



# THE TERN TIDE

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## 10th Anniversary of the Ocean Inlet Opening, August 24, 2016

By Shirley Dettloff

August 24, 2006, 4:00 a.m.: It was a memorable morning 10 years ago when the Amigos de Bolsa Chica, state and federal officials, and TV cameras from several stations gathered on the Pacific Coast Highway bridge spanning the new ocean entrance to watch the ocean waters flow directly into the wetlands for the first time in 107 years. Even at that hour of the morning, every member of Amigos de Bolsa Chica who had been gathering on the bridge was wide awake and excited to witness an event that had been almost 40 years in the making. We popped the corks and poured the champagne. Vic Leipzig raised his glass and made a toast to the Bolsa Chica and to the Amigos, many of whom had spent 3 decades or more of their lives to make sure that this day became a reality. Not only did the champagne flow, but many tears of joy.

Now, on Wednesday, August 24, we will have a chance to commemorate that historic day with a ceremony on the bridge sponsored by the State Lands Commission and Amigos de Bolsa Chica. You won't have to get up at 4:00 a.m., but a more civilized time of 10:00 a.m. The event will continue with a reception and a showing of the film, *Saving the Bolsa Chica* at the Huntington Beach Central Library. This will be a wonderful day to reminisce as to why the Amigos work was so important. First we saved



the Bolsa Chica, and then we made sure that restoration began. The Amigos are still working to ensure the sustainability of the wetlands so that our legacy lives on for future generations.

Vic raised his glass on behalf of thousands of Amigos with the toast, "Amigos, we all have a tremendous amount to be grateful for this morning. A tremendous bay created last year, recreating the bay God made, and we have made another. Let us hope that God smiles upon us and blesses it with the wildlife, the fish, the vegetation and the good health He gave to the original."

# Bolsa Chica State Beach Native Plant Garden

By Rachael Lloyd

What a difference a year makes. In July of 2015 when Amigos de Bolsa Chica applied for a California State Parks Foundation grant to facilitate the rejuvenation of the Native Plant Garden surrounding the Bolsa Chica State Beach Headquarters we did not have an active garden program.

Our first need was to purchase adequate tools and a tool shed to protect them. Once those were in place the Amigos were able to attract volunteers to remove endless piles of dead brush and weed out invasive plants from the garden area. Next volunteers built retaining wall block terraces to stabilize garden slopes that were eroding with each rain. A step path was placed through the center of the terraces to allow state beach personnel better building and garden access. When that work was completed mulch was applied to the garden slopes.

The last step was to add new plants to the newly opened up garden. Here we were hindered by the weather. In the Southern California area the normal winter rains came only sporadically and very lightly, despite the “El Nino” effects on the northern part of the state. Along with this development the state beach was ordered to eliminate all unnecessary water usage due to California’s on-going drought. Knowing that native plants need regular moisture for approximately 2 years after transplanting before their drought resistant capacities are able to fully function we hesitated to purchase plants.

We did not know it then but these unforeseen circumstances turned out to be very beneficial in the end. Amigos de Bolsa Chica was approached by three key volunteer groups, the Global Sustainability Project, based at Segerstrom High School in Santa Ana, the Community Environment Service Club, and Coast Community College located in San Clemente. All the groups were desiring to involve their participants in the study and propagation of native plant species.



**Local science teacher Tom Pfeiffer leads a group of teens during one of our many garden work days.**  
*Photo by Rachael Lloyd*

Two of the groups had work areas and water sources available at their respective educational institutions. So, with a Plant Collecting permit from State Parks Environmental Scientist Lana Nguyen, and in co-operation with high school science instructor Tom Pfeiffer of Segerstrom High School and Dr. Tanya Murray of Coastline Community College cuttings were taken from plants occurring naturally within Bolsa Chica State Beach and Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. There are currently 250 plus native plant seedlings from 13 local native plant species now under propagation at these 2 educational institutions. These plants are maturing until fall when they will be returned not only to the Bolsa Chica State Beach Headquarters Garden but to other beach areas needing restoration.

