



# MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Summer 2009

Every time I saw Andrea Lawrence she made a point of commenting on what I write in this little tucked-away space, page two of the *Mono Lake Newsletter*. Every time. I was amazed that she, Andrea Lawrence, Olympic gold medalist, protector of rural life in harmony with the Eastern Sierra landscape, champion of Mono Lake, would read this spot, remember it—she'd even ask about things as if to quiz me. I would usually say something like, "I can always count on you and my Mom." She would just give me a look "no."

The world changed when Andrea passed away, and sitting here on the eve of the *Newsletter* going to press I can't help but think of what anecdote might catch her eye. The Violet-green Swallows swooping over Lee Vining Creek while the stream scientists checked out restoration progress last week? The vibrant green color of the lake on these blustery spring days ... the Lee Vining preschoolers visiting the brine shrimp tank on a field trip ... the eager seasonal staff arriving in awe of the place they've landed for the summer ... the aspen trees leafing out like little lanterns and the desert peach bursting into bloom ... the Osprey vying for its nest back from a Canada Goose down at South Tufa ... the indescribably wonderful smell of the sagebrush in the rain?

One thing I know for sure is that she didn't ever stop at page two. There are turbidity issues to investigate, a wilderness designation to celebrate, route inventory plans to study, mining operation plans to review, and a return to the State Water Board at hand. And, there's the memory of one incredibly powerful friend to honor.

With that, I invite you to read this *Newsletter* from the entire staff of the Mono Lake Committee, on behalf of its 16,000 members, inspired by countless dedicated individuals, and with the memory of Andrea Lawrence under our wings.

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



Lee Vining's preschoolers on a field trip to the Mono Lake Committee. The brine shrimp tank was definitely a hit.

### 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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NEWSLETTER

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# Back to the State Water Board in 2010

*For the first time since the landmark Mono Lake decision*

*by Geoffrey McQuilkin*

**T**he Mono Lake Committee expects important Mono Lake issues to be up for review before the State Water Resources Control Board in 2010.

It will be the first hearing before the State Water Board since the landmark 1994 and 1998 Mono Lake water rights decisions that curtailed diversions from Mono Lake's tributary streams and mandated restoration of the severely damaged streams, waterfowl habitat, and lake.

Committee members and interested readers who remember the epic Mono Lake water rights struggle with Los Angeles that culminated before the State Water Board may now be doing a double take and asking: Is this really true?

Yes, it is true. And while it's not really a surprise—a return to the State Water Board is part of the stream restoration plan adopted in 1998—moving from the planning concept to the scheduled reality is taking some getting used to.

There are some important questions to be asked:

*Is this a big deal for Mono Lake and its tributaries? Yes.*

*Will the hearing result in changes to the State Water Board's 1994 Mono Lake order? Yes.*

*What kind of changes? We expect the changes to center*

on requirements for how much water must be in Mono Lake's tributaries at various times of year. Recommended changes will come from State Water Board-designated stream scientists—noted experts who have conducted a

decade of intensive studies. Other stream restoration changes are likely to be proposed as well. The Committee believes the proceeding has no reason to reopen the question of Mono Lake's long term management level.

*Will the changes help restore Mono's tributaries? We hope so. The Committee agrees with the State Water Board stream scientists that optimizing the*

**"A return to the State Water Board is precisely why the Mono Lake Committee's 16,000 members have remained vigilant over the years."**

timing, size, and duration of flows can benefit the streams. Setting peak flows at certain times of year and minimizing flows at other times, for example, is the right way to emulate the natural cycles that allow fisheries, riparian habitat, and streamside forests to thrive.

*Is this a move by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) to undercut Mono Lake's protection? No, the hearing is part of the State Water Board requirements. However, we will have to be certain that every single change that is made is right for Mono Lake, a process that can get very technical very quickly.*

*Will the Mono Lake Committee be there to speak for Mono Lake and its tributaries? Absolutely.*

## **Getting prepared**

The Committee has been active in every aspect of implementing the State Water Board orders over the past 15 years. While DWP, as the water rights holder, is ultimately responsible for satisfying the State Water Board requirements, the Committee is the on-the-ground organization making sure that the best possible results are achieved.

We're already mapping a strategy and broadening our experienced team in preparation for the State Water Board proceeding by contacting outside experts in ecological

*Continued on page 26*



ELIN LJUNG

*Scientists and Committee staff in the field assessing Mono Basin stream restoration progress.*

# In memoriam: Andrea Mead Lawrence

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

**A**ndrea Mead Lawrence—alpine skiing Olympic double-gold medalist, mother of five, visionary environmental leader, 16-year Mono County Supervisor, advocate for Mono Lake’s protection, and Mono Lake Committee Board member—passed away on March 31 at home in Mammoth Lakes with her family at her side. She was 76.

Andrea was an inspirational leader, a tireless champion of doing the right thing, and a gracious model of how to simply be a good person. Here at the Mono Lake Committee she was our sounding board, our conscience, and our friend. We will miss her enormously.

Andrea dedicated her life to preserving our shared public landscapes. After moving to Mammoth Lakes in 1968, she founded Friends of Mammoth to challenge excessive development, leading to the landmark California Supreme Court decision that broadened the reach of the state’s Environmental Quality Act to all permitted projects.

As a Mono County Supervisor, Andrea promoted an understanding that the economic vitality of the county is interwoven with the protection of its outstanding natural landscapes. She testified in support of Mono Lake’s protection, of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, and of the Desert Protection Act. She spearheaded the protection of Bodie State Park and helped found the Sierra Nevada Alliance to tackle Sierra issues on a regional scale.

In 1976, David Gaines and the ecological research team that revealed the devastating impacts on Mono Lake of excessive water diversions to Los Angeles set up camp in the Mono Basin. Andrea joined them by the campfire. In 1979 she joined in the first Bucket Walk, carrying water from above the Lee Vining diversion dam to Mono Lake at a time when the creek was still dry. In subsequent years she advocated for Mono Lake’s protection politically in many places; she spoke on behalf of Mono

County in favor of protection before Congress, the California Legislature, and the State Water Resources Control Board.

Upon retiring as a Supervisor in 1999, she joined the Committee Board of Directors. She brought to the Committee her firm determination that big victories, such as Olympic medals and the 1994 water rights protection of Mono Lake, are only the beginning. When you care about a landscape, she told us, when you are connected closely to a place, then your responsibility and duty to act are ongoing. Constant vigilance, she always reminded us, constantly applied.

Through all of her involvements, Andrea had a guiding vision of how community, economy, and ecological integrity should be integrated in a way that preserves the vitality of each and enhances the whole.

She also had an unerring ability to clearly see how that balance could be struck—and the fierce tenacity to fight to restore equilibrium in environmentally threatened places like Mono Lake, where the scales had tipped too far, for too long.

In 2002 Andrea was honored as the Greatest Winter Olympian of all time in recognition of her success in transforming herself from an outstanding athlete into an exceptional leader of the Eastern Sierra community and a champion for environmental protection.

Shortly afterward she founded the Andrea Lawrence Institute for Mountains & Rivers ([www.alimar.org](http://www.alimar.org)), a non-profit organization dedicated to her vision of preserving the Eastern Sierra through sound planning.

Andrea is world renowned for her Olympic skiing achievements, but it was her philosophy of life that made those gold medals shine so brightly. As she said, “Your life doesn’t stop by winning medals. It’s only the beginning. And if you have the true Olympic spirit, you have to put it back into the world in meaningful ways.”



Andrea Mead Lawrence, 1932–2009.



Andrea in Vermont, 1947.

## **A remarkable memorial**

Surrounded by the mountains and rivers of the Eastern Sierra, over 500 friends and family gathered to pay tribute to Andrea on her birthday, April 19.

The family-organized event at Mammoth Mountain's main lodge featured numerous speakers, a video about Andrea's achievements from Olympic historian Bud Greenspan, and an impressive display of photographs and awards.

Amidst the sadness of her passing, attendees shared stories of inspiration from Andrea, coupled with memories of her outstanding achievements for skiing, community, and the environment.

Official presentations came from representatives for California's US Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and Eastern Sierra Representative Buck McKeon. Supervisor Bill Reid spoke kindly on behalf of Mono County, and the US Ski Team honored Andrea's unmatched skiing achievements.

Also speaking of Andrea's life and accomplishments were Rusty Gregory, Peggy White, Linda Meyers-Tikalsky, Tony Rossman, Martha Davis, Tim Alpers, Sally Miller, Deanna Dulen, Derrick Vocelka, Nina Winter Graham, Genny Smith, and Susan Carpenter.

I was honored to be among the speakers and to be able to reflect on the life lessons Andrea taught so many of us. Here is the conclusion of what I said that evening.

### **In memory of Andrea**

... This was Andrea's magic. She asked us to reach down inside ourselves, to look at our own core values, to make an honest assessment of our goals, to find that inner strength—the inner flame—that flows from who you are and what you value as a person.

And she showed us that when you tap into this inner flame, you can accomplish anything.

Which of course she did, again and again. And by doing so, she changed the landscape of Mono County and the entire state of California for the better.

Many of us who worked with Andrea on Eastern Sierra issues had only glimpses of the skiing side of her life. In the last few months I've had the honor of spending more time with

her family, and I've learned a little bit more. For example, it is apparently routine business in the Lawrence household to take phone calls from the International Olympic Committee!

More seriously, I've learned that in a global sense, Andrea taught us in the environmental community—and in her community of friends—to use the same approach she did to achieve her unmatched skiing success. This really hit home for me watching the film of her racing in 1952. So let me conclude, with that Olympic race in mind, by attempting to distill four Andrea Lawrence Lessons for all of us.

First, find your inner flame. Know your values. When you walk up to compete, know your goal clearly.

Second, identify the challenges you must navigate to achieve your goal, whether they be slalom gates, government agencies, or matters of law. Then figure out the fastest possible path around, through, over, or past them to get to your goal. It may be a path of mere seconds, as in Oslo; or 33 years, as at Mono Lake.

Third, point your skis straight down the hill, commit fully, lean into it hard, and go. Go fast. Really fast.

And fourth, there is Andrea's most famous lesson: if, on that journey, you catch a ski tip on the gate—if your legislation doesn't pass the first time, if your water rights negotiation collapses for the fifth time—and you get spun around and off balance, you never walk away. You don't give up. You pull yourself together, climb right back up to the problem spot, and get back on course.

That's how Andrea won gold medals, and that's how she taught so many of us here to succeed.

Because you have a goal to get to. You have strong reasons why. The clock is ticking.

And why would you walk away from doing your personal best at what you love? ❖



Andrea at the 2008 Mono Lake Committee staff retreat.

