

MONO LAKE



N E W S L E T T E R

Winter & Spring 2019

A Home for Outdoor Experiences

State Park Budget Woes

Record Dust Storms

Field Seminars

Sometimes, even when all signs are telling you to go to bed, you have to eke out the time to ski. Newsletter deadline looming ... but on went the gear, and into a small pack, a thermos of tea to share with fellow adventurers.

An almost-full moon combined with good snow coverage is shockingly bright—like skiing around inside of a black and white photograph. Just seeing the sparkles jumping off the snow would have made the trip worthwhile. Our skis swishing on really cold snow made by far the loudest sound, and contouring the shoreline, we stopped frequently just to soak in the quiet.

Then we heard the distinct sound of water falling into water. I wish I had a picture of us all standing there—ski tips out over Mono Lake, up to our ears in neck gaiters and ear-flap hats, tilting our heads to find the sound as if learning to echolocate. Was water flowing under us? From the big tufa above? We skirted around it, stopping, tilting heads, searching with our ears, watching ripples hit the shore of the dark water before us. A tiny waterfall in the sharp shadows of a formidable block of tufa just offshore? I'd never seen a spring here in the daytime before.

It's exhilarating to discover something new in familiar territory.

And so it's my hope that you'll find articles in this *Newsletter* that will stop you in your tracks with curiosity and reveal something new about Mono Lake. The biggest dust storm ever? A long-term home for the Outdoor Experiences program? A solar park on DWP lands? The Black Point marsh is getting covered by sediment? Scientists are recommending changes to required flows in Mono's streams?

In the meantime, I highly recommend listening to that voice telling you to get out to Mono Lake.

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



COVER PHOTO BY FRED HIRSCHMANN

ARYA DEGENHARDT

Cross country skiers glide to the shoreline by Black Point while the Mono Craters reflect in the lake's glassy surface.

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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MONO LAKE
NEWSLETTER

Winter & Spring 2010
Volume XXXI, Numbers 2&3

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Committee and LA unite to advance outdoor education

Outdoor Experiences program finds a home in the Mono Basin

by Bartshé Miller

In 2009 the Mono Lake Committee finalized a 30-year lease with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) for the home of the Outdoor Experiences program (OE). The lease includes approximately seven acres surrounding a small house that has served as the base camp for the Committee's OE program since 1995.

Located near the junction of Highway 395 and Highway 158 N (the north end of the June Lake Loop), the area is called Cain Ranch. Once a working ranch, DWP purchased it and the surrounding property before the aqueduct was built in the Mono Basin. The house is adjacent to a DWP facility that is occasionally used as a staging area for repairs and projects associated with the aqueduct.

Since the 1994 State Water Board decision, the Committee's education relationship with DWP has been a positive one. After David Nahai became DWP's General Manager in 2007 momentum grew to formalize that relationship and to finalize a long-term lease arrangement that would provide a home for outdoor education at Mono Lake for years to come. In 2008 the Committee and DWP signed an Agreement in Principle that formalized

the education partnership and the roles that both organizations will play in developing an outdoor education center in the Mono Basin.

Since the OE program began 15 years ago, the number of LA students and program days has roughly tripled. OE has been one of the most successful pieces of the Committee's education program, bringing LA's urban youth to the culturally and geographically distant Mono Lake. The program partners with school and community groups throughout the city, reaching youth who have never traveled beyond Los Angeles. Many of these students have never heard of Mono Lake, and have no concept of where their water comes from. In OE students see the Milky Way; they put their hands in snow; they hike next to cold, clear, mountain streams; they understand that these streams are the source of their city's water. OE provides first-time life experiences and education. OE connects urban Los

Angeles to Mono Lake.

As OE has grown and matured, so have the other pieces of the Committee's education program: single-day



Outward Bound Los Angeles students in front of the long-term home of the Outdoor Experiences program.

environmental education programs, interpretive programs at South Tufa, weekend interpretive canoe tours, field seminars, lectures by visiting field researchers and experts, and the annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua. In recent years there have been more researchers, educators, students, and visitors in the Mono Basin participating in more volunteer, stewardship, research, and education programs. The opportunities

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Streamflow recommendation process delayed Committee poised for (lots of) action

by Lisa Cutting

As of press time, the Mono Lake Committee is still awaiting the release of streamflow recommendations from the State Water Board-appointed scientists (see Fall 2009 *Newsletter*). Originally scheduled for distribution by the end of last year, we now anticipate receiving them very soon. Once released, we will have a 60-day comment period to

provide feedback to the State Water Board.