With the California State Parks Foundation grant of \$2,400.00 Amigos de Bolsa Chica saw their efforts expanded far beyond initial hopes. With tools and supplies the Amigos were able to attract community partners. Their assistance was critical in creating momentum for the future enhancement of the native plant population at Bolsa Chica State Beach. Amigos de Bolsa Chica is excited to acknowledge the generosity of the California State Parks Foundation and all our volunteers who helped get us to this successful place.





## Meet the New Program Manager for FLOW

And Attend the Orientation for New Volunteers on August 19

As part of our Whale Tail grant from the California Coastal Commission, Amigos is excited to be able to introduce you to our new program manager, Gwen Noda. Gwen will bring the fledgling FLOW program to a new level of excellence. She believes citizen science serves an important role in science to help gather data that scientists cannot obtain and serves an important role in science education for the public by involving them in the scientific process in science projects relevant to their communities.

Gwen was born and raised in Los Angeles, and earned a B.S. in Marine Biology and M.A. in Biology, both from UCLA. Her research experience is primarily with benthic aquatic invertebrates, but she likes pelagic organisms (especially plankton!) as well. She has spent time on a boat around the Channel Islands looking for baby squid; at Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology studying sacoglossans; at Gump Station on Moorea, Tahiti studying aggregating sea urchin defensive behavior; at SNARL in the Eastern Sierra looking at possible impacts of the invasive

freshwater New Zealand mudsnail on other aquatic benthic macroinvertebrates. She has taught science on a boat, in a forest, in a museum, and from inside of an aquarium while scuba diving to people of all ages. She has volunteered for the grunion greeter citizen science project for about 10 years. She has participated in and helped organize BioBlitzes, and she is board member of a new non-profit based in San Diego that started and manages the Sharks of California, Sevengill Shark Identification, and Yukon Marine Life Survey citizen science projects. Amigos is very lucky to have her!

Gwen and the FLOW team will be hosting an orientation for new FLOW volunteers on Friday, August 19, 2016, 11:15am-1:15pm at the Bolsa Chica State Beach Visitors Center. Everyone who is interested is welcome - no experience needed! If you know anyone who is interested in volunteering with FLOW, please let them know about this orientation session, Contact Gwen at [flow@amigosdebolsachica.org](mailto:flow@amigosdebolsachica.org) for more information and to sign up!

## Welcome 2016 Docent Training Class Graduates

Amigos de Bolsa Chica held the 2016 Docent Training Class in March and April this year. The graduates: Veronica Amezola, Karissa Borjas, Julia Doan, Alicia Julian, Fernando Lopez, Clarissa Mongcupa, Daryth Morrissey, Celina Olivares, Thomas Pfeifer, Daniela Sanchez, Kathryn Sandoval, Bill Stern and Sharon Webster. We look forward to their new focus of being a docent and leading tours.

We would like to thank the presenters for taking the time to lead the discussion on the class topics. The History session was taught by Brian Westcott; Restoration was taught by Jim Robins; Ecology was taught by Dr. Vic Leipzig; Birds and Endangered Species was taught by Elissa Warantz; and the Fishes and Marine Invertebrates session was taught by Kelly O'Reilly,



2016 Docent Class: Clarissa Mongcupa, Karisa Borjas, and Celina Olivares, Thomas Pfeifer, Bill Stern, Kathryn Sandoval, Daryth Morrissey and Alicia Julian  
Photo by Jim Robins

Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve Manager. On behalf of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Kelly presented a plaque recognizing Amigos de Bolsa Chica's 40 years. Several experienced docents came back for refresher sessions and shared their experiences with the new docents. Included in the class was a Bird Tour led by Elissa Warantz and Jerry Donohue. A Perimeter Tour given by Dr. Vic Leipzig will be given later in the year. Facilitators for the class were Jennifer Robins and Jim Robins with assistance from Jerry Donohue.

