



Passing the Torch

by Steven Bell

With warm wishes, we announce the retirement of Patrick Brenden from the Bolsa Chica Conservancy as Chief Executive Officer.

Patrick's leadership and experience was instrumental in seeing the Conservancy survive the COVID-19 pandemic, a harsh time for non-profits, of which many struggled to make ends meet. In addition, thanks to his active efforts, our interpretive center not only survived, but reopened in an updated capacity.

All of us at BCC are thankful for all the hard work and dedication Pat has given us since July of 2019 as CEO, his time on the Advisory Council prior, and his continuous contributions hereafter. We wish him all the best in his retirement and future endeavors! 🐦



Welcome to the Team!

by Mara Salisbury

The Bolsa Chica Conservancy is excited to welcome our new Executive Director, Carissa Macias, to the team! Carissa started her career in ecology studying Marine Biology at California State University Long Beach, and went on to work for the State Parks as an Interpretive Specialist. From there, Carissa has been dedicated to serving both her local community and habitat through working with various groups including: Girls Scouts of Greater Los Angeles, Newport Bay Conservancy, and the City of Newport Beach's Natural Resources Division. In her time at The City of Newport Beach, Carissa revived many educational programs that had been put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic, including Newport Beach's FiiN science camp. We are all looking forward to seeing what innovative ideas she brings to the Conservancy! In her free time Carissa enjoys cooking and baking, as well as watching movies with her family and reading. Please join us in welcoming Carissa to the BCC team! 🐦



Unique Visitors to Bolsa Chica in 2022

by Kirsten Haltman

As the Bolsa Chica Conservancy prepares to say goodbye to 2022, we fondly reflect on the exciting birds that visited the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve over the year. This year, Bolsa Chica was fortunate enough to see a number of rare avian guests, bringing visitors (and photographers!) from all over southern California to witness their beauty and majesty in person.

Early in the year, a Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) was sighted in the Pocket Pond area. At first, it was sighted in its juvenile plumage, which looks remarkably similar to the Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), with a few key differences in the beak, leg, and feet coloration. After a few weeks of attracting fans, the Little Blue Heron left... only for it to return months later in its adult plumage! This beautiful bird is typically found in Central and South America and the Caribbean; with the US West Coast being considered rare territory for mature adults. With the latest sighting falling within a couple weeks of writing this article, this egret seems to be making itself a home here at Bolsa Chica!



Little Blue Heron

The second rare sighting of 2022 was a juvenile Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) observed in and around the Pocket Pond during the spring. Although our



national bird is known to nest on Catalina Island and in southern California's mountains, seeing them along the coast is truly a special occurrence - and on top of that, a second eagle has been sighted recently at the writing of this article! Based on the coloring of both individuals, they could be the same bird. The Bald Eagle seen in the spring appeared to be a third year juvenile, and the one spotted recently appears to be a fourth year subadult. However, without banding, it's hard to tell for certain. Regardless of the identity of the bird, Bolsa Chica is lucky to have this majestic visitor grace us with its presence!

Science Word of the Season: Parasitism by Kenneth Perez

What does the festive mistletoe have in common with Bolsa Chica?

Apart from being iconic in their own rights, both have ties to parasitism! **Parasitism** is a type of relationship between two organisms where one organism, the parasite, feeds on another organism, the host. This may sound very similar to most predator-prey relationships, but there is one key difference. Most parasites do not kill their prey. A parasite that kills its host is a parasite that is not very good at its job. The host must remain alive to provide continued nutrition to the parasite.

While everyone was focused on flashier visitors, another unusual avian friend quietly appeared at Bolsa Chica at the start of 2022. When staff started to receive photo submissions for the yearly calendar, we noticed that a photographer had submitted a photo of a Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) hanging out near the Brightwater home development. While Roadrunners are not an uncommon sight in Orange County, they are almost unheard of in Bolsa Chica. We haven't spotted the bird since, but it's still a unique visitor to Bolsa Chica!



Greater Roadrunner by Jim Elias

Though there are many different kinds of mistletoe, American mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*), is one of the most famous. This festive plant will parasitize other plant species by using special structures called haustorium that allow them to tap into the water and nutrients in their host.



American Mistletoe

And Bolsa Chica, believe it or not, has its own parasitic plant! If you ever see what looks like tangled orange netting over a plant, that's actually saltmarsh dodder (*Cuscuta salina*)! Saltmarsh dodder can be found feeding on other plants year-round, usually on hosts close to the water's edge. It's commonly found on coast wooley heads (*Nemacaulis denudata*), beach evening primrose (*Camissoniopsis cheiranthifolia*), and other coastal sand dune plants.



Saltmarsh Dodder

Despite the concerns raised by the shifting of many bird species' ranges due to climate change, it is still exciting to see new bird species coming and going from Bolsa Chica. We use this opportunity to draw attention to the importance of coastal habitats like Bolsa Chica in preserving nature's many treasures and residents. 🦅

Despite their one-sided relationship, parasites are crucial members of their ecological communities. Many parasites, especially those that are smaller or microscopic, help encourage biodiversity in their hosts. They impact and influence the flow of energy in an ecosystem and play important roles in food webs. All in all, while some parasites can be unnerving, they all play an important part in the circle of life! 🦅



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