

President's Tern

Thank You to Amigos Volunteers and Contributors

By Charles Falzon

Usually this column in the Winter issue of the Tern Tide boasts of the number of students who participated in FLOW and private tours, the number of people who participated in our public monthly tours and bird walks and our amazing volunteers. And while it seems like ages ago, we did have some regular business before the shutdown on March 15.

Three school groups participated in FLOW in January and February with 80 students. FLOW Program Manager Amber Davis, along with Jerry Donohue, Judy Huck, and Bill Stern, assisted. One school group and one Girl Scout group participated in private scheduled wetland tours with 70 tour-goers. Naturalists Karen McReynolds, Kim DiPasquale, Nancy Boyd-Batstone, Karen Belville and Al Vari led the groups.

We had less luck with public tours with rain preempting the January and March tours. Jim and Jennifer Robins held the tour on February 1 while other Naturalists attended the Climate Solutions Conference at Orange Coast College. The January bird walk was pre-empted by a unique tour of the Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station Wildlife Refuge. Terry Hill led a group of six on the February bird walk. While the Department of Fish & Wildlife does not want us to hold group activities at the Reserve and we have not been offering it to the public, Bill Stern and Terry Jorris have continued with the south parking lot trash cleanups by

themselves as often as they possibly can (see page 4).

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Ed Zschoche last September. Ed had been very active with the Amigos for more than a few decades: he was a member of the board of directors, and served on the membership and educations committees. His son Jonathan produced videos of the Naturalist trainings we have available on disc and in our Google Classroom. Ed's enthusiasm and generosity will be missed.

On a brighter note, our Education Committee grew considerably this year. Karen Belville is the new committee chair, and Nancy Boyd-Batstone, Nancy Curtis, Annie Daw, Sharon Von Dollen, Gwen Noda and Tom Pfeifer have joined committee regulars Jerry Donohue, Judy Huck, Bill Stern, Jennifer Robins, Amber Davis, Tom Anderson, Joana Tavares and Shirley Dettloff for monthly Zoom meetings. This is the committee who has overseen the webinars, the creation of the Virtual and the Self-Guided tours, keeps Naturalists trained, and is always working to keep the Amigos educationally relevant.

Thank you to all who contributed financially this past year; we cannot do this work without you. Those who wished to be mentioned in the newsletter as of December 18: Karen Belville, Mike & Maria Buhbe,

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Amigos de Bolsa Chica Self-Guided Tour

By Karen Belville and Nancy Boyd-Batstone

Have you had the opportunity to visit the new Educational Panels at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve (BCER)? These panels are the culmination of a ten-year cooperative effort of several conservation groups (including the Amigos) to educate the public about ecology, birds, history, restoration, and endangered species in the Reserve.

17 panels are covered in the Amigos' new Self-Guided Tour. They are placed at various overlooks along a mile walk, beginning at the south parking lot of BCER and ending at the Mesa Trail Overlook. The panels are beautifully designed, illustrated, informative and

groups. It can also be used as an adjunct activity to expand learning and provide enrichment for students, home-schooled youth, on-line learners and families. Additionally, teachers who utilize the Amigos de Bolsa Chica Virtual Wetlands Tour with their classes may have students who want to visit the BCER to experience it in person and delve more deeply into the history and the ecology of the area.

The Self-Guided Tour provides questions for each panel to encourage students to reflect on the information. Currently, we have focused on high school level students as they are more likely to be able to visit the Ecological Reserve on their own. However,



17 beautifully illustrated and highly informative education panel along the trails at the BCER take you on the Amigos new Self-Guided tour.

Download the tour and enjoy: https://www.amigos-debolsachica.org/self-guided_tour.php

Photos by Thomas Anderson

are appealing to all ages. All by themselves they are definitely worth a visit!

In response to restrictions on group tours due to COVID-19, Amigos Education Committee members designed a Self-Guided Tour of the Reserve utilizing these panels. This new tour can be found on our website: https://www.amigosdebolsachica.org/self-guided_tour.php. This tour was designed to encourage teachers, high school students, and families to visit BCER in person and safely in small, independent

questions could be modified or shortened for younger students. The tour also provides photographs of the 17 informational panels, an answer guide for teachers, and details on how the informational panels and student questions connect to the California Next Generation Science Standards for High School and the corresponding Disciplinary Core ideas. Additional links are also made with the History and Social Science Standards for 11th grade and the Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills for grades 9-12.

