

## Alternative to Coastal Wetlands Field Trip

1. Coastal wetlands include saltwater and freshwater wetlands located within coastal watersheds. These can be salt marshes, bottomland hardwood swamps, fresh marshes, and mangrove swamps. An estuary is a partially enclosed area where a freshwater river or stream meets the ocean.
2. Estuaries are often called nurseries of the sea and offer indispensable ecological benefits. Birds, fish, amphibians, insects, and other wildlife depend on estuaries to live, feed, nest, and reproduce.
3. Santa Barbara, Ventura, Oxnard, Malibu, Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Newport Beach, San Clemente, Oceanside, Del Mar, and San Diego all have coastal wetlands. It is estimated that five southern counties once possessed about 26,000 acres of wetlands. Now these are reduced to about 8,500 acres. Currently, about 42% of all coastal wetlands are in immediate danger.
4. Alkali Heath, Cordgrass, and Marsh Rosemary are all halophytes. Halophytes are plants adapted to grow in saline conditions, such as a salt marsh.
5. Pampas grass is native to Argentina and is highly undesirable as food or shelter to birds and other wildlife in Southern California. Additionally, these plants are very harmful in our drought-prone climate as they are highly flammable and reproduce at very high rates.
6. During the April and May migration, huge flocks of hundreds of thousands of Western Sandpipers migrate along the Pacific coast and stop at sites all the way up to the Copper River Delta in Alaska.
7. **Long-billed Curlew:** a large, long legged shore bird with an exceptionally long and curved bill. It uses this bill to get into burrows or between rocks to get shrimp and crab, or deep into dirt for earthworms.  
**Marbled Godwit:** has a two-toned, long, and slightly upturned bill that is used to pull out aquatic invertebrates and plant tubers from mud and sand. It is a rather large bird and is speckled with brown/cinnamon colors.  
**Brown Pelican:** has an oversized bill, sinuous neck, and big, dark body. Gracefully glides above the surf of Southern and Western shores. Feeds by plunge-diving from great heights to stun fish before eating them. Used to be in the brink of extinction due to pesticide pollution.

**Great Blue Heron:** very large and tall with a long neck, blue/gray toned feather, and a long orangish beak. Generally, a slow and gracefully moving bird, but has the ability to strike lightning-fast, after stalking their prey.

**Red-Tailed Hawk:** a large bird with a red tail that is most obvious from above. They soar in circles, looking for prey before they attack in a slow, controlled dive and impale their prey with their outstretched legs.