Summer <u>1989</u>

Vol. 12, No. 1

MONO the N E W S L LAKE ETTE



On The Cover

A Gull's-Eye View of the Lake

One of David Gaines' greatest pleasures was to take folks out in canoes on Mono Lake. We launched our canoe tours in early June when algae made the lake as green as pea soup. As the weeks have passed, however, the feasting of Mono's brine shrimp has turned the lake clear blue once again.

Both passengers and guides feel a sense of awe as we glide past tufa islands, glancing down at shrimp plumes bubbling from submerged tufa. We have discovered some of the lake's many hidden treasures from our canoe. We've seen the first osprey chicks to hatch by Navy Beach in years, and witnessed the arrival of waves of Wilson's Phalaropes and countless shorebirds. Under the water we've spotted gleaming white gaylusite crystals, that coat the tufa like sugar.

Going out in canoes has enabled visitors to gain a deeper appreciation of the lake from a unique new perspective. They have also felt the simple joys of canoeing. We invite you to come to the lake and discover its abundance with us. Tours will run Saturday and Sunday mornings, (8, 9:30, and 11 a.m.) through Labor Day. The cost is \$8 for adults and \$5 for children. Reservations are strongly recommended. Ask for further information at the Mono Lake Visitor Center. Hope to see you down at the lake either this summer or next!

These tours have been made possible through the support of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, the Mono Lake Foundation and the Mono Lake Committee.

Kathy Duvall

THE MONO LAKE COMMITTEE is a non-profit citizen's group dedicated to saving Mono Lake from the excessive diversion of water from its tributary streams. We seek a compromise that will meet the real water needs of Los Angeles and leave our children a living, healthy and beautiful lake.

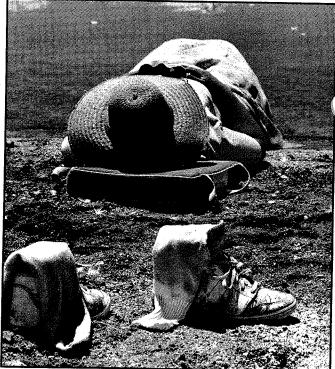
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This newsletter is partially funded by a grant from the Mono Lake Foundation, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to studying and protecting the Mono Lake watershed. If you wish to make a tax deductible contribution to the effort to save Mono Lake, please write your check to the "Mono Lake Foundation."

Lake Level Falling

Mono Lake's elevation was 6376.1 in early August, a foot and a half lower than at the same time last year. The lake has been dropping almost an inch per week due to a seasonal increase in evaporation and below-normal runoff. At this level, small islets have emerged between Negit Island and the landbridge which provide stepping stones for predator access to the islands. Coyote tracks and scat were detected on Negit in July. (Gull nesting productivity appears to be down slightly on Negit. We'll have an update in the Fall newsletter.) If diversions continue through the year's end, the lake will drop below 6375 feet, fully exposing the landbridge and threatening next year's gull colony.

This drop follows a generally dry spring. The Department of Water and Power's runoff forecast for June was 74% of normal. Despite a third dry year, Southern California water officials expect adequate water supplies in 1989, because the Metropolitan Water District has surplus water from the lower Colorado River.