We hope to continue our Naturalist-led tours in the future when it is safe to gather in groups. Until then, we want to encourage individuals to get outdoors and visit the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. Remember to wear a mask and maintain social distancing. Enjoy!

Meet Melissa Loebel, New Bolsa Chica Reserve Manager

By Shirley Dettloff

Several members of the Amigos had an opportunity to meet with the new Manager of the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, Melissa Loebel, and went away from the meeting impressed with her background and experience. Our feelings were that Melissa will be an asset to the future of the Bolsa Chica. Melissa has a B.A. in Psychology from California State University, Long Beach, and she will complete her Masters in Fisheries and Wildlife Administration from Oregon State University in 2022. This educational background is certainly impressive, but her professional experience provides so many different experiences that will be so helpful in managing the Bolsa Chica.

From December 2005 until June 2011 Melissa worked at the Aquarium of the Pacific. She did daily husbandry, training and observation of mammals, birds, and reptiles, maintained accurate records of diet and behavior for the entire animal collection. She also did daily public presentations and supervised volunteers and interns. In 2012 she was a Natural Resource Volunteer for the California State Parks and was doing habitat restoration and enhancement along with soil management, data entry and a survey for rare species.

In 2014 she was an intern at the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge and was involved in habitat restoration along with monitoring endangered species and a monthly bird survey. From December 2012 to October 2016 she worked at the Los Angeles Zoo where she did training and observation of multiple bird species including the Andean Condor, Cape Griffon, and a variety of vultures, eagles, owls, hawks, and parrots. In October 2016 until September 2017 she was Husbandry Supervisor-Terrestrial at the California Science Center where she provided strategic direction and best practices for daily animal care, training, enrichment and the ambassador animal program.

From 2017 up to the time she came to the Bolsa Chica, Melissa was the Naturalist/Operations Manager at the Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center. She was responsible for overseeing the restoration and maintenance function of the Center and Marsh and made recommendations for site enhancements. She monitored and managed the ecosystem to ensure that

natural balance was maintained including inventory of animal and plant life. She maintained and managed the staff schedule and budget, oversaw specific research projects at the Preserve working closely with the US Geological Service, Department of Fish & Wildlife, and California State Universities, as well as managing grant projects and application processes.

We are indeed lucky to have someone with such a diverse range of experiences. These experiences will allow Melissa to take over immediately. Amigos plan to have a close working relationship with Melissa in her role at the Bolsa Chica, doing what we can as an organization to make sure that we continue making our goals to continue restoration, professional management, and ensuring that the Bolsa Chica will be a healthy natural resource for future generations.

Melissa is already a member of our community; she and her family have moved to Huntington Beach and her children Kaia and Kalea are enrolled in our schools. We know that the future of Bolsa Chica is in the hands of someone with the knowledge and experience to make sure that our work of 50 years will continue so that the children of this community will always have and know the importance of wetlands. Welcome Melissa!



Melissa Loebel, new Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve Manager. Photo from Friends of Madrona Marsh.

Help Save the Bolsa Chica from the Onslaught of Trash

By Bill Stern

For many months, Amigos Volunteer Naturalists Jim Robins, Terry Jorris and Bill Stern have been responsible for picking up trash in and around the parking lot and walk bridge off Pacific Coast Highway between Seapoint and Warner. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, our monthly pickup activity has decreased.

However, that hasn't reduced the amount of trash deposited by visitors to the lot and surrounding pristine Reserve areas. Empty beer cans and liter tossed in the bushes remind us of those days long ago when Huntington Beach was known as Tin Can Beach. About ten years ago all three Bolsa Chica groups got together to contribute to the costs of the portables in both the north and south parking lots. This means your donations help pay for keeping the Reserve clean. Hand washing stations were installed this year. These are necessities but come at a fairly high cost and cannot be sustained if they are abused.

On another serious note, please be aware that car thefts are occurring in the south parking lot. Be vigilant, don't leave valuables in plain sight and report break-ins and suspicious activity to the police.

Our hope is that the Ecological Reserve will be enjoyed and protected by all visitors. We know that to be good stewards we must be responsible for our actions. Take a few extra steps to use the dumpster, or pack out your trash and dispose of it properly. Help us preserve the natural beauty of Bolsa Chica. Working together, we will continue to cherish our wonderful Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve we all love and enjoy.