ARNA DEGENHARDT



Over 500 friends and family gathered for Andrea Mead Lawrence's memorial at Mammoth Mountain on April 19, 2009.

ARNA DEGENHARDT

# New wilderness designated in the Mono Basin

*Legislation benefits Mono Lake watershed and beyond*

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

On March 30 President Barack Obama protected 70,000 acres of public land in and adjoining the Mono Basin. With the stroke of a pen—actually ten pens, we’re told—he signed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act into law, marking the completion of a long and challenging adventure for local wilderness legislation.

Actually, the adventure sometimes seemed like a search *in* the wilderness. The new Mono Basin and Eastern Sierra wilderness has seen one of the most intensive community processes on record. Maps and proposals were parsed, reviewed, redrawn, and reparsed through many a meeting and over many years to reflect the concerns and needs of local land users, wilderness advocates, and wilderness skeptics alike.

Leading the local effort has been Sally Miller, a Senior Field Representative for the Wilderness Society. In well over a decade of advocating for the designation, Sally has been the leader of a large group of local supporters, has helped to negotiate many a proposal detail, and was a key player in the politics of turning the wilderness vision into reality.

Sally worked very closely with Senator Barbara Boxer and local Congressman Buck McKeon, who together developed and carried the initial bill that contained the new Eastern Sierra wilderness. Senator Dianne Feinstein also joined in support of the legislation.

In earlier years Sally was on the Mono Lake Committee’s policy staff, working on many issues including the 1994 state decision protecting Mono Lake. Like the Mono Lake

decision, big successes require big coalitions, and many other local organizations and individuals, including the Committee, contributed in key ways to the wilderness success.

## **Signing wilderness into law**

As the final weeks of the effort approached, many Committee members took note of action alerts we sent out. Thank you for your successful calls in support of the legislation!

On the day of the signing, both President Obama and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar spoke eloquently. Referencing the many challenges facing the country, Salazar summed up the enduring value of wild lands: “In these moments when our national character is most tested we rightly seek to protect that which fuels our spirit.”

President Obama elaborated:

“As Americans, we possess few blessings greater than the vast and varied landscapes that stretch the breadth of our continent.... What these gifts require in return is our wise and responsible stewardship.

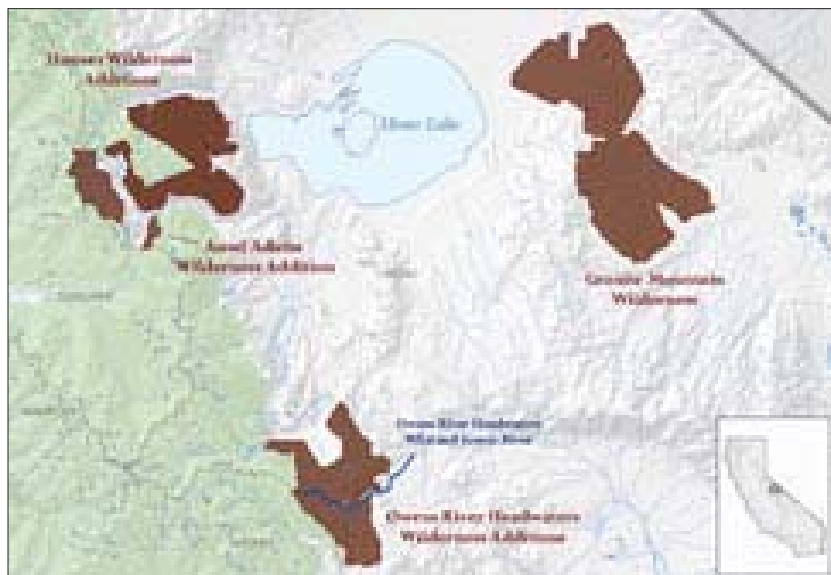
“As our greatest conservationist President, Teddy Roosevelt, put it almost a century ago, ‘I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.’

“That’s the spirit behind the bipartisan legislation I’m signing today—legislation among the most important in decades to protect, preserve, and pass down our nation’s most treasured landscapes to future generations.”

Sally and community leader Tim Alpers were on hand when the bill was signed; both are based in our small-town home of Lee Vining. For the record, that means that nearly 1% of Mono Basin residents joined the President and other dignitaries in the East Room of the White House for the signing! Tim reported having a meaningful conversation with the President afterward about the Eastern Sierra.

## **What is protected now?**

The new wilderness protects outstanding scenic and ecologically valuable lands in the Mono Lake and adjacent watersheds. Public lands at the headwaters of Lee Vining Creek, including Mt. Conness, the Tioga Crest, and the Mt. Warren-Lee Vining Peak plateau, will be permanently protected from development. These



Areas in and near the Mono Lake watershed newly protected by the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009.

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# Turbidity trouble

*Grant Lake Reservoir's low levels cause problems for Rush Creek*

by Lisa Cutting

In early spring, on a routine visit to the creek, Mono Lake Committee staff observed the first of what proved to be several episodes of turbid water in Rush Creek and the Rush Creek Return Ditch—the conveyance system for transporting water from Grant Lake Reservoir to Rush Creek. While it was alarming to see the usually pristine, clear water turned clouded and murky, the turbidity problem didn't come as a total surprise.

In late January, State Water Board-appointed stream scientists expressed concern about the effects the low level of Grant Lake Reservoir might have on Rush Creek (see *Streamwatch* on page 18 for an explanation of that low level), and they urged the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) to consider operational changes. The two primary concerns were the potential discharge into Rush Creek of silt, sediment, and other turbidity sources in the short term, and warmer water temperatures during the summer months. Depending on magnitude and duration, both of these conditions will affect the health of trout and the recovery of the creek.

In an effort to minimize or prevent the problems from occurring—and following the stream scientists'

recommendations—the Committee immediately pushed for taking all available precautions to increase Grant Lake Reservoir's level. The Committee supported the scientists'

proposal to temporarily reduce flows in Rush Creek from 36 to 22 cubic feet per second. We also insisted that DWP reduce exports of water through the aqueduct. After much bureaucratic red tape and delay, Rush Creek flows were reduced on April 3.

However, DWP did not fully cease exports until May 1—only after the Committee collected multiple water samples fully documenting the extent of the problem and after the stream

scientists continued to express concern.

The Committee is continuing to take turbidity samples, especially after high spring winds that erode the sediment banks of Grant Lake Reservoir. Until Grant rises to a level that inundates the sediment supply areas, we anticipate the turbidity to continue. Documenting the level at which turbidity is no longer an issue for Rush Creek will be important information that the Committee will use to shape future long-term management decisions at Grant Lake Reservoir so this situation doesn't happen again. ❖



Murky water in the Rush Creek Return Ditch, April 27, 2009.

ORIG: DWP

## Regional water planning effort advances

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Efforts to bring together regional water stakeholders have advanced in recent months through the efforts of over 40 Eastern Sierra water agencies, federal, state, regional, and county agencies, Native American tribes, farming communities, private stakeholders, and conservation organizations participating. Notably, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy granted funding to support an early planning process that has developed substantial momentum.

The goal is to develop an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) that brings together the many local and regional water plans already in existence. The process, which is not regulatory, is designed to ensure sustainable water uses, reliable water supplies, better water quality, environmental stewardship, efficient urban development, protection of agriculture, and a strong economy.

Put in practical terms, California is emphasizing IRWMPs as a key water planning tool, and that means that state funding for water projects in our area generally requires that an IRWMP be in place. In fact, \$27 million in funding is already designated for IRWMP projects in our region. The Mono Lake Committee anticipates that the IRWMP will lead to funding for important Mono Basin restoration projects.

The process is moving forward thanks to the excellent work of our colleagues Mark Drew and Holly Alpert at Caltrout, who are the IRWMP project leader and coordinator, respectively. The Committee's role while serving on the IRWMP Planning and Coordinating Committees is to represent Mono Lake and the Mono Basin.

More information, including maps and recent documents, can be found at [www.inyomonowater.org](http://www.inyomonowater.org).

# Sprucing up the Mono Lake Committee

Send in your ideas today!

by Elin Ljung

The Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore has always been at the forefront of the effort to protect Mono Lake. Once people come inside, they can hear the success story, view educational exhibits, and speak with knowledgeable staff. But before they get inside, they see the outside, which could use some sprucing up.

Last winter, the Mono Lake Committee's year-end fundraising effort focused on two aging aspects of our facilities: roofs at the Annex property, and the Information Center entrance. Members responded generously, so now we're putting that money to hard work!

## Annex roofs

With every Mono Basin windstorm, the Annex roofs lose a few (or more) shingles. This past winter Annex supervisor Bartshé Miller kept a close eye on the roofs—shoveling heavy snow loads, checking inside for leaks, and patching thin spots. Status report this spring: everything looks okay for now.

The roofs need to be repaired soon. The Committee is getting estimates for those repairs, and then we'll prioritize the units by the wear they have suffered. We expect to get roofers up on top of the units this summer and to have everything properly protected by the time the snow flies again!

## Information Center entrance

After weathering 16 years since its last renovation, the front of the store has peeling paint, crumbling stucco, and wobbly

stairs. In this tight budget year, we'll be as responsible as always with our funds, but we also recognize the need for some structural and basic aesthetic improvements.

And so, we have a contractor coming to inspect the stucco and recommend a stabilization strategy. In addition, we're working on a plan for the front entrance area. And the unsteady stairs have already been repaired—local carpenter David Dore outfitted the entrance with sturdy steps that have built-in anti-slip protection!

Along with important structural renovations, we also get to think creatively about changes to the building's appearance. Once the façade is repaired, we'll have a blank slate ... and that's where you come in. Since our members have invested in these improvements, we'd like to ask you: how should the front of the store look?

There are many possibilities—paint another large mural, paint a solid color, select certain spaces for illustration, cover the front in paneling.... In addition, what else should the front include? Would you like to see a drinking fountain there? Wireless access and power outlets? Places to sit and talk with your friends? Now is the time for your input (see box).

## Solar panels

As donations for the roofs and the storefront came in, we also got a surprise call from a member who upgraded his photovoltaic system at home, and offered to donate his old solar panels to the Committee!

We've jumped at the opportunity—the panels will cover half the roof of our auxiliary office (the ice house) and provide for all its electricity consumption. We'd like to maximize this generous donation and purchase enough panels to cover the ice house roof completely, which would begin to offset the electricity we use in the main office and Bookstore too. The additional panels, wiring, and installation will cost \$15,000, and we feel it's a great way to match the donation. If you would like to contribute to the solar panel fund, please contact Geoff ([geoff@monolake.org](mailto:geoff@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595.