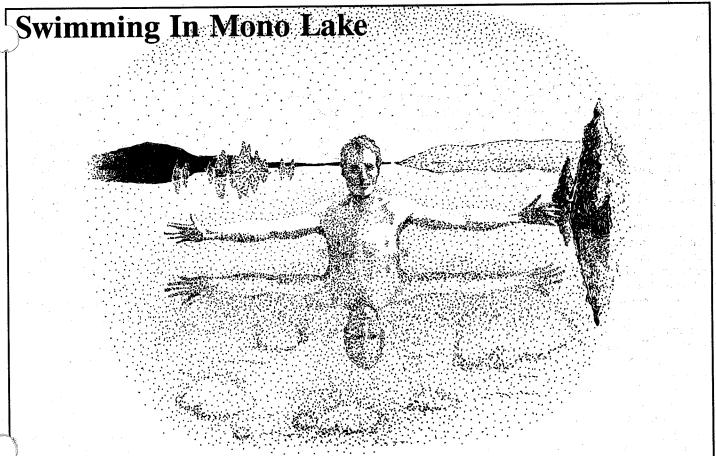


C. Bock

IN THIS ISSUE

On The Cover: Canoe Tours	,
Lake Level Update	,
Swimming in Mono Lake	ĺ
AB 444	ı
Legal Update4	ı
Mono Lake News In Brief	7
Mono's Beauty Secrets	١,
MLC News and Activities6-7	,
Bucket Walk/Bike-A-Thon Festivities8	,
	ı

2



Michele Dick

This piece appeared in one of the very first Mono Lake newsletters — Winter/Spring 1979. Ten years later, both Gray Brechin and Sally "Voice of Reason" Gaines still provide us with an accurate description of one of summer's great delights, albeit in very different styles. Ice age Mono Lake, called Lake Russell by early geologists, once rose about 400 feet higher than the present lake level.

Years ago, I had a dream that I was a gull following a huge cloud of locusts into the gathering darkness over Egypt. It was brief, and I still don't know if there are gulls in Egypt, but it was one of those rare and memorable dreams from which you wake feeling perfectly happy, the way you feel when singing in harmony with a large chorus. Swimming in Mono is something like that.

It is the stillness and the light, as well as the life, which makes swimming in Mono so different from pool, ocean, or river swimming. By July, the lake is a warm and living broth of brine shrimp grazing the water pastures of algae. Swimming in clouds of these feathery animals, your body buoyed by the heavy brine, gulls wing slowly about you while thousands of grebes bob and dive at eye level all the way to Paoha. Paddling, or just floating, you are suspended at the interface of two living media, between predator and prey. Air and water are saturated with the light which rains on the valley and lances down the Sierran canyons in the late afternoon, flickering from the lake's surface and stoking the food chain beneath it. The

basin seems to brim with light, and you are suspended in the midst of it, as you are in time, on one of the many levels of old Lake Russell.

This meditative suspension, in the midst of a vital fabric which is an extension of your own flesh, is what whales may feel, buoyed and enveloped in a living medium from which they take only what they need of krill or fish, and the pleasure of being in it. It is the too-rare feeling of singing in harmony with the world which supports us. Feel this, and you will know that to hurt it is to hurt yourself.

Gray Brechin

Gosh Gray. Those are your thoughts while swimming? You probably never even went in. I bet you just stood on shore looking dreamily out over the water making up images. What a mixture, anyway. Singing whales flying over Egypt?

Just tell folks that swimming in Mono Lake is fun on a hot day, that it's nice to float on your back and look around at the neat tufas, craters and giant mountain ranges. And don't neglect to warn them that the salts sting eyes and cuts, and leave you looking a little like a tufa (until you rinse off with fresh water).

Sally Gaines

Saunters by Mono Lake will return next time. Lauren had to skip this issue due to a death in the family.

A New Approach to an Old Problem: Assembly Bill 444

Legislation by Assemblyman Phil Isenberg (D-Sacramento) and Bill Baker (R-Danville) that would contribute funds to help pay the cost of permanently protecting Mono Lake passed 54-12 in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. The vote came on June 15.

"This is one of the most important environmental bills in years," Isenberg said. "Mono Lake needs protection now, and I expect this will help resolve the issue."

The bill, AB 444, would require Los Angeles and the state Department of Water Resources to reach one or more agreements with the Mono Lake Committee on the protection of the lake. It would also create an Environmental Water Fund which would finance projects to produce water and power supplies to replace those lost by Los Angeles in preserving the lake. A companion bill, AB 1442, would provide the funding by settling a 20-year-old debt owed to the state by State Water Project contractors.

"This a very constructive step," said Mono Lake Committee executive director Martha Davis. "This bill provides a framework and financial incentive for resolving the Mono Lake controversy as soon as possible."