# Bolsa Chica Science Symposium: Past Successes, Future Challenges



By Thomas Anderson

*NOTE: This is the condensed version of the Symposium information; to read the full account, please go to [http://www.amigosdebolsachica.org/terntide/2016\\_summer\\_symposium.php](http://www.amigosdebolsachica.org/terntide/2016_summer_symposium.php)*

Jennifer Luchessi, Executive Director of the State Lands Commission, started the program with praises for Amigos de Bolsa Chica's 40+ year commitment to preserving, protecting and restoring the Bolsa Chica. Amigos de Bolsa Chica is the group that first brought all the federal and state agencies together for what has turned out to be a very long ride. "You can only protect nature if you love nature," she said, and Amigos is "an inspiring example of advocacy."

California Fish and Wildlife Biologist and Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve (BCER) Manager Kelly O'Reilly spoke next, extolling many success stories since the first phase of the restoration was completed ten years ago. 69 species of fish have been counted, and there are now 107 acres of eelgrass – prime habitat for juvenile fish – in the full tidal basin (FTB). The 367 acre FTB is now a State Marine Conservation Area which means no fish can be taken. California Least Tern populations continue to be erratic, not just at Bolsa Chica, but statewide. This is primarily due to predation by coyotes, falcons, ravens, and hawks. King tides are now regularly all but inundating the tern islands in the muted tidal area that had been created in 1978. There is much erosion around the tide gates in that area as well. With the increase in houses around the reserve comes the increase in problems with dogs which are prohibited from the Reserve.

Chris Webb, Coastal Scientist and Senior Engineer with Moffatt and Nichol spoke next. When the restoration project that had been completed in 2006 was designed, it was known that the newly constructed tidal inlet would slowly fill with sand and need periodic dredging. While it is unlikely to completely close, the constriction at the tidal inlet prevents the low tide in the FTB from being as low as the ocean's low tide. This has had an impact on the newest muted tidal areas ability to drain as designed: the pressure-sensitive gates are

not opening and closing as planned. A number of options are being studied, but the best option would be to complete the restoration of the 252 acre future full tidal basin to create more volume of water flowing in and out of the Reserve, and this volume of water would keep the inlet open to a much greater degree. Further restoration, however, is contingent upon continuation of oil operations in that area.

Charles Galbraith was unable to attend due to a family emergency. His presentation, "Recovery of the Ridway's Rail: Captive Propagation and Reintroduction," was given instead by symposium moderator Vic Leipzig. To help revive the species, Galbraith and others established a captive breeding program. 72 captive bred and banded Rails had been released at the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge, and by 2016, 624 pairs were counted in the 21 wetland groups. 7 pairs were counted at Bolsa Chica in 2015. These birds are not banded and are likely to be offspring from the Seal Beach birds.

Rachel Woodfield of Merkel & Associates, Inc. spoke next about monitoring the long-term biological and physical effects of 10 years since the tidal inlet opened. Restoration added tremendous complexity and uniqueness to the Bolsa Chica. Ms. Woodfield said the tides are not low enough to allow the hoped-for increase of Cordgrass habitat. While it was introduced to areas in the Reserve in 2007, it is simply under water too much to thrive and spread. The ten most numerous bird species are Western Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, Long-billed and Short-billed Dowitcher, Northern Shoveler, Elegant Tern, Belding's Savannah Sparrow, American Coot, Northern Pintail, and Ruddy Duck. In 1986 there were 143 Belding's Savannah Sparrow (an endangered species) territories, and there are now 200-300 territories.

Next, Michael Horn from California State University, Fullerton spoke about his long-term monitoring of the Elegant Tern. These terns live up to 20 years, lay one egg, provide long parental care, utilize single prey, feed near the shore, and have small breeding range of concentrated populations in

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the Gulf of California, San Diego Bay, Bolsa Chica, and the Los Angeles Harbor. Five fish (sardine, anchovy, pipefish, lizardfish and squid) make up 70% of their chicks diet. The terns find all of these fish on the surface layers of the water and are very effective at catching millions of fish for their offspring each season. Last year, 8th graders from Sycamore Middle School counted 5, 878 tern nests at Bolsa Chica after the birds had departed.