These modest yet exciting upgrades—Annex roofs, storefront renovations, and solar panels—will help us keep working away on behalf of Mono Lake. We look forward to hearing your ideas! ❖

*Elin Ljung is the Committee's Communications Coordinator. Her achievement this spring: becoming a certified EMT!*

## Wanted: your ideas!

Let us know your storefront renovation wish list by:

- stopping by in Lee Vining
- visiting [www.monolake.org/storesurvey](http://www.monolake.org/storesurvey)
- calling Geoff McQuilkin at (760) 647-6595



The Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore façade will be repaired and refreshed this year.



# March for Water in Los Angeles

by Elin Ljung

This spring, Los Angeles Education Coordinator Herley Jim Bowling participated in March for Water, LA's celebration of World Water Day. He sent us a glowing report of the day's event, which was organized by Miguel Luna, director of the non-profit group Urban Semillas.

March for Water began at the Los Angeles State Historic Park and finished at the Rio de Los Angeles State Historic Park. Both parks are recently restored additions to the city's open space. The march route followed the LA River for three miles, along which more than 1,000 marchers carried water vessels in an act of solidarity with others around the world. They also carried their own reusable water bottles, since the event was designed to be free of bottled water.

Herley Jim set up a booth at the march's endpoint, where he and other groups wrangled their blowing canopies in the stiff breeze. Equipped with plenty of Mono Lake materials

and stories from time spent in the Mono Basin, he spoke with several teachers about the Committee's Outdoor Experiences (OE) program. Two students from CALS High School who had visited Mono Lake last October with OE also stopped by—including one student who told Herley Jim about the colleges she had been accepted to! David Nahai, General Manager of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, spoke at the popular event.

World Water Day is an international celebration of fresh water that began in 1993. This year's World Water Day theme was "Shared Water-Shared Opportunities," a phrase that sums up the water connection between Mono Lake and LA beautifully. ❖

*Herley Jim is the Committee's Los Angeles Education Coordinator. He loves spreading the word about water conservation at both ends of the LA Aqueduct.*

## Lee Vining Creek gets trees for Earth Day

by Anya Degenhardt

If you had been driving through Lee Vining at 10:00AM on April 20<sup>th</sup> you would have seen quite a sight: 26 third, fourth, and fifth grade Lee Vining Elementary School students with buckets and shovels crossing Hwy 395. The kids were on their way down to Lee Vining Creek to plant trees for Earth Day, a local tradition since 2005.

Because proper planting technique is critical to the trees' success, Outdoor Experiences Manager Santiago Escruceria and Birding Intern Nora Livingston led the students in a hands-on demonstration by planting seedlings in front of their classrooms the day before the big field trip.



Earth Day 2009: 26 students, 60 new trees.

On Earth Day itself, students carefully planted and watered 60 native Jeffrey pine seedlings in what was historically riparian forest before excessive water diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power left the area dry and most trees were lost.

Today, water flows down Lee Vining Creek again, and planting trees helps to jump-start the natural process of revegetation. Tree planting is an important piece of the restoration puzzle that aims to bring streamside forests and wildlife back to the Mono Basin.

On their walk home the students also picked up trash along the Lee Vining Creek Trail and participated in short solo walks. Afterwards, the students shared with the group what they enjoyed about the day and what they learned from the Earth Day activity.

Thank you to the Lee Vining third, fourth, fifth graders, their parents, and teachers who made this event possible!



PHOTOS BY SANTIAGO ESCRUCERIA

Lee Vining Elementary students en route to Lee Vining Creek.

# Policy notes

by the Policy Team

## **Black Point Cinder Mine Operations Plan under review**

Now that the US Forest Service has determined the Black Point Cinder Mine had an existing right to mining claims in 1984—the year the Bureau of Land Management transferred land ownership to the Forest Service in conjunction with the Mono Basin Scenic Area legislation—the process of finalizing an acceptable operating plan can move forward.

The Forest Service is currently evaluating a Plan of Operations submitted by the operators which describes the owner's intent to expand the operation by another 15 acres over a fifteen year period. In addition, the proposal includes plans for phased reclamation of each of the three work sites as a way to mitigate impacts to visual resources. Once the mining claim expires in 2024, the plan outlines steps the owners will take to complete reclamation, including removing all structures, roads, and any other associated impacts that the operation produced.

The mine is currently 31 acres in size and has been operating since 1951. The mine produces approximately 25,000 tons of cinders per year, which are used as a de-icing aggregate for winter road maintenance throughout Mono County.

The Mono Lake Committee has submitted preliminary comments to the Forest Service and is awaiting the release of the Environmental Assessment which will further refine the project proposal and associated impacts.

Even though the Black Point Cinder Mine has a valid mining claim that was recognized at the time of the Scenic Area designation, it is within the boundary of the Scenic Area and is therefore required to meet the requirements of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Comprehensive Management Plan, which in large part serve to protect the scenic values of the area. The Committee believes that both goals can be achieved—continued mining and reducing visual impacts—but creativity and a thorough evaluation of all possible mining areas, operation procedures, and mitigations will need to be closely considered.

## **Inyo National Forest Travel Management Project**

The Mono Lake Committee has been involved with the Inyo National Forest Motorized Travel Management Project since it began in 2002. This project is part of a national effort to designate transportation systems in each national forest in the country. The goal of the project is to develop a

sustainable network of existing roads and trails that provide opportunities for access and recreation in the Inyo National Forest while protecting natural and cultural resources.

Throughout the process, the Committee has helped inventory and evaluate routes within the Mono Basin and has offered comments as part of the ongoing planning process. Most recently we submitted comments specific to routes in the Mono Basin and their proposed designation as outlined in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement released by the Forest Service in January 2009.

Our primary concern for the Mono Basin has been designation of a transportation system that provides suitable access for a variety of recreational pursuits while protecting the landscape and minimizing habitat fragmentation. Of particular concern has been route proliferation in sensitive areas—especially in riparian areas and near the shore of Mono Lake.

Once the planning process is complete and all comments have been considered, the Forest Service will release a final decision to the public, presumably later this year. The final decision will identify the system of roads and trails available for public use in the Inyo National Forest.

## **Mono Basin Resource Stewardship Project on hold for 2009**

The California State budget crisis reached a critical point last December, which required the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to immediately suspend all grant funding for projects, including projects already in progress. The Mono Basin Resource Stewardship Project—a two-year partnership project with Friends of the Inyo and the Forest Service—was one of them.

The Resource Stewardship Project began in 2008 primarily to assist in

*Continued on page 11*



JIM STIMSON

*The Black Point Cinder Mine.*

restoration of riparian and lakeshore habitats and to maintain healthy land and water resources as visitation to the Mono Basin increases. Fortunately, most of the project work takes place during the summer months, so the effects of the funding freeze haven't been felt until now.

Even though Governor Schwarzenegger announced recently that the State now has funds to restart projects that have been stalled due to the freeze on bond funds, it is too far into the summer season to plan and coordinate the seasonal components of this project. Therefore, the Resource Stewardship Project partners have agreed to start fresh in 2010, assuming the Sierra Nevada Conservancy approves an extension into the next field season. This will provide time for proper planning and outreach, since many activities include school groups, volunteers, and opportunities for the visiting public.

### **Lundy Dam repairs underway**

This year visitors will notice construction equipment, pumps, pipes, and a lot of earthwork at the Lundy Lake Reservoir in Lundy Canyon. Is this an effort to finally return the excess water diversions that long-suffering Mill Creek has been denied? Not this time around.

The project underway is part of Southern California Edison's regular dam maintenance program. The lakeside face of the dam is being stabilized to address erosion problems and the intake structure is being repaired. In the process Lundy Lake Reservoir has been drawn down to very low levels. Safeguards are in place to protect water quality in Mill Creek.

In an interesting twist, the project will require water rights holders to temporarily divert water for several weeks through ditches that directly connect to Mill Creek, rather than diverting from the hydropower plant as is common practice. This illustrates a point long argued by the Committee: water rights holders have specific



*The Lundy Dam repair project.*

limits on what they can divert, and the presence of a hydropower plant doesn't change that. We doubt we'll see anyone diverting more than their court-established rights directly from the creek. So why do users take more than their share when they divert water from the hydropower plant tailrace? What about construction to address Mill Creek's water woes?

Mono Basin stakeholders still await restoration of the creek's bottomland forest and wetlands, renewal of its fishery, and the return of a healthy lake delta for waterfowl. Based on the recent hydropower license and associated settlement agreement, the Committee is working with the major parties to get that water back where it belongs, and we're hopeful that progress will soon be seen.

### **Stimulus funds possible for the Mono Basin**

The federal American Recovery & Reinvestment Act passed earlier this year makes \$650 million in stimulus funding available to the Forest Service for facilities improvements—and a slice of that funding could benefit the Mono Basin.

The Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center is a focal point of Forest Service operations here in the congressionally-created Scenic Area. Its doors opened in 1992 and, not surprisingly, 17 years later

the building has some significant needs. It also offers a tremendous opportunity to showcase how energy efficiency measures can transform the costs of operating a public facility—both in dollars and in carbon emissions.

Installation of a photovoltaic power system, for example, would reduce annual operating costs, take advantage of the strong high altitude sun in the Mono Basin, and be a prominent demonstration of government building efficiency. Replacement of failed windows throughout the building with multi-pane high-efficiency models also has high energy conservation value, and additional insulation and heating improvements are possible. Overall, reductions in operating costs offer the promise of a longer operating season for the Visitor Center, thus benefitting the local tourism-based economy.

The Committee has been working with the Inyo National Forest to highlight these needs. However, the Forest Service at upper management levels has not publicly shared the stimulus project list that is under consideration, so we're unable to determine where the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center ranks. We're awaiting further information and will support these important facility improvements at Mono Lake when the opportunity arises. ❖

# Recreation sites changing this summer

by Lisa Cutting

## Old Marina gets its turn

After nearly five years of waiting, the Old Marina visitor site on the west shore of Mono Lake could see some activity this summer. The California Department of Parks & Recreation (State Parks) has secured funds internally to begin the much needed rehabilitation of the site. Overall, the project will benefit Mono Lake by moving parking away from the lake's edge, removing old fill, and controlling runoff. Project improvements include repaving the parking lot, installing a viewing platform, and adding interpretive information signs.

The project was originally proposed in 2004 and was scheduled to be funded through state transportation funds—specifically, the Environmental Enhancement & Mitigation Program (EEMP). The EEMP was established by the California Legislature to fund projects to mitigate the environmental impacts caused by new or modified public transportation facilities. In this case, the project was planned mitigation for the impacts caused by the Rush Creek Highway Project that Caltrans completed in 2003. Despite efforts to actually put the funds toward the committed project it was never prioritized high enough at the state and local level.