The streamflow recommendations are important because they will revise the current flow requirements that the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) has been operating under, and are critical to the continued restoration success of Mono Lake's tributary streams. Due to the significance of these

changes, the Committee has rallied additional scientific and engineering expertise to supplement our existing team of experts.

Our analytical team will be reviewing the recommendations on several levels. The fundamental questions we will be asking are:

Continued on page 18

State park budget back on the chopping block

Ballot measure could provide untouchable funds

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Unfortunately last summer's budget battles over California's State Park system have not faded away under the deep winter snows now blanketing the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve. In fact, it looks like the funding showdown—2010 version—is kicking into gear sooner than ever.

Newsletter readers will remember the basic scenario: state parks generate more revenue for California than it costs to run the world-renowned system of parks, reserves, and recreation areas. And yet the system has suffered cutback after cutback over the past decade. Last year Governor Schwarzenegger proposed eliminating general budget funding for the agency and shutting down over 80 percent of the state park system. The closure list included the state park units at ecologically vital Mono Lake and the nearby historically rich gold mining ghost town of Bodie, not to mention many other parks around the state.

This year the drama is already starting to unfold. The budget crisis continues for the state, with current projections estimating the state will run



The popular and scenic Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve boardwalk.

out of cash by April.

Governor Schwarzenegger has already put forward some of his budget plans for the 2010–2011 budget year that starts in July. It's not looking good for state parks.

Once again, all general funding is stripped from the state park system. This time there's a darker twist. The budget proposal goes on to "restore"

park funding by using revenue from controversial and as-yet-unapproved offshore oil leasing in the Santa Barbara area.

The state's budget problems are very real, but because parks are a net revenue raiser for the state through taxes on park-related business, park closure just makes no sense—it puts the state deeper in red ink. It also makes little sense to tie parks funding to oil drilling. Should the fate of the parks at Mono Lake and Bodie really depend on the success of offshore oil extraction proposals? We think state parks are worth operating on their own merits.

With the season for budget games open early this year, Mono Lake supporters can expect a number of twists and turns in the months ahead. Last year over 2,800 letters supporting Mono Lake and Bodie made a big difference in keeping parks open, and action will likely be needed again. The Committee is closely involved and will be providing updates via the *Newsletter* and the state park action center of The Mono-logue, our Website blog, at monolake.org/savestateparks. ♦

Ballot measure a bright opportunity for state park funding

What is the solution for the unending funding crisis for state parks? How about a dedicated source of funds that the governor and legislature can't mess around with every year?

The November 2010 ballot will contain (assuming enough qualifying signatures are gathered) a proposition that the Mono Lake Committee supports: the State Park and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2010.

The initiative would create a new,

constant funding source for state parks through a vehicle license fee increase. In exchange, all Californians would gain free admission to state parks. And the funding would be dedicated for parks and protected from budget raids.

Volunteers are needed right away to gather signatures for this important measure, and you can sign up or learn more at the initiative's website: yesforstateparks.com.

Develop Eastern Sierra lands for renewable power?

Serious questions ahead for the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

A rapidly developing concept for renewable power generation in the Eastern Sierra has captured the time and attention of the Committee's policy team in recent months.

Late last year the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) began discussing a proposal for a "solar park" to be located on Los Angeles-owned lands and the dry lakebed of Owens Lake.

The solar park would generate a vast amount of solar power—up to 5,000 megawatt's worth, more than twice the output of Hoover Dam—to supply Los Angeles, replacing coal as a power source and commendably lowering the city's greenhouse gas emissions.

However it would also initiate a major change in how DWP manages its vast Eastern Sierra landholdings, which stretch from Mono Lake to Owens Lake and are currently held as undeveloped watershed lands.

Is the proposal a good idea? A bad idea? The honest answer is that the proposal just isn't far enough along to make a judgment. The project has an admirable vision of developing low-carbon green power, yet it raises a broad array of questions that must be answered in any viable plan.

The Committee's strategy is to gather the best information possible, consider what the project means for Mono Lake and the Mono Basin, and evaluate how Los Angeles could shape the project to make it successful for both Los Angeles and the Eastern Sierra. Our analysis so far has identified six major topics of direct relevance to Mono Lake.