During the lunch break, a wide variety of student projects from the classes of Daryth Morrisey (Vista View Middle School), Thomas Pfeifer (Segerstrom High School), and Tanya Murray (Coastline College) were presented by highly professional poster sessions in the library hallway. Attendees were able to engage the students in explanations of their projects and research. After lunch, Joana Tavares from the Amigos and Morgan Brown from the Bolsa Chica Conservancy next spoke about Citizen Science opportunities within each organization.

California State Controller Betty Yee, whose office the State Lands Commission is a part of, started a panel discussion about the Bolsa Chica's future with news about possible funding for Bolsa Chica's ongoing maintenance and sustainability issues. Bob Hoffman, formerly of the National Marine Fisheries and now with Merkel & Associates, has been with the Bolsa Chica restoration efforts as long as the Amigos. He spoke about the need for a permanent source of funding for dredging and maintenance. David Pryor, formerly a California State Parks Biologist and now a consultant for the Bolsa Chica



**Reviewing student project posters during lunch**  
*Photo by Thomas Anderson*



**Bob Hoffman, David Pryor, Jennifer Luchessi and Bob Westerman**  
*Photo by Thomas Anderson*

Conservancy, said that the healthiest, most robust ecosystem requires looking at all the edges – the dunes, the mesa – for restoration as well. Jennifer Luchessi returned to explain that State Lands currently manage four million acres of wetland and tideland throughout the state. Her office is looking for new sources of long-term sustainability funding. Bob Westerman of California Resources Corporation, the oil operations company within the Bolsa Chica, explained how the price of oil determines the future of oil operations in Bolsa Chica: An increase in prices could be a source of revenue for the maintenance of the wetlands, while the cost of moving the oil wells determines the feasibility of the completion of the 252 acre future full tidal basin.

The day ended with a special tour of the closed areas of the Reserve guided by Kelly O'Reilly. Fifty-three symposium-goers boarded a bus and headed for the area behind the full tidal basin. The tour provided an excellent opportunity to closely observe the muted tide gates which are having trouble operating properly due to the aforementioned low tide issues. The tour was a very effective way to witness all the glories and successes of the Bolsa Chica restoration as well the current and future issues of its sustainability.

Many thanks to Shirley Dettloff who coordinated with the library for the event; to Dr. Victor Leipzig, for moderating the event and organizing the speakers; to Barry Nerhus, Jerry Donohue, and Joana Tavares for assisting Vic; Rachael and David Lloyd who, with the assistance of Terri Bidle, Tami Olsen, and Jennifer Robins, prepared excellent snacks for the morning break and a banquet of sandwiches for lunch.



# President's Tern Busy Summer for Amigos, Membership Help Needed

By Jerry Donohue

Summer has arrived and the continual squawking from 20,000 + elegant terns in the Reserve once again reminds us of our avian sanctuary here in Huntington Beach. Black skimmers leave their delicate wake on still evenings. Sand verbena and beach primrose are blooming along the walkways. Four new plastic benches were installed by Fish & Wildlife along the loop trail in the Reserve so that visitors can sit and enjoy the beauty that is Bolsa Chica.

Summer usually brings a respite in Amigos activities but in our Cooperating Association with Bolsa Chica State Beach, we find constant activity on the west side of Pacific Coast Highway. We were recipients of a Whale Tail grant this spring that is enabling us to expand our FLOW program. Joana Tavares will be writing curriculum and Gwen Noda will be contacting community members to become FLOW docents and local schools to participate in the program.

We are again offering FLOW Junior Ranger programs every Friday this summer from 9:00-10:00 am through August 19. And on three occasions after the Junior Rangers leave, we will work with Junior Life Guards on this plankton based program. In this regard, we have recently purchased five new battery powered microscopes that are much easier for elementary school age students to use. We are also participating in the Summer Learning Institute for

six sessions where up to 60 students from LA City schools come to the beach, many for the first time, and spend three hours learning about the marine environment, including phytoplankton, through the FLOW program.