Even after such a long delay, the plans have remained active and the environmental review process has been completed. State Parks crews will prep the site and contractors will finish the project. Access will be restricted at various points as work takes place throughout the summer.

Old Marina is a primary visitation site easily accessible from Highway 395 north of Lee Vining. This location attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year. The project improvements are sure to make it even more appealing, especially since it will be

connected to the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center via the soon-to-be-completed Mono Lake Trail.

## Lee Vining Canyon campground changes

Visitors planning to camp in Lee Vining Canyon this summer will experience fewer options than last year. In addition to Boulder Campground, which has been closed since 2005, Cattleguard and Moraine campgrounds will be closed this summer. Lower Lee Vining, Aspen Grove, and Big Bend will remain open as usual.

Reasons for the new closures are two-fold. First, the Forest Service has resource concerns for all of the Lee Vining Canyon campgrounds because they are located in a sensitive riparian corridor close to the creek. The three campgrounds closed this summer have the highest level resource concerns; the closures will minimize potential habitat damage.

Second, the Forest Service has analyzed the use patterns from previous years and has determined that even during peak visitation periods the campgrounds are never completely full. The strategy is to focus use into three campgrounds instead of six in order to protect the most sensitive areas. Additionally, the campgrounds that remain open will be more efficiently operated and serviced.

The Forest Service has made assurances that they will remain flexible with their operating plan this summer. If use patterns exceed available capacity they will consider reopening Cattleguard and Moraine campgrounds to accommodate visitor needs. ❖

*Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Policy Director. She's ready for the summer with new tied flies and backpacking routes.*

## Mono Lake Trail update

*This summer work is continuing on the Mono Lake Trail—a 1.3-mile-long trail that will connect the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center with the Old Marina area. In addition to trail construction, the project also includes restoration of previously disturbed areas and removal of invasive plant species. If all goes according to plan, and the crews are not called out of the area on wildfires, the trail will be completed by early fall—just in time to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area designation!*



ARYA DEGENHARDT

# Boat tour operator withdraws from Mono Lake concession

*Makes surprising attempt to blame Mono Lake Committee*

*by Geoffrey McQuilkin*

The operator of one of Mono Lake's natural history boat tours recently decided to withdraw from his concession agreement with California State Parks. This means that the lake will be without a motorized wildlife tour opportunity this summer. Canoeing and kayaking tour programs, however, remain in operation.

The operator, known as Mono Lake Boat Tours, has been offering seasonal tours since 2003. The program has typically involved a two-hour-long tour focused on wildlife and natural history and participants have reported the tours are informative and enjoyable.

Mono Lake is a part of the California State Park system, and all commercial ventures on the lake operate under state regulations that protect the lake's many unique values including tufa, nesting and migratory birds, and water quality. Canoe and kayak programs run by the Mono Lake Committee and Caldera Kayaks, for example, both operate under concession agreements that include resource protection requirements, safety plans, and other operational rules.

Details on the situation with Mono Lake Boat Tours are still emerging, but it's well known that State Parks staff began work on renewing the Mono Lake Boat Tours concession last year. However, in April 2009 the operator informed the state that he had no interest in either renewing the concession agreement or engaging in further communication. As best we can tell, the change of heart is due to the operator's frustration with routine lake protection requirements that have been part of the permitting process for years.

Surprisingly, the Mono Lake Boat Tours operator seems to be blaming State Parks and the Mono Lake Committee for his own decision to abandon operations. The particulars of this are confusing, but one entry on his website claims the tours "have come under attack" from the Committee, and another claims the State is "striving to shut down his operation."

These allegations are surprising, disappointing—and flat out incorrect.

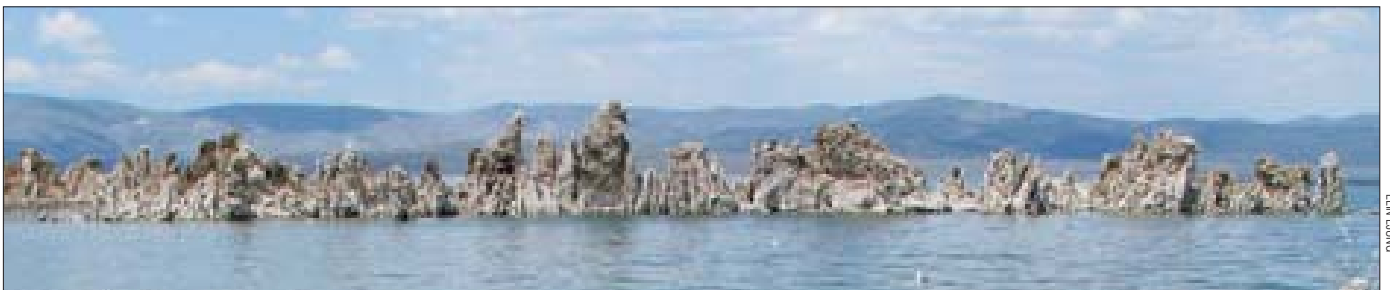
First, responsible programs that give people a chance to experience the wonders of Mono Lake are something the Committee advocates. For this reason, the Committee has supported the permitted tour for years, and we're surprised to be accused of acting otherwise. In fact, it was during the process of referring a visitor to Mono Lake Boat Tours that we first heard they wouldn't be operating this year.

Second, State Parks has dedicated a substantial amount of staff time to pursuing a successful operating agreement with Mono Lake Boat Tours, not to shutting down the program. Rangers from at least five different supervisory levels have been involved, all seeking to craft an agreement that keeps the tours in business.

Third, it's disappointing that the operator apparently views State Park protections at Mono Lake as unnecessary burdens to operation. Without protection, Mono Lake today would be almost thirty feet lower in elevation, its wildlife imperiled, and its waters far from today's shoreline. Without protection, there would simply be no opportunity for boat tours of any type.

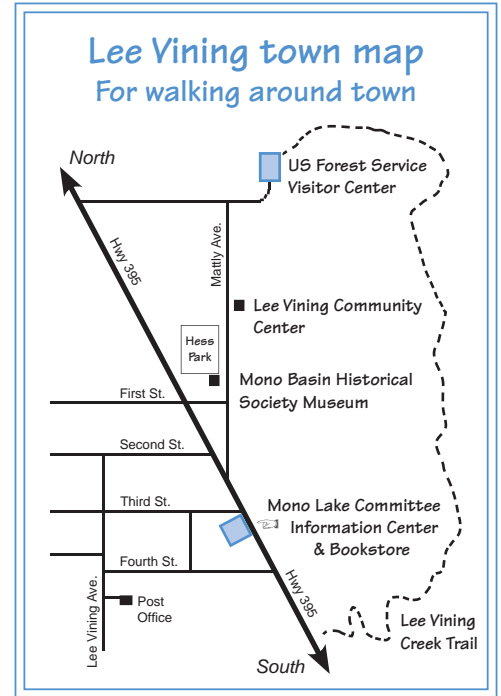
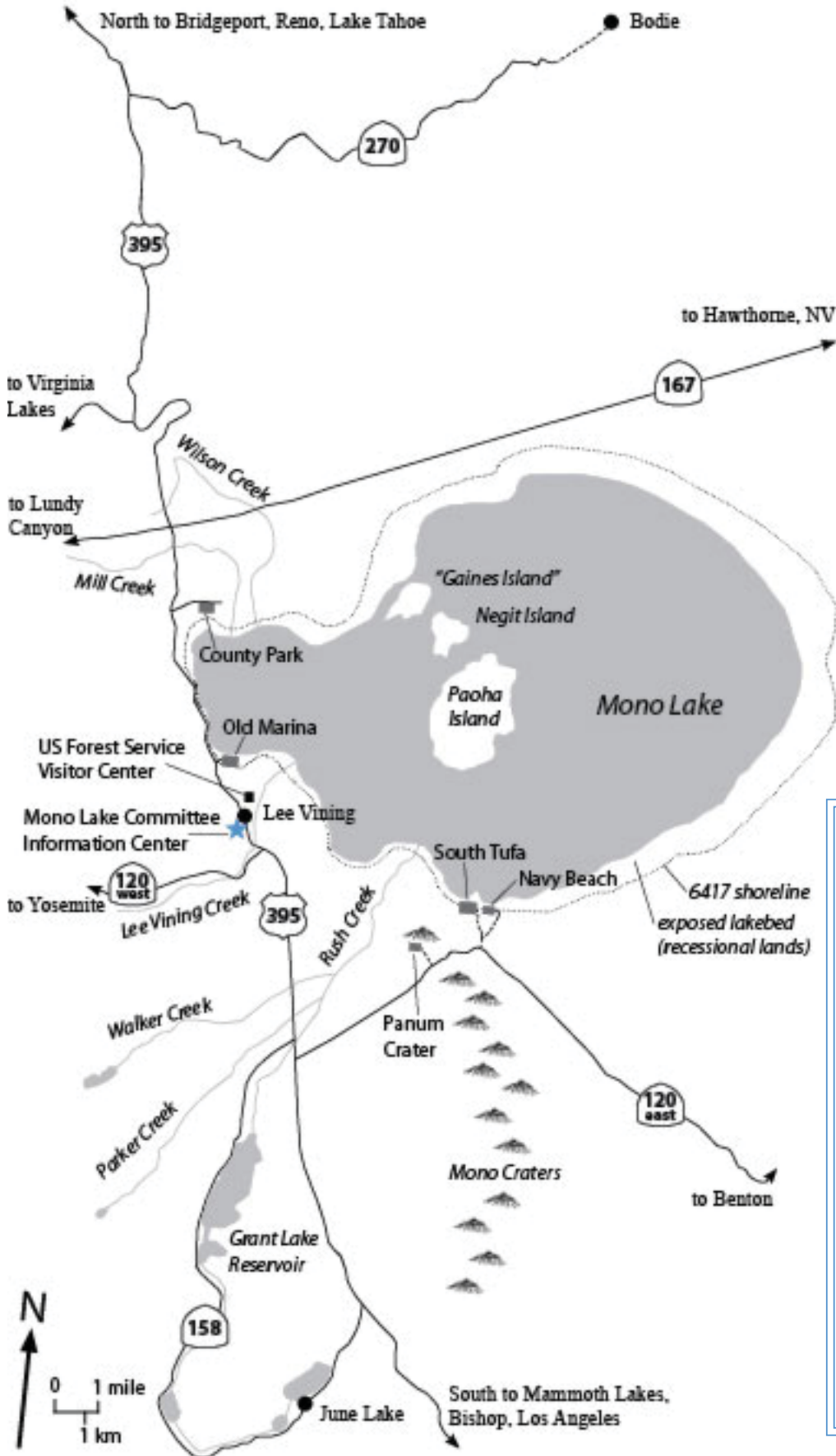
Today, canoe and kayak tours continue to operate successfully under State Park requirements—in fact, they comply with Forest Service regulations as well. If Mono Lake Boat Tours is no longer willing to meet Mono Lake protection standards through an operating agreement with State Parks, then they've done the right thing by withdrawing from their permit. This opens the motorized tour concession to potential new operators who have enthusiasm for delivering public programs in a manner that protects Mono Lake for decades to come.

