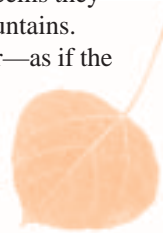


This is the time of year when you go out for a walk and come back with aspen leaves stuck between the pages of your bird book. The colored leaves line paths along creeks in perfect speckled color—they're so bright it seems they might light your way back home after the sun dips below the mountains. Without even thinking you suddenly find your hands full of color—as if the trees were calling out for you to hold on to the leaves for a while before they work their way back to the soil. It is a spectacular time of year with crisp mornings, crunchy apples, the return of fall clouds, and of course the spectacular fanfare of deciduous trees and shrubs giving up their leaves before winter hits.



As we near the final months of the Mono Lake Committee's 25th Anniversary year, we too offer a fanfare of sorts. This newsletter is the final issue in this year's focused series of four. We've made an earnest effort to reach back into the past 25 years—not just to highlight the successes and efforts of the Committee, but also to prepare ourselves for what lies ahead.



In this issue we outline just that—the path ahead. There is a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation in the staff and around the office these days—we find the plans refreshing as a crisp fall day. And as we look at this path ahead, we find it lit with the bright leaves of the past, reminding us of where we've come from, the principles that guide us, and the honor we have of continuing past traditions in new projects for the years ahead.

This issue of the Mono Lake Newsletter is dedicated to David Gaines, founder of the Mono Lake Committee. David's vision for Mono Lake was extraordinary, and each day we strive to keep the flame of his commitment alive through the work of the Mono Lake Committee. As David well knew, and this year's newsletters have shown, the victories we've won and the victories we will win are group efforts. And so, I present this final anniversary issue with many thanks to you for your dedication to Mono Lake.

—Arya Degenhardt
Communications Director



PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM STROUP

Mono Lake Committee founder David Gaines, 1947–1988.

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

MONO LAKE

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2003 ~ Volume XXVI, Number 4

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The Mono Lake Committee at 25

Success, and the Journey Ahead

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

I was looking for something else, rooting through an old box at home, when I found it, yellowing, folded, and still riveting: the Mono Lake article I clipped from the *Los Angeles Times* 24 years ago.

“Lake Bridge Blasted: Gulls Get Guard’s Aid” proclaims the headline, announcing the Metro section lead article. And there, in black and white, are the pictures and the story that we all know so well. Excessive water diversions. A lake in decline. Thirsty Los Angeles. A nesting island for California Gulls connected to the mainland. Water rights, coyotes, National Guard explosives, a hopeless situation, and a hopeful call for a thoughtful solution.

The article came about because of the Mono Lake Committee’s first twelve months of action, and one can’t help but be impressed by how very far things have come since then, how very much better off Mono Lake is today. It catches you unaware, then, back at the office, when the occasional letter comes in, or the occasional comment circulates at a local meeting, that questions the Committee’s very existence.

The work is done, the line goes, the lake is protected, the Committee’s work is over. Pack it up, the not-so-friendly conclusion usually goes, and head home. These comments usually qualify for a smile and an offhand dismissal, and like all such things, that means they are worthy of deeper thought.

Why *is* the Committee still in business?

“Teaching,” David Gaines once said, “can be a means of establishing a relationship between a person and the environment that extends to how we live, that defines a right relationship between humans, other living things, and places like Mono Lake.”

David, as usual, went right to the essence of the matter. When we learn about Mono Lake, we understand it; when we understand Mono Lake, we value it; when we value Mono Lake, we care. That’s why Mono Lake shapes our lives.

That’s why the Committee is still here. We care about this remarkable place. And we all know that when you walk away from the things you care about, you risk losing them forever.

This shared love of place is the most remarkable attribute of the thousands of Mono Lake supporters out there. There’s a story, and a special reason to care, behind each one of you. A son whose father brought him to fish Mono’s creeks decades ago, perhaps, or a photographer captivated at sunset, or a family surprised by an unexpected find on vacation, a northern Californian fighting to keep LA in line, a southern Californian helping their own city do the right thing, a teenager looking beyond the city for the first time, a birder who walked the lakeshore with David Gaines. Or perhaps, like me, a young student captivated by the struggle to define that “right relationship” with Mono Lake.

There, in that fundamental reality of shared love of place, lies the Committee’s reason to exist and the Committee’s future. What do we do next? Our job is to take that “right relationship” between people and Mono Lake, forged only so very recently, and make it grow.

There’s more to learn.

There’s much to be taught.

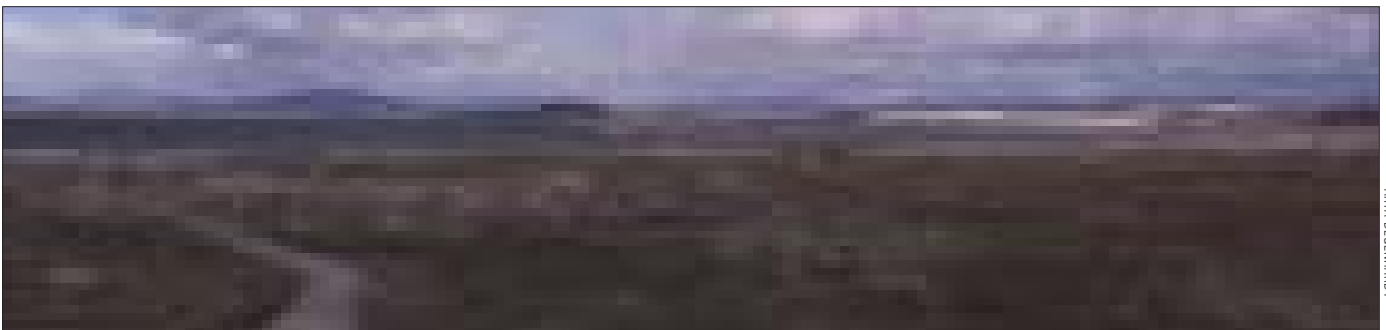
There will always be a lake to protect.

Our policy program must be strong, to anticipate and counteract threats to the lake, and to assure restoration. No question.

But we must go deeper as well, for this place has so much still unknown about it. The Committee must encourage science to continue exploring Mono’s mysteries.

Then we must take the lessons of science, and history, and people changing the world, and turn to teaching, to share them with those who follow us and will themselves, one day, be the stewards of Mono Lake.

The Mono Lake Committee is about one lake, one watershed, one very special place. There is much to be done. We, the tens of thousands of members of Mono Lake’s family, have notable protection successes behind us, a deep shared love for Mono Lake between us, and a future to forge together. ❖



ARYA DEGENHARDT



ARVA DEGENHARDT

Meeting the Challenges of the Next 25 Years

The Action Plan of the Mono Lake Committee

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

As the Mono Lake Committee celebrates its 25th Anniversary, the true celebration is that Mono Lake's tale has become a rare one of environmental success, of balancing the demands of people and the protection of nature.

The next 25 years pose huge challenges for California and Mono Lake, and they offer up new opportunities as well. Is the Committee ready to meet these new challenges and opportunities? For Mono Lake's sake, we must be.

The question of how to prepare for the future has occupied the discussions, debates, and late night thoughts of the Board of Directors, Committee staff, volunteers, scientists, and supporters. The answers lie in four areas: continue the Committee's successful policy work, expand the education program, support scientific research, and assure a functioning office and support structure for the organization.

Here, then, is our plan to assure the lake's protection in the years ahead. What follows is drawn from the Committee's

strategic plan and the case statement that supports our new capital campaign funding effort. You'll see that, as always, Mono Lake is the source of hope and inspiration for all that we do.

The Accomplishments of 25 Years

The Committee has changed Mono Lake—and California—forever. Successes include winning a landmark Public Trust legal ruling on water rights, organizing successful grassroots action, developing a constituency of inner city groups in Los Angeles, achieving real solutions for LA's water needs, winning restoration for damaged lake and stream resources, and—most importantly—winning protection from excessive water diversions for Mono Lake and its tributary streams.

The victories at Mono Lake are not the Committee's alone, for many individuals and

organizations played critical roles—notably Audubon and California Trout. Yet with press strategies, public presentations, scientific investigation, legal wrangling, and persistent

Whenever I despair that the environmental challenges facing California may one day overwhelm us, I take heart from the success of the Mono Lake Committee, whose history teaches us that we hold our natural resources in public trust, to be passed along to the next generation in better condition than we found them. I know that the next 25 years will see the Committee inspire others to embrace that tradition and restore California's environment to its former glory.

—Terry Tamminen

Executive Director, Environment Now

negotiating, the Committee has always been at the center of the storm of activity, leading most of the charges, supporting the rest.

The accomplishments at Mono Lake are truly testament to the ability of one person to rally many to change the world for the better. They are testament to our ability as a state to develop innovative water solutions that support the real needs of cities while protecting the places like Mono Lake that make California so special. In the end, the positive solutions forged at Mono Lake are a reason for all of us to take hope, to look optimistically at the difficult problems of the world today.

The Organization Today

Today the Committee is as committed as ever to pursuing its mission on Mono Lake's behalf. Goals have, of course, changed as a result of the landmark Water Board order, but Committee staff and members are clear on one thing: permanent protection of Mono Lake requires a permanent guardian in the form of the Mono Lake Committee.

The Committee pursues programs in public policy, education, science, and more to achieve that protection.

Public Policy

To the casual observer, the Water Board's landmark 1994 decision might seem to have marked the completion of the Committee's mission. Yet those involved with politics know that victories require continuing vigilance, and they know that winning a decision on paper is one thing; seeing changes on the ground is another.

Following the Water Board order the Committee dedicated its expert policy staff to working with—and watching over—Los Angeles to assure implementation of the far reaching order. In its watchdog role, the Committee has focused in particular on the restoration requirements—for which the formulation of a detailed plan alone took four years. Today environmental restoration at Mono Lake, with its goal of bringing back natural conditions by restoring natural processes, is on the cutting edge of this new science.

At the same time, the Committee has maintained its leadership role in state water issues. Staff are involved in the state and federal CALFED proceedings, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) planning, Metropolitan Water District study teams, and more. The goal is twofold: first, share the Mono Lake success story as a model for water solutions needed elsewhere; and second, make sure that the Mono Basin is not tapped to meet new and changing water demands placed on the state's interconnected water supply system.

In the Mono Basin, new policy issues are emerging which require the Committee's leadership. The popularity of Mono Lake raises the prospect of recreationists loving the lake to death if proper planning is not pursued. And unexpected but

critical issues such as Caltrans' plans for massive highway construction on the lake's western shore require detailed involvement.

And the Committee is always attuned to the possibility of a challenge being raised to the Water Board order. Mono's protection is commonly assumed to have the force of a court ruling, but in fact the order is an administrative decision subject to future revision. Should such a proposal be made, the Committee must be there to marshal the facts and advocate on Mono's behalf.

Education

From the days of David Gaines' first informal canoe tours and traveling slide shows, the Committee has offered education programs to increase knowledge of Mono Lake and awareness about its need for protection.

These programs began as short trips, showing visitors the lake's birds, tufa towers, and unique ecosystem. Over time they have come to include canoe tours, school programs, visitor center services, and in-depth programs such as two-day field seminars. All these programs continue today.

The education program's major growth has taken place with school and community groups. The diverse landscape of the Mono Basin offers a multifaceted outdoor classroom for both general and advanced scientific studies. Field trips to the basin are common for grade schoolers and graduate students alike. Committee educators lead groups in their discovery of the unique aspects of the area and link Mono Lake's protection with the value of using water wisely at home wherever they live.

Unique among the Committee's educational offerings is the Outdoor Experiences program. Founded nine years ago as a way to connect Los Angeles youth implementing water conservation programs in the City with the very resource they were protecting, the seasonal program has grown to work with a diverse set of community groups, schools, and organizations. Participants enjoy the focused, multi-day experience the program provides. Some have never been out of the city; others are searching for new paths in life and find answers at Mono.

Demand for the Outdoor Experiences program is high, with each season booked nearly solid 9 months in advance. Year-round interest in the program from school groups also exceeds capacity. Currently the program is constrained by seasonal camping spots and limited funding assistance to those groups who need it most: the urban constituents of the Mono Lake watershed.

