

Amigos de Bolsa Chica

THE

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Save the Date - September 3, 7:00 pm - Town Hall: Restored Wetland Biological Monitoring

The Amigos de Bolsa Chica will present a town hall program on Wednesday, September 3 at 7 PM at the newly opened Huntington Beach Wetland and Wildlife Care Center, Newland and Pacific Coast Highway (enter on Newland). The program will feature a report on the biological health of the newly restored Bolsa Chica wetland. Rachel Woodfield, biologist for Merkel Associates, Inc. will present the results of their biological monitoring program. Bob Hoffman, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will offer his analysis of the increasing biological diversity that the restored wetland has experienced since it opened in August, 2006. Light refreshments will be served.

Coordinator's Line

by Laura Holdenwhite

Having the Amigos phone at my house has been an adventure, to say the least. While I often get calls about tours, for directions, and general questions about the wetlands, sometimes I really wonder why people are calling the Amigos. I have gotten a call asking for a restaurant suggestion; help with a mystery author's plot involving the Bolsa Chica; and recently someone wanting to donate a line - or what us landlubbers would call rope. Ed Harnby, who is a volunteer on the SS Lane Victory, was kind enough to think of us when the line on his ship needed replacing. And a very big line it is. Used to tie the 455' SS Lane Victory up to the dock where she is berthed near the Vincent Thomas Bridge, one needs a big line.

Why would Amigos de Bolsa Chica need line like this? Because the barricades in the south parking lot are in serious need of replacement. With the telephone poles that the Dept. of Fish and Game has, the only thing missing is an Eagle Scout in search of a project to replace the barricades.

The SS Lane Victory, www.lanevictory.org, makes her home in San Pedro. She is a non-profit educational institution, and is open to the public for tours.



Amigos Docents Host an Orange County Docent League Event

by Alma Bowman

Docents are creative and enthusiastic. Amigos de Bolsa Chica was creative in planning an Event for the Orange County Docent League and the Docents attending from 14 other organizations were enthusiastic in their enjoyment and praise of the event.

Creative planning was completed by the Education Committee: Margaret Carlberg and Jennifer Robins, co-chairs, and Alma Bowman, event co-chair. Other committee members participating were Barbara Sentovich, Barbara Stewart, Al Vari, Dave Carlberg, and Jim Robins. Blue table cloths accented the centerpieces of photo art from previous photo contests and the beautiful setting of the Huntington Harbor Yacht Club. Thanks to Mary Ellen Houseal for arranging the HB Yacht Club for us.

Karen Kyster took charge of welcoming and registering 80 Docents. Home made baked goods highlighted our morning coffee. Thanks to Barbara Sentovich, Barbara Binaski, Betty Murphy, and Wesley White (a budding chef and son of Laura Holdenwhite) for the creative baking. Thanks also to Starbucks for coffee and JT's Bagel Company for their contributions.

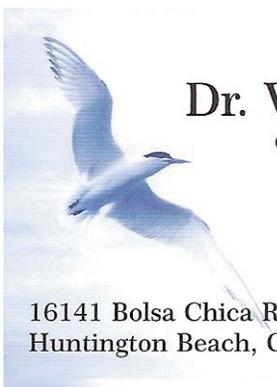
Tours of the wetlands followed a wonderful lunch provided by Jay's Catering of Garden Grove. Thanks to Phil Smith for arranging a van from the Senior Program of HB. The van took 50 Docents to the wetlands, solving our parking problem and helping us group our tours. Docents returned from their tours praising our docent information and all that they had seen in the wetlands. Amigos Docents gathered to set up, serve food, lead tours and clean up. Thanks to them all: Julia Tafel, Ron Davis, Beth Taormina, Chuck Drescher, Sue McNulty, Maria Bubbe, Terry Hill, Fran Pike and Vic Leipzig.

The Orange County Docent League represents over thirty docent groups in Orange County. It is entirely a volunteer organization which offers docents an opportunity to connect and exchange information. Many organizations offer reciprocity. If you wear your docent badge, you will be admitted to their facility for free. Financing an event is always a worry. Thanks to creativity and contributions, we met our budget and contributed over \$200 to the OCDL. Most of all, we had fun highlighting Amigos de Bolsa Chica's tour program and showing our wonderful wetlands.

Visitors from Japan and New Zealand

by Tom Livengood

On July 2, 2008, students from Huntington Beach sister cities Anjo, Japan and Waitakere, New Zealand took tours of the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve and Shipley Nature Center. Each group of overseas students had four Huntington Beach students as their hosts. The Friends of Shipley provided lunch for the students and guests. Both Anjo and Waitakere are green cities with programs that foster green building projects and protect the environment. This was a great opportunity to showcase our community's restoration projects and the environmental assets of Huntington Beach. Gifts were provided for the students by both Shipley Nature Center and Amigos de Bolsa Chica.



