

# Mono Basin Journal

A Roundup of Quiet Happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



GEOFF MCQUILKIN

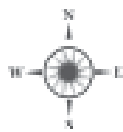
We all know that Mono Lake is unique, and we all know that the lake is of great public interest. But it's easy to forget just how far that interest extends. Not long after a big February snowstorm, a crew from TV Asahi, a national television station in Japan, showed up for a lake visit. The reason? They were working on an episode of the "Spaceship Earth" weekly documentary which, their printed material says, "considers the social, loving and natural environment that surrounds us." I'm not quite sure what the "loving environment" means, but it all sounds applicable to Mono Lake.

So we headed out to South Tufa and other points of interest, tromped through the snow, and tried to avoid getting their minivan stuck. Their particular interest was to match video footage of the lake that they shot back in 1989, and again in

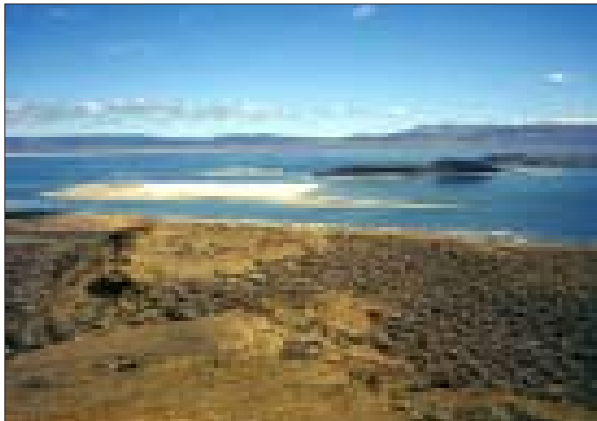
1997, to show how much the lake has risen and changed.

It's hard to explain how remarkable it is to be standing on a lonely snow-covered road overlooking Mono Lake with people from 5,000 miles away who are shooting high definition video and trying to communicate via an interpreter. That's got to qualify Mono Lake for star-power credentials!

And so we spent the morning out under the bright sun. I explained the importance of stream restoration for the camera. They debated tufa tower changes in Japanese. I looked for gulls with my binoculars, as directed. They set up the tripod for sweeping shots of the Sierra. And underfoot, a web of animal tracks crisscrossed the new snow and headed toward the lake, a quiet reminder of the real reasons for all this electronic, multilingual activity. ❖



## Benchmarks



CHRIS LIZZA

Looking east towards Gaines Island, the white remnant of the land bridge between the mainland and Negit Island, in the fall of 2000. Lake level 6384.



ARMA DEGENHARDT

Spring 2004, the slightly lower lake level of 6382 makes a difference in the size of Gaines Island. A coyote was spotted out there in the summer of 2003—see the article on page 9 for details.