The bill does not set a required lake level. A 6,388-foot elevation level was included in its original form, but was amended to gain support of Los Angeles officials. The legislation now directs the state, DWP, and the MLC to seek agreements which will benefit and enhance Mono Lake. This requirement includes protecting the whole Mono Lake ecosystem: its nesting and migrating birds, air quality, fisheries and other wildlife resources.

This legislation is remarkable because it has bi-partisan and broad regional support. The San Francisco Chronicle called assemblymen Isenberg and Baker "a political odd couple," lauding their cooperative efforts. The bill has support from Southern California assemblymen Terry Friedman (D-Sherman Oaks) and Richard Katz (D-Panorama City), and other legislators throughout the state.

The legislation will be considered by the state Senate's Agriculture and Water Resources Committee when the Legislature reconvenes for the fall session. We need your help to get this important bill passed. Please write Governor Deukmejian, your local senator and Mayor Bradley of Los Angeles in support of AB 444—to provide protection for Mono Lake.

Peggy Nicholson

Legal Update: Decisions, Decisions

A recent flurry of court activity has once again turned the spotlight on Mono Lake. The Mono Lake Committee, along with National Audubon Society and California Trout, made progress on several fronts.

As reported in the last newsletter, the Mono Lake Committee and the National Audubon Society were victorious in a decision handed down by the 3rd District Court of Appeals on January 27th. This decision clearly stated that water licenses issued to the Department of Water and Power (LADWP) in 1974 were not in compliance with Fish and Game requirements for flows to preserve fisheries below dams. The LADWP appealed that decision to the California State Supreme Court. On April 27th, the Supreme Court declined to review the Appellate Court decision.

This victory means that the State Water Resources Board will have to reissue water licenses for at least half the water annually diverted from the Mono Basin. How these licenses will be reissued will be determined by Judge Cecily Bond of the Sacramento Superior Court.

Meanwhile, El Dorado Superior Court judge Terrence Finney coordinated the three Public Trust lawsuits in March. This litigation requires that the needs of the Mono Basin ecosystem must be balanced with those of the City of Los Angeles. Separate public trust suits had been filed for Rush Creek, Lee Vining Creek and the lake itself over the years. The Mono Lake Committee advocated coordinating the suits because the issues involved were so closely related.

Finally, in an effort to provide temporary relief to Mono Lake, the Mono Lake Committee and National Audubon Society filed for a preliminary injunction last April in El Dorado County Superior Court. If granted, the injunction would require that Mono Lake be maintained at 6377 feet. This level would protect gulls nesting on Negit Island, and would also prevent increased salinity from threatening other species living in and around Mono Lake.

On June 19th, Judge Finney listened to presentations by lawyers representing the Mono Lake Committee, the National Audubon Society, California Trout, the State Lands Commission, the U.S. Forest Service and the LADWP regarding the request for a preliminary injuction. He has yet to hand down a decision, but has granted a temporary restraining order. The order has required LADWP to stop exporting water from the Mono Basin. Water from Rush, Parker, Walker and Lee Vining Creeks is being stored in Grant Reservoir until a decision is reached.

Daria Walsh

Mono Movie

Monophiles will enjoy a program on the life story of environmentalist David Brower, with a closing segment on Mono Lake. The show will be aired on KQED, Wednesday, Sept. 20 at 8:00 p.m. and Saturday, Sept. 23, at 2 p.m.

Mono Lake News In Brief

Back At The Ranch

Mono County planners are reviewing the final draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Conway Ranch development near Mono Lake. The Planning Commission decided that the first draft EIR, submitted last summer (see the Mono Lake Newsletter, Summer-Fall 1988), needed to be rewritten because some information was incorrect or omitted. A new draft EIR will be available to the public in August.

The developers have planned to turn Conway Ranch, an old 1000-acre homestead and wetland, into a resort community. The resort would have extensive recreational facilities, including a golf course, 30-acre artificial lake, and 690 housing units. If you wish to obtain a copy of the draft EIR, write Scott Burns, Mono County Planning Director, HCR 79-Box 221, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546.