The Mono Lake Committee lives on 25 years after it began with most observers believing its aims to be totally beyond realistic accomplishment. Now, as it embarks on its second quarter century, almost no one questions its ongoing commitment not only to strengthening the Mono Lake Basin's protection, but also to playing an expanded role in assuring a modernized conservation-heavy future for all of California's water resource management.

—Tom Graff
Environmental Defense

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Scientific Inquiry

The Committee's roots are in the scientific study of the lake. Real knowledge about the real condition of the lake, streams, and surrounding lands drives the Committee's protection effort.

With limited resources to fund scientific studies through grants, the organization supports scientists' work in three other ways. The Committee maintains a comprehensive library of Mono Lake studies and information. The Committee hosts a website (www.monobasinresearch.org) devoted to scientific studies. Third, the Committee supports a scientific advisory panel of expert, veteran Mono Lake researchers to facilitate scientific discussion and, importantly, provide guidance to the policy staff.

And More

The Committee operates its Information Center and Bookstore in Lee Vining, sharing news of Mono with 100,000 people a year. Detailed websites are the authoritative source on Mono Lake (see www.monolake.org) and provide a science clearinghouse while the *Mono Lake Newsletter* reaches the 15,000 Committee members and beyond. The Committee publishes books on Mono Basin natural history topics and the award-winning Mono Lake Calendar.

The Committee plays a central role in encouraging sustainable economic activity at Mono Lake, particularly birdwatching, photography, and sightseeing. A newly published full-size map of birding spots in the Eastern Sierra provides guidance year round for birders. Staff recently forged a partnership with land management agencies to create a wildly popular annual bird festival—the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua—that fills motel rooms, delights participants, and builds support for the lake.

The Committee employs over a dozen year-round staff to accomplish its programs and maintains offices at Mono Lake and in Los Angeles. Eight seasonal employees join the team at the lake to provide educational programs in the busy summer months and work as interns for the organization. Today, the Committee has 15,000 members, primarily in California but across the country and world as well. All are committed to assuring a healthy future for Mono Lake.

Future Goals for the Committee

Committee founder David Gaines taught us how to respect Mono Lake and how to fight for it. The issues and opportuni-

ties ahead are different than those he faced, but the passion for the lake, its streams, and its remarkable spot in the Sierra remains the same.

At twenty five years of age, it is time for the Mono Lake Committee to look inward to be sure that the organization can meet Mono Lake's future challenges. The Committee must shore up its strengths, repair its weaknesses, and seize the opportunities that are available.

We know the Committee has many valuable assets that must not be lost: its success in gaining protection for the lake, the

The Mono Lake Committee plays a critical role in shaping statewide water policy because it is the only organization that bridges the great divide between the rural areas where water originates and the cities at the end of the pipeline. Bringing together the people of the Sierra Nevada and the people of Los Angeles, the Committee is a trusted organization that will play a critical future role as the source of ideas and solutions to California's pressing water problems.

—Mary Nichols
Secretary for Resources, State of California

strength of its solution-oriented policy approach, the integrity of refusing to transfer Mono's water woes to other places, the popularity of its education programs, the success of linking urban youth with the natural landscape that supplies their water, the loyal commitment and dedicated work of thousands of supporters, the outstanding effectiveness achieved on a modest budget, the grassroots nature of the organization, the sense of being part of a broad family of Mono Lake enthusiasts.

We also know that the challenges of the future demand more of the organization.

To meet the challenges of the future, the Committee must strengthen its assets and embrace its opportunities to meet four key goals. They are:

Goal 1: Always be able to meet public policy challenges proactively to assure continued protection

The Mono Lake Committee is dedicated to Mono Lake. No other organization has such a mission.

Many agencies and organizations have been part of the Mono Lake protection effort, but only the Committee has been involved every step of the way. For example, the Water Board required that the Department of Water and Power (DWP) implement an extensive restoration program at the lake and its tributaries. Of all the groups and agencies involved with the Water Board, only the Committee remains highly active with restoration, collaborating with and watching over DWP.

The Committee must be ready to identify and respond to today's policy concerns and tomorrow's new issues that challenge Mono Lake, be they local issues, agency management shifts, or fundamental issues of California water policy.

To be successful, the Committee must be sure that it will always have a skilled, involved public policy staff ready to work on many fronts. Their daily work will determine the future of the protection of the lake.

How to get there:

Strengthen the Public Policy Program

Establish a permanent endowment fund to underwrite the Committee's public policy program in the following areas:

- Ensure that the spirit and letter of the State Water Board order and restoration plan are both implemented and unchallenged.
- Ensure a strong presence in California to positively influence water politics and programs statewide.
- Ensure sound resource management by the agencies managing Mono Lake and the Mono Basin.
- Ensure proactive work on new threats to Mono Lake.
- Continue to demonstrate the Mono Lake victory as an example of a collaborative water solution that protects valuable natural resources while meeting real water needs.

Goal 2: Expand the education program to better connect Mono Lake and Californians

When the Committee was founded it faced a simple but immense challenge: few people knew about Mono Lake. A massive effort to educate people about the diverse wonders of the Mono Basin spread knowledge of Mono, and those who came to know Mono Lake came to be interested in its future.

Looking to the next 25 years, that familiarity must be transferred to the next generation of Californians. With the state's population growing by 600,000 people each year and expected to rival Great Britain in size by 2040, we must do the same thing David Gaines

Teaching can be a means of establishing a relationship between a person and the environment that extends to how we live, that defines a right relationship between humans, other living things, and places like Mono Lake.

—David Gaines
Founder, Mono Lake Committee

sought to do 25 years ago: make sure people know the treasure we have here at Mono Lake, and make sure they don't trade it away because of ignorance about what would be lost.

At the same time, the Mono Basin is one of the most diverse and attractive outdoor classrooms in the state. Volcanoes, glaciers, birds, forests, Mono Lake, recovering streams, and alpine habitats are but a few of the opportunities available for learning.

There are huge unmet educational opportunities to share this spot and its value with the next generation of California leaders. Likewise a visit to the lake demonstrates the success of water conservation in meeting the needs of Mono Lake and Los Angeles, bringing home the important lesson that we can solve difficult problems for the benefit of both people and nature. Demand for education programs from schools, universities, and community groups will always be high.

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Challenges Confronting Mono Lake

California's rapidly growing population

California's population is expected to be 58 million strong in 2040—26 million people bigger than today. Where are the future Mono Lake advocates? How can they be introduced to Mono Lake? How can they enjoy Mono Lake without loving it to death?

Increasing urban demand for water

Water conservation and recycling have met the water needs of much of Los Angeles' recent population growth. But can they continue to do the job? Will other approaches, like desalination, be developed, or will water seekers return to Mono Lake?

Unfinished restoration work

Restoration requires time. Will Mono's streams recover from the damage of excessive diversions, or will additional work be needed? Will the lake recover to health as forecast in the Water Board decision?

Changeable lake level protection

The Water Board's administrative order setting the management level of Mono Lake can be revisited. Will it? Who will gather the information needed and defend the lake?

New threats

Unexpected projects like highway construction and expected trends like increasing recreation pose new threats for the lake. Who will tackle these new challenges and speak on the lake's behalf?

Need for a constituency

To remain protected, the lake needs advocates to speak on its behalf. Who will they be in the next generation? What will make them care about Mono Lake?

Shrinking budgets for federal and state parks programs

A State Reserve and Forest Service Scenic Area protect the lake and surrounding lands. But shrinking budgets have already slashed government commitments to the lake. Can these important safeguards be maintained?

Limited facilities to support scientific studies

Scientific inquiry reveals the information we need to protect Mono Lake and keep it healthy. But scientists need a place to sleep and a desk to work at, and a regional housing shortage and rising costs are a disincentive to conduct research at the lake. How can we assure that Mono Lake research continues?

How to get there:

Expand and Enhance the Education Program

- Serve more students with programs of greater depth.
- Create the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center as a base of operations for the expanded program. The Center will provide a classroom, bunkhouses, and facilities that will allow the program to offer life-changing outdoor experiences to a broader audience of up to 6,000 students a year.
- Expand and enhance the education program to utilize the Center. The mission will be to combine science-based environmental education, outdoor experiences, and hands-on restoration activities to inspire stewardship of natural and urban watersheds.
- Establish a permanent endowment fund to ensure a self-sustaining Outdoor Education Center and provide low cost opportunities for students and at-risk inner city youth to participate in inquiry-based learning throughout the Mono Basin's unique landscape.
- Implement a science curriculum inspired by the Mono Lake watershed that integrates with state educational standards, and links research and restoration scientists to students with a Scientist-Student program.
- Construct the Center using environmentally responsible site planning, construction techniques, materials selection, and energy efficient design, making the buildings themselves an educational lesson.
- Serve Eastern Sierra students with programs tailored to the unique needs of the region.

The Committee has been a strong partner with the USDA Forest Service in the protection of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. Only with the continued help of its membership can we achieve our mutual goals. I look forward to an expanded partnership that takes us to an even higher level!

—Jeff Bailey
Forest Supervisor, Inyo National Forest

the last 25 years. New questions about the lake must be asked as it changes; many old questions remain unanswered. Three examples: How does lake stratification affect avian food supply? Is the hydrologic modeling of Mono Lake that underlies the Water Board order accurate at higher lake levels? Are stream flows creating the proper dynamics for restoration?

To be an effective advocate for the lake, the Committee needs to assure that scientists are asking, and answering, these critical, real world questions.

How to get there:

Increase Scientific Inquiry

- Create a support program to increase and encourage scientific inquiry in the Mono Basin.
- Provide hard-to-find seasonal housing and workspace for researchers.
- Provide a comprehensive library of Mono Lake research and materials, accessible to students, scientists, and the public.
- Facilitate forums for water policy and conservation, stream restoration, bird studies, habitat preservation, water management, science education, and related issues.

Goal 4. Provide safe, sustainable, yet modest office and public information space for staff, volunteers, and visitors.

The heart of the Mono Lake Committee operation is its office and bookstore complex in Lee Vining.

The office and bookstore is the place where policy strategies are formulated and education programs designed. The *Mono Lake Newsletter* is wholly written and designed here, the Mono Lake websites created and maintained. Research data bursts from a tiny library, created in a hallway space. Blood samples and specimens from bird studies are occasionally housed in the

If I had to distill the history of the Mono Lake Committee into one word it would be "hope." The Committee continues its history of hope and its mission of acclaiming the intrinsic value of this special place and sharing that with future generations through its vision for a Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center.

—Mary Pipersky
Chair, Mono County Board of Supervisors

fridge. All member communications are handled on the site as is all the Committee's bookkeeping. It's the spot where thousands of visitors stop for information about the lake, or for some friendly help finding lodging in town. It's where Mono Lake T-shirts and books about the area are sold, raising operating funds.

All the programs of the Committee depend on office space for staff and public space to share our work with visitors and

Goal 3: Assure scientific research continues to answer critical ecological questions

Scientific study is the foundation of the Committee's work at Mono Lake. Scientific investigation has provided the information needed to formulate sound policy goals—and thus protection—for the lake, its birds, its streams, and much more.

Today the lake is higher and less saline than any time during

friends. The staff has happily and skillfully worked under leaky roofs, two to a desk, taking breaks to stack wood for winter heat. And while we don't propose to lose the historic charm, improvements are needed.

How to get there:

Enhance Office and Public Space

- Provide a modest, safe, environmentally sound space for staff and volunteers to work effectively and efficiently.
- Enhance the capacity of the Committee's Information Center and Bookstore to provide a wide range of public education, information, and sales programs through exhibits, a slideshow room, and bookstore space.
- Provide basic housing for seasonal educators and staff interns.
- Use environmentally responsible construction techniques, materials selection, and energy efficient design, demonstrating that such projects can be done affordably in rural Mono County.



The recently acquired Kings Inn will become a science field station, seasonal housing, and possible staff workspace located next to existing housing down the street from the Committee offices.

Funding the Future

The Mono Lake Committee operates on an annual budget composed at least 75% from supporter donations and we expect to continue to do so in the future. We believe that members are the Committee's core strength. Members will continue to be the source of both the Committee's political strength and its operating budget. In turn, Committee programs and policies will be responsive to member ideas, criticisms, and dreams.