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Polar Bears and Bolsa Chica

by Dave Carlberg

No, that's polar bears AND Bolsa Chica, not polar bears IN Bolsa Chica. The U. S. Department of Interior announced late last year that it was planning to list the polar bear as a threatened species, due to the loss of its critical habitat, the Arctic sea ice. Normally such action takes several months for biologists to accumulate enough data to justify the listing, but a number of conservation groups filed a successful lawsuit forcing the government to act quickly. Responding to a court order, the Interior Department designated the polar bear as threatened in May of this year.

What does "threatened" mean, how does it differ from "endangered", and most importantly, what does all this have to do with Bolsa Chica? To begin, threatened and endangered are terms from the Endangered Species Act, legislation passed by the U. S. Congress in 1973. Many states, including California, have their own versions of the ESA. The act's purpose is to protect species of plants and animals from extinction. Plants and animals can face extinction from a variety of threats, any one of which prevents them from reproducing. Obviously if a plant or animal fails to produce progeny to replace it when it dies, its population will soon dwindle until it becomes zero, that is, the species becomes extinct. Three major causes of extinction are: loss of habitat, overexploitation (including predation) and contact with toxins in its food or environment. Loss of habitat prevents polar bears from feeding on their natural prey, seals, and in the case of birds, from nesting. Most birds are very particular when it comes to finding that perfect honeymoon cottage. Lacking that, the species may be headed for extinction.

Understanding overexploitation is pretty simple. If a particular species, such as a plant or a fish, is harvested to the point there are not enough members of the species to reproduce, in time extinction becomes inevitable. Think passenger pigeon. A number of popular food fish are on the brink of extinction because they are so popular. See www.mbayaq.org/cr/SeafoodWatch.asp for information about what seafood to order and what kinds to avoid. The most notable examples of the dangers of exposure to environmental toxins have been the California Brown Pelican, the American Peregrine Falcon and the California Condor. In the case of the first two, as you recall, consuming food that contained high levels of DDT led to an imbalance in the birds' calcium metabolism and weakened egg shells, resulting in crushed eggs before they hatched. Fortunately action over the years to clear the environment of DDT has resulted in a dramatic come-back for the two species. Lead from hunters' bullets in carcasses that condors feed on appears to be jeopardizing the survival of the few condors we have left in our state. In early May, a survey of condors in the San Joaquin Valley found toxic levels of lead in the blood of seven ill condors, one of which died during treatment.

"Threatened" and "endangered" are two official classifications with which a species can be labeled. An endangered species is deemed closer to extinction than a threatened one and would obviously demand greater attention. A given species may be nominated for placement on the federal threatened or endangered list through direct action by a government agency such as the Fish and Wildlife Service or through petitions by private individuals or organizations. In either case, a fair amount of scientific data is usually required to justify the listing.

At least 6 endangered or threatened birds can be seen in the Bolsa Chica. The first three nest there, others are visitors. They are: California Least Tern (on both state and federal lists as endangered), Belding's Savannah Sparrow (endangered on state list only), Western Snowy Plover (threatened on federal list only), Light Footed Clapper Rail (endangered on both lists, potential nester in Bolsa Chica), American Peregrine Falcon (endangered on state list only, but a candidate for delisting) and California Brown Pelican (endangered on both lists).

While there are many sites in California that can brag about hosting endangered or threatened species, because Bolsa Chica is so close to the highly urbanized patch we call Orange County, easily accessible to the public and heavily visited, it should be a major ground-zero to educate students and adults of the world-wide significance of protecting species that are on the brink of extinction. Why be concerned about the loss of a few species? Every organism on Earth is part of the Web of Life. As the loss of species continues, it makes the Web that much closer to collapse.



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Earth Days at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve

by Julia Tafel

The two Earth Day events at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve were wonderful experiences for all who participated in them. The Amigos were involved during both days with an information and sales booth, refreshments and activities on Saturday, April 19 from 9:00 A.M. to noon and on Sunday, April 20 from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Everything took place in the north parking lot of the Reserve in front of the Bolsa Chica Conservancy facility.

Saturday was especially gratifying. The Amigos de Bolsa Chica joined the Bolsa Chica Stewards (the restoration team of the Bolsa Chica Land Trust) to participate in the removal of non-native plants and then to plant almost 1000 native grasses and shrubs on the Bolsa Chica Mesa. The event drew close to 600 volunteers consisting of students, scouts, members of a variety of organizations and members of the community from throughout Orange County and as far as Palm Desert. It was amazing to watch the Stewards organize the effort with so many volunteers in such a smooth, orderly manner.