For the Committee there is no question that natural history programs on the lake provide valuable public experiences. There's also no question that protecting Mono Lake requires planning, management, and permitting by State Park staff. In the end both are necessary to achieve the right outcome—a healthy, thriving Mono Lake for everyone. ❖



ENL LINDS

# Mono Lake and vicinity map



### How far is it?

Remember to check for road closures before you travel!  
1-800-GAS-ROAD

Distance from Lee Vining to:

South Tufa .....	11mi	18km
Yosemite Park entrance	13	21
Tuolumne Meadows ....	21	34
Mammoth Lakes .....	27	44
Bodie .....	32	52
Bishop.....	66	106
Yosemite Valley.....	77	124
Lake Tahoe.....	110	177
Reno.....	140	225
Death Valley.....	177	285
San Francisco (via 120)	250	402
Los Angeles .....	303	488
Las Vegas .....	326	525

# Things to do in the Mono Basin

## Activities

There is a lot to do in the Mono Basin! Stop by the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore when you're in town and our knowledgeable staff can help you plan your visit.

• **South Tufa tours** are an excellent introduction to Mono Lake. Join a naturalist on a walking tour at the South Tufa Area to learn about the ecology, geology, and natural and human history of the Mono Basin. The walk is approximately one mile long on easy terrain and lasts about an hour. Meet at the South Tufa parking lot at 10:00AM, 1:00PM, and 6:00PM daily during the summer months. There is no charge for the walk, but a \$3 per person fee is required to enter the South Tufa Area. No reservations are necessary.

• **Canoe tours** depart Saturday and Sunday mornings in summer at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00AM, and last for about one hour. \$22 per person. Reservations are required; call (760) 647-6595.

• **Bird walks** take place Fridays and Sundays at 8:00AM throughout the summer. Meet at the Mono Lake County Park with binoculars and a bird book (not required). Tours last 1½–2 hours and are open to all levels of birders. Committee staff can also suggest good birding areas around the Mono Basin.

## Visitor Centers

• **The Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore**, located in the heart of Lee Vining, offers a free video, educational exhibits, a fine art exhibit, and activity schedules. The bookstore offers an excellent selection of regional books, maps, T-shirts, local crafts, and environmentally minded gifts. The Committee also houses the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce with information on lodging, dining, and recreation opportunities as well as weather and road conditions. The Mono Lake Committee is open from 8:00AM–9:00PM daily during the summer, or call (760) 647-6595 for more information.

• **The Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center**, located just north of town, features an expansive view of Mono Lake, interpretive displays, and natural history trails. A dramatic film on Mono Lake shows regularly in the theater, and during the summer rangers give patio presentations daily. Open every day from 8:00AM to 5:00PM; contact the Visitor Center at (760) 647-3044 for more information on extended hours and program offerings.

• **The Mono Basin Historical Society Museum**, located in Lee Vining at Gus Hess Park, houses a fascinating collection of materials from the Mono Basin's past. See Native American artifacts, gold mining implements, and even the legendary upside-down house! Open Thursdays–Mondays from 10:00AM to 5:00PM and Sundays 12:00 to 5:00PM. There is a \$1 charge but children under the age of 13 are free. Contact the museum at (760) 647-6461 for more information. ❖

## Regional travel resources

- Mono Lake Committee Information Center  
(760) 647-6595 [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org)
- Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce  
(760) 647-6629 [www.leevining.com](http://www.leevining.com)
- US Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center  
(760) 647-3044 [www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/about](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/about)
- Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve  
(760) 647-6331 [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)
- Bodie State Historic Park  
(760) 647-6445 [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center  
(760) 924-5500 [www.visitmammoth.com](http://www.visitmammoth.com)
- June Lake Chamber of Commerce  
(760) 648-7584 [www.junelakechamber.org](http://www.junelakechamber.org)
- Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce  
(760) 932-7500 [www.bridgeportcalifornia.com](http://www.bridgeportcalifornia.com)
- Devils Postpile (760) 934-2289 [www.nps.gov/depo](http://www.nps.gov/depo)
- Inyo National Forest 24-hour Wilderness Permits/Info  
(760) 873-2408 [www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo)
- Yosemite National Park [www.nps.gov/yose](http://www.nps.gov/yose)  
Information by phone (209) 372-0200  
Campground Reservations (800) 436-7275  
Hotel and Motel Reservations (801) 559-5000  
Wilderness Permit Reservations (209) 372-0740
- White Mountain Ranger District–Bishop (760) 873-2500
- Lone Pine Interagency Visitor Center (760) 876-6222
- Manzanar National Historic Site and Interpretive Center  
(760) 878-2932 [www.nps.gov/manz](http://www.nps.gov/manz)
- Death Valley Reservations (760) 786-2345
- Bridgeport Ranger Station–Toiyabe National Forest  
(760) 932-7070
- California Road Conditions (800) 427-7623  
[www.dot.ca.gov](http://www.dot.ca.gov)

# The Mono Lake story

Nestled at the edge of the arid Great Basin and the snowy Sierra Nevada mountains, Mono Lake is an ancient saline lake that covers over 70 square miles and supports a unique and productive ecosystem. The lake has no fish; instead it is home to trillions of brine shrimp and alkali flies. Freshwater streams feed Mono Lake, supporting lush riparian forests of cottonwood and willow along their banks. Along the lakeshore, scenic limestone formations known as tufa towers rise from the water's surface. Millions of migratory birds visit the lake each year.

## A story of hope

In 1941, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) began excessive water diversions from Mono Basin streams. Mono Lake dropped 45 vertical feet, lost half its volume, and doubled in salinity.

The Mono Lake Committee was founded by David and Sally Gaines in 1978 in response to the threat of inevitable collapse of the Mono Basin ecosystem. The early Committee bought an old dance hall in Lee Vining to use as headquarters (which still houses the Information Center today), and went to work spreading the word about Mono Lake. The Committee took the City of Los Angeles to court in 1979, arguing that DWP had violated the Public Trust Doctrine, which states: "The public trust ... is an affirmation of the duty of the state to protect the people's common heritage of streams, lakes, marshlands and tidelands...." – Supreme Court of California, 1983

During the winter of 1988, David Gaines was killed in a car accident in a snowstorm. He never got to see the lake he

loved begin to rise, but his energy and inspiration still carry on through the work of Committee staff.

Mono Lake's recovery depends upon water conservation in Los Angeles, and the Committee has created solutions to the demand for water by implementing conservation programs in LA that have saved more than enough water to share with Mono Lake. Over the last 15 years, LA has become one of the most water-conscious cities in the United States, and the Committee works statewide to promote wise water use for people and the environment.

In 1994, after over a decade of litigation, the California Water Resources Control Board ordered DWP to let Mono Lake rise to a healthy level of 6392 feet above sea level—twenty feet above its historic low. DWP has reduced its Mono Basin water exports by over 80%, and Mono Lake is on the rise! This is truly an environmental victory. See below for more on what the Committee is doing today.

## 16,000 members

Mono Lake has a great success story, and you can be a part of it. Add your voice to the 16,000 members who are committed to the protection and restoration of Mono Lake. Your support as a Committee member will be put to hard work for Mono Lake!

Check out Mono Lake on the web at [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org) for action alerts, letter-writing campaigns, WebCam images of the area, and fun activities happening year-round. By staying connected to Mono Lake, you ensure its protection for generations to come. ❖

## What is the Committee doing today?

**Protecting Mono Lake.** The Committee serves as a voice for Mono Lake in the face of land development threats and recreation pressures. Working with agencies like DWP, California State Parks, and the US Forest Service, the Committee is successfully balancing the water needs of both humans and natural ecosystems.

**Restoring Mono Lake.** Restoration work at Mono Lake focuses on re-

establishing natural processes along damaged streams. As water flows down the creeks and into the lake, vegetation and wildlife return and the lake rises, helping to bring back a healthy ecosystem.

**Educating the next generation.** Each year the Committee partners with Los Angeles community and school groups, bringing inner-city youth to the Mono Basin to learn about the source

of their water. For kids who may have never left LA, these are life-changing trips filled with hiking, canoeing, helping with restoration work, and learning to be at home outdoors.

Find news, updates, and lots of great information at [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org).





## ❁ Store Selections ❁

ORDER THESE ITEMS  
AND MORE ONLINE AT  
[MONOLAKE.ORG/STORE](http://MONOLAKE.ORG/STORE)

### HAND-PAINTED GOURDS BY DIANE CAMPBELL

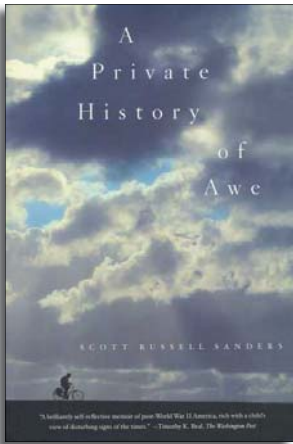
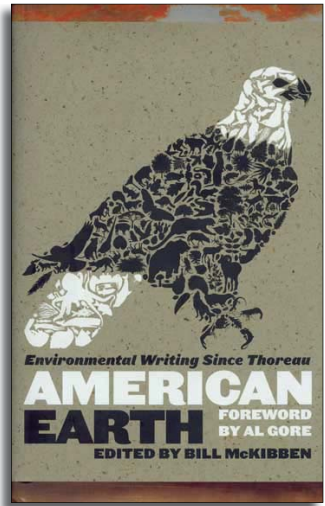
These hard shell gourds are grown, dried, and decorated by Diane Campbell just up the road in Gardnerville, Nevada. Diane studies each gourd surface before designing and painting these one-of-a-kind pieces of art. The gourds are approximately four inches tall and make wonderfully natural decorations or gifts. Please call if you would like a description of available gourd designs.  
*Hand-painted gourds, approximately 4" tall: \$20.00 each*



### AMERICAN EARTH: ENVIRONMENTAL WRITINGS SINCE THOREAU EDITED BY BILL MCKIBBEN

This anthology offers an unprecedented, inspiring, and timely gathering of the best and most significant American environmental writing from the last two centuries. Here, for the first time in a single volume, are the words that made a movement. Included are classic selections of environmental imagination, nature philosophy, poetry, protest speeches, and conservation and legal opinions. These pages recount familiar stories, cherished landscapes, and critical moments of action—a passionate and eloquent celebration of nature and the lasting American heritage of speaking on its behalf.

