

Why do places like Mono Lake matter?

I look around and see some vividly colored Indian paint brush sitting amongst little patches of white snow. I can smell the sage brush around me and hear the wonderful silence of nature all around. As I gaze off over the still, glassy water I can see the sun's final rays glinting off of the smooth surface and enveloping the surroundings in the most amazing pink hue. I couldn't imagine a more peaceful and serene place to be. It pains me to think that this wondrous place could have been lost if it hadn't have been for the ones who chose to fight back when the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power was diverting its water source. If it weren't for these soldiers, people wouldn't be able to experience the incredible majesty that is Mono Lake.

I also look out at the tufa towers standing resolute and tall in the lake and it reminds me of the time that my dad got his gall bladder removed. After the surgery I remember the surgeon telling us that the gall stones were made of the same substance of those towers and my brother and I thought that was really funny. I also remember reading how NASA had made a groundbreaking discovery of arsenic in cells in Mono Lake and how meaningful that research could be to the study of microbiology.

I am a cross country skier and have been fortunate enough, due to the long car rides to Tahoe every Friday, to see Mono Lake at sunrise as we are leaving, and returning to witness the splendor of the sunset over the lake. And, even though I have seen Mono Lake many times, it always seems to be a little bit more gorgeous in the changing lights throughout the day. I am grateful for the fact that I am able to visit such a mesmerizing place that not many people are able to experience. I remember going to Mono Lake as a little boy after moving to the Sierra from Oceanside and going through the visitor's center and looking at all of the exhibits and thinking that it was so cool that we had our own little ocean because of the saltiness of the lake, the sand, and all of the seagulls, and it reminded me of my old home. I knew that I could always go to the lake if I ever felt like going back to the "ocean."

Mono Lake matters for many reasons – its natural beauty, untapped research potential, cultural heritage, capacity to make science relatable, and its living ecosystems. As the potential for more water resource issues arise, I hope that people will continue to honor its value.