Scenic Area Plan

The Forest Service hopes to release its final management plan for the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area this fall. The draft EIS and Comprehensive Management Plan went out for public review in September, 1988. Over 2,500 comments were tabulated this winter. Recreation, water (including lake level), wildlife, and grazing were the most frequently mentioned topics. The Forest Service will send out the Final Environmental impact Statement (FEIS) and/or Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) to those who commented on the drafts and who returned a document request form sent out in July. For further information, or to request the documents, please contact Inyo National Forest, 873 North Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514, Attn. Dick Warren.

Bodie Bonanza?

Thar's gold in them than hills—the Bodie Hills, that is. Just how much is what mining interests are trying to find

In June, 1988, rangers at Bodie State Historic Park learned that Galactic Resources, an international gold mining corporation, had acquired all of the old, inactive mining claims on private land in the historic Bodie Bluff area, adjacent to the Bodie townsite. During the past winter, the mining company conducted test drilling and filed claim to over three square miles of Bureau of Land Management property. Drilling was completed early this summer, and Galactic has not announced what the next step will be. Generally, the most economic gold mining process today is open-pit excavation in conjunction with some form of cyanide leaching.

The Mono County Board of Supervisors has received over 100 letters on this controversial project. For more information, contact: Mono County Board of Supervisors, P.O. Box 715, Bridgeport, CA 93517; Save Bodie!, P.O. Box 28366, Sacramento, CA 95828-0366; Galactic Resources, Ltd., 935 Marine Building, 355 Burrard Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V6C2G8.

Mono's Beauty Secrets

You never thought you'd read about beauty secrets here, did you? MLC member Michael Magliari, a graduate student at UC Davis, contributed this article from the March 29, 1889, issue of the San Luis Obispo Tribune.

"Golden Blondes: A New Yarn About the Virtues of Mono Lake."

"All who bathe in the waters of Mono Lake become blondes, says the Virginia City Enterprise, and if the bathing be persisted in for any length of time they get to be red headed. A man last spring rented the Levining [sic] ranch, on the north end of the lake. He has three strapping daughters.

As soon as the water became warm enough, the girls daily went bathing in the lake, taking for their mermaid gambols a time when the 'men folks' were all out on the ranch at work.

When they began taking their dips in the lake the girls were brown haired, but soon found themselves becoming

This so delighted them that they began bathing twice a day, and between times washed their heads in water from the lake.

The old man noticed the gradual change in the color of the hair of his daughters, and was much astonished thereat, but he had his suspicions, and said nothing. He kept quiet until the hair of the girls became a fiery red, and then he went after the old woman about it.

When he got so bad that he talked about killing a redheaded man who had once been his neighbor over in California, his old woman told him it was only the water of the lake – that the transformation was caused by the girls bathing in the lake.

The old [man] said it might be, but he was not satisfied. He ordered the old lady to bathe regularly every day with the girls, saying that if she became red headed he would think there was something in it.

Soon the hair of the old woman was as red as that of her daughters. The old man still thought there was some trick about the business, so he tried the baths himself. Now the old man, the old woman, and all hands are a family of golden blondes."



Despite the yarns, not all bathers turned blonde as this 1920s photo of a Mono Lake beauty contest shows. Courtesy of Wallis McPherson.

MLC News and Activities

1989 Bird-A-Thon

We hope that we can count on you to help us count on September 23 for the 1989 Mono Lake Committee/Point Reyes Bird Observatory Bird-A-Thon. Enjoy a marathon birdwatching session, visit with old and new friends, and raise funds for two important organizations.

In 1988, 65 counters and their sponsors raised over \$45,000—an average of \$690 was raised by each counter. This year, we hope to increase our number of counters to 100 and raise over \$60,000 to benefit the Point Reyes Bird Observatory and the Mono Lake Committee.

In order to reach our goal, we need to start now. Tell your friends, family, co-workers, children's friends, and second cousins-once-removed about the Bird-A-Thon. Recruit a friend to be your partner. Partners can count together, raising twice as much money on the same birds.