New development of Los Angeles lands

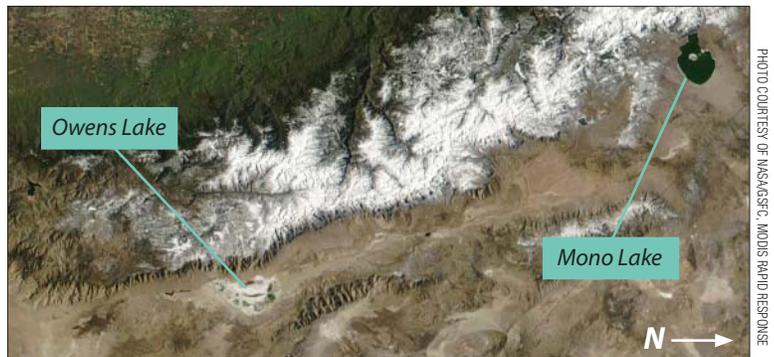
The most-discussed element of the solar park proposal is the idea of using specially designed and placed panels on the dry bed of Owens Lake to prevent dust storms. Yet DWP's solar park vision is much bigger and includes the use of many square miles of City-owned lands. How much? Where? What guarantees will be offered for the protection of the rest of the City's lands?

DWP's existing environmental obligations

DWP will be making many new solar park promises. Yet DWP has a host of already-established environmental obligations at Mono Lake and throughout the Eastern Sierra, including the Owens Gorge, Lower Owens River, and the Owens Valley. Will these be moved along quickly to show good faith? Or will the solar park vision consume most of DWP's staff and resources and delay current obligations even further?

Transmission capacity

More than any other factor, the capacity of the power lines constructed for the project would control the scope and



A NASA image of DWP's 500 square miles of Eastern Sierra land holdings from Owens Lake to Mono Lake. DWP has proposed to use both the Owens Lake dry lakebed as well as other lands for the solar park project.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA/GSFC, MODIS RAPID RESPONSE

siting of a solar park. Comprehensive master planning and commitments would be a minimum requirement before such transmission could be built.

Project oversight

When it comes to using Los Angeles lands for the project, the solar park proposal is quite unusual. In almost every other location in California a renewable power developer would apply to a separate landowner for approval and their project would be regulated by a state agency, all of which creates a clear public process for review, approval, and enforcement. In this case, DWP is the project proponent, DWP is the landowner, and DWP has a longstanding exemption from agency oversight. So who will oversee the project, enforce agreements, and provide for a public process?

Aqueduct operations

Fields of solar panels on the bed of Owens Lake would need protection from flooding, and that would affect how the Los Angeles Aqueduct is operated. New water storage needs and changes to the timing of diversions could affect Mono Lake restoration and would need to be thought through carefully.

Involvement by other utility companies

DWP has said that they are looking to Southern California Edison (SCE) and Pacific Gas & Electric to be partners in the project. SCE already has large Mono Basin investments in three hydroelectric plants and associated transmission lines, so we want to know more about what such a partnership means. Would SCE be offered access to local Los Angeles lands, for example, to construct new facilities?

In summary, DWP has a lot of work to do to develop a viable solar park proposal. We're tracking the situation closely, offering ideas, and watching to see how DWP chooses to proceed. ❖

What 2014 means for Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

With the century now entering its teenage years, dates like 2014 are getting much closer. For Mono Lake, this is significant. 2014 is a year of special note in the State Water Resources Control Board decision that protects the lake and controls Los Angeles' water diversions.

But what, exactly, is it that the State Water Board planned for the 20-year anniversary of their decision? A reevaluation of Mono Lake's importance? A rehashing of the level at which the lake should be managed? These would be alarming events for Mono Lake supporters. I recently spent some time reviewing the document with Committee attorney Bruce Dodge to get to the bottom of it.

The State Water Board order turns out to be quite clear. The 2014 date is part of the rules that govern water diversions—how much water can be exported to Los Angeles under what conditions.

Although the rules were carefully modeled to raise the lake to the desired management level, the State Water Board realized that perhaps in the real world they would play out differently. If so, they reasoned, it would be prudent to reevaluate these diversion rules in 2014 in order to assure that the ecologically sound lake management level is achieved.

The critical point is this: the State Water Board provided for "reconsideration of water diversion criteria if lake level does not reach 6,391 feet [above sea level] in 20 years."

That means the *rules for diverting water* are up for revision—not the management level of Mono Lake. Common sense tells us that, if necessary, diversions would be decreased in order to increase the elevation of the lake.

