

# Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of less political events at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

A full moon rises every 29.53 days, but how often do we notice, and for how long? A glance out the car window, a glimpse of moonlight in the backyard, a brief sighting over the streetlights and power poles of the city? 30 seconds watching the moonrise? But 30 days later, there's always another chance—like tonight, as the moon rose behind Black Point,



Photo by Richard Knepp

dusky yellow out behind the jet black, craggy volcanic hilltop. Then the moon made a full appearance, hung for a moment, and slowly disappeared, top to bottom, behind a rogue cloud lingering over the lake. My shadow flickers across sagebrush when the cloud lets trickles of light through, then turns strong and steady as the cloud relinquishes its hold, and stretches thirty feet away to the west.

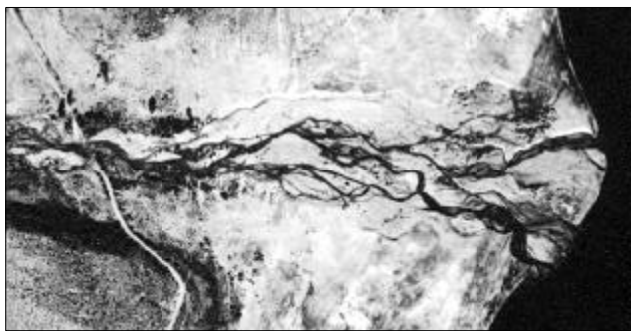
Swimming in the lake at dusk one night was a pastel experience, a shimmering time of silver blue floating on the

water, as if some airbrush artist was creating the scene. The sky splashed its gray colors into the blue water with a west wind driving ripples and phalaropes through the scene at will. Water at eye level merges with sky to form one vast undulating surface, no end in sight, the sound of waves curling onto the shore, all speckled with birds.

And what is summer without the birds? This year the phalaropes have made themselves known

again. At County Park they rise in sudden flocks, bank a few turns, and descend back into place. On the west shore they spin and search for food. Come the end of the day, they stream eastward, five, fifty, five hundred at a time, in search of a better nighttime place to float away the hours, getting ready as always for the epic nonstop journey to Argentina and Bolivia, following a cyclical pattern far from our control but never too far from our destruction. At least for now, those nights are largely worry free, here at Mono, for them and us. ↪

## Benchmarks



Aerial view of Lee Vining Creek delta. The exact date of the photograph is unknown—best estimate is early 1980s.

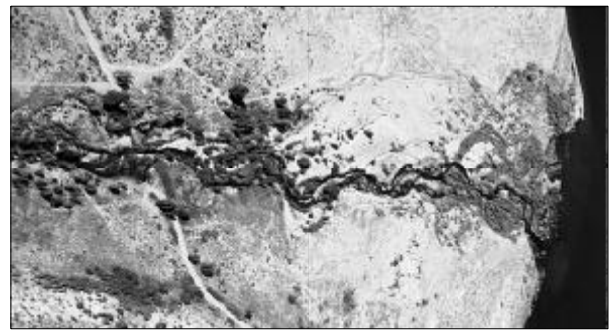


Photo by Arya Degenhardt

Lee Vining Creek delta August 2000. Note the changes in both vegetation and stream channels.