

# WHAT'S NEW?!

## Establishing Forster's Tern Nesting Colonies at Pond A16

### Project Overview

In 2012, the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project constructed 16 new nesting islands in Pond A16 to provide nesting habitat for waterbirds. Forster's Terns, once abundant nesters in Pond A16, have not returned to nest there since the construction of the new islands. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with funding from Valley Water, are using social attraction on six islands to help re-establish Forster's tern breeding colonies at Pond A16.

### Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*):

Forster's Terns prefer wetland habitats where they forage for fish and arthropods. They forage by hovering and then plunging into the water to catch a meal. Forster's Terns historically nested on islands at Pond A16. Compared to some marsh habitat, island nesting can be advantageous as it is more difficult for terrestrial predators to get to the nest. Forster's Terns are migratory birds, breeding in the Bay Area from April to August and wintering along the coasts of California and Mexico. Forster's Terns are an at-risk species in the San Francisco Bay Area and a target species for The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project.

### What is Social Attraction?

Social attraction is an important conservation technique whereby visual (bird decoys) and auditory (colony sound recordings) cues are used to mimic a real, established waterbird nesting colony and attract individuals to nest in preferred habitats and restored sites. Social attraction has been used successfully to establish breeding colonies of many waterbird species around the world, including Caspian Terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*) right here at the north end of Pond A16. Can you see any of the 50 decoys (pictured right) or hear the colony sound recordings on the islands in front of you?



Forster's tern decoys on an island in Pond A16. Photo Credit: Ken Phenicie, SFBBO, USGS



Forster's terns are eat fish from the surrounding bay waters. Photo Credit: USGS, SFBBO



This satellite picture of Alviso Pond A16 shows the islands that can host the tern colonies.

For more information on this project please visit: <https://apps.usgs.gov/shorebirds/>

***Sponsored by: US Geological Survey, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Valley Water.***