To put the solutions described above into place, however, requires funding beyond the Committee's annual budget. So in its 25th anniversary year, the Committee has launched a capital campaign to raise the funds necessary to establish these program improvements. The campaign goal is to raise \$10 million including \$1 million for a policy program endowment, \$6.5 million for constructing and endowing an Outdoor Education Center, \$500,000 to support scientific research, and \$2 million to repair and augment existing office and public

space and to acquire seasonal educator and intern housing.

One big step forward has already been made: the recent purchase of the Kings Inn property in Lee Vining. Adjacent to the Committee's existing seasonal housing, the former motel offers space for a science field station, seasonal housing, and possible staff workspace. It's not fancy—the oldest of the units was constructed in the 1930s—but meets the bottom line requirement: it gets the job done.

In 25 years, when my grandson takes his child to the Mono Lake Committee's Outdoor Experiences Program, I am proud that this will be the fifth generation of our family to be inspired to continue our tradition of advocacy for water conservation in Los Angeles to protect the wonder that is Mono Lake.

—Elsa Lopez

Director, Audubon Center in Los Angeles
Former Executive Director, Mothers of East Los Angeles—Santa Isabel

Facing the Future

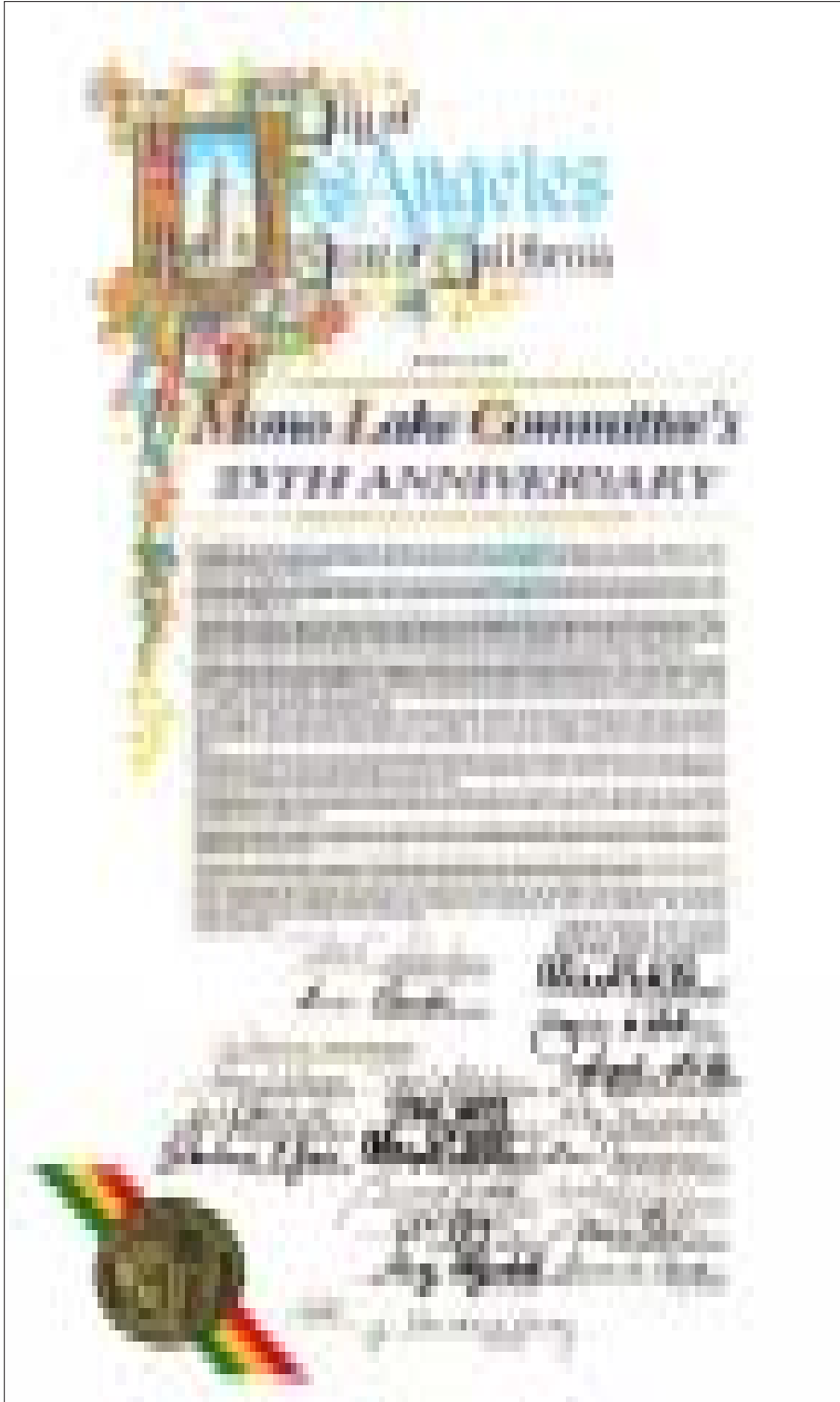
So can we continue to protect Mono Lake?

We can indeed. The Committee is ready for the challenges and opportunities of the next twenty five years. With your help, we can work together to successfully:

- ◆ Protect Mono Lake
- ◆ Strengthen the Mono Lake Committee's successful and innovative public policy programs.
- ◆ Aid in bringing the Committee's proven approach to conservation problem solving to the forefront of state and national forums.
- ◆ Reach the next generation of Californians to foster their connection with Mono Lake.
- ◆ Build a unique Outdoor Education Center that is the only one of its kind in the Eastern Sierra.
- ◆ Link urban youth with the land to inspire stewardship and sound environmental practice.
- ◆ Support scientific research at Mono Lake.
- ◆ Support a successful organization of motivated individuals.
- ◆ Assure that future generations will find Mono Lake as we do: ecologically vibrant, visually captivating, and, most importantly, protected. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Co-Executive Director. His daughter Caelen climbed her first peak this fall ... with a little help from Dad.

Mono Lake Committee Honored by Los Angeles



In struggles like the effort to protect Mono Lake, the opposing sides are often seen as intransigent and irreconcilable. Breaking that mold is one of the great successes at Mono Lake, a fact most graciously documented and eloquently underscored in a resolution unanimously adopted by the Los Angeles City Council and presented to the Mono Lake Committee this year.

More than one Mono advocate reading the resolution, which now hangs in the Committee's headquarters in Lee Vining, has been seen wiping tears from their eyes. Here is the text; you be the judge.

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee was founded in March 1978 by undergraduate students who spent the summer of 1976 producing the first ecological study of Mono Lake, an unusual and special place of salty water, feathery brine shrimp, tufa towers, and millions of migratory birds; and

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee had a vision of restoring water to Mono Lake and the Sierra Nevada streams that feed the Lake and avoiding harm to Los Angeles' drinking water supplies by advocating for funds for conservation and reclamation projects in the City of Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee had many legal successes, including the California Supreme Court 1983 ruling that the Public Trust Doctrine protects California's natural areas; legal affirmation that California Fish and Game codes protect fisheries below a dam; and the 1994 California Water Resources Control Board Decision 1631 that set minimum flows for Mono Basin streams that will stabilize Mono Lake at a level 20 feet above its lowest level and restore the surrounding streams and waterfowl habitat; and

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee has had many political

successes, including state legislation in 1981 that created the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve; federal legislation in 1984 that created the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area; 1989 State Assembly Bill 444, which made \$60,000,000 available to Los Angeles for conservation and water reclamation programs that would replace water left in the Mono Basin for Mono Lake; and HR 429 in 1991 that provided additional federal funding for reclamation projects in the Los Angeles area to serve the same purpose; and

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee should be commended for their Outdoor Experiences Program for the youth and young adults of Los Angeles, which brings these future leaders of Los Angeles to the top of Los Angeles' watershed, where they develop an appreciation for Mono Lake and the Mono Basin and a commitment to protect the lake through water conservation actions at home; and

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee has had outstanding education programs for the public, international visitors, and students from throughout the state and nation, which include canoe tours on the Lake, birding hikes, summer seminars, and events that highlight the value of protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee wishes to show appreciation to the Los Angeles City Council, and the City of Los Angeles in recognizing the value of protecting and restoring Mono Lake and linking the Lake's protection to toilet and showerhead retrofit programs in Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, the Mono Lake Committee has worked with many Los Angeles community-based organizations and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and pioneered aggressive toilet and showerhead retrofit programs, saving over 100,000 acre feet of potable water each year; and

WHEREAS the Mono Lake Committee's 15,000 members are looking to the future as they advocate for policies and programs that support a world in which lakes and streams and cities and wildlife and people all have an opportunity to thrive:

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Los Angeles City Council along with the Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller hereby congratulate and commend the MONO LAKE COMMITTEE on achieving its 25th ANNIVERSARY, and wishes the organization many more successes over the coming years. ❖

Drawing a Line in the Sand: 25 Years Later

A Recap of Events Celebrating the Mono Lake Committee's 25th Anniversary

by Douglas Dunaway

David Gaines was a reluctant hero. Preferring the reclusive, in-the-field work of a biologist, he did what nobody else would: drew a line in the sand of the shrinking shores of Mono Lake, taking on the role of a mythical David versus Goliath, throwing stones at one of the largest public utilities on earth. "My rational intellect said it was hopeless, but my conscience said we had to try." David instinctively knew that a quick, easy solution was not possible. "Dreams and visions are counterpoint to laws and lawsuits. Without them, nothing will ever change."

25 years later, the Mono Lake Committee can look back on an impressive history of landmark legal battles, cutting edge stream restoration, solid scientific research support and most importantly, a commitment to speak for the resources in the Mono Basin. To honor past accomplishments and future challenges, the Mono Lake Committee sponsored a series of special events that occurred throughout the year.

Starting off with a 25th Anniversary Photo Gallery on the website, visitors could look at stunning photographs and relive past events, while the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore and Information Center welcomed visitors with banners announcing 25 years of dedication to saving and restoring Mono Lake. Special 25th Anniversary tee shirts, ball caps and coffee mugs proved to be hot items and were in constant demand.

Coinciding with the Second Annual Mono Basin Bird



Sally Gaines was the recipient of the 2003 Defender of the Trust Award.

Chautauqua, a 25th Anniversary Reception was held in the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore. Historic photographs of the key players in the 18 years of legal battles were on display, as well as some of the original scientific research reports. Highlights of the event included an encore viewing of a commemorative slide show; Committee Co-Executive Director Frances Spivy-Weber presenting a resolution from the City of Los Angeles to Board Members Martha Davis and Andrea Lawrence and Co-Executive Director Geoffrey McQuilkin;

Continued on page 12

guest appearances by scientists, activists, and photographers; and a packed house of members and friends enjoying delicious food and drinks. Staff also shared the 25th excitement at other events throughout the year, hosting, for example, a reception at the Sierra Nevada Alliance annual conference.

Plenty of outdoor celebrations took place as well. A special Blessing and Rehydration Ceremony took place on the shores of Mono Lake. Richard Blaver, a local Kutzadikaa Paiute and his wife Natalie, recited a prayer, sang Native American songs and retold ancient stories of Mono Lake. This was followed by a new twist on an old tradition. Instead of returning Los Angeles water back to Mono Lake, water from heavily diverted Mill Creek, was poured onto the exposed shoreline at next year’s anticipated lake level.

Mono Lake Committee Co-Founder Sally Gaines reached back in time and resurrected the infamous Half Day Field Trips. Started in 1978 as a way of spreading the news about Mono Lake’s plight, these special tours offered a look into the past—before the State Reserve and National Forest Scenic Area even existed. Four tours were given throughout the year, treating guests to a glimpse of what the Mono Basin was like 25 years ago, and



ARVA DEGENHARDT

The lake blessing ceremony with Rich Blaver.

celebrating the successes of protection and restoration.

In a final gesture of gratitude and thanks to a life spent protecting Mono Lake, Sally Gaines was knighted with the Defender of the Trust award, an honor that inspires everyone in the Mono Lake Committee, and drives home the message that it takes dedicated people to accomplish what others would see as impossible. The late David Gaines said it best: “At issue at Mono Lake is more than beauty and wildlife. At issue is our



BRETT PYLE

A 25th Anniversary field trip group.

role in the evolutionary drama of life on earth. Shall we continue to selfishly and profligately deplete the very resources which sustain life on earth? Or shall we choose to share with other plants and animals, perceiving ourselves, not as all-powerful masters, not as slaves, but as enlightened earth housekeepers, as brothers and sisters to all living things.”

