via the channel levees. A lot still depends on what happens on the Shea/Parkside property. If the Parkside development goes forward, Shea has offered to upgrade the north levee and it will probably remain open to the public. If Parkside does not occur, the county will have to upgrade the north levee and that will probably terminate it as a public trail. Access to the south levee from the ground water barrier trail (where Graham and other streets dead end at the east edge of Bolsa Chica) will probably be blocked by the vertical wall of the renovated channel.

This story may have a happy ending. The project must get a permit from the Coastal Commission. If the commission reads the project as a violation of the Coastal Act regarding public access to coastal facilities, the commission might order the district to come up with a more people-friendly design.

# GOOD DAY CAFE

**Breakfast & Lunch**  
**Dine or Take Out**

**7:00 am to 3:00 pm**  
**4911 Warner Avenue Suite 102**  
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## South Dune Restoration

by Lou Murray

The Orange County Conservation Corps, in conjunction with the Bolsa Chica Conservancy and the Amigos de Bolsa Chica, were awarded a small grant from the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project in fall of 2006. The goals were to remove non-native trees and iceplant from the dune area along PCH south of the south parking lot and educate Corps members (pictured below) and the public about the value of wetlands.

The first obstacle we faced was removing three homeless encampments that were hidden among the Myoporum trees. After the sheriff's department roused one group after another, the cleanup began. Chainsaw crews from the Corps cut and chipped Myoporum, Tamarisk, Brazilian pepper trees and giant reed (*Arundo donax*). We filled dumpster after dumpster with trash and plant debris. Volunteers from the public helped by pulling and hauling iceplant to the dumpsters. They also planted hundreds of natives such as beach primrose, coyote brush, coastal goldenbush and mule fat. DFG cut down the non-native palms and used herbicide to kill pampas grass. Orientation crews from the Corps came month after month to pull iceplant. In all, about 300 Corps members participated in this project. Finally, all the iceplant is gone along PCH. The crew shown here finished up the job in the spring of 2008.

The great news is that where iceplant has been removed, natives such as beach primrose, sand verbena, silvery beach bur, and coastal wooly-heads are springing up. Western fence lizards, side-blotched lizards, and silvery legless lizards abound. However, more iceplant remains below highway level near the wetland edge. It will take a few more years of follow-up on the part of the public to keep iceplant out of the south dunes for good.



## Bird Watch

by Vic Leipzig with Information from Peter Knapp, Department of Fish & Game

It's already spring in the wetlands and the endangered Belding's Savannah Sparrows are proving it. Singing males perch on the tops of pickleweed to establish territories and attract mates. Although the deep-water restoration project completed in 2006 displaced some sparrows, state and federal biologists expect that the population will rebound now that there is more habitat. A survey in April will determine how well this state-listed species is doing.

Spring came early this year for another important species, the federally-threatened Snowy Plover. These non-migratory shorebirds began scraping nesting spots in the sand as early as mid-February, which is a month earlier than usual. Down in San Diego, some plovers even had eggs in nests in February. Here at Bolsa Chica, most plover nesting activity occurs on the newly created nesting areas that are safely above fluctuating water levels.

Up on the mesa, Great Blue Herons are doing courtship and nest-building in the eucalyptus trees. Surf scoters were especially abundant this past winter. In mid-winter there were nearly a thousand of these

large ducks—numbers never seen before at Bolsa Chica. At least 200 are still present. All will depart for the far north later in spring. Royal Terns were also numerous this winter. Up to 70 were present, compared with a mere handful in most years. Because Royal Terns usually nest at Bolsa in summer, this year may see record-breaking numbers of breeders.

Elegant Terns, the most abundant terns at Bolsa in the summer, are just starting to arrive from their winter grounds in Latin America. So far, only a few dozen have shown up. But by summer there should be 8,000 of these raucous birds wheeling over the wetlands!

Some less common birds that are spending time at Bolsa include the Reddish Egret that has shown up off and on for over a year. Three Brants, small geese similar to Canada Geese, are happily feeding on the eelgrass planted by wildlife authorities in the new tidal basin. Eelgrass is an underwater plant typical of protected bays in southern California. It supports fish and shellfish, which in turn feed many bird species. Watching the wildlife change with the seasons is one of the thrills of a visit to Bolsa Chica.

## Give a "Gift of Membership"

Is there a special young person in your life who will be graduating this spring? Will you be honoring someone this Mother's and Father's day? Are you looking for a unique gift that will show your thoughtfulness throughout the year? Give those special people in your life a gift membership to the Amigos de Bolsa Chica.