Another way to support this event is to support MLC star birder Emilie Strauss by making a contribution in the envelope enclosed in this newsletter.

All counters will be sent a PRBO/MLC Bird-A-Thon 1989 visor as thanks for their efforts. This year, both counters and sponsors will also be eligible to win prizes in the drawing at the Bird-A-Thon dinner which will wind up the day.

We hope that you are as excited about this year's Bird-A-Thon as we are. Participate any way you want—take your binoculars with you hiking, canoeing, driving, or just sitting on your porch. What better way to raise money for two very important causes while having fun!

Please contact Jessica Fiske at (415) 868-1221 to sign up now for the 1989 Bird-A-Thon.

Ready For The New Year?

The 1990 Mono Lake calendars have arrived! These beautiful color wall calendars are available from the Mono Lake Committee by mail or at the Visitor Center in Lee Vining. The calendars are produced by the Mono Lake Coalition, a San Francisco Bay Area group that has been working on educational projects to benefit Mono Lake for ten years.

The Mono Lake Coalition is wholesaling the calendars to bookstores, outdoor shops, and gift and stationery stores. Wholesale discounts are also available to companies that would like to use the calendars as gifts to employees and clients. Your company name and logo can be imprinted on a shirt-tail that hangs below the calendar, making it an attractive marketing item.

For more information on wholesale orders, please contact the Mono Lake Coalition, c/o the Sierra Club Bay Chapter, 6014 College Ave., Oakland, CA 94618. Complete information for individual mail orders will be included in the catalog coming in the next newsletter.

Fourth Annual Fine Wine Cellar Drawing

The Committee's fourth annual Fine Wine Cellar Drawing on May 19 raised over \$22,000 to help save Mono Lake. Four winners were selected at this gathering, held at Thiggy's in San Francisco.

Guests were treated to two exceptional speakers. Tom Graff from the Environmental Defense Fund gave an update on MLC's joint study with the Department of Water and Power (DWP) on alternative water sources and water marketing. Sacramento Assemblyman Phil Isenberg spoke on legislation he introduced to help protect Mono Lake, (see article, page 4).

Long-time Mono Lake supporters Herbert Cerwin, Martin Litton and Ken Alexander were on hand to select the winners. Winners included Jodi Lehman-MacMillan of Los Altos, Julian and Ruth Frechtman of Washington, D.C., John and Melody Taft of Ojai, and Mr. and Mrs. William Shambau of Pacific Palisades. Phillip and Emily Marshall of Woodland Hills won the weekend at Mono Lake

We express our sincere thanks to all of you who helped to make this fundraiser such a success. Special recognition again goes to Herbert Cerwin who generously donated exceptional California wines from his personal cellar, and to Gerald Asher, editor of Gourmet magazine who selected French wines for the drawing.

Thanks also to Wally Marinko for gracing the evening with his outstanding piano playing. Our gratitude to Anything Goes in Mammoth Lakes for donating a gourmet picnic basket, the Mono Inn for giving a delicious dinner, and to the Gateway Motel for contributing the special Mono Lake Weekend lodging.

Attention Southern Californians!

The coming months will be exciting ones for Mono Lake. An active and vocal volunteer base in Southern California will be important. Whatever your skills, whatever your experience, Mono Lake needs your help right now.

Wednesday, September 13th, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., the Mono Lake Committee will host a volunteer and new member orientation meeting at our Los Angeles office, 1355 Westwood Boulevard, Suite 6, (at Rochester). If you have any questions, please call Betsy Reifsnider at (213) 477-8229. We look forward to seeing you on the 13th!

ILC Job Opportunities

Lee Vining: Associate Eastern Sierra Representative

This staff member will specialize in policy development research, litigation support and media work. Experience in the environmental field in the above areas is important, along with skills in public speaking and writing, and a willingness to travel to Sacramento and the Bay Area. Background in natural sciences helpful. This position offers medical insurance, generous vacation and holidays, somewhat flexible hours and an opportunity to live near Mono Lake. For more information, contact Ilene in the Lee Vining office.