Terry Jorris, left, and Bill Stern undertake a trash pickup recently in the south parking lot at the BCER.

BE STILL, a Lesson from My Friends at the Bolsa Chica

By Karen Belville

The Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve (BCER) is a special place. I visit for many different reasons. I usually find myself going there for a specific purpose and tend to be on a time schedule. Sometimes it is to learn more about birds and ecology. Other times it is to lead a group, pick up trash, complete a project, enjoy time with friends, or just get some exercise.

Recently I had a new experience with a small group of long-time friends. One of my friends had never been to BCER and really wanted to experience it. She is battling stage 4 cancer and has become more compromised with her endurance. This allowed us time to walk slowly and rest frequently on the benches to wait and observe. We walked from the south parking lot and over the bridge to the path for about a third of a mile. The trip up and back took us three hours.

It was amazing what we experienced! We spotted hundreds of topsmelt under the bridge, a Horned Lark in the special area for nesting endangered birds, Killdeers running around the mudflats, and a Reddish Egret frolicking through the water. My friends and I watched Buffleheads, Grebes and Surf Scoters diving, and Cormorants drying out their wings. We saw Ruddy Turnstones poking and flipping small rocks; a Whimbrel, Curlew, and Marbled Godwit poking through the mud; and a Snowy Egret shuffling at water's edge by the cordgrass and pickleweed.

Over a period of 20 minutes, we noticed a flock of Turkey Vultures, gradually aggregating with one soaring vulture and concluding with a party of six gathered together devouring something white! We also observed an Osprey eating a very large fish on a distant tree. There were many adorable Sandpipers, Sanderlings and "Peeps" skittering around. A highlight was finding a Northern Harrier gliding, hunting and finally fighting with another large bird over an octopus! As we were walking across the bridge back to our cars, the Grand Finale was the sound of two Ridgway's Rails calling to each other and the subsequent sighting of one of the Ridgway's Rails swimming under the bridge to reach the other bank.

Magical! Lessons learned: 1) Take your time. 2) Wait for nature to come to you 3) Enjoy the sights, sounds,



Above: "Be Still" towel. Photo by Karen Belville. Below: A Reddish Egret frolicking in the pocket marsh. Photo by Thomas Anderson.



smells, movement, and unexpected surprises of nature 3) Embrace the quiet moments 4) Appreciate and protect the gifts BCER has to offer. One of my friends in the group gave a parting gift to all of us. It was a towel with a Heron and a message "BE STILL". That says it all.

The American Kestrel

By Kim DiPasquale

The American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*, is North America's smallest and most colorful falcon. With males being more colorful and smaller than females, it is also one of the most sexually dimorphic raptors. Kestrels are common in North America and can be found in cities, in farmland and in open country. They prefer relatively open, lightly wooded areas wherever prey is abundant and there are places to perch and watch and wait. They are commonly seen at Bolsa Chica perching and hunting on the North side of the pocket marsh which is adjacent to the trees and open grasslands on the upper mesa. It is fairly common year round but there is an influx of additional birds from September to March. Its diet includes mice and other small mammals, reptiles, large insects, and smaller songbirds. They nest in cavities in trees and lay 3-7 eggs. The call is a shrill, rapid *killy-killy-killy-killy*, or *klee-klee-klee*.

These birds average 9-11 inches with a 21-23 inch wingspan. They have narrow, pointed wings and a long, rusty barred tail with a black tip. The larger female has a rusty-colored back with dark barring, and streaked underparts. The male displays blue-gray shoulders, wings and crown, and spotted underparts. Both sexes have double black stripes on a white face. A similar species, the Merlin, is also found at Bolsa Chica. The Merlin is about the same size but stockier and with a more powerful flight pattern. The Merlin is darker in overall color with a heavily streaked breast and shows a white stripe over the eye.



The American Kestrel at Bolsa Chica. Photos by Kim DiPasquale

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Cathy Brady, Susan Camber, Margaret & Dave Carlberg, Gary Charlton, Dennis Chambers, Shirley Dettloff, Kim DiPasquale, Jerry & Lori Donohue, Jody Ford, James Gilchrist, Peter Gordon, Peter Green, Madeline Hall, Marilyn Harris, Terry Hill, Rob Islander & Alison Pine, Peter Knapp, Diane & Wayne Kopit, Larry Lee, Vic Leipzig, Kevin McCarthy, Joan McCauley, Richard Moore, Cat Navetta, Marvin Nellicks, Kevin Powell, Lawrence Parmeter, Tom Pfeifer, Emily Renzel, Jennifer & Jim Robins, Marilyn Rowe, Kenia Sedler, Mike & Barbara Sentovich, Bill & Meredyth Stern, Terri Taylor, Dennis Trombley, Al Vari, and Diane Zink.