When you purchase a gift membership, you not only help preserve, restore and maintain the Bolsa Chica, you also introduce that person to the incredible experience of the Bolsa Chica. Your gift will include the quarterly newsletter, *The Tern Tide*, so that the recipient can stay current with the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve activities and know exactly how your membership increases awareness about the importance of wetlands, Bolsa Chica in particular.

For more information on gift memberships, contact our office at 714-840-1575.

## Birding Travel Opportunity

At the beginning of June, Vic Leipzig will be the escort for a birding tour of Costa Rica under the auspices of Irvine Valley College. The tour will run from May 31 to June 8 and will visit the rain forests that cloak the Arenal Volcano and the cloud forests of Monteverde as well as other habitat areas in this beautiful, stable, and ecologically-sensitive country. Contact Vic at (714) 848-5394 for further details.

G. Victor Leipzig, Ph.D.  
*scientific & environmental writing*

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## The President's Tern

Dave Carlberg

The Signal/Hearthside residential development on the upper Bolsa Chica mesa seems to have attracted a good share of newsprint lately. A few months ago it was the infamous glass wall and more recently it's the buried remains of a significant number of Native Americans on a site part of which is slated for the construction of megabuck houses. That revelation comes as no surprise to those of us who have followed the Bolsa Chica saga. Human remains as well as numerous prehistoric artifacts have been unearthed on the mesa for a number of years. What made headlines was the fact that the most recent discoveries of remains were not reported in a timely fashion as required by law.

Over many years the most striking artifacts found in the Bolsa Chica are the so-called cogstones, and in such great numbers that it suggests they must have been manufactured there. The cogstones are unique; nothing like them has been found anywhere else in the world, although similar artifacts have been unearthed in Chile and Peru. Their age (at least 5500 years old) and what they were used for are two of the many reasons why the specific 11 acre site where the cogstones were concentrated (known to archeologists as ORA-83) is considered one of the most archeologically interesting and valuable sites in the state if not the U. S. In addition to the discovery of cogstones on the Bolsa Chica site, evidence of subterranean house pits has been found. Experts have pointed out that such structures, particularly in light of the age of the site, are extremely rare in Southern California. In addition, other authorities believe the Bolsa Chica Mesa may have been the location of a prehistoric astronomical observatory. If true, it would be the earliest such site in North America and one of the oldest in the world. On at least two occasions, the State Historical Resources Commission declared the site eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, but Signal has steadfastly refused to allow the listing. However, mere listing offers no protection for the site, but it opens the door for local or state agencies to impose their own protective regulations. Endangered species and archeological sites on their property are two things developers dread the most (besides a downturn in the housing industry), for either discovery can put the brakes on a project.

Bolsa Chica was visited by various tribes of natives beginning at least 8000 years ago. Decendents of the most recent Native American occupants of the Bolsa Chica call themselves Tongva; the Spaniards called them Gabrieliño, indicating their association with the San Gabriel mission. Most scientists believe the Tongva began arriving in Southern California between about 1 AD to around 500 AD. Sadly, the arrival of European settlers into California in the late 1700s was the beginning of the end of the region's indigenous people. Except for fragments of oral history passed down to the few descendants who live in the area, we know practically nothing about the occupants of the Bolsa Chica prior to 1769. All we have are the archeological sites such as ORA-83 to provide us with a glimpse into the very distant past.

Approximately 30 registered archeological sites are presently mapped in the Huntington Beach area. A 1973 study showed that 60 percent of the sites were either totally destroyed or so badly damaged by vandalism, farming or development that their scientific value was limited. The balance was considered damaged but of some scientific value. None of the sites was untouched. In spite of federal and state regulations that are supposed to protect Native American historical sites, we are witnessing the loss of an enormously, perhaps nationally, important piece of our history within our very community. While developers are required to bring in archeologists to oversee excavation of prehistoric sites, it is not clear to what extent archeologists are able to take the time to follow scientific principles of investigation. According to CEQA EIR recommended procedures for archeological sites, the sites should be excavated in a proper professional manner, with provision for analysis and publication of results. I have the feeling construction schedules take precedence over science.

I wish I had some wise answers to this except to urge you to continue putting pressure on appropriate agencies such as the California Coastal Commission to assure that archeological sites such as ORA-83 are fully protected and freely open to analysis by the scientific community with the results made public.

One more thought before we close. Don't you think it would be appropriate for Signal/Hearthside to fund a Native American wing in the future permanent Bolsa Chica interpretive center?