In the end, this reasonable provision demonstrates good planning to assure that the desired ecologically sound management level of Mono Lake is indeed achieved. ❖

Let's give Willow Flycatchers a fair chance

by Lisa Cutting

With the impacts of climate change and species extinction becoming more commonplace in our daily lives, maintaining hope and seeking ways to take action and make a difference are often challenging prospects. Right now the Mono Basin Willow Flycatcher population is on the verge of not surviving. The good news is that Mono Basin residents can do something to make a difference for the Willow Flycatcher right here in our own backyards.

In an interview last fall, PRBO Conservation Science staff biologist Chris McCreedy provided an update on the declining Willow Flycatcher population (see Fall 2009 *Newsletter* for details). First rediscovered on Rush Creek in 2001, the population peaked at 16 adults in 2004. After complete breeding failure in 2008, only two chicks fledged last year.

McCreedy's study shows that the reason for the decline is clear: low breeding success. Rush Creek's Willow Flycatcher population is not producing enough offspring to maintain itself over time.

The primary cause of this low breeding success is an abundance of Brown-headed Cowbirds that parasitize Willow Flycatcher nests on Rush Creek. When a cowbird lays an egg in a Willow Flycatcher nest, the relatively small flycatcher raises the cowbird chick and often its own young don't survive.

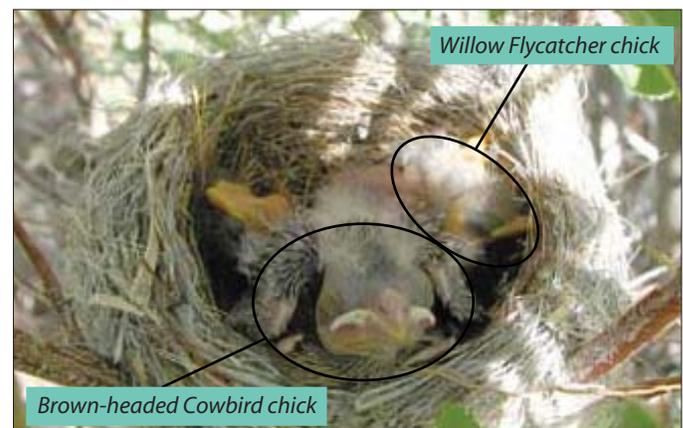
Why is there an abundance of cowbirds? Cowbirds are not well-adapted for desert habitats and rely on humans

for food. Here in the Mono Basin, we have such beautiful birds that backyard bird feeding and watching are popular. Unfortunately, Brown-headed Cowbirds are taking advantage of these easy foraging situations, which allow them to populate the Mono Basin in artificially large numbers.

New information, new opportunity

The Committee is launching a new program to share this new information about the problem of feeding cowbirds. Understanding that people love watching birds at feeders, this program will give locals the opportunity to swap out

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A Brown-headed Cowbird-parasitized Willow Flycatcher nest on Rush Creek.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS MCCREEDY

Bird Chautauqua is back for a ninth year

by Bartshé Miller

Now is the time to make your summer migratory plans for the Ninth Annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, June 18–20, 2010. This year's Chautauqua will offer a covey of field trips, workshops, presentations, and traditional Chautauqua fun. Many popular field trip leaders and programs will return, and the event will conclude Sunday afternoon with a free live concert at Mono Lake County Park.

The Chautauqua has something for everyone—from kayaking, star talks, and sketching birds, to bird photography, field trips and more. Do you have friends and family who aren't interested in birds? Bring them with you anyway! There are a wide range of programs that will appeal to anyone interested in art, science, natural history, and photography.

Chautauqua registration begins
Thursday, April 15, 2010
at birdchautauqua.org

We have collected some of our favorite photographs from the last eight years and posted them in the Bird Chautauqua scrapbook at flickr.com/groups/birdchautauqua. You can add your photos as well, or just get a better idea of how much fun the Chautauqua is.

A portion of the proceeds from the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua supports scientific research through the Jeff Maurer Chautauqua Research Grant. Jeff was a friend to many, and a longtime Chautauqua field trip leader. Among his many endeavors, Jeff was an outstanding field biologist who accomplished important research with minimal resources and funding. Jeff spent several years studying Northern Goshawks and Great Gray Owls in the Yosemite region. As a biologist with the National Park Service Jeff helped with the reintroduction of the rapidly declining

mountain yellow-legged frog. Through this Chautauqua grant Jeff's passion for field biology will live on.