The Whale Tail grant means FLOW will be Amigos de Bolsa Chica's major educational focus through June 2017. We have a dedicated cadre of volunteers who attend our Friday sessions but we need more individuals if we want to move this program forward to fully utilize plans drawn up with this grant. We are at the State Beach Visitor Center every Friday at 9:00 am during the summer, and we invite you to come and visit us. We will have a new volunteer training day August 19 from 11:15-1:15 pm. Joana and Gwen will both be there to assist and we can accommodate your strengths into tasks that you find worthwhile. Any amount of help greatly benefits our program.

Finally, in celebration of our 40th anniversary, we are undertaking a few special projects and activities, and we need help from our membership to ensure success: archiving 40 years-worth of historical documents; planning volunteer socials; and hosting a holiday party (we are missing the Carlbergs very much!). If you have an interest in assisting on one or more of these special events, please contact us at [info@amigodebolsachica.org](mailto:info@amigodebolsachica.org).

## Volunteers Needed!

Amigos de Bolsa Chica always has opportunities for anyone interested in volunteering for a wide variety of activities. We get requests for docent led tours throughout the year for all ages of students, Girl and Boy Scouts, family groups, civic organizations. If you are interested in learning about the birds, ecology and history of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands – share your knowledge with others about these subjects – we want to hear from you! There are experienced docents who can help you learn how to lead tours and educate a wide range of people who visit our beautiful wetlands.

Amigos also conducts a Citizen Scientist program at Bolsa Chica State Beach. FLOW – Follow and Learn about the Ocean and Wetlands – studies water samples from the wetlands and tidal inlet. We use

microscopes and chemical analysis to analyze the samples collected. This is an exciting opportunity for members of the community to learn more about coastal ecology, to participate in the collection of scientific data, and to get involved in environmental quality monitoring efforts. We meet every Friday at the Bolsa Chica State Beach Visitor Center at 9:00 a.m. during the summer months. If you become a regular FLOW volunteer, you get free parking at all California State Parks. That's right, free parking!

Amigos also has other opportunities to join and work with other Amigos volunteers: grant writing; archiving 40 years-worth of historical documents; planning volunteer socials; and hosting a holiday party. Please contact us at [info@amigosdebolsachica.org](mailto:info@amigosdebolsachica.org) or by phone at 714 840-1575 for more information about any of these volunteer pursuits.

# Amigos de Bolsa Chica's 40 Years of Commitment and Success, a Historical Series



## Part 6, After the Coalition

By Shirley Dettloff

While the Bolsa Chica Land Trust was formed in 1992 to protect the wetlands and Bolsa Chica mesa as one ecosystem, the Amigos carried the responsibility of saving the wetlands. The Amigos legacy will always be that we were the first organization to recognize the importance of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands and to begin working in the 1970s to achieve our goals. We have always had great respect for the work that has been and still is being done by the Bolsa Chica Land Trust. During our work in the Coalition, representatives of the Trust came to us and wanted us to work with them to achieve saving all of the land, both the lowlands and the upland mesa areas. Although we applauded their work, we felt that we had made decisions within the Coalition process that we would have to stand behind and that the wetlands had to remain our primary goal. This of course caused some friction within the greater community, but we felt we were standing behind what we thought was the best chance for saving all of the wetlands. Also during the Coalition process the Amigos felt that the restoration of the wetlands could not be done in the best possible way solely by the landowner. We felt that the restoration process must have a well-respected group to oversee and review the restoration process, so we urged the Coalition to name a committee to do this work. A group was put together that included representatives from the city, the county, the state, and federal agencies that had experience with wetland restoration. This group also included community representatives, the Amigos de Bolsa Chica. In 1989, this group would become the Bolsa Chica Conservancy.

