



The Bolsa Chica Conservancy Interpretive Center found at the corner of Warner Avenue and Pacific Coast Highway in Huntington Beach, California.



The Bolsa Chica Outer Bay as seen from the interpretive center.

Great Egrets as well as many other shorebirds could be seen in both the outer bay and inner bay.



We crossed this footbridge over the Inner Bay at Bolsa Chica.

A Snowy Egret soared over the water.





A few feet out on the footbridge we turned to see this wonderful bird saunter along the shore – a Ridgway's Rail. These rails are endangered due to loss of saltmarsh habitat, but Bolsa Chica provides a protected area for them.



The Ridgway's Rail also waded out into the shallow water of the Inner Bay.



Further out on the bridge a lone Forster's Tern glided about. It was late September, so the tern was already in nonbreeding plumage.





The Forster's Tern landed at times on pilings near the footbridge. Note its bright red legs.



Western Gull in flight

Near the end of the bridge, a group of shorebirds were gathered to rest in the noontday sun. The three bigger birds are western Willets, while all the rest are Long-billed Dowitchers.



Near the group above a single Willet stood next to a Long-billed Dowitcher. Except for size, a quick glance might not reveal the two different species that were in the same early fall plumage coloring.



At the end of the footbridge a fence topped by barbed wire protected an area for shorebirds. The barbs along the wire did not deter a Say's Phoebe (left) from landing on it. Further down the wire we were treated to our second 'rare' bird at Bolsa Chica – a Belding's Savannah Sparrow (right).



This was a second Belding's Savannah Sparrow, which did not seem fearful of us. The sandy ground made the dark stripes on the bird's body stand out more.



Beyond the fence a single Marbled Godwit wandered toward us, poking its long beak into the sand searching for food.  
... but it was not alone!





Eleven more Marbled Godwits rested on the shore of the Tidal Basin. The twelfth bird at right front is a Long-billed Curlew with its long beak tucked in its body feathers.

A single Long-billed Curlew basked in the California sun, panting through its open beak.



Two other curlews stood about near the shore while a Long-billed Dowitcher preened in the shrubbery.



The resting Long-billed Curlew had companions nearby: two more Marbled Godwits and some Western Gulls.

Many Western Gulls relaxed in the sun, some standing, some lying down.



Among the Western Gulls was this second-year juvenile, identified by its black-tipped beak, gray and brown wings, and dark areas on its head. Like most large gulls, the Western Gull takes four years to reach full maturity.





Smaller shorebirds also occupied the beach. Black-bellied Plover numbers dominated with Western Sandpipers and Sanderlings interspersed. All these shorebirds were now in nonbreeding plumage.

Plovers stood around the area as two Western Sandpipers walked on the left, a Long-billed Dowitcher walked on the right, and a little Sanderling poked in the sand at extreme right.



Four Long-billed Dowitchers marched through the Black-bellied Plovers to join other dowitchers down by the water. A Ruddy Turnstone stood behind the first (left) dowitcher.

As we were heading out, a raft of Double-crested Cormorants with two Brown Pelicans swam in the Inner Bay. A group of Snowy Egrets lolled in the vegetation on the right, and a Great Egret walked in the shallows.



As we recrossed the footbridge, the Forster's Tern stretched luxuriously as it preened (above), and a Snowy Egret stood on the railing as if to say, "Good-bye!" to this shorebird paradise.