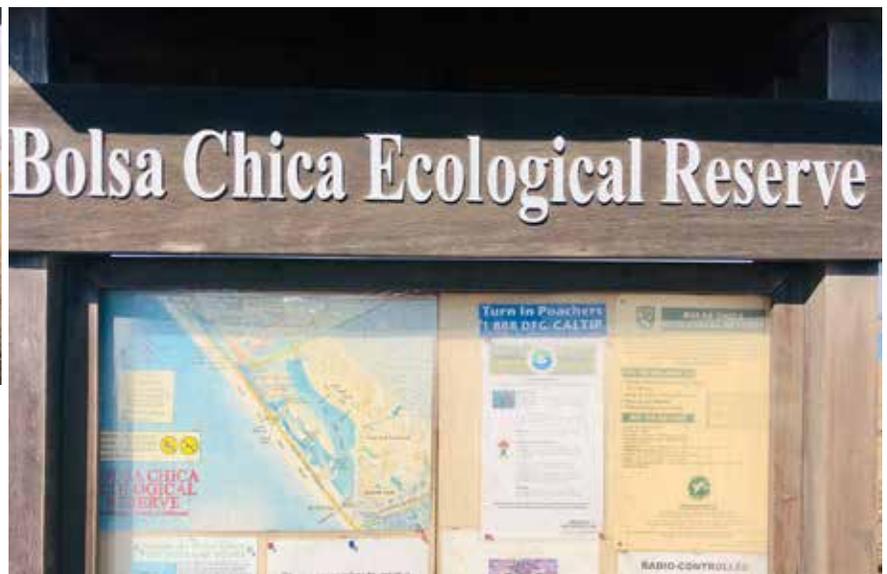
Our struggles over the past decades to preserve and restore the Bolsa Chica have taught us many things about perseverance and taking nothing for granted. This past year seems to have driven that home to a greater degree. We have all learned more about the things we are grateful for, our health, chief among them. Hopefully we have learned that our individual health is not separate from the health of our environment. Doing all we can to keep ecosystems like Bolsa Chica as healthy as possible not only benefits biodiversity but assists with the mental and physical health of humankind as well.

Keep Bolsa Chica Safe and Healthy for All

There has been an increase in visitors to the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve since the pandemic began. While the Amigos won't be able to be at the wetland to give tours or lead trash cleanups – and explain the importance of healthy wetland habitat – for a while longer, we want to encourage everyone to act responsibly when they visit this fragile ecosystem. Remember, the Bolsa Chica is a Marine Protected Area, and fishing is allowed only near the bridge at Warner Avenue. If you see fishing or pollution, call CALTIP, 888-334-2258. While it may not prompt immediate response from a Fish & Wildlife Warden, it will help the department know what's happening at Bolsa Chica. Enjoy your time in nature and remember the following:

- **Please stay on the trails. The mud is a fragile home to small creatures that birds and fish depend on. Snakes are often found in the rocks along the trails.**
- **Do not litter. Please take your trash with you, especially any food scraps.**
- **Do not feed the birds or any wild animal.**
- **No bikes.**
- **No dogs.**
- **No drones.**
- **No horses.**
- **Continue to keep 6 feet of distance.**
- **Wear a mask, if not for yourself then for others. It can be difficult to socially distance on the trail during busy times.**

To report fishing, illegal dumping and other illegal activities, please call the California Department of Fish & Wildlife's anonymous CALTIP hotline: 888-334-2258.



Sprucing up the kiosk, before and after: A joint project of the Amigos and the Bolsa Chica Land Trust, the south lot information kiosk is now 10 years old, and has been repainted by Kim DiPasqualie.

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FLOW Fridays, the First Saturday of the Month Tour and the Last Saturday of the Month Bird Walk/Trash Cleanup are suspended until further notice so as to avoid exposing our volunteers and tour participants to COVID-19. Check our website, www.amigosdebolsachica.org for updates.



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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:

FLOW Citizen Science Naturalist training/wetland tours Wetlands cleanups Fundraising Grantwriting

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