*American Earth, hardcover, Library of America, 1,047 pages, 5¼" x 8": \$40.00*



### A PRIVATE HISTORY OF AWE BY SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS

This coming-of-age memoir, love story, and spiritual testament is one man's attempt to describe the human experience of awe through the feelings, emotions, and philosophy that emerge from his movements through everyday life. It is a story rich with moral integrity and the honest exploration of landscape, family, and spirit. This book is a treasure trove of questions about how to live with awareness and how to respond to cultural and natural forces beyond our control.

*A Private History of Awe, softcover, North Point Press, 322 pages, 5½" x 8¼": \$15.00*

Order by phone: (760) 647-6595, fax: (760) 647-6377, or online: [www.monolake.org/store](http://www.monolake.org/store)

### MONO LAKE COMMITTEE MAIL ORDER FORM

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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				CA residents--add 8.25% sales tax to subtotal	
				<b>Total</b>	

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**International Shipping Rates by weight.**

Phone: (760) 647-6595

Fax: (760) 647-6377

Mono Lake Committee, P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541

Call (760) 647-6595 to order

## Why Grant Lake Reservoir got so low

by Greg Reis

**D**uring the past runoff year (April 2008–March 2009), Grant Lake Reservoir was very low, reaching its second-lowest level on record. That low level of 6.1 thousand acre-feet (taf) occurred February 12, 2009; when full the reservoir holds 47.2 taf. There are three main reasons it got so low between April 2007 and April 2009.

### 1. Dry previous year = 12 taf drop

The 2007 Runoff Year (April 2007–March 2008), was the second-driest on record. The minimum required flows in lower Rush Creek—even with a variance from the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) that allowed the lower flows—required 1 taf more water than flowed into the reservoir from upper Rush Creek. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) is permitted 16 taf of export, which came from Lee Vining Creek (5 taf) and Grant storage (11 taf). Dropping 12 taf resulted in a less-than-

half-full reservoir (22 taf) at the end of the runoff year (March 31, 2008).

### 2. Water held back upstream = 2 taf delayed

Southern California Edison (SCE) began releasing water from its upstream Gem Lake Reservoir on February 13, 2009. Typically this reservoir would be emptied starting in October, which would have doubled the amount of water in Grant Lake Reservoir in February. This is just a seasonal impact, since SCE's reservoirs are drained every winter, and affected Grant's level by only about 2 taf on April 1, 2009.

### 3. Forecast not corrected, year-type rules, full export = 10 taf drop

Last year in April, DWP forecasted 86% of average runoff, but actual runoff turned out to be much less—71% of average. This discrepancy was due to the very dry spring and summer and the unusual pattern of last year's snowpack.

Following close-to-forecasted runoff in June and July, runoff during the month of August was only 27% of average. If the forecast had been updated in May as the Committee recommended, we believe 75% of average would have been the revised forecast, resulting in operations that would have brought Grant Lake Reservoir about 5–10 taf higher today. The remainder (less than 5 taf) is the difference between 71% inflow and required outflow plus the full 16 taf of permitted water export to Los Angeles. Thanks to the Committee's efforts, DWP finally ceased exports on May 1, which helped the reservoir rise faster this spring.

There are many reasons for avoiding a low Grant Lake Reservoir. In particular, below 20 taf, warm water temperatures and high turbidity can cause problems for the aquatic ecosystem. See article on page 7 about problems with turbidity this past spring. ❖

## Mono Lake's level to drop again this year

by Greg Reis

**F**rom April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009, Mono Lake dropped 0.9 feet. The forecast was for only a third of a foot drop; however, the lake level forecast is based on the runoff forecast, which was over-forecasted by about 20,000 acre-feet, translating into nearly half a foot of Mono Lake's elevation.

For the 2009 Runoff Year (April 2009–March 2010), DWP is forecasting 88% of average runoff for the Mono Basin, which puts it into the "normal" year-type category. This is similar to last year's forecast. However, due

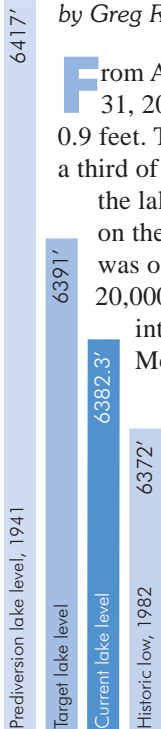
to above-average precipitation in April and what is starting out to be a wet May, runoff is likely to be slightly greater than forecasted. The Mono Basin, along with the Tuolumne watershed to its immediate west, has the highest percent of runoff forecasted in the state in what is elsewhere a dry year.

There is no lake level forecast yet because plans for flow releases are still being finalized. It appears likely that in order to retain water in Grant Lake Reservoir, Rush Creek will not be given a full peak flow this summer. This will bring Grant Lake Reservoir up to 26,000 acre-feet (or 26 taf) of storage by July, and will cause Mono Lake to drop an additional third of a foot more than what would otherwise be expected. Our best guess for Mono Lake is a similar drop in level to last year—slightly less than 1

foot. This will be the third year in a row of a dropping Mono Lake level.

As of May 1, 2009, Mono Lake was at 6382.3 feet above sea level. This summer's falling level will be similar to what it was during the summer of 1997, 2003, and early summer 2005. Unlike 1997 and 2003, Mono Lake is not chemically stratified this year, which means new data points for the ongoing limnology and gull monitoring and an increase in our knowledge about the amazing and unique Mono Lake ecosystem. ❖

*Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. He climbed Granite Mountain 12 days after it became designated wilderness.*



# Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



GEOFF MCQUILKIN

One does not usually stroll around daydreaming of efflorescent salt formation, but if anywhere can inspire the unusual, it's Mono Lake. So I discovered on a recent exploration of the lake's long northern shoreline expanses.

The presence of soft sand and alkaline salts was no surprise, and the current-carved lakeshore swept off toward the horizon. But an unusual object stood out in the distance that, upon investigation, turned out to be one very waterlogged and half buried tree trunk, well weathered and softened by the years.

Most remarkable though was the delicate, fluffy coating of salts that grew from every inch of the log. Much like the wick of a candle, the wood fibers carried salty groundwater upward to evaporate away, leaving behind a colorful bloom of salts and minerals in place of a candle's flame. Clearly the salty crust had been growing for months, since the last big snowstorm perhaps; yet the driest edges flaked away in the slightest breeze, ready to ride the air currents and create the next Mono Lake dust storm on a windy day.

And winds we have had, as is always the case as winter slowly departs. Spring arrives late, and yet at my home the winds delivered—before the daffodils bloomed in the yard or the desert peach lit up the long sagebrush plains—a colorful gift. The gift, in fact, of a swimming pool. The blue plastic kind, for kids, for summer. Lodged neatly in a tree.

It was cracked in three places, and no longer very useful, though its color nicely complimented the yellows and oranges of the tanagers, orioles, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds perched nearby. Apparently someone up the street had set it out in anticipation of a warm day that didn't arrive, and instead the gusty winds took it on high speed aerial adventure. But that was just fine, I reflected as I pulled it from the branches, because that's the fun of Mono Lake: you never know what you'll discover next. ❖

*Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. This spring his daughters Caelen and Ellery took him to Disneyland for his birthday!*

## Benchmarks



GREG REIS

*In May 2006 Grant Lake Reservoir exceeded its capacity of 47,200 acre-feet of storage, and flowed down the spillway.*

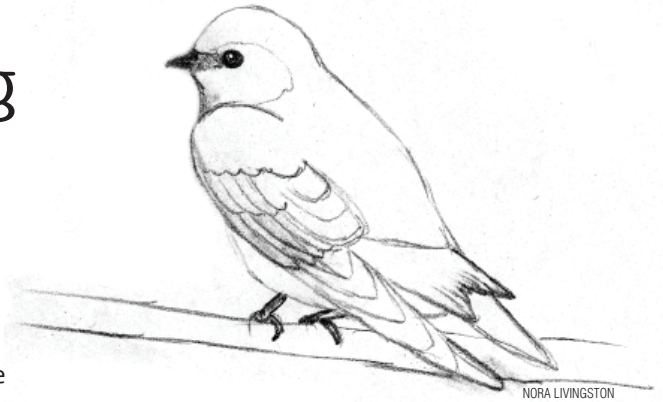


EIN LING

*May 2009: three years later, the reservoir has dropped to only 14,429 acre-feet of storage. See page 18 for the reasons why.*

# Wings of winter, tails of spring

by Nora Livingston



In December, Rough-legged Hawks circled over County Ponds, while Short-eared Owls hid in the grasses of Owl Meadows ... over two dozen American White Pelicans gracefully circled Thompson Ranch ... White-tailed Ptarmigan were captured on film, camouflaged in the glistening snow at Virginia Lakes ... a Black Rosy-finch was singled out of one hundred Gray-crowned Rosy-finches.

A late Christmas gift: 562 snow-white Tundra Swans mingled on Mono Lake ... a gang of Piñon Jays, Scrub Jays, Steller's Jays, and a Clark's Nutcracker raided the Jeffrey pines by Mono Mills, while a Williamson's Sapsucker kicked snow off pine boughs ... a Red-naped Sapsucker stuck around in Lee Vining for a spell.

February ... Red-winged Blackbirds returned to town ... March ... Greater Sage-Grouse snuck behind the Volunteer Fire Department in Mono City and a Mountain Bluebird appeared on the west shore of Mono Lake, a sure sign of coming spring ... swallows returned, cavorting and cartwheeling in the sky ... an American Dipper dipped on Rush Creek and a Canvasback cruised Grant Lake.

California Gulls came back to town in mid-March, bringing thoughts of summer ... Western Meadowlarks began singing again ... a rare sighting of a silky, red-eyed Phainopepla came on the last day of March ... the Ospreys returned to June Mountain and their tufa thrones on Mono.

April brought Yellow-rumped Warblers and Say's Phoebes, singing House Wrens, and a colorful array of birds to County Park: Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Bullock's Orioles, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and Violet-green Swallows. A Golden Eagle soared high in Lundy Canyon, and a Great Egret fished solo in Lee Vining Creek ... a single unidentified hummingbird signaled the truth that summer is oh-so-close ... Mountain Chickadees, Green-tailed Towhees, a Townsend's Solitaire, Brown Creepers, and Brewer's Sparrows echoed with calls, songs, and chatter.

