

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of less political events at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Ildflowers have been making spectacular appearances across the moraines, along the lakeshore, and amongst the boulders and trees of the mountain canyons. Below Copper Mountain and at the base of Bloody Canyon, swaths of gold were visible from miles away as thousands of arrow-leaved balsamroot plants quietly spread their petals to the sun. The blossoms dried and faded among blue spikes of lupine, all joined by spiny hopsage thick with seeds, which took over the job of capturing the afternoon sun and glowing as if illuminated from within.

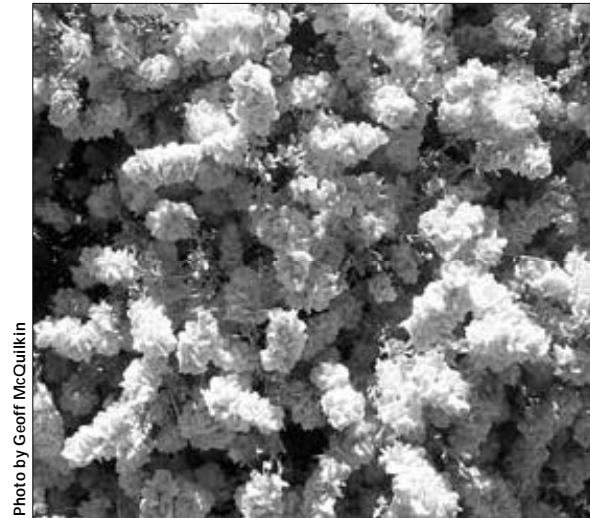


Photo by Geoff McQuilkin

Rich red paintbrush captured attention at Old Marina, while yellow-tinged purple mimulus snuck into the dry and dusty spaces between sagebrush, bitterbrush, and desert peach shrouded in pink blossoms of its own. Apple trees wore bright white veils of flowers and, for once, late season snows and frosts held off, leaving each tree full of fruit and dreams of many an apple pie drifting through town at night.

As the days lengthened, the lake waters slowly warmed, launching the year's brine shrimp hatch. But before those trillions of tiny crustaceans appeared, this year's rich algae crop gave the lake a blue-green hue notably more striking than average. The color unavoidably drew one's attention out across the lake's surface, probing the depth of the somewhat tropical looking waters. One night such gazing led to a further sight: evening lightning on the eastern horizon, flashing from the season's first thunderstorms, striking distant peaks still harboring shaded patches of snow.

And so begins another Mono Lake summer with flowers aplenty, birds back along the creeks, and flaming-red wave cloud sunsets stretching out overhead. Briny Mono Lake laps at the sandy shore, alkali flies flee from hungry gulls, brine shrimp twist and tumble in the temperature currents of the day, and Mono Lake lies quiet, glowing with life here in the high, dry expanses, shaded by the towering Sierra, a home for us all. 🐦

Benchmarks



Photos by Arya Degenhardt

1998: Greg Reis measuring a young cottonwood on Rush Creek.



1999: Greg back out on Rush Creek it took some figuring to find the right cottonwood.



2001: Now a considerably leafier cottonwood, we'll be lucky to see Greg next year!