

The porch at the El Mono Motel & Latte Da Cafe is one of the unexpected special spots in the Mono Basin. Built only in the 1920s, it is difficult to compare it to the thousands of years boasted by the volcanoes on the horizon or the millions of years of quiet persistence of Mono's waters below. Maybe it's because it is so dwarfed by the mountains to the west and humbled by the enormity of the sky above that this cobble-footed landing has secured its niche in this town. Along with being a watering hole for travelers it is a gathering spot for locals—from the beloved gas station attendant to the self-proclaimed rednecks and hippies in between. Sure, they come for the coffee, but they stay for the porch ... the atmosphere, conversation, shared experiences, ideas hatched—often inspired by, or at least enhanced by the view out over Mono Lake.

This morning on the porch the sun is low and the waters glassy. People trickle in and out, and already conversations are turning to current events—Hurricane Katrina and how to help from afar, gas prices (monitored by leaning out to read the signs across the street), the weekend of children's sporting events. The town comes together in the fall—emerging to the quieter streets in excited anticipation of this favorite season. The leaves are just beginning to change and the days are noticeably shorter, but the hiking, wildlife watching, and porch sitting are some of the best of the year. Where are you headed today? Lundy? Tuolumne? Down to the lake?

Sitting here I take great pleasure in knowing that people are out and about enjoying this place. It's one of the many reasons the Mono Lake Committee was founded, and is still here today. I think you can feel it on top of the mountain peaks that offer a view of the lake, on the porch of the El Mono, and, I hope, in the pages of this *Mono Lake Newsletter*.

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE IMAGE SCIENCE AND ANALYSIS LABORATORY, NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER

A view of Mono Lake and the Mono Basin from the International Space Station.

COVER PHOTO BY BARTSHE MILLER

Mono Lake Committee Mission

The Mono Lake Committee is a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas.



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Founded by David Gaines in 1978

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