Been birding in the basin lately?

Share your sightings at

**[www.monolake.org/birds](http://www.monolake.org/birds)**

and see what others have  
encountered too.

**Bird on!**

And we were not without the feeders full of Lesser and American Goldfinches, Cassin's and House Finches, Pine Siskins, and Brewer's Blackbirds. After such a rich diversity of species, even in the coldest months, I can't wait to see who and what the warmth of summer brings! ❖

*Nora Livingston is the Committee's Birding Intern. She'll spend her summer with warblers, flycatchers, and sparrows—any feathered friend who'll teach her how to fly!*

# 2009 Field Seminars



ELIN LINGS

## Great Basin Wildflowers, Plants, & Habitats

June 12–14

Mark Bagley

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

Most of the Mono Basin lies in the Great Basin desert, and this field seminar will focus on plants in the sagebrush scrub, pumice flats, piñon-juniper woodland, Jeffrey pine forest, and wetland habitats in the lower elevations of the basin. During short walks in the different desert habitats, we will identify wildflowers, trees, and shrubs; observe plant communities; and discuss plants' relationships with their environment. This seminar is for beginners as well as for dedicated wildflower enthusiasts. Mark Bagley is an independent botanical consultant in the Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert and has taught plant and natural history seminars for the Mono Lake Committee since 1988.

## Birding the East Side

June 13–14

David Lukas

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

This field seminar will concentrate on the identification and ecology of birds in the Mono Basin and local Eastern Sierra. The class will visit a wide variety of habitats including desert

scrub, marsh, riparian forest, and mountain slopes in search of breeding birds and migrants. With over 300 species having been observed in the Mono Basin, this course will be of great interest to both beginning and more advanced birdwatchers. David Lukas has led over two hundred birdwatching and natural history programs for the Nature Conservancy, Yosemite Association, Audubon Society, Elderhostel, and other groups. He is the author of *Watchable Birds of the Great Basin*, *Wild Birds of California*, and the recently revised *Sierra Nevada Natural History*.

## The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

June 26–28

David Gubernick

\$250 per person / \$225 for members  
limited to 8 participants

Learn to take creative and beautiful close-up images, further develop your artistic vision, and enhance your photographic skills in the warm and supportive learning environment of this workshop for beginning to advanced amateur photographers. The weekend will emphasize the artistry of macrophotography and the technical means to render such images; this is not a course in botanical identification. David J. Gubernick, Ph.D., is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning nature photographer and workshop leader. His first

photography book, *Wildflowers of Monterey County*, has been a best-seller, garnering rave reviews.

## Summer Birds of the Mono Basin

July 17–19

David Wimpfheimer

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This birding class for beginners and advanced birders alike will explore a number of sites, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and natural history discussion. Woodpeckers, corvids, flycatchers, warblers, and other passerines display varied behaviors, but a major focus will be Mono Lake and other special wetlands. David Wimpfheimer has been educating and interpreting about birds and the natural history of California for over 20 years, and has a strong connection to Mono Lake. His seasoned focus and knowledge always make for an enjoyable, educational outing!

## The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

July 17–19

David Gubernick

\$250 per person / \$225 for members

limited to 8 participants

Learn to take creative and beautiful close-up images, further develop your artistic vision, and enhance your photographic skills in the warm and supportive learning environment of this workshop for beginning to advanced amateur photographers. The weekend will emphasize the artistry of macrophotography and the technical means to render such images; this is not a



In summer, Osprey build nests, lay eggs, and raise chicks at Mono Lake.

course in botanical identification. David J. Gubernick, Ph.D., is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning nature photographer and workshop leader. His first photography book, *Wildflowers of Monterey County*, has been a best-seller, garnering rave reviews.

## Capturing the Sageland in Pastel

July 24–26

Ane Carla Rovetta

\$160 per person / \$145 for members

\$15 materials fee

limited to 12

participants

The sparkling light and radiant skies of the Mono Basin are pure inspiration. Add a set of brilliant pastel chalks and your own unique imagination, and you have an incredible weekend of color exploration and art. Landscape painter Ane Carla Rovetta will guide students through a value system she modeled after Ansel Adams' work that will help organize the overwhelming hues of the summer terrain. Using materials she has carefully selected, the group will paint on location to create impressions of this majestic basin. Each participant will go home with at least one small finished painting and several sketches, color studies, and value experiments that will fuel future artistic endeavors!



Close-up with an alpine lily.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID GUBERNICK

## Mono Basin Watercolor Painting

July 31–August 2

John Hewitt

\$160 per person / \$145 for members

The wide skies, lush grasses, and shining-white tufa towers that characterize summer at Mono Lake provide many opportunities for artists to capture the season with a paintbrush. This weekend seminar will explore some of the most scenic locations around Mono Lake, and is designed for beginning through advanced painters who work with watercolors, oils, pastels, or acrylics. Instructor John Hewitt is a nationally-acclaimed watercolorist and former Lee Vining resident who has taught classes and workshops for over 20 years in locations as far afield as the Italian Alps.

## Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

August 1

Greg Reis

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began exporting water 350 miles south to the City of LA in 1941. Visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin and learn about the aqueduct's effects on Mono Lake, its tributary streams, the Upper Owens River, and land management in the area. The group will also discuss the history of water diversions, the effort to save Mono Lake, and the future of habitat restoration. Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist and the perfect guide for unraveling the Mono Basin's complex and fascinating plumbing—he has over a dozen years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration and he keeps close track of Mono Basin water management.

## Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 7–9

Lucy Parker & Julia Parker

\$185 per person / \$170 for members

\$80 materials fee

primitive group campsite included (no pets, please)

During this seminar, participants will prepare materials and create a Miwok-Paiute burden basket, which was used for gathering pinenuts, acorns, and berries. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels. You are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. Lucy Parker is a descendant of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika<sup>a</sup>, and Kayasha Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother Julia, a master basket weaver. Julia Parker has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry and is the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women who wove in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Introduction to High Country Plants & Habitats

August 14–16

Ann Howald

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This class will explore the mosaic of habitats found in the Eastern Sierra high country—flower-filled meadows fed by meandering streams, sagebrush-covered slopes, lodgepole pine forests, subalpine lakes bordered by willows, and flowery rock gardens. Sight identification of common trees, shrubs, and wildflowers will be emphasized, as well as the many ways that plants, birds, insects, and other wildlife interact in

high country habitats. Ann Howald is a consulting botanist and volunteer for the California Native Plant Society. She has taught popular Committee field seminars for over ten years.

## Mono Lake Summer Photography

August 21–23

Richard Knepp

\$220 per person / \$200 for members

There is a certain magic at Mono Lake in the summer: long sultry days, magnificent vistas across the basin, tufa towers



Julia Parker weaving a burden basket.

showing the bones of the lake's submerged springs, cumulus clouds drifting across the sky, hinting at the promise of a late afternoon thunderstorm. And—as always—the potential of the singular sunrise/sunset cycles that draw photographers from around the world. Join veteran photographer and Monophile Richard Knepp as we wander some of the lesser-known Mono Basin locales. Discussion topics will range from the basics of Ansel Adams' Zone System to printing options in a digital world. A fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested.

## Fly Fishing in the Mono Basin

August 21–23

Peter Pumphrey & Roberta Lagomarsini

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

This introductory fly fishing seminar will begin by covering the equipment involved, the varieties of flies and their uses, and basic casting technique. The class will then move to one of the Basin's many streams to consider trout habitat and habits, characteristics of a healthy stream environment, reading the water, fly presentation, and catch and release. A limited amount of equipment is available for those who are not already engaged in the sport. Peter Pumphrey and Roberta Lagomarsini are guides licensed by the State of California and have been teaching fly fishing for over ten years.

## Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 28–30

Lucy Parker & Julia Parker

\$185 per person / \$170 for members

\$80 materials fee

primitive group campsite included (no pets, please)

Over the seminar weekend, participants will complete a Miwok-Paiute tule basket, which was used for holding trinkets, basket tools, glass beads, abalone shells, and other trade items. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels. You are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. Lucy Parker is a descendant of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika<sup>a</sup>, and Kayasha Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother Julia, a master basket weaver. Julia Parker has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry and is the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women who wove in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



GREG REIS

John Wehausen listens for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep near Mt. Gibbs.

## Fall Bird Migration

August 29–30

Dave Shuford

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. As a result, early autumn is the time of year to see the greatest diversity of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Lake Reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at PRBO Conservation Science for 30 years. He has conducted numerous surveys and research projects in the Mono Basin and beyond and is well acquainted with where to find birds in the Eastern Sierra. This is one of our most popular field seminars, so register early!

## Living on the Edge: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep in the Mono Basin

September 12–13

John Wehausen

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

The US Fish & Wildlife Service listed the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep as Federally Endangered in 2000. This field seminar will involve discussions of the fascinating biology of bighorn sheep, their relationship with other mammals (including mountain lions and humans), and their conservation in the field. Past participants saw bighorn nine out of the last ten years—while there is a very good chance of seeing bighorn sheep in the wild during this seminar, there is no guarantee. John Wehausen is a research scientist at the White Mountain Research Station in Bishop who has been studying the Sierra Nevada bighorn and working for their conservation since 1974. *Please be aware that this seminar involves very strenuous hiking at the 10,000-foot elevation and above.*

## Visions of the Past:

### Bodie, Masonic, Aurora

September 19–20

Terri Geissinger

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

In the Bodie Hills, all within 20 miles, lie three ghost towns—their stories are filled with pioneer families, prospectors, muleskinners, heroes, and gunslingers. This guided tour will visit the town and the cemetery of Bodie, once the second-largest city in California. Next, visit the rock cabins and foundations of Masonic, where 500 people resided in a beautiful canyon, mining gold with great hope and eventually producing considerable wealth. The last stop is Aurora, once a bustling town of 8,000 souls in the 1860s. Your guide Terri Geissinger is a Bodie State Historic Park interpreter and guide. She is



BARISH MILLER



Arborglyph seekers venture into an aspen grove.

active in the Mono Basin Historical Society, and has a talent for making history come alive.

## Reading the Aspen Groves: Arborglyphs & Aspen Natural History

October 3–4

Richard Potashin & Nancy Hadlock

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

A century of sheep grazing brought Basque shepherders into the Mono Basin's aspen-bordered meadows, and they left numerous carvings—or arborglyphs—on the aspens. Join the instructors for an enchanting journey into the aspen groves to explore this historic art form and to learn about the numerous

wildlife, insects, and birds that are drawn to the groves. During leisurely walks the instructors will discuss the history of sheep grazing in the Mono Basin, Basque culture, the cultural significance of the carvings, and efforts to document them. Richard Potashin is a longtime Eastern Sierra resident who has been discovering and documenting aspen carvings for many years. He is currently a Park Ranger at Manzanar National Historic Site with his wife, Nancy Hadlock, who has been a passionate student of Basque culture for over 20 years.