Sometimes the sun and the moon rise and set over Mono Lake within a single day, winking down on the reflections of themselves as they arc overhead, secure in the knowledge that they will still be here for eons to come. 25 years seems a mere blink in time to such celestial bodies, but the Mono Lake Committee will continue to mark time as it looks forward to the next 25 years. ❖

Douglas Dunaway is the Committee’s Staff Assistant. When not working he and his wife, Cindy, enjoy creating beautiful stained glass art.

Our Vision is 20/20!

Mono Lake Committee Recognized by the Sierra Business Council

Each year the Sierra Business Council’s “Vision 2020” award recognizes businesses, individuals, non-profits, or agencies that significantly contribute to the realization of the organization’s mission, which is: “To secure the social, natural and financial health of the Sierra Nevada for this and future generations.” The Committee was selected for its 25 year history of building social, natural, and financial capital in the Eastern Sierra and serving as a role model in its collaborative approach to protecting and restoring Mono Lake.

Sally and Vireo Gaines accepted the award during the 9th Annual Sierra Business Council Conference—which was held in Mammoth Lakes. Over 300 participants representing businesses, agencies, and local governments attended from all over the Sierra Nevada region. Keynote speakers included: Michael Tollefson, the new Superintendent of Yosemite National Park; Ed McMahon, author of an acclaimed guide on how to man-

age growth in gateway communities; Tom Killion, world renowned visual artist and co-author of *The High Sierra of California*; and Hal Clifford, author of *Downhill Slide*.



ARVA DEGENHARDT

Sierra Business Council President Jim Sayer presented the Vision 2020 Award to Sally and Vireo Gaines.

Caltrans Draft EIR Just Released

As this newsletter goes to press, Caltrans has just released the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on the Mono Lake Widening Project to the public for comment. Because of the project's complexities, the review deadline has been extended from November 14th to December 1st in order to allow for adequate analysis and input from the public.

Committee staff and experts are currently analyzing the document and are comparing the proposed alternatives contained in the DEIR to the several years' worth of work completed by the Project Development Team (PDT)—the group of agencies and special interest groups that have been working with Caltrans to help significantly reduce project impacts. The Committee will send our final analysis out to members soon by mail. We hope that you will provide written comments to Caltrans so that the shoreline of Mono Lake remains protected.

A first quick review of the document has Committee staff disappointed. While Caltrans did incorporate a few suggestions made by the PDT into the second alternative, it does not nearly go far enough to minimize serious impacts. In fact, there is no mention in the DEIR of any agency concerns although there were plenty raised both in PDT meetings and in writing to Caltrans. Also missing from the document are supporting studies on which Caltrans' analysis is based. Additionally the various components of each alternative and their associated impacts are not clearly stated. Therefore, it is difficult for the evaluator to tease apart what specific part of the project is causing what impact—and

what choices can be made to reduce certain impacts. The Committee will be working hard to distill this information down to make it available in a more understandable form.

The Mono Lake Widening Project is proposed for a 2.9 mile section along the west shore of Mono Lake. There are two alternatives outlined in the DEIR in addition to the No Build alternative. The first alternative describes the full extent of the project that Caltrans has proposed. It includes a shift in road alignment to address rock fall issues and to increase the design speed of the highway, and also an alignment shift to increase the shoulder width to a uniform eight feet throughout the project area. This alternative would result in the greatest impact to the natural and scenic values of the area.

The second alternative attempts to balance transportation goals while still protecting the natural and scenic resources. It takes the first alternative and reduces the realignment for rockfall but still maintains the realignment related to design speed increase. It allows for less than eight foot shoulders in some areas. And it eliminates the intersection improvement at Picnic Ground Road (Old Marina) completely.

Public comment on the DEIR is a critical step to convincing Caltrans and local decision makers that Mono Lake is a special place and deserves extra special care. For the latest updates please check www.monolake.org or contact Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. ❖

**DEIR comment letters
due December 1.**

**Watch for an action alert
in the mail soon or visit
www.monolake.org.**

Motor Boat Tour Operator Refuses State Permit

by Lisa Cutting

Despite years of discussion, several months of negotiation, and the completion of an environmental review, the proponent of a motor boat tour at Mono Lake has refused to sign the permit offered to him by California State Parks.

For the last six months, State Park rangers have been developing permit conditions that carefully protect Mono Lake's wildlife, scenic, and ecological resources. While the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve has the duty to protect Mono Lake for all Californians, they also recognize the desire for responsibly conducted interpretive programs that teach others about Mono Lake. Balancing the two has been challenging but the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve has gone to great lengths to craft such a permit (see Spring 2003 *Newsletter*).

The environmental review for all three types of commercial boat tours at Mono Lake—motor, canoe, and kayak – was completed in late July. The analysis determined that none of the tour operations would significantly impact the environ-

ment provided they adhered to the permit guidelines. Some of those guidelines include buffer zones near stream deltas and nonfocal visitation sites, maximum tour lengths, shoreline no-wake zones, and a four-stroke motor requirement (where relevant) to minimize noise and reduce impacts to water quality.

The Mono Lake Committee and Caldera Kayaks signed their permits for canoe and kayak tours respectively. Tom Crowe of Mono Lake Charters did not sign his permit complaining that the permit guidelines were too restrictive.

Tom Crowe continued to operate his commercial tours and on August 20th California State Park rangers cited him for operating without a permit. His arraignment is pending.

The Mono Lake Committee continues to seek to protect the lake while encouraging people to experience and learn from it. Interpretive tours are a part of the educational experience, but they must be conducted in a manner that does not significantly impact the lake or the visitor experience.

A View of Future Statewide Water Issues

by Frances Spivy-Weber

Saving Mono Lake in the future will continue to depend on water—water for Mono Lake and water for Los Angeles. The Mono Lake Committee, through its members and friends, must continue to find cooperative solutions that protect the lake and meet the water needs of Los Angeles without the city having to go out and take water from other environments.

The cooperative solutions of the future will use and expand on the conservation and water recycling lessons we in the Mono Lake Committee have learned so far. But the challenges will be greater. Here is my short list:

1. Deteriorating water quality in both surface water and groundwater

More people in California means more pollutants flowing down gutters and polluting surface and ground water. Scientists are discovering the dangers of everyday items, such as aspirin, chemotherapy drugs, and birth-control pills accumulating in water supplies. Research also shows new dangers in known contaminants, such as possible developmental problems for babies drinking milk from bottles washed in water with trace amounts of perchlorate, a chemical commonly found in Colorado River water.

2. Reluctance or inability of agencies to lead governments toward integrated water and watershed planning

Integrated watershed and resource planning is complicated on many levels. For example, agencies and organizations have separate budgets and lines of authority, and they operate under different and occasionally conflicting laws.

3. Development patterns controlled by counties and cities, that damage future water supply and water quality options

Current law states that cities, counties, and water agencies must be sure there is water for large developments before they are built. Small developments under five hundred units, however, are not con-

strained. County and city planning guidelines are not required to address the damage development can have on water supply. For example, concrete is recommended for covering roads, driveways, parking lots, and channeled streambeds, even though rain cannot percolate back into the ground when it falls on concrete and sewer systems are often overpowered when it rains.

4. Climate change and other risk factors like earthquakes or terrorism

People must always plan for risks to water supply and water quality. Climate change scientists predict less snow and more rain in the future, including in Southern California. Earthquakes crack pipes and canals; an earthquake in the Bay Delta would severely damage water supplies used by 22 million Californians.

The magnitude of these issues is breathtaking, but there are knowledgeable leaders, including the Mono Lake Committee, pointing the way to short term solutions and offering sage advice about what people need to be doing now to prepare for 2030 and 2050.

Demand Reduction

To address all four challenges, a cost effective first step is to expand local and statewide urban and agricultural conservation programs. The logic is simple. If people, industry, agriculture, and the environment are expected to need “x” amount of water, we can buy time and flexibility locally and statewide if we can reduce that demand number by 10, 20, 30% or more.

After installing a low-flow toilet, how much more can someone do? The answer is, “Plenty!” At home, many people still need to put in new and improved water-saving devices. We can join the popular movement to plant native and California-friendly plants and be the first on the block to install new “smart” irrigation systems. Businesses, schools, and industries have these options and more. Restaurants can use

water-saving spray rinse valves and steam trays; air conditioner cooling and x-ray processing can use recirculating water. Agriculture water efficiency can continue to increase through drip irrigation and crop shifts to plants that produce a higher value per unit of water, such as nuts and vines.

Increasing Investments in Local Water Supply Projects

It is hard to accurately predict when and where there will be an earthquake, how global warming will affect the Sierra and other parts of California, or what water quality horror we will find down the road. But it is easy to agree it is prudent to be prepared. If one source of water supply is cut off, it is smart to have other supplies as backup.

The Mono Lake Committee is working with others in several important water policy arenas to promote increased funding for decentralized projects that will make more water available to local and regional water agencies, particularly in times of drought or emergencies.

A companion to this effort is our support for integrated water and resource planning at the regional and watershed level with the goal of identifying where funding for a water project will also pay off in energy savings, improved water quality, and more water for the environment. For example, if LA could capture and safely use the 12 inches of rain that falls on it each year, the City could reduce its imports from the State Water Project by almost 50%.

The Mono Lake Committee’s future water policy work will be growing and solution-oriented with a clear presence in Los Angeles. It will emphasize partnerships with environmental and community-based organizations, as well as agencies, that are pursuing our agenda locally or statewide. Mono Lake Committee members and their love for Mono Lake will be the heart of our legitimacy as water advocates. ❖

Committee Calls for Land Trade to Protect Mono, Benefit Local Hospital

Resort Subdivision Threatens Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Readers of the local *Mammoth Times* newspaper over Labor Day weekend were surprised by a multi-page profile of a new subdivision of “high price tag” homes overlooking Mono Lake—and with good reason: The Forest Service Scenic Area surrounding Mono Lake expressly prohibits subdivision. That, however, hasn’t stopped the owner of 120 acres on Mono’s west shore from threatening to bring 24 resort homes to Mono’s quiet shores.

Surprisingly absent from the article was the current status of the land trade being sought for this very property. As avid *Mono Lake Newsletter* readers know, the property known as the Cunningham property is currently part of a win-win land exchange discussion that would permanently protect the Mono Lake land and free up acreage for the much-needed expansion of the Mammoth Hospital in Mammoth Lakes. In fact, in August the Mono County Supervisors unanimously called on the Forest Service to complete an appraisal so the trade could go forward.

The Mono Lake Committee is very supportive of the land trade and is working actively with the landowner, American Land Conservancy, Forest Service, and Mammoth Hospital to see it come to successful completion. Jeff Bailey, the Inyo National Forest Supervisor, has long identified acquisition of lands from willing sellers within the Scenic Area as his highest priority.

Land Trade Progress

Most recently, Forest Service land appraisal experts visited the lake in early September. Their task: to evaluate current real estate market conditions and chart a course for the production of a current and accurate appraisal of the 120 acres. Their report is expected in early October, raising the possibility that the acquisition could be wrapped up before the end of the year.

The land trade could work like this. After an agreed upon price is reached for the land, the American Land Conservancy purchases the property. They condition the deed to preclude future development, and then sell the land to the Mammoth Hospital. The hospital then offers the Mono Lake parcel plus several others to the Forest Service in trade for equally valued land in Mammoth Lakes. Gary Myers, CEO of Mammoth Hospital, is ready for immediate action, pointing out that “The Hospital Board has already authorized me to spend up to \$3 million for the land we need for expansion.”

Subdivision Prospect Looms

If the land trade falls apart, however, the prospect of the

advertised subdivision looms large. Visual impact projections show high visibility from key viewpoints at Mono Lake, particularly the highly visited boardwalk at County Park and US Highway 395 just north of the lake. Endangered Willow Flycatchers have been spotted in the area, and rare mountain beaver are thought to possibly live along the small creek running through the property.

Most significant, though, would be the blatant violation of the Scenic Area development guidelines on the 20th anniversary of the Scenic Area’s creation. Designed to “freeze in time” the rural and relatively undeveloped nature of the Mono Basin, the Scenic Area guidelines allow for private property owners to continue a variety of uses while prohibiting the large scale change of substantially new development.