The Bolsa Chica Land Trust filed a lawsuit against the Coastal Commission, every State and Federal Agency involved, and the landowner. The lawsuit said that development in the wetlands was not allowed, and the filling of Warner Pond and the relocation of the eucalyptus trees was not legal. As an organization that supported the Coalition Agreement, which was reflected in the LCP, the Amigos found themselves in a difficult position explaining why they had taken the risk over development of 900 homes in a small portion of degraded wetland/lowland. The position the Amigos had taken was that if the federal agencies complied with their own rules, development of 900 homes could never take place. Yes, this was a huge risk, but one the Amigos were willing to take to attain the concessions we had worked so hard to achieve. And of course, we were thrilled that the Land Trust won their lawsuit on two important points, development in the lowlands and the filling of Warner Pond. Preservation of the wetlands was now law. After the ruling by the court, the next step for the County and Signal Landmark was to revise their LCP application.

History shows that some of the decisions made by the Coalition not only led to gaining all of the wetlands but to their restoration as well. Discussions about the state's acquisition of the wetlands had taken place in the early 90s. Much of this was the result of the work done by the Coalition team and the continued work done by Signal Landmark's representatives in Sacramento. Coalition members had met with both the Port of Long Beach and the Port of Los Angeles to convince them that mitigation funds required for the enlargement of port facilities should be

used at Bolsa Chica. After the Coalition was disbanded, the Ports, because of these efforts, decided to fund the purchase of the Bolsa Chica lowlands and put it in the hands of the State of California.

A morning to remember was when the Amigos filled the City Council Chambers to be at the hearing where the State was set to assume ownership of the Bolsa Chica on February 12, 1997. The State Lands Commission met that morning to decide if they would assume the ownership of the wetlands. Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis was chair of the commission. We had gotten to know the Lt. Governor when he was Chief of Staff to Governor Jerry Brown. Instead of meeting with the Governor we had a quick five minutes with Gray Davis in a back hallway, hoping we could be very convincing... maybe we were! There was a great deal of tension in the room because the oil companies who were still drilling in the Bolsa Chica had to be a part of any agreement and had not made a final decision to support the agreement. Many meetings, some at City Hall, had taken place within a mere few hours to try and settle any questions the oil company had. The Commission adjourned the meeting, while the local representatives made a call to their corporate office in Bakersfield to try and get a final answer. The AERA Energy representatives went into the backroom just off the Council Chambers and after fifteen minutes the meeting reconvened with the oil company accepting the conditions of the agreement. The State of California now had assumed responsibility for the Bolsa Chica. To safeguard the restoration process a group of state and federal agencies was put together to oversee the restoration work: the Bolsa Chica Steering Committee. They continue to meet to this day.

The Land Trust still opposed any development on the Mesa and they found allies within the Coastal Commission staff who relied on the expert advice of several raptor experts including Peter Bloom. These experts believed that the mesa afforded habitat and a food source for the raptors that also used the wetland environment. The Amigos agreed that a case had been made for saving the mesa. Signal took exception to this and threatened to take Amigos to court if we pursued a course of disagreeing with their planning proposal. They based this on the fact that we had signed the Coalition Agreement, but we felt, with legal advice, that they had on several occasions broken the agreement. They had moved the planning process from the City to the County, and most important the plan going to the Coastal Commission was a very different plan than the Coalition Plan. At the time of the Coastal Commission meeting in 2001, I was a member of the Coastal Commission. In the audience were several representatives from Sacramento who carried the Governor's position of support of Signal's plan, but did not say a word. The two Commissioners who represented State Lands and Fish and Game also sat silent. Agreeing with staff, I supported limited development on the mesa and made the motion to support the staff recommendation. The vote was 12-0. Finally the Commission had spoken and not only were all of the wetlands saved but a significant amount of land on the mesa would be turned over to the state as well. A real cause for celebration!



## THE TERN TIDE

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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.

### ANNUAL DUES

\$ 10 Student  
\$ 25 Individual  
\$ 40 Family  
\$100 Sustaining  
\$1000 Life Member

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Additional Contribution:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Fund operational expenses    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Fund education projects    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed

### Please check if you are interested in volunteering for:

Education outreach \_\_ Grantwriting \_\_ Social media \_\_ Wetlands cleanup \_\_ Leading tours \_\_ Fundraising \_\_

All contributions to Amigos de Bolsa Chica are tax-deductible as allowed by law under IRS Code Section 501(c)3.  
No goods or services were provided in consideration of this gift.

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