Lee Vining: Assistant Program Coordinator

This staff member will be responsible for working in the visitor center, providing membership services and assisting staff members on various projects. Must be reliable, well-organized and like working as part of a team. This position offers an opportunity to receive training in a variety of office, management and interpretive skills, as well as medical insurance, generous vacation and holidays, and an opportunity to live near Mono Lake. For more information, contact Daria in Lee Vining.

Los Angeles: Bookkeeper

We need a reliable, accurate, detail-oriented person who loves Mono Lake to help us in our Westwood office. rimary responsibilities include cash receipts and eposits, payables, receivables, disbursements, and monthly summaries. Some bookkeeping experience would be helpful. We can't offer an executive salary, but we can provide reasonable remuneration, a friendly workplace, generous vacation and holidays, medical insurance, and somewhat flexible hours. Best of all is the knowledge that you will be helping to preserve Mono Lake. Send your resume to Stacy in the Los Angeles office.

Los Angeles: Development Coordinator

Conscientious, detail-oriented person needed to assist the Development Director with the Committee's fundraising program. This staff member is responsible for the day-to-day management of special events and aids the Director with other aspects of the program including direct mail development and public relations. Computer skills and a working knowledge of WordPerfect is a must. If you are a hard-working, self-starter and enjoy spreading the word about Mono Lake, please send your resume to Shelly in the Los Angeles office.

Intern/Volunteer Opportunities

The Mono Lake Committee office in Lee Vining is seeking interns/volunteers for our fall and winter seasons. Their work is a vital part of our efforts to save Mono ake. For details on our intern/volunteer program, please call Daria (619) 647-6595.

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Mono Merriment: Bucket Walk and Bike-a-thon

Mark Saturday, September 2 on your calendar and plan to join us for a day of festivities at Mono Lake.

Schedule of Events

9:30 a.m. Bucket Walk. Meet us at the Old Marina, where a shuttle will take us to the starting point, above the Department of Water and Power's (DWP) Lee Vining diversion dam. Bring a small container for carrying water as well as snacks, drinking water and signs with appropriate slogans. After waking 4 miles downhill, we return to the Old Marina to welcome the riders on the Los Angeles to Mono Lake Bike-A-Thon.

This is a special year for the riders—it marks the tenth anniversary of the Bike-A-Thon. Almost a week before the Bucket Walk, over 100 dedicated riders will gather at the reflecting pools at the headquarters of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. In unison, the riders will collect water in vials, strap the vials to their bicycles and begin this six-day, 350-mile pilgrimage to return the water to Mono Lake. Their ride will help to raise public awareness, and through the donations of ride sponsors, also raise much-needed funds to ensure Mono Lake's survival for us all.

12:30 p.m., Rehydration Ceremony at the Old Marina. Bucket Walkers and Bike-A-Thoners walk to the lake's shore to return to Mono Lake the water we have carried. Long-time supporter Father Christopher Kelley will lead the Rehydration Ceremony.

Immediately following the ceremony, we continue the celebration with a picnic at Mono Lake County Park. Bring your own food and drinks. Picnic food will be available for a minimal charge.



2:30 p.m., The Committee's 11th Annual Meeting at Mono Lake County Park. We'll talk about the year's accomplishments and let you in on the latest legal and political news. This is a great time to get acquainted with others who share a love and commitment to Mono Lake.

3:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Music and Dancing. Recording artist Michael Tomlinson presents a solo acoustic guitar concert of his lyrical, earth-oriented ballads. The program continues with Bucket Walk favorite Dakota Sid performing his witty repertoire of environmental folk songs. The Country Dance Band will follow with lively dance tunes. More musical surprises will follow in the evening.

If you've joined us before for these events, you know how much fun this day can be. If you haven't, join us for a day of merriment on Mono's shores. For further information about the Bucket Walk, call Daria Walsh at (619) 647-6595. If you're interested in the Bike-A-Thon, contact Shelly Backlar or Amber Rae at (213) 477-8229.



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