While the newspaper’s promotional article claimed that environmental studies have been completed at the site, in reality only an initial proposal has been filed with the Mono County Planning Department. No subdivision has occurred and an Environmental Impact Report has yet to start. If the subdivision project moves forward, there will be many opportunities to influence the outcome.

Should the owners, Bill and Robin Cunningham, decide to pursue subdivision, they will be exploiting a legal loophole and entering uncharted territory. The loophole exists where county zoning and Forest Service Scenic Area rules do not align; the proposed development would exploit the loophole by seeking review and approval from Mono County planning officials while ignoring the protections put into place by Congress. In doing so, the landowners would be gambling that the federal government would not follow through with condemnation of their land, the major enforcement mechanism of Scenic Area guidelines.

Although the promotional article went so far as to claim that “many of the affluent out-of-the-area Mono Lake Committee supporters have expressed interest in owning and developing incredible homes at this location,” here at the Committee offices we read that as further hyperbole. Mono Lake supporters who understand the threats such a development poses, we expect, will call for the win-win land trade as the only alternative.

Whichever path this issue takes, the Committee, Forest Service, and all those who support protection of the scenic views and rural qualities surrounding Mono Lake will need to stand strong to assure their protection. ❖

Just A Click Away

Mono Lake Committee Websites Connect Visitors and Enthusiasts to Mono Lake Every Day

by Greg Reis

Even on the slowest day in the dead of winter when sometimes only one intrepid soul makes it through the snow to the Information Center and Bookstore in Lee Vining, thousands of people are still learning about Mono Lake and conservation issues from home, work, and school via the Mono Lake Committee Websites.

In the spring of 1996, if you visited the new Mono Lake Website, you would have found three links on the homepage: About Mono Lake, Visit Mono Lake, and Long Live Mono Lake.

At the time we never would have imagined that 7 years later there would be five different Websites consisting of 3,500 linked files, 2,600 images, and 25,000 hyperlinks, taking up over 800 MB of space on a dedicated server. Instead of only three links to choose from, the Mono Lake Home Page now offers 33 different choices in 13 major categories. Due to the low cost of using the World Wide Web as an outreach tool, the Committee continues to fill its niche with information and photos on a weekly basis. Today the Committee's websites reach over 2,100 people daily.

If you've never visited us online, you certainly are wondering what information about Mono Lake can possibly be so voluminous. The following is a brief synopsis of each website and what you can expect to find there.

Mono Lake Website: www.monolake.org

The Mono Lake Website receives 1,200 visitors per day. It contains information about Mono Lake natural history, political history, and the Mono Lake Committee's work. Fun stuff like Webcams, live weather information from Lee Vining, and photo galleries draw most of the visitation. A members'

Every time you shop at Amazon.com, use a link from www.monolake.org and the Committee gets 5% of your purchase price!

section provides special treats for Committee supporters. Policy information, news and events, and weekly seasonal updates are kept as current as possible, and the Mono Lake

Newsletter (in color!) can also be viewed here. Special sections such as the Eastern Sierra Birding Trail Map, Mono Lake Bookstore, and Visiting Mono Lake provide information for trip planning. A bird and wildlife sightings forum allows you to post interesting sightings and read those of others.



Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce: www.leevining.com

The Chamber of Commerce Website receives over 200 visitors per day. In the Committee's support role with the Chamber we provide visitor information to thousands of tourists through our Information Center and Bookstore, by mail, by phone, by e-mail, and through this Website. The Chamber

Website lists all the businesses in town with photos and contact information to help encourage visitors to stop, stay, and experience what Lee Vining has to offer.

Living Lakes Website: www.livinglakes.org

In 1998, the Committee received a grant to build the Living Lakes Website from the Global Nature Fund (GNF), the founder of the Living Lakes Partnership. Each year since then we have received a grant to maintain this Website. It receives over 550 visitors each day. The highlights of the site are the pages about each of the 25 partner lakes around the world. The site also contains information about the partnership, yearly conferences, and issues the partners are working on.

Mono Basin Clearinghouse Website: www.monobasinresearch.org

In 1999 we launched this research-oriented Website, which now gets over 200 visitors each day. The goal of this site is to be a clearinghouse of scientific information on the Mono Basin, and content has been growing steadily. It contains reports and studies, a list of current ongoing research, historical interviews, and much more. We send a monthly email to a small group of people with updates on new postings to this Website. To be added to the list, email updates@monobasinresearch.org.

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua Website: www.birdchautauqua.org

The newest of our Websites celebrates our annual June birding festival—the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua. This festival is made possible by a partnership between the Committee, PRBO Conservation Science, Eastern Sierra Audubon, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve. Information on walks, talks, and special events during the solstice weekend is available along with online registration for many of the events.

Take a Virtual Visit

So if you've never visited us online, hopefully this gives you some ideas for where to start. And if you are a regular visitor, thanks for making these sites successful! ❖

From Outer Space to Inner Earth

Microbe Hunter Digs for Clues to Exotic Life in Mono Lake

David Perlman, San Francisco Chronicle Science Editor

Brine shrimp dart in the shallows along this weirdly tower-studded lakeshore, and clouds of alkali flies darken patches of the lake's salty surface. But Richard Hoover, a onetime solar physicist, collects only a few of those mundane creatures.

He is on the hunt for stranger prey.

Glass tubes cram his pockets as he gathers samples of muck from the lake's rough and rubbled bottom. Some of the samples, he hopes, will reveal the presence of "extremophiles," microbes that inhabit some of the most bizarre environments on Earth.

An infinite variety of life forms has been found in environments that more familiar organisms can't tolerate. Hoover hopes that some of these places just might resemble the extreme environments where life may once have thrived on other worlds in our solar system.

Perhaps, Hoover muses, extremophiles might thrive beyond Earth even now.

The space probes that examine red-hued Mars, or giant Jupiter's icy moons Europa and Callisto, or ringed Saturn's smog-shrouded satellite Titan, are spurred by the possibility that life may well be far more widespread in the solar system—or at least may once have existed in extreme environments other than on Earth alone.

But what might life be like in such alien places? Some of their environments are much too hot or cold to support the normal life of Earth's surface and its waters. Some are much too acid or alkaline, and the atmosphere on some may be much too dense or sparse for normal Earthly organisms.

Yet on Earth, such extreme environmental niches exist, and life inhabits them: in the boiling hot springs and geysers of Yellowstone; in ice layers thousands of feet beneath the surface of Antarctica; in the deepest metal mines of Asia; and in the muck of Mono Lake, where not a

single fish can withstand the water's heavy burden of salt and alkalinity.

Hauling "Beautiful Creatures"

At Pyramid Lake, northeast of Reno, Hoover found "deep red and orange bacterial mats" in areas of the lake bottom where no oxygen exists, and he hauled up quantities of diatoms and unusual algae with their varied silica exoskeletons.

But it was at Mono Lake that Hoover found his richest haul.

"What beautiful creatures they are," he exclaims as he describes with more than a hint of rapture the three new species of bacteria he had already found during an earlier visit to the lake.

"It may take months in the lab before we can be sure of what I'm collecting today, but you never know, and in this kind of wonderful mud, with absolutely no oxygen and so heavily alkaline, we're bound to find more new ones—the very kinds of microbes that could well be living—or at least might once have lived—somewhere else in the solar system."

Hoover and his research colleague at Huntsville, microbiologist Elena Pikuta, have already identified three new species of bacteria they have found in Hoover's avid quest at Mono Lake. They bear formidable names: *Spirochaeta americana*, *Tindallia californiensis*, and *Desulfonatronum thiodismutans*.

The last one, *D. thiodismutans*, is particularly notable, Hoover says, because it apparently lives and obtains its energy by metabolizing sulfur—the very element that sustains bacterial life at the base of the food chain in deep-sea hydrothermal vents, miles beneath the sea where there is neither light nor oxygen and where fiery volcanic heat dominates the environment.

Hoover has sought his microbial trophies in some of the most remote places on Earth, including the Russian Antarctic research station called Vostok,

where temperatures often reach 130 degrees below zero.

That outpost sits atop more than two miles of ice, and far below it lies a mysterious lake almost 125 miles long and 3,200 feet deep—twice the depth of Tahoe—which American and Russian scientists would dearly love to explore.

Finding Common Ground in Ice

The Russians, with American help, drilled a hole through the Vostok ice toward the lake and stopped when their drill reached a depth of 11,900 feet for fear of breaking through the ice and contaminating the pristine lake.

Teams of Russian and American scientists are seeking a way of probing the lake itself with some kind of meticulously sterile robot minisubmarine, but no one has yet figured out just how to do it.

Hoover and his Russian colleague, Sabit Abyzov, have been examining ice core samples from the Vostok drilling project that are as much as 400,000 years old. And living in the ancient ice are fungi, algae, bacteria, protozoa and diatoms.

"That ice must be very much like the icy crust of Jupiter's moon Europa," Hoover says, "so is it too much to wonder whether all kinds of similar forms of life have existed up there, too?"

Hoover notes that the geologic basin in which Mono Lake lies resembles a prominent feature on Mars called Gusev Crater, where NASA's Mars robot rover named Spirit will land early next year. Gusev Crater surely holds no water today, but it may contain fossil evidence of past life. Hoover hopes the extremophiles he picks up in Mono's alkaline waters may help scientists understand the ancient life of such fossils—if ever they are found on Mars. ❖

This excerpt from David Perlman's article is presented with permission from the author and the San Francisco Chronicle.

The Hidden Stream

by Greg Reis

Most individuals knowledgeable about the history of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power’s (DWP) diversions would say that DWP diverts four streams: Rush, Lee Vining, Parker, and Walker Creeks. But there is a fifth stream of water that often gets ignored, yet LA sustains the full amount of diversions from it, even to this day. During the 1989–1994 injunction against diversions while Mono Lake was low, full diversions from this stream continued unabated—about 12,000 acre feet each year, 30% more than the entire annual flow of Parker Creek. Admittedly, it isn’t entirely within the Mono Basin, only about 7,300 acre-feet (60%) is believed to come from this basin (35% more than the annual flow of Walker Creek).

The Water Board sets no limits on the diversions from this stream. In fact, no one is able to prevent diverting this stream. It isn’t a creek, but it is a stream of water that averages over 15 cubic feet per second, enough to raise Mono Lake two-tenths of a foot in a year. By now you are starting to guess—is it the direct precipitation into the aqueduct system? No. You scratch your head. What could it be?

This hidden stream is the groundwater inflow into the Mono Craters Tunnel. It is like a horizontal well, tapping the groundwater basin under the Mono Craters and the Jeffrey Pine forest. It is called “Tunnel Make” by hydrologists.

The numbers that show the amount of water diverted from the Mono Basin generally don’t reflect it. DWP is allowed to export 16,000 acre-feet of water per year right now? No, more like 23,000 acre-feet. 33,000 acre-feet per year on average after transition to 6391? No, more like 40,000 acre-feet. DWP has reduced its Mono Basin water exports by 80%? No, more like 75%.

The environmental effects of this hidden diversion have not been studied. The water table over the tunnel is lower than if it hadn’t been constructed. Mono Lake is slightly lower than it would have been otherwise. And in the Owens Basin, 4,700 acre-feet of water that would have slowly percolated through the volcanic sands into Clark Canyon and the Upper Owens River is instead dumped in at a single point. Recognizing this hidden stream exists is essential for having a complete understanding of Mono Basin diversions. ❖

Lakewatch

Rainy Year for Lee Vining Means Less Evaporation for Mono Lake

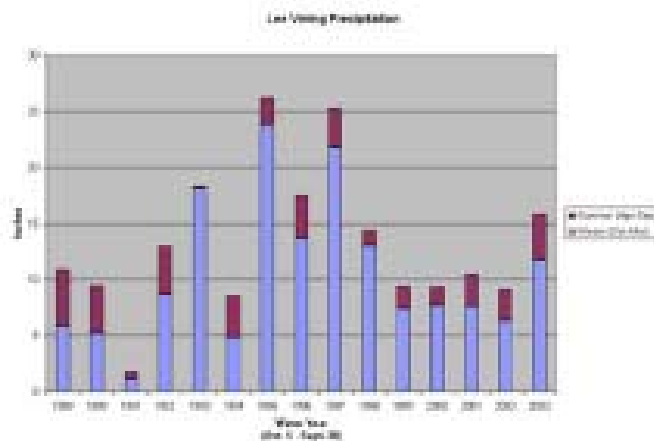
by Greg Reis

Mono Lake dropped 0.9 feet this summer between April 1st and October 1st. During the same period last year it dropped 1 foot. One possible reason for the slightly smaller drop is that it has been a wet summer (144% of average precipitation from April–Oct). At the lower elevations you could tell that there was a lot of summer rain and the sagebrush stayed green through August.

From October 1st 2002 to October 1st 2003, Lee Vining received about 16 inches of precipitation, about 120% of average, and the 5th wettest year in the 15 year record.

Close to 10 inches fell in each of the previous four years. Snowmelt runoff was below average, however, due to variations in precipitation throughout the basin.

The Committee felt this year’s runoff forecast was too low based on near-record spring precipitation. April–September 2003 runoff was about 80% of average compared to the 70% forecasted by DWP. For the runoff year, based on its forecast of 74% of average,



DWP released a peak flow of 200 cfs to Rush Creek. Had the forecast been more accurate (the Committee believes runoff for the year could end up as high as 85%), at least 250 cfs and possibly 380 cfs would have been required. There is no procedure in the Water Board Decision for appealing a runoff forecast—a deficiency which the Committee is discussing with DWP and the Water Board. ❖

Greg is the Committee’s Information Specialist. This summer he hiked from the top of the Rush Creek watershed to Mono Lake.

6417'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

6392'

Target lake level

6381'

Current lake level

6372'

Historic low, 1982

Mono Basin Journal

A Roundup of Quiet Happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



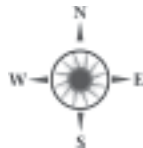
GEORGE MCQUILKIN

Time for a change, says fall, the transition season of the Mono Basin. It's not like spring, that undecided season that acts like summer but feels like winter. No, fall celebrates what's ahead and what's behind. Phalaropes still shift across the lake in graceful flocks, but thinning flocks, full of out-bound birds with South America on the mind; grebes are inbound, growing in numbers, nabbing every brine shrimp they can before the lake chills. The sky fills with summer cumulus clouds and spectacular sunsets yet the winter chill at night clips back flowers and hard-won vegetable gardens.

The apple crop is tinged with red now. In this year's heavy harvest some are large, some not so large; perhaps they should

have been thinned, but the small apples have their own allure as bite-sized treats, self contained, no packaging needed. Stories of pies in the oven and applesauce on the stove drift through town; apple enthusiasm and excess replacing memories of last year's apple drought.

It's transition season in the high country as well. Yellow leaves droop from willows at 9,000 feet; brown grasses ramble across meadows, red-leaved ground cover spills down rocky slopes where the last rivulets of warm season meltwater make thin cascades. In the day, the warm sun whispers of the summer gone by; at night the cold temperatures speak of the winter now racing toward us. ❖



Benchmarks



Benchmark Tufa just peaking above the lake's surface in 1962—lake level approximately 6394 feet above sea level.



BARTSHE MILLER

Benchmark Tufa 2003, lake level 6381.6—the lake is just beyond the willows behind the tufa towers.

THE FALL CATALOG

from the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO SWEATSHIRT

Every day will feel like a day off in these 100% cotton pigment-dyed sweatshirts. They have a broken-in feel and a weathered look that will make them your favorite from the first day! Office Manager Craig Pyle is wearing the crewneck style in smoke grey with a narrow rib-knit collar, cuffs, and bottom band and Eastern Sierra Policy Director Lisa Cutting is wearing the boxy cut version in periwinkle blue with hemmed sleeves and open bottom with side vents.

Adult Mono Lake Committee Logo Sweatshirt, in periwinkle blue or smoke grey, adult sizes S-XL: \$42.00 XXL: \$46.00

EMBROIDERED SWEATSHIRT

Stay warm on chilly mornings with our cozy sweatshirt featuring our popular Mono Lake and the Sierra crest design in multi-colored embroidery. Soft and fuzzy on the inside, this 50-50 Lee Heavyweight sweatshirt comes in subdued fall colors. The youth hooded version being modeled by our friend Shane is available in navy, and Rena sure looks smart in the adult crewneck which comes in moss green and sandalwood marl.

Adult Crewneck Embroidered Sweatshirt, in moss green or sandalwood marl, sizes

S-XL: \$36.00 XXL: \$40.00

Youth Hooded Embroidered Sweatshirt, in navy, youth sizes S-XL: \$32.00



LONG LIVE MONO LAKE CUFF CAP

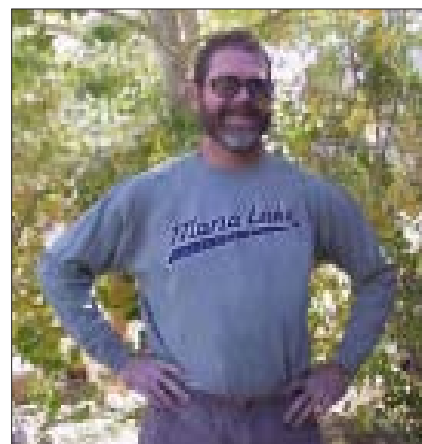
Vireo Gaines stopped by to try out our new "Long Live Mono Lake" fleece beanie! It features a lining that makes it waterproof yet breathable. Be prepared when the snow flies! Available in two sizes, S/M or L/XL, in black, charcoal or navy.

Cuff Cap, sizes S/M or L/XL: \$16.00

MONO LAKE SCRIPT LONG-SLEEVE T-SHIRT

Retro script lettering lets 'em know where your heart is! Douglas Dunaway is sporting this long-sleeved 100% cotton sage green T-shirt with navy lettering with a white outline. Perfect for cool autumn days.

Mono Lake Script T-shirt, adult sizes S-XL: \$18.00



Call (760) 647-6595 to order

BOKU BOOKS JOURNAL

These 40-page journals feature a sewn binding and are made from 70% recycled material and 30% Kenaf—a plant fiber whose yield is five times greater than that of pine trees. Kenaf fiber paper is energy efficient to process, needing fewer chemicals and no chlorine compounds. Measuring 6"x9", the Boku Journal is available in lined and unlined versions with double thick card stock covers in tan, green, blue, black, purple, and brick red.

Boku Journal, please specify color tan, green, blue, black, purple, and brick red, specify lined or unlined pages: \$9.95



SKETCHING SET

From Cretacolor Austria comes this set of fine art materials that are well suited for sketching and drawing as well as experimental techniques. This set offers artist's pencils (graphite, charcoal, white chalk, sanguine oil, and sepia), a fired chalk stick, sketching charcoal, paper wipe, and a kneaded eraser all in a carrying tin.

Sketching Set: \$15.95



WATERCOLOR PENCIL SET

Aquarellith are classic water color pencils that can be mixed both wet and dry to give unlimited color possibilities. Apply water to the colors with a brush and defined lines dissolve into rich, smooth contours and transitions. Set contains 12 colors in a carrying tin.

Watercolor Pencil Set: \$16.95



WATERCOLOR POSTCARD PAD

Create wonderful original art and then mail it to a friend! These pads contain 20 sheets of 100% alpha cellulose watercolor paper with a printed postcard back. Paper is acid free, 140 lb stock, 4" x 6".

Watercolor Postcard Pad: \$9.95



Saddleworn



Handtooled

PAPERBLANKS JOURNALS

These stylish 7"x9" journals feature leather-print covers with a magnetic wrap closure, 144 lined pages of acid-free archival paper, ribbon page marker, and a memento pouch. The covers feature an old leather appeal without the leather and have the look of being lovingly used for a century!

Comes in 4 cover styles: saddleworn, handtooled, foiled, embossed

PaperBlanks Journal, please specify saddleworn, handtooled, foiled, or embossed cover: \$15.95



Foiled



Embossed

Call (760) 647-6595 to order

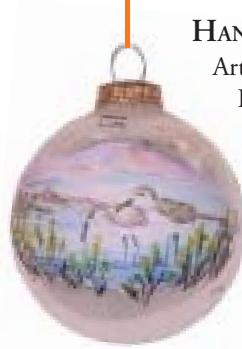
❁ The Fall Catalog ❁



*Lee Vining Creek
& Lupine*



Avocets



Sandpipers

HAND-PAINTED CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS

Artist Wendy Rismeyer has created three beautiful Mono Lake scenes, each handpainted in oils on a glass Christmas ornament. Two scenes depict the Mono Lake shoreline with either American Avocets or Sandpipers, the third shows Lee Vining Creek with an early summer bloom of lupine. These ornaments will be wonderful keepsakes you'll treasure in your family for years.

Hand-Painted Ornament, please specify Lee Vining Creek & Lupine, Avocets, or Sandpipers: \$14.95



TOM KILLION HIGH SIERRA HOLIDAY CARD SET

A set of ten of Tom Killion's beautiful and popular High Sierra color woodcut prints. The set includes ten cards, two each of Half Dome, Kearsarge Pinnacles, Horse Creek Trail, East Pinnacles Creek, and Tuolumne Meadows. Message inside reads: "Peace on Earth".

Killion Holiday Set, 10 cards with envelopes: \$12.95



WENDY MORGAN HOLIDAY CARD SETS

Two charming designs from one of our favorite bird artists.

The first design shows Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds carrying a garland of stars while the second design shows a

Chickadee perched on a decorated pussy willow branch.

Message inside reads: "May you have a Happy Holiday and a

Joyous New Year".

Morgan Holiday Set, 10 cards with envelopes, please specify

Hummingbirds or Chickadee design: \$11.95



MONO CRATERS HOLIDAY CARD SET

Stephen Ingram's lovely color photo of the snow-covered Mono Craters reflected in Mono Lake graces the front of this holiday card. Enjoy the holidays and wish for lots of snow! Message inside reads: "Best wishes for a joyous holiday season."

Mono Craters Set, 8 cards with envelopes: \$11.95

Call (760) 647-6595 to order

WILD BRYDE EARRINGS



Wilson's Phalarope \$18.00



Eared Grebe & Brine Shrimp \$17.50



Brine Shrimp \$12.00



Gull at Mono Lake \$17.00



Hummingbird & Columbine \$17.00



American Avocet \$17.50



Chirpy Chickadee \$16.00



Warbler & Binoculars \$20.00



Earth \$17.00



Flycatcher \$17.50



Killdeer \$18.00



Snowy Plover \$17.00



Save Mono Lake Pin \$24.00



Alkali Fly Pin \$9.00

WILD BRYDE EARRINGS & PINS

Wild Bryde is an ecology-oriented and nature-friendly company. The materials used in their jewelry making processes, their packaging, and their office supplies are all recycled or recyclable. They create beautiful pieces that honor the earth and wildlife and they have worked with the Mono Lake Committee over the years to produce a special selection of Mono Lake related earrings and pins. All of the earring selections are hanging styles on french wires. Earrings and pins are available in gold or rhodium plated finish.

All selections are shown actual size. See individual styles for prices, please specify gold or rhodium (silver) finish.



MONO LAKE: EXPLORATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

BY JIM STIMSON

This beautiful collection of photographs allows you to see the Mono Basin and Mono Lake in all seasons from a variety of perspectives. An opening essay by Charles Wilkinson reflects on the political history of the Mono Basin and Stimson's intent as a photographer. This is the finest coffee table book about Mono Lake around.

Mono Lake: Explorations and Reflections, hardcover, Orion Publications, 116 pages, measures 12¼" x 11¼": \$55.00

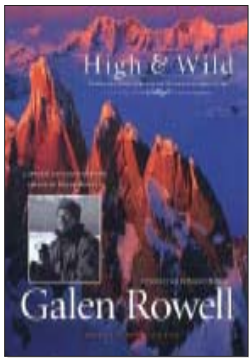
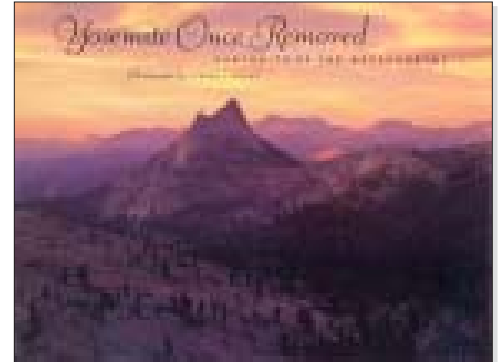
**YOSEMITE ONCE REMOVED:
PORTRAITS OF THE BACKCOUNTRY**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLAUDE FIDDLER, WITH ESSAYS BY STEVE ROPER, NANCY FIDDLER,
ANNE MACQUARIE, JOHN HART, AND DOUG ROBINSON

Yosemite Valley is the site of famous landmarks, but occupies only seven square miles.

Yosemite National Park covers 1,200 square miles, 94% of which is designated wilderness. Claude Fiddler's remarkable photographs and essays by five veteran backcountry travelers, take you to that other Yosemite, a marvelous region far above the much-visited Valley.

Yosemite Once Removed, hardcover, Yosemite Association, 127 pages, measures 11½"x9¾": \$29.95



HIGH & WILD: ESSAY AND PHOTOGRAPHS ON WILDERNESS ADVENTURE

BY GALEN ROWELL

This is an expanded and updated version of the 1979 classic. The book contains over twenty essays on Rowell's many alpine adventures with accompanying photographs. Many of these photos have not been published elsewhere. A treat for mountaineers and anyone who enjoys a good adventure story.

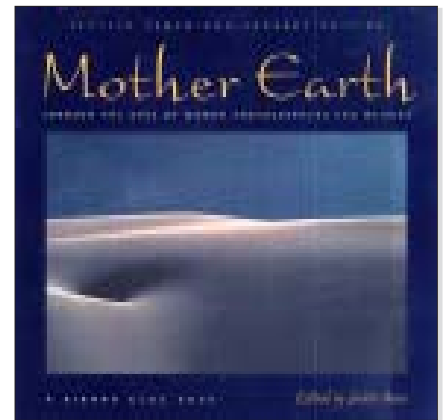
High & Wild, hardcover, Spotted Dog Press, 224 pages, measures 7 ¼"x10 ¼": \$34.95

MOTHER EARTH: THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS AND WRITERS

EDITED BY JUDITH BOICE

With more than seventy brilliant color photographs and accompanying text, this book combines the work of some of the world's most talented women photographers with the poetry and prose of eminent women writers to present a unique perspective on our planet.

Mother Earth, softcover, Sierra Club Books, 190 pages, measures 10"x9½": \$24.95



THE HIGH SIERRA OF CALIFORNIA: POEMS AND JOURNALS BY GARY SNYDER, WOODCUTS AND ESSAYS BY TOM KILLION

The spirit of the Sierra Nevada is captured by the eloquent words of Gary Snyder and the color woodcuts of Tom Killion in a unique and amazing way. Pick up this popular and visually stunning book and get lost in the beauty and magic of the High Sierra.

The High Sierra of California, hardcover, Heydey Books and The Yosemite Association, 128 pages, measures 11¾"x9¼": \$50.00

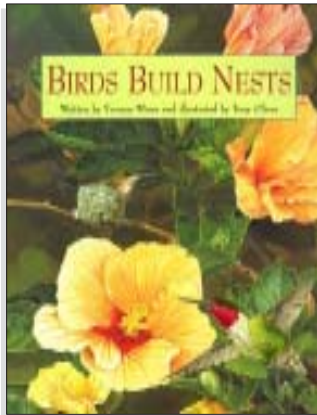
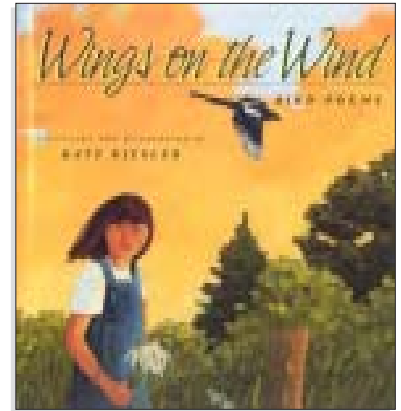
Call (760) 647-6595 to order

WINGS ON THE WIND: BIRD POEMS

COLLECTED AND ILLUSTRATED BY KATE KIESLER

This fine-feathered collection of poems celebrates birds—the wonders of flight, the miracle of nests, the magic of song. Kate Kiesler's oil paintings gracefully complement poems by Margaret Wise Brown, Carl Sandburg, Edward Lear, and others.

Wings on the Wind, hardcover, Clarion Books, 40 pages: \$14.00



BIRDS BUILD NESTS

WRITTEN BY YVONNE WINER, ILLUSTRATED BY TONY OLIVER

Bird's nests vary enormously, from the most amazing delicate hidden pouches to vast tower-like structures or even shallow hollows in the ground. This book highlights 15 birds and their interesting and diverse nests.

Birds Build Nests, softcover, Charlesbridge Publishing, 32 pages: \$6.95

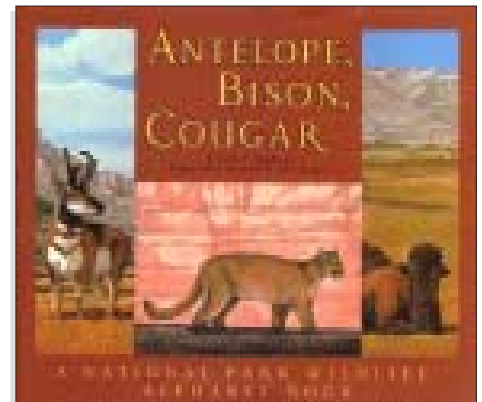
ANTELOPE, BISON, COUGAR:

A NATIONAL PARK WILDLIFE ALPHABET BOOK

STEPHEN P. MEDLEY, ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL SAN SOUCI

More than a simple alphabet book, *Antelops, Bison, Cougar* was created to introduce young people to the wealth of wild mammals, birds and other creatures that live in various sites throughout the U.S. national park system. The book contains beautiful illustrations, interesting facts about the animals and the parks, and contact information for the parks mentioned in the book.

Antelope, Bison, Cougar, hardcover, Yosemite Association, 62 pages: \$14.95



SHE'S WEARING A DEAD BIRD ON HER HEAD!

BY KATHRYN LASKY, ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID CATROW

When wearing dead birds as hat decorations became a raging fashion at the turn of the last century, Minna Hall and Harriet Hemenway founded the Massachusetts Audubon Society to fight the practice and protect the birds. Delightful illustrations accompany this fascinating true tale of how two determined women became classic American activists—for women, for social progress, and, of course, for the birds.

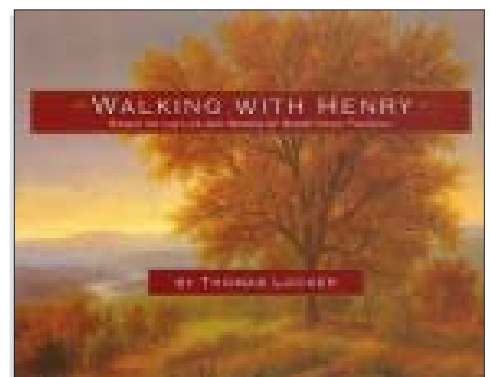
She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head, softcover, Hyperion Paperbacks for Children, 38 pages: \$5.95

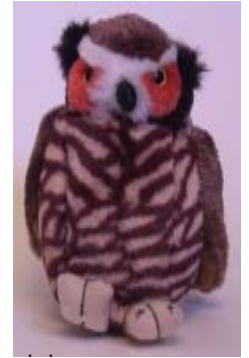
WALKING WITH HENRY

BY THOMAS LOCKER

Readers join Thoreau on a walk in the wilderness in this poetic picture book. An appropriately spare text is accompanied by evocative landscape paintings. The book's accessibility makes it an appropriate choice for introducing Thoreau to youngsters and it could also be used to encourage them to look more closely at the natural world around them. An inspirational selection of quotes from the naturalist's writings is included at the end.

Walking With Henry, hardcover, Fulcrum Publishing, 32 pages: \$17.95

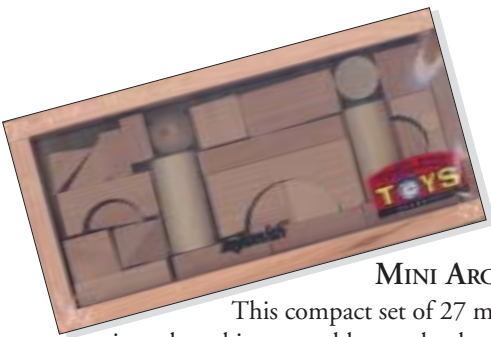




AUDUBON BIRDS WITH REAL BIRD CALLS!

These plush stuffed birds feature authentic calls provided by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and are perfect for adult and child bird lovers alike! Attached mini booklet contains brief descriptions of the bird and a map of migration patterns. Ages 3 and up.

Audubon Birds, please specify American Goldfinch, Bald Eagle, California Gull, California Quail, Great Horned Owl, Hermit Thrush, Mountain Bluebird, Northern Flicker, Peregrine Falcon, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, or Western Tanager: \$6.95 each



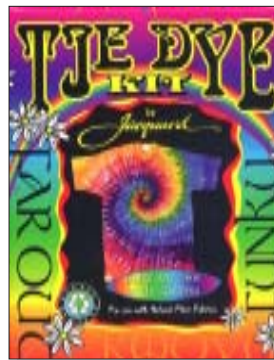
MINI ARCHITECT BLOCKS

This compact set of 27 mini hardwood blocks is packaged in a reusable wooden box. Perfect for learning to build all kinds of structures! Blocks range in size from 3/4" up to 2 1/4". Ages 5 and up.

Mini Architect Blocks set: \$4.95

TIE-DYE KIT

Add some color to your clothes! This kit comes complete with everything you need to create rainbows of fun in



your wardrobe. T-shirts, socks, boxers, let your imagination run wild! Kit contains enough dye to color 5 shirts.

Tie-Dye Kit: \$12.95



MONO LAKE JIGSAW PUZZLES

Two beautiful 500 piece selections provide hours of fun for the puzzle enthusiast. The standard puzzle (right) measures 18"x24" when completed while the more challenging panoramic puzzle (above) measures 12"x36" when finished.

Mono Lake Jigsaw Puzzles, please specify standard or panoramic: \$13.50 each



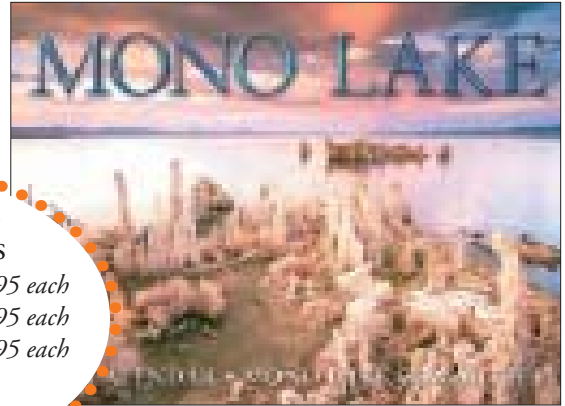
Call (760) 647-6595 to order

2004 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

The 2004 Mono Lake Calendar is full of beautiful color images of Mono Lake and the Mono Basin. From tufa towers to birds and lightning strikes to rushing creeks, this 12-month calendar captures many unique views. The

Mono Lake Calendar is a great way to bring the awe-inspiring beauty of the seasons at Mono Lake to your home or office all year long. Printed in the USA on recycled paper.

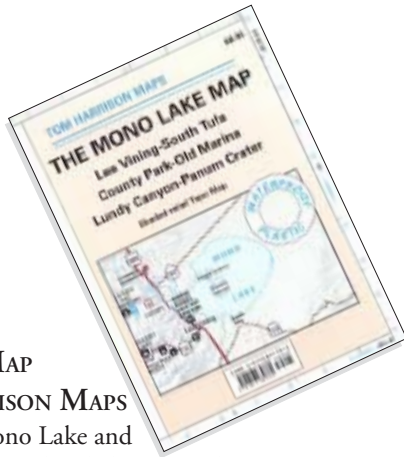
2004 Mono Lake Calendar, measures 13¼" x 9¼": \$10.95 (#4500)



**2004 CALENDAR
BULK DISCOUNTS**

Buy 2-5 pay \$8.95 each
Buy 6-10 pay \$7.95 each
Buy 11 or more pay \$6.95 each

**GREAT FOR
HOLIDAY GIFTS!**



NEW!

MONO LAKE MAP

BY TOM HARRISON MAPS

Now see all of Mono Lake and surroundings on one detailed topographic map! This shaded relief topographic map is printed on waterproof plasticized paper at a 1:63,360 scale (one inch = one mile). Comes pre-folded, 18"x26" when flat.

Mono Lake Map, Tom Harrison Maps: \$8.95



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE MEMBER NALGENE BOTTLE

New colored Nalgene bottles come with the Mono Lake Committee Member logo silk-screened on one side and "Long Live Mono Lake" on the other. These great gift items are available in glacier blue, violet, bright green, and sage green.

Mono Lake Committee Member Nalgene Bottle, please specify glacier blue, violet, bright green, or sage green: \$9.50

Order by phone: (760) 647-6595, fax: (760) 647-6377, or email: bookstore@monolake.org

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Call (760) 647-6595 to order

Living Lakes Partnership Helping Lakes in Need

Mono Lake Success Story Spreads Around the World

by Greg Reis

Five years ago, a group of Germans came to Mono Lake with grand ideas for an international partnership of lakes sharing solutions and helping each other. Inspired by the Mono Lake story, they wanted the Mono Lake Committee to be one of the founding members. The Committee agreed to join, though somewhat hesitant about what the group could actually accomplish.

Since then, much has been accomplished. The Global Nature Fund (GNF), the German environmental group that organized the partnership, has managed to get enough funding from corporate sponsors to expand the partnership to 24 lakes. All the members gather together at one of the lakes each year for a conference. In 1999 the Mono Lake Committee hosted the conference at Mono Lake. In 2000, the partnership had an exhibit at the World Exposition in Hanover, Germany.

Aside from the conference, the Work Camp (see below), and the grant the Committee receives to maintain the

Living Lakes Website, it might seem like we don't get a lot of direct benefits out of the partnership. However, it is through our contributions that we receive. Spreading the story of the Committee's successes not only helps others strategize ways to protect their lakes, but it also increases awareness of Mono Lake and the solutions that worked well here.

Laguna Chapala, Mexico's largest lake, is one of the newest partners of Living Lakes. Chapala is drying up due to excessive water diversions—with much of the water going to cities such as Guadalajara and Mexico City. Last year some of the people working to save Chapala visited Mono Lake and were very excited by what they learned about the ways the Mono Lake Committee helped promote water conservation to wean LA off of excessive diversions.

The Committee also shares information with other lake organizations in need, not just Living Lakes Partners. We have

given presentations, advice, and publicity to the Owens Lake Committee and the Walker Lake Working Group—working on the severely impaired watersheds to the south and north of Mono Lake.

Unfortunately, not all lakes can meet the criteria for becoming a Living Lakes partner, but the partnership wishes to help as many lakes as possible. It recently implemented an "Associate Membership" for those groups that don't meet the criteria for full partner status but wish to come to conferences and benefit from the networking and publicity associated with the partnership. This is something that groups working on Walker Lake, Owens Lake, and other lakes in need might want to pursue. An application form can be downloaded from the Living Lakes Website at <http://www.livinglakes.org/kritassoc.pdf>.

The Mono Lake Committee is proud of its involvement in the Living Lakes partnership, and hopes to help strengthen protection for lakes all over the world. ❖

Mono Lake Gets Help from Living Lakes Work Camp

During the first three weeks in September, the Mono Lake Committee hosted a Living Lakes Work Conservation Camp, one of four that was organized by the Global Nature Fund. Mono Lake and the Mono Basin certainly benefited from the Work Camp's volunteered help. Completed projects included trail maintenance of the Lee Vining Creek Trail; removal of two truck loads of trash and barbed wire from the upper part of Lee Vining Creek; the removal of invasive Tamarisk (salt cedar) from the Lee Vining Creek delta, Rush Creek, Lee Vining Tufa and along the southern shoreline of Mono Lake; the removal

of 24 large bags of Russian Thistle from the South Tufa trail and assisting the U.S. Forest Service with raking out illegal off-road vehicle tracks at the Mono Craters Vista and along the road that goes around the east side of Mono Lake. The Mono Lake Work Camp paid for their own flight costs and most of the expenses accrued during their visit to the Mono Basin that were not paid for by DaimlerChrysler, the work camp sponsor. As a charter member, the Mono Lake Committee is pleased with the Living Lakes Work Camp's accomplishments and is looking forward to continued involvement with the Living Lakes Partnership.



German Living Lakes Work Camp volunteers from left to right Corinna Fischer, Elke Sommer, Philipp Kammerer, Mareike Poit, and Fabian Becher.

The Forgotten Season

Winter Photography in the Mono Basin



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD KNEPP

January 16-18, 2004

\$195 per person/ \$175 for Mono Lake Committee members

Limited to 15 participants

There is a visual quiet that compliments the silence marking this season in a most remarkable place. A lifting morning poconip fog, tufa towers jacketed in snow and reflected in the mirror of the lake's surface, ice sculpting crystalline filigree along creek and lake banks. Come share in the wonder that provides a very different photographic opportunity.

This photography field seminar will be based in Lee Vining on the weekend of a full moon. Explore various locations along the lake, and photograph the serenity and beauty that is the Mono Basin in winter.

Though primarily a field seminar, there will be discussions covering composition and methods of proper exposure under the diverse variety of lighting conditions encountered during winter in the Eastern Sierra, the Zone System for color and black and white, visualization, filtration, and developing a personal vision. The workshop is for the enthusiastic color and/or black and white photographer with a working knowledge of his or her camera.

Instructor Rick Knepp is a former Mono Lake Committee staff member and long-time photographer whose autumn workshops have sold out four years running. Rick has studied with master printers John Sexton and Jim Stimson, teaches photography and darkroom techniques, and directs and assists at workshops around the Pacific Southwest. Rick is a veteran of Mono winters and his experience will allow you to take advantage of the many winter photographic opportunities.

Come prepared for the cold winter landscapes. This seminar will take place regardless of weather or road conditions. Be prepared for the possibility of driving in snow, or the additional drive time that may be required when Sierra passes are either closed for the winter or closed temporarily due to snow.

Cost is for tuition only. Participants must arrange their own accommodation. There will be no refunds due to weather.

For registration or more information on the second annual winter photography seminar, contact Education Director Bartshé Miller (bartshe@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

Staff Migrations

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

So far as we can tell, the myth of fall is that it is the quiet season. It's not! See if you can follow this tale of staff movement:

We bid farewell to Office Manager Patricia Holland who really enjoyed getting a quick look at the Mono Lake Committee from the inside, but just couldn't stay away from education. How could we compete with a classroom of kindergartners? We wish you the best back at school, Patricia!

Luckily, Craig Pyle stepped up to the plate and has journeyed from Florida to join us as our new Office Manager. He brings great experience from the "real world" of corporate employment and is ready to be the calm in the storm of the back office. The fit is already looking good as he's been slipping through willows on his days off, bird book in hand, to spot our west coast avian visitors on the creeks.

We're also excited to announce that Intern Douglas Dunaway of Bishop has accepted a position as Staff Assistant! He will be helping out with a plethora of projects ranging from writing press releases to helping with bulk mailings.

We've got lots of farewells (ta ta for now, as we prefer to say; you never know who will be back) for the super seasonal

staff of 2003! Store Assistant Anna Scofield is off to college at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo—have a great time Anna, and come back home to visit often! Store Assistant Blake Treadway has moved on (but luckily not too far) to a position with the Toiyabe National Forest. Canoe Coordinator Ariel Rowan is also sticking around the area with a position with the Inyo County of Education. Birding Intern Randy Arnold is back to his real job with the Barefoot Winery after enthusiastically spending his summer sabbatical with us.

Jessica DeLong headed back to Pennsylvania to stage her next adventure. Local resident Reagan Heater is off to his first year at Sierra College near Tahoe. Maya Schwartz is back for her final year at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point. And Rose Wilson is back at Grinnell College in Iowa. Thanks to all for their hard work; we know the lure of the Mono Basin will bring them back soon!

And the good news for us is that Intern Jessica Kirkpatrick is sticking around to help out in this increasingly busy season. She's also coaching the Lee Vining High School girls volleyball team! Go Tigers! ❖

Have you always wanted to visit the Galapagos Islands?

Here's a chance you won't want to pass up!

Cruise the Galapagos Islands for 11 days aboard the Sagitta Sailboat with Mountain Travel Sobek.

August 9-19, 2004

The 15-person group will be accompanied by an expert naturalist guide for 11 days of sailing, hiking, snorkeling, and island-style relaxation.

A portion of the trip cost benefits Mono Lake Committee Protection, Restoration, and Education programs.

For more information, contact Susanne Methvin
1-800-282-8747 x6023 or email Susanne@mtsobek.com





From the Mailbag

News from Members and Friends

by Erika Obedzinski

“My all time favorite lake.” This is what one member wrote recently on a slip of paper she folded around her check and mailed to us. It’s remarkable when you stop to think how many of us share in this feeling—and that it is through this shared dedication, and love of a place that Mono Lake is now being restored. As another member wrote to us, “Every time I think of Mono Lake I am amazed at the success a small band of dedicated citizens can make when they truly believe in their cause. Thinking about it, perhaps the band is not too small now but it certainly was in the beginning.”

I keep a folder near my desk of all of the notes and letters that arrive in the mail from our members throughout the year. It’s always heartening to receive this kind of positive feedback. When the issues and work involved in protecting the lake become more challenging, your words can be a source of necessary inspiration. So in celebrating our 25th year, it feels like a good time to share some of the words we’ve received from you. Here is a small sample of your many heartfelt notes and letters to us. Thank you to all of you!

—Erika Obedzinski

Shirley Wodtke of Cupertino has been a Mono Lake Committee member since the early 80s when she received information about Mono Lake through the mail. Born in

Idaho, where she learned to love the outdoors, Shirley felt it was important to protect the environment. With Mono, she thought it would be difficult to win, but she felt compelled with this and other environmental issues that “you have to try.” Shirley now spends some of her time as a volunteer at the south end of San Francisco Bay helping in the effort there to restore thousands of acres of old salt ponds into wetlands and tidal marsh. We received this thoughtful letter from Shirley Wodtke this spring.

I’ve been with your organization for a long time. In the early years, I gave generously answering every appeals letter with the most I could muster at the time. It was always needed for expensive legal battles. And we won and I am so proud of everyone. For me the whole experience was uplifting. I still read your newsletters cover to cover and have visited Mono Lake twice. Now I am going into retirement and can’t give as generously. But I am here and am available to write letters and in other ways act as a voice for Mono. I want to thank the whole staff for their hard work and dedication over the years.

Myself, I am a “want-to-be-biologist.” When I was young there were no jobs for biologists (especially women). Now there are many and if I were just beginning my career now I would have one of them (even though the pay is lousy). But I am settling in my retirement years for volunteer work for the restoration effort that is going on in South San Francisco bay.

Many thanks to Mono Lake Committee for giving me an uplifting experience—that is, to be part of the saving of Mono Lake.

—Shirley Wodtke

Member Notes

I just drove through your whole area once many years back. I kept sending donations to your work—such sincere energy for such a special area needs help. Hang in there—for the water, for the birds, for the specialness.

Thank you for all of your crucial work ... I love that lake!

I’m happy to help in my small way, the natural beauty and ecology of our planet.

In 1940 my husband and I stayed in a tiny one room cabin with an out house out back. The lake at that time was lapping the road to the north end of town. Wish we had photos of that day.

I have read David Gaines’ books and was saddened at his tragic end. However, the legacy he left is visible to all when they look across the placid waters of Lake Mono.

In Honor

Doris and George Dyer of Sanger gave a gift in honor of the birthday of John R. Dyer of Reno.

In Memory

William and Sharon James of La Crescenta gave a gift in memory of Ron Bigelow, and James and Janet Seay of Kerman made a donation in memory of Kyle Opperman.

Thank you

Thank you to Alan Magree of Long Beach, who gave a generous donation to cover the costs of postage to send hand written thank-you cards to our members who join or renew in the bookstore.

Thank you to the Meyer Family of Redford, MI for emailing the adorable photo above of their 4-year-old son Gregory playing in the “bunny grass.”