## Mono-Bodie Fall Photography

October 9–11

Richard Knepp

\$300 per person / \$285 for members

Autumn in the Mono Basin is one of the greatest photographic experiences in the country. Spectacular foliage and skies combine with exceptional light, presenting ample subject matter for photographers in both color and black-and-white. And, for the sixth year, the class will spend Saturday at Bodie, inside some of the buildings—a very special treat! Join accomplished photographer Richard Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, fall color in nearby canyons, and the ghost town of Bodie. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested. This is the 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row of this popular seminar!

# Field Seminar Registration Information

To register for a field seminar, please call the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595 and ask for the seminar desk, or register online at [www.monolake.org/seminars](http://www.monolake.org/seminars).

More extensive seminar descriptions are available online at [www.monolake.org/seminars](http://www.monolake.org/seminars).

We accept VISA, MasterCard, and Discover only. We cannot accept personal checks or registration by mail or email. Seminars are limited to fifteen participants except where noted. If a seminar receives less than six participants (with some exceptions) the seminar will be cancelled two weeks in advance, and full refunds will be issued. If you cancel three weeks prior to the seminar start date, we will refund your payment (less a \$15 processing fee). No refunds can be issued for any reason if cancellation is within three weeks of the field seminar date, but tuition can be applied to another seminar in 2009.

Participants must sign a liability release form. All seminars operate under permits from the Inyo National Forest and California State Park system.

The Mono Lake Committee works with instructors and field leaders who have received high ratings from past seminar participants. We emphasize a spirit of learning and camaraderie in this magnificent outdoor setting for a reasonable cost. Proceeds from Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars benefit research and education in the Mono Basin.

Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars are open to everyone, but Mono Lake Committee members get advance notice and class discounts. If you are not a current member of the Mono Lake Committee, you may receive the discount by joining when you register.

# Staff migrations

by Erika Obedzinski

We are glad to welcome a knowledgeable seasonal staff team, nearly half of whom are returning from years past, with much Mono Lake experience and enthusiasm among them.

Outdoor Education Instructor **Hillary Behr** graduated last fall from University of New Hampshire with a BS in Environmental Conservation Studies. Intern **Rosa Brey** recently graduated from Whitman College where she received her BS in Environmental Studies & Anthropology.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Martha Claassen** has backpacked extensively in the Eastern Sierra in her many trips to the area over the years and hopes to make this area her permanent home. Intern **Melanie Frincke-Craig** is a Mammoth Lakes local and studies Wildlife Ecology & Conservation at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Former Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Hannah Gehrman** returns to be an intern this summer. Hannah grew up in Lee Vining and is studying to be a teacher at the University of Nevada, Reno. Returning Intern **Katherine Getts** recently graduated from Scripps College with a BA in Politics. Former Intern **Morgan Lindsay** just graduated from Mount Holyoke

College with a BA in Environmental Studies and returns to be Canoe Coordinator. Outdoor Education Instructor **Logan Parsons** is a scientific illustrator—you may recognize her name as she is also the artist behind the mural in the Committee Information Center & Bookstore.

Returning Intern **Claire Skinner** recently graduated from University of Virginia with a BA in English Language & Literature. Bishop native and former intern **Rose Wilson** returns this summer to be an Information Center & Bookstore Assistant. Rose received her BA in Sociology from Grinnell College and has been living in Japan teaching English. Welcome to everyone!

A big thank you goes to **Brian Scavone** who stepped in as Temporary Information Center & Bookstore Manager while **Duncan King** was on leave. We're glad to have Duncan back and we're also glad to know we'll see Brian often as he will be working for Friends of the Inyo this summer and fall. ❖

*Erika Obedzinski is the Committee's Office Director. She was glad to finally learn how to read piezometers on Lee Vining Creek during the flow study this spring.*

## State Water Board in 2010 from page 3

restoration, fisheries, and engineering. We expect the hearings to productively advance the effort to restore Rush, Lee Vining, Parker, and Walker Creeks, and we're even hopeful that a joint filing can be developed with DWP to minimize or eliminate dispute before the Board.

Still, the bottom line is that reopening any element of the Mono Lake decision is a very serious matter.

We're focusing in on three big questions that need to be asked on Mono Lake's behalf:

1. Are the changes that are recommended to the State Water Board the best possible for the streams and lake?
2. Will DWP take the steps needed to reliably operate the Los Angeles Aqueduct system to meet the recommended streamflow and restoration requirements?
3. What consequences do changes to the stream restoration program have for the restoration of Mono Lake?

## Wilderness from page 6

lands will be added to the previously existing Hoover and Ansel Adams Wilderness Areas.

Overlooking Mono Lake from the southeast is the new Granite Mountain Wilderness, located just beyond the Jeffrey pine forest. Close by in the Eastern Sierra, new wilderness was also created on public lands in the Owens River Headwaters below San Joaquin Mountain, in the spectacular

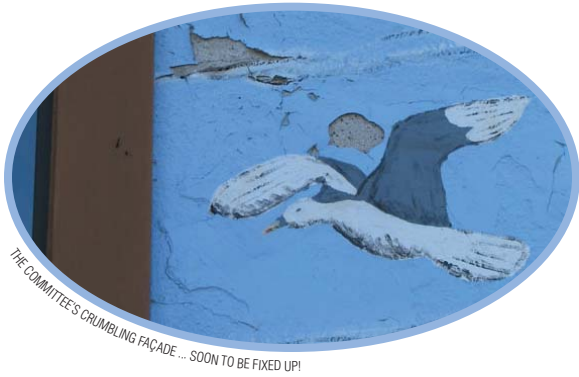
## Much more to come

At this time, much remains to be pinned down about the State Water Board process and timeline. The path to Sacramento is complicated, detailed, and involves coordination among many parties. Here's an example: five major scientific reports are due this year on various aspects of the stream restoration program. A sixth will synthesize that information and make recommendations on stream flows. A subsequent reworking of DWP's operational plan for Mono Basin aqueduct facilities will come after that. A schedule disruption with any of these reports could easily produce a cascade of process and timeline changes.

In the big picture, a return to the State Water Board is precisely why the Mono Lake Committee's 16,000 members have remained vigilant over the years to assure Mono Lake's continuing protection and restoration. Whether it's 2010 or 2014 (another date of possible State Water Board action in regard to lake ecosystem restoration), we'll be there for Mono Lake—and we'll be ready! ❖

White Mountains, and as eastern slope additions to the John Muir Wilderness.

Sally Miller expects that visitors to the newly designated lands won't see much difference on-the-ground from years past. "That's the goal of wilderness," she says, "to preserve these special places as they are." ❖



# From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

I have spent the last three months discovering places in and around the Mono Basin where the ice and snow melt early and the sun shines often. One of my favorite discoveries is a piñon pine plateau halfway between Highway 395 and Highway 6 with spectacular views of the White Mountains. Before I lived in the Mono Basin, I began planning my next visit the day that I returned from my last. Each visit always included a stop at the lake to “check on my investment.” As sunshine spots get more plentiful with the coming of summer, I hope that you too are planning a visit to check on your investment at Mono Lake!

Thank you to all who have sent contributions in memory or in honor of your friends and loved ones. We appreciate these gifts that help us carry on the work that will keep Mono Lake a special place for many generations.

### In honor

**Cindy Green** of American Canyon made a donation in honor of her sons **Corey & Jason Green**.

### In memory

**Keith & Jeannie Barnes** of South San Francisco made a donation in memory of **Gale Blosser**. **Edward & Mildred Bennett** of Berkeley gave a gift in memory of **Grace de Laet**. **Tom & Gail Frost** of Pleasanton sent a memorial contribution in honor of his aunt **Muriel Nesbitt**. **Bill Geyer** of Sacramento made a donation in memory of his dear friend **Pat O'Brien**. **Carol Heinz** of Seattle, WA gave a gift in loving memory of her mother **Peggy Heinz**, “who loved

California and Western Gulls and was an advocate for them and for their habitat.” **Kim Hopko** of Lakewood made a donation in memory of **Jack Franck**. **Elgian Hurley** of Boron sent a contribution in memory of his wife **Dona**. **Mary Elliott James** of San Simeon gave a gift in memory of **Bryce Tingle**. **Nick & Marianne Lippuner** of Truckee made a donation in memory of **Karl M. Kuttel**. **Lisa Malet** of Novato sent a contribution in memory of her sister **Julie Malet**—“Mono Lake was a favorite place of hers.” **Carol Mathews** of Walnut Creek gave a gift in loving memory of **Robert Mathews**. **Duane Simshauser** of Camano Island, WA made a donation in memory of **Julie Simshauser**. ❖

*Ellen King is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. She and her husband Duncan welcomed Kisa, a three-year old Bombay cat, to the family this spring!*

## Checks for Mono

Want to show the world



that you love Mono Lake? Checks and address labels with a photo of Mono Lake on them are available online at [www.messageproducts.com](http://www.messageproducts.com).

When you visit the website click on the Environmental Organizations tab, then on Environmental Protection. Checks feature a photograph of “pirate ship” tufa and a California Gull. Checks are \$14.95 per box.

The Mono Lake Committee receives compensation for its partnership with Message!Products—ten percent of each sale goes to protection, restoration, and education for Mono Lake.

## Wish list: solar panels and such

A spruced-up storefront is coming soon, thanks to members' generous year-end gifts. But we can always use more help!

Don't worry, we're not doing anything drastic—just keeping things standing and looking good. See the article on page 8 for more details on the plans for fixing the building's crumbling façade,

installing solar panels, and fixing the roofs at the Annex.

If you're in the construction or design trade and you have time or materials you can donate, please let us know. Or, if you would like to contribute to our solar panel fund, please contact Geoff McQuilkin ([geoff@monolake.org](mailto:geoff@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595.



The Field Station roof is ready for repair!



MONO LAKE  
COMMITTEE

Highway 395 at Third Street  
Post Office Box 29  
Lee Vining, CA 93541

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Mono Lake Committee

The Mono Basin, Lee Vining, the Eastern Sierra: this community of place we call home and share with our visitors is richer, and indeed more abundant because of the efforts to identify and preserve the unique characteristics of our land and our culture.

—Andrea Mead Lawrence, 1932–2009



ARVA DEGENHARDT