The day began with a brief speech from Huntington Beach Mayor Debbie Cook, followed by Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve Manager Kelly O'Reilly with the California Department of Fish & Game. Kim Kolpin, Executive Director of the Stewards, gave instructions on what the planting would involve. The goal of this phase of the restoration is to replant the bluff of the mesa along Outer Bolsa Bay with native coastal vegetation that was lost many generations ago to ranching and farming.

Refreshments were provided to volunteers throughout the morning. They consisted of drinks, snacks and bananas and apples donated by Ingardia Bros. Produce. A free lunch of barbeque beef and macaroni and cheese from Johnny Reb's and sandwiches from Subway were donated for the hardworking volunteers.

The Amigos participated again on Sunday, this time in conjunction with the Bolsa Chica Conservancy. It was a successful family fun day of public education on the Bolsa Chica and the environment. Nearly 500 adults and children benefited from the diverse activities and educational information which was offered throughout the day. Everyone appeared to have enjoyed themselves.

Taryn Taddeo, Grace Adams and the Bolsa Chica Conservancy did an incredible job of planning the



Kelly O'Reilly, Reserve Manager and HB Mayor Debbie Cook



Nearly 600 volunteers gathered on the mesa to weed and plant



Several varieties of native plants were part of the restoration efforts

details and logistics of the event and arranged for the very popular Snake and Bat booths, activities like the Wheel of Wetland Science, What's in the Box and more. The support and participation of the BCC corporate partners - REI, SimpleGreen and MWD who had information booths – were filled with important information.

Victor Leipzig and Terry Hill staffed the Birds and Tides station by the inlet to encourage people to watch for birds and participate in a bird count. The art activities included a rock painting station and an Amigos staffed bird mobile coloring and assembly station staffed tirelessly by Bob and Joyce Beardsley who first appeared early in the morning to help set up the Amigos booth.

The BCC's plan for the use of a passport, which required a stamp from each booth, was very successful in ensuring that families visited every informational exhibit. The reward of a ride in the inflatable bounce house or a snow cone or hot dog was a wonderful incentive to complete passports. The Amigos again provided drinks, fruit and snacks for all the public

The extremely satisfying and worthwhile weekend was made possible through the efforts of many Amigos members. Dave and Margaret Carlberg, Jennifer and Jim Robins, Tom Anderson, Brian Wescott, Alma Bowman, Laura Holdenwhite, Al Vari, Bob and Joyce Beardsley, Phil Smith, Vic Leipzig, Terry Hill, Heather and Maegan Rivera, Mary Ellen Houseal, Tom Livengood, Ron Davis, Julia Tafel, Dean Elder, Craig Frampton, and Jim Marsall supported this splendid endeavor.



A great deal of care went into the planting of nearly 1,000 individual native grasses and shrubs



Water was trucked in to fill dozens of containers that gave each new plant adequate moisture to get started in its new home



Sunday's Earth Day celebration included a variety of information and activities



Also on Sunday, Vic Leipzig and Terry Hill organized a bird monitoring station

Birds of the Season

by Vic Leipzig

Information from Peter Knapp, Department of Fish & Game

It's June, and mating season is well underway at Bolsa Chica. Peter Knapp reports that Least Terns have established 180 nests already, with plenty of time left to exceed last year's number of 220 nests. This has been a very impressive season for Least Terns. I've seen more of them this spring than in any year I can remember. And this year, they're not just nesting out of sight on one of the tern nesting islands way south of the boardwalk. There are several highly visible nests on the other side of the chain link fence at the end of the boardwalk. Look for them on your next visit.

Elegant Terns got off to a bad start earlier this spring, but are making up for it now with a spectacular 6,100 nests counted on the north tern island. Assuming that each nest is produced by a separate pair of adults, the total number of Elegant Terns must be over 12,000.

On the other hand, small shorebirds have largely departed from Bolsa Chica, migrating to their arctic breeding grounds. On several recent visits, I was unable to find even a single Western Sandpiper or Least Sandpiper. Although many individuals of these species leave early, usually a few linger at Bolsa Chica until later in the summer. Not this year. They seem to have all migrated at once.

The birding thrill of recent weeks has been a Little Blue Heron. This heron is about the size of a Snowy Egret. Most of its plumage is a uniform dark blue-gray color with a hint of reddish in the head. It is NOT just a little version of the Great Blue Heron! Although there is an established population down at the mouth of the San Diego River, not many of them seem to make it up to Orange County. I haven't seen one at Bolsa Chica since 2003.

A small but potentially significant change in Bolsa bird life has occurred recently with the first ever nesting of Great-tailed Grackles. These large, noisy, and aggressive blackbirds have expanded their range into California from Texas in just the past few years. This year for the first time, they are nesting in the tules and cattails at the south end of Bolsa and are easily observed from Wieder Park. Will their population grow? Time will tell.

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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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