For more Chautauqua information visit birdchautauqua.org or call the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595. Registration for the Ninth Annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua begins online Thursday, April 15, 2010. ❖

Farewell Jeff Maurer

Jeff Maurer, biologist, birder, educator, gardener, musician, ultimate frisbee athlete, and friend to many, died in a climbing accident in August 2009. The loss sent ripples of grief throughout the greater Mono Lake and Yosemite area that Jeff called home. Many local people knew Jeff through his participation in the Chautauqua and for the seasons he spent working and living in the Mono Basin.



Jeff Maurer.

A celebration of his life was held at the Mono Lake County Park where his family and hundreds of friends shared tears of sadness and joy over many stories about Jeff—who truly lived and loved life to the fullest. His memory will live on in the places and

species he helped to protect, the hearts of the many people whose lives he touched, and through the Jeff Maurer Chautauqua Research Grant.

We will miss his genuine and easy smile especially come June, the time when Jeff would be coming down from the mountains to spend time with us here at Mono Lake.

Willow Flycatcher from page 6

traditional feeders for thistle seed socks, which cowbirds can't access. This means that people can continue to watch birds in their yards, help reduce the local cowbird population to more appropriate numbers, and give the Mono Basin Willow Flycatchers a chance to live.

Since the best way to attract birds to yards is to landscape with plants, there will be a native plant component to the program as well. Planting bird-friendly plants is a big commitment, but the benefits are many: the plants are easier to maintain than non-native species, they will attract native, resident bird species, and they help the Willow Flycatcher and other riparian songbirds to thrive in the Mono Basin.

Often the decline of a species is related to circumstances outside of our immediate control. But with the Willow Flycatchers here in the Mono Basin, we don't have to stand back and watch the population vanish. There *is* something we can do. We're confident that with some relatively simple actions, the positive effects can and will be profound. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. When not shoveling snow this winter she was dreaming of it in its liquid form, cascading down a mountain slope with lots of trout dashing about.

Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting and Morgan Lindsay

Winter flow monitoring on Rush and Lee Vining creeks

As a result of the Instream Flow Study report released by State Water Board-appointed stream scientists in August 2009, Rush and Lee Vining creeks are flowing at lower levels than they normally would this winter. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) requested approval from the State Water Board to operate at the lower flows as a way to test what would happen under severely low flow conditions. Of particular concern was the potential for problems related to ice build-up in the creeks.

The Committee's main concern with the flow study was that comprehensive monitoring should be done even under adverse Mono Basin winter conditions to ensure that the low flows were not problematic. The restoration program is guided by adaptive management, so to dramatically lower the winter base flows and not see how the system responded would be the wrong approach. The Committee has had to push for monitoring in the past and once again we expressed this concern.

The State Water Board approved DWP's request for the study contingent on implementing a monitoring program, which DWP developed in consultation with the stream scientists. DWP has had crews in the Mono Basin weekly collecting flow measurements and temperature data, observing and recording icing information, and observing to the extent possible how trout are responding to the lower flows.

The Committee has also been out on the creeks in the snowy and icy conditions, conducting supplemental monitoring of components not included in the required directive from the State Water Board. Measuring groundwater levels and flow in the side channels, documenting ice build-up, and generally observing the creeks under these conditions has been informative and will

help us determine if these lower flows are appropriate for the future.

Rush Creek turbidity report

In spring 2009 the combination of Grant Lake Reservoir reaching its second-lowest recorded volume of 6,148 acre-feet (total capacity 47,171 acre-feet) and high winds resulted in extreme bank erosion and suspended silt traveling down Rush Creek. When notified of the problem by the Committee, State Water Board-appointed stream scientists feared that if the turbidity levels were high enough, trout and macroinvertebrates would suffer. The Committee immediately began implementing a monitoring program.

Working with the stream scientists and the California Department of Fish & Game, the Committee developed protocols that included measuring turbidity levels and photographing water quality conditions. All of the results are now documented in a report that will help inform the future management of Grant Lake Reservoir—specifically identifying an appropriate minimum operating level that will prevent this from happening in the future.

The Committee speaks up for Walker Lake

Just fifty miles northeast of Mono Lake sits Walker Lake, another terminal alkaline lake still fighting for survival with over 160 vertical feet of water lost to upstream diversions. With threatened bird and fish populations—including Lahontan cutthroat trout—edging closer to extinction every day, Nevada Senator Harry Reid and the Walker Lake Working Group are spearheading the effort to save Walker Lake.

This past October, the Mono Lake Committee submitted formal comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement—expressing support for the Walker River Basin Acquisition

Program. The purpose of the federally-funded Acquisition Program is to procure water rights from willing sellers upstream of Walker Lake with the hope of stopping and eventually reversing this remarkable lake's decline. Visit walkerlake.org for more information.

Committee partners with Conway Ranch Foundation

As a contributing member of the Conway Ranch Foundation, the Committee also came up with another way to support the local Foundation's mission and programs: this summer the Committee's fly fishing field seminar (see page 22) will go to Conway Ranch to use the trout ponds as part of the seminar's outdoor learning experience. Staff from the Inland Aquaculture Group, the non-profit that operates the fish-rearing operation on the ranch, have agreed to show seminar participants the facilities and explain their operation. Providing educational programs is part of the Conway Ranch Foundation mission and the Committee is excited to find other ways to work together.

Mono County Supervisor Bill Reid dies unexpectedly

Mono County Supervisor Bill Reid died suddenly on October 21, 2009 of a pulmonary embolism. Reid served as a county supervisor for 15 years and was most recently representing the north county district, which includes the communities of Lee Vining, Bridgeport, Walker, and Coleville.

Reid was known for his honesty and resolve in getting things done. Described by some as the political opposite of Andrea Mead Lawrence but just as strong-willed, their battles over various issues while they both served on the board were heated and well known. The Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee accomplished much with Reid's leadership and dogged determination. He will be missed. ❖

Defender of the Trust award celebration

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

September 28th marks the anniversary of the historic State Water Resources Control Board decision protecting Mono Lake. We've found that it's just the right date to celebrate by presenting our Defender of the Trust award. The award acknowledges outstanding work protecting the Public Trust, the shared natural resources recognized by the California Supreme Court in the landmark 1984 Mono Lake case.

2009 was the 15th anniversary of the State Water Board decision and Mono Lake Committee staff held an award dinner complemented by a weekend of events and activities for guests to experience autumn in the Mono Basin, to see changes at the lake firsthand, and to get a chance to meet fellow Mono Lake enthusiasts. A group of Defense Trust members—supporters who have made a significant financial commitment to the Committee—joined us in advance of the dinner to meet the staff and experience Committee programs.

Honoring Richard Roos-Collins

The 2009 Defender of the Trust award went to a true Mono Lake champion: attorney Richard Roos-Collins. Richard came to the Mono Lake legal cases in 1991, stepping in as the lead attorney for California Trout at a time when courtroom litigation was transitioning to State Water Board evidentiary hearings on extensive and detailed scientific studies.

His challenge was to take the public trust duties established by the court and transform them effectively into functioning water policy. How much water should Rush Creek have in order to protect our common heritage? What criteria can we use to measure ecological restoration? How will we know when Los Angeles has achieved its restoration obligations?

These are the types of questions Richard dissected into pieces and reassembled into clear answers with great skill, using a gracious approach that lead many witnesses and opponents to overlook the fact that a fierce fighter had just gotten the better of them. The remarkable recovery we see today on Rush, Lee Vining, Walker, and Parker creeks—the trees, the songbirds, the trout, the channels—is directly linked to Richard's defense of the public trust.

Richard's career has taken him into many other environmental issues, notably the reform of federal hydropower licenses to include previously neglected environmental requirements, such as instream flow. He negotiated the 2003 settlement of Pacific Gas & Electric's bankruptcy, resulting in the management of 140,000 acres of PG&E land in the Sierra for public beneficial uses.

Richard's hydropower expertise has also bought him full circle back to Mono Lake, where we have three hydropower projects—including one on Mill Creek, Mono's third largest tributary. Richard's presence in that ongoing, decade-long process has again exemplified his success at giving public trust values a seat at the table through teamwork, careful negotiation, and deep expertise.

Many thanks to Barefoot and Muir-Hanna

The award evening was enjoyed by all and marked the we-can't-remember-how-many-times-it's-been time that our generous friends at Barefoot Wines have made a Mono Lake event a success. It was a notable first as well—

Barefoot owners Bonnie Harvey and Michael Houlihan joined us for the evening. In an unplanned tribute, Bonnie even won the evening's 50-50 raffle. She promptly donated her winnings to the Committee's education and protection programs. Thank you Michael and Bonnie for doing so much for Mono Lake.

"Barefooter" Randy Arnold (also of Committee birding intern and Wine Flight fame) out-poured himself once again for the Defense Trust weekend's Around the World Wine Tasting. The Committee was honored to work with this expert who organized an amazing set of silent auction prizes and an impressive array of wines. The silent auction and raffle organized by Randy and his wonderful crew raised over \$3,500 for Mono Lake. Thank you Randy.

The Defense Trust evening wouldn't be complete without our friends from Muir-Hanna Vineyards. Descendants of John Muir, the Muir-Hanna family has a longstanding connection with the Mono Basin. Many thanks to Bill and Claudia Hanna for supporting the event. ❖



Geoff McQuilkin presents the Defender of the Trust award to Richard Roos-Collins, left.



Bonnie Harvey of Barefoot won the 50-50 raffle, which she immediately donated to the Committee.

PHOTOS BY ANNA DEGENHARDT

Discovering Mono Lake's north basin wetlands

Water diversions from Mill Creek harmful to bottomlands and marsh

by Morgan Lindsay

To walk along Mono Lake's enigmatic northwestern shore from County Park to Black Point is to discover two vital havens for wildlife, the Mill Creek bottomlands and the Black Point marsh. Unfortunately, ongoing water diversions from Mill Creek have degraded the bottomlands and the marsh, and continue to threaten both wetlands today.

Mono Lake Committee staff recently explored this fascinating corner of the Mono Basin on a field trip with Dr. Scott Stine, the dedicated geomorphologist who has studied the Mono Basin's varied landforms for the past 30 years. Dr. Stine's State Water Board testimony was crucial to the

struggle to protect Mono Lake, and his unique research is the foundation for ongoing efforts to restore the streams and wetlands described below.

Where does the water flow?

Mill Creek is Mono Lake's third-largest tributary after Rush and Lee Vining creeks. Mill was never diverted south to Los Angeles but instead, used within the Mono Basin—initially for irrigation and later also for hydropower. Mill Creek originates in Lundy Canyon as clear Sierra snowmelt that tumbles down Lundy Falls and through a series of beaver dams before collecting in Lundy Lake Reservoir. The majority of Mill Creek's flow, up to 70 cubic feet per second, is then diverted from the lake to the Lundy Powerhouse operated by Southern California Edison (SCE). Once it goes through the hydroelectric generators, Mill Creek's water comes to a fork where it either returns to Mill Creek or is further diverted to create the headwaters of a long-established irrigation system called Wilson Creek. Wilson Creek arcs northeast before bending south to enter Mono Lake adjacent to the Black Point marsh, just some 500 feet east of Mill Creek—to the detriment of the bottomlands and the marsh.

Full of fish and fowl

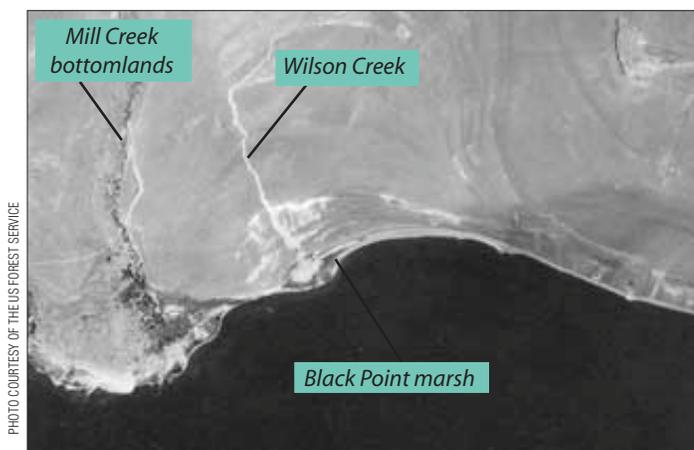
Together the Mill Creek bottomlands and the Black Point marsh form an extended wetland complex that provides safe refuge and abundant food for a variety of wildlife. Mill Creek itself offers habitat for brown and rainbow trout and the riparian woodland of the bottomlands is favored by songbirds including Yellow Warblers. According to monitoring conducted in 2008, more than half of all waterfowl observed at Mono Lake were found at the north basin wetlands—a total of over 19,000 birds. This area is also important for nesting waterfowl; 25 percent of Mono Lake's Mallard and Gadwall brooding pairs nested at the wetlands in 2008. With wetland and riparian woodland habitat a naturally scarce resource in the Mono Basin, the Mill Creek bottomlands and the Black Point marsh are of significant importance to the region. How have they come to be threatened?

The bottomlands hit bottom

Stretching two and a half miles north from Mono Lake's shore, the Mill Creek bottomlands refer to a series of low-lying wetlands adjacent to the creek. In the early 1800s before Mill Creek was diverted, the bottomlands were characterized by a wide valley floor with multiple braided stream channels, a high water table, and a dense forest of cottonwoods and willows.

Then beginning in the late 1800s, heavy water diversions

Continued on page 11



A 1940 aerial shows the newly formed Wilson Creek beginning to deposit sediment over the Black Point marsh. The dark areas surrounding Mill Creek show the remaining bottomland forest. Lake level: 6417.



A 2000 aerial shows the deep erosion of the Wilson Creek "grand canyon" and the resulting downstream fan of extensive gravel deposits on the Black Point marsh. The Mill Creek bottomlands continue to diminish. Lake level: 6383.7.



Looking upstream at Mill Creek.



Wilson Creek's "grand canyon".

from Mill Creek for irrigation caused the Mill Creek bottomlands to dry up frequently. By 1929, when the first aerial photos of Mono Lake were taken, natural Mill Creek was already greatly diminished. A once expansive bottomland forest could now be counted only in linear feet along the stream rather than in acres, as evidenced by the many dead trees visible where the forest had once flourished.

The bottomlands were also affected by Los Angeles' water diversions from the south Mono Basin streams. As Mono Lake dropped—45 vertical feet by the 1980s—Mill Creek adjusted to the lower lake level by deeply incising its banks. The resulting trench forced Mill Creek to abandon its historic floodplain, isolating the creek from its vital system of multiple channels. But even as a century's worth of dewatering and incision damaged the Mill Creek bottomlands, the Black Point marsh was suffering the opposite fate.

A spring-fed marsh

To understand the origin of the Black Point marsh, it is necessary to travel back in time to the 1850s when Mono Lake first appears in the written record. A. W. von Schmitt was the first to map the Black Point marsh in his 1857 survey of the Mono Basin. Von Schmitt showed the marsh as a large wetland area with abundant tufa between the Mill Creek delta and Black Point. But mysteriously, in his otherwise incredibly detailed notes, von Schmitt gave no sign of any creek present where Wilson Creek flows into Mono Lake today. But how could the marsh have existed without the water from Wilson Creek?

The answer to this riddle is that Wilson Creek has only flowed in its present course for less than a hundred years, while the Black Point marsh has flourished for nearly one thousand years with water from many groundwater-fed freshwater springs. Dr. Stine was able to determine a minimum age for the marsh by radiocarbon dating wood found encased in Black Point marsh tufa towers; the results proved the marsh to be at least nine hundred years old. In fact, the creation of Wilson Creek's present route as a way to channel excess irrigation water to Mono Lake does more harm than good for this crucial marsh.

Between a lake and a hard place

Since the early 20th century, over 70 percent of Mill Creek's average flow has been diverted into Wilson Creek, carving deeply eroded canyons on its way to Mono Lake. As a result, Wilson Creek is actively destroying the Black Point marsh by eroding thick layers of rocks and gravel from the Wilson Creek streambed and depositing that debris onto the low-lying marsh.

Beginning in the 1930s and continuing today, many tons of sediment from the deep, wide chasm of the Wilson Creek arroyo or "grand canyon," have been washed down the steep slope of the artificial streambed and dumped on top of the marsh. The coarse gravel cannot hold water well and is quickly colonized by drought-tolerant shrubs.

Since the 1940s, approximately half of the marsh has been buried, and Wilson Creek continues to deposit more sediment on the marsh every year. If no changes are made, over time the Black Point marsh will be irretrievably lost.

Restoration in sight

However, the future of the wetlands in the north Mono Basin is beginning to look brighter. A settlement agreement over the relicensing of the upstream Lundy hydroelectric project, a Committee project for many years, holds the potential to allow the full legal water allotment to be returned to Mill Creek. This currently diverted water, enough to double Mill Creek's current average flow, will make it possible to reopen abandoned channels and restore the degraded Mill Creek bottomlands. As for the Black Point marsh, less Mill Creek water in Wilson Creek will reduce erosion and help keep the marsh free from tons more debris.

We need not look further than the vigorous recovery of Rush and Lee Vining creeks for proof that there is still time to preserve and restore the threatened wetlands of the north Mono Basin. But this opportunity to repair a century's worth of damage will not last forever. Now is the time to give the Mill Creek bottomlands and the Black Point marsh a chance to heal. ❖

Morgan Lindsay is a Committee Project Specialist. This winter she was delighted to help monitor Mono's icy creeks on snowshoes and cross-country skis.

Mono's California Gulls get rings for research

by Kristie Nelson, PRBO Conservation Science

2009 marked the 27th year of continual monitoring of the California Gull population at Mono Lake by PRBO Conservation Science biologists in partