

Angel Gomez, Club Director of Sales

Angel's Be Alive!



BOLSA CHICA WETLANDS



A view from the bridge.

Hello everyone!

This month we visit Huntington Beach and the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. The reserve is designated by the California Department of Fish and Game to protect a coastal wetland, with its threatened and endangered species. The Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve boundaries are Warner Avenue to the north, Seapoint Avenue to the south, Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) to the west, and residential development to the east.

Let's begin!

The history of Bolsa Chica is a long and varied one. The earliest peoples were the native Indians of California. Archaeologists have found cog stones that date back 8,000 years and are the only surviving relic of the Indian lifestyle. The exact purpose of the stones is unknown, but speculation has centered on religious or astronomical use. Cog stones can be seen at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana.

Once Spain colonized California, Spanish officials created vast land grants called ranchos. One such grant, Rancho Los Nietos, was given to Manuel Nieto. After Nieto died, the grant was partitioned in 1834 into five Mexican ranchos, including Rancho Las Bolsas. Rancho La Bolsa Chica was separated from Rancho Las Bolsas in 1841. The grant was later owned by Abel Steams.

In July 1920, the Standard Oil Company began oil extraction in and around the Bolsa Wetlands.

In the 1940s, the U.S. military constructed two bunkers at Bolsa Chica to defend the coastline. Gun turrets were also mounted on the mesa, but were fired only for testing purposes. The larger of the two bunkers was demolished in 1995. The



Lots of people walk and jog, too.



Aden and Kathy look at displays.

smaller support bunker still exists but is closed off from public access. All that is left of the turrets is their circular frame.

In the 1960s, most of Bolsa Chica was acquired by a housing developer, and in response, fans created the Amigos de Bolsa Chica (Friends of Bolsa Chica), to save and preserve more of the wetlands. The Amigos was founded in 1976, and the 20-year battle to save the wetlands began.

The Bolsa Chica Wetlands area is an amazing adventure if you want to take a simple walk, explore plant life or animal life, or just want to get outside. I liked the all the information and exhibits in the Interpretive Center. There is much diversity describing the center – there is information on life in the water, life in the air, and of course wildlife on the ground all around us.

Try your best to get outside and explore. This place is right by the beach and takes only about an hour to walk through. And also guess what – is it totally free! Bring your family, bring your friends and enjoy all the beauty of the wetlands. This is a place you can come back to week after week or month after month and see something new each time. I really recommend this place for everyone in your family.

Don't forget to bring your camera and take lots of photos and send them to me at agomez@cityemployeesclub.com. Bring water, snacks and maybe some sunscreen.

**As always, Be Alive!,
Angel**



This sign describes birds typically flying in the area.



Aden and I in front of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands Interpretive Center.



Our new feathered friend.

Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve

3842 Warner Ave.
Huntington Beach, CA 92649
(714) 846-1114

Area: More than 300 acres

Difficulty Rating: Easy walking, 1.5-mile trail

Features: Wildlife, bird watching, animal and plant life education

Restrictions: No dogs, bicycles or horses

Admission: Free

Parking: Free

Directions: From the north, exit San Diego Freeway (405) at Seal Beach Boulevard and travel west toward the beach. Take a left on Pacific Coast Highway and drive south past Warner Avenue intersection. Turn left at the next stoplight into the reserve. From the south, take the San Diego Freeway (405), exit Golden West Street. Drive west to Pacific Coast Highway and turn right where Golden West ends. Drive two stoplights and turn right into the parking lot of the reserve at the second light (past Seapoint).

Hours: Open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Interpretive Center: The Center offers live animal exhibits, aquaria, maps and information about Bolsa Chica and education programs on wetland science. It is the starting point for the Mesa Trail, which leads to the overlook and rest stop at Mesa Point. The south lot is the starting point for the 1.5-mile (2.4 km) Loop Trail, which crosses a wooden bridge, passes two overlooks, and returns to the parking lot via a sand-dune trail paralleling PCH.

Tours: Free public tours are offered each month by three organizations at Bolsa Chica:

- First Saturday at 9 a.m., offered by the Amigos de Bolsa Chica from the south parking lot
- Second Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon, offered by the Bolsa Chica Conservancy from the north lot.
- Third Sunday at 10 a.m., conducted by the Bolsa Chica Land Trust.



The wetlands up close.



Angel Jr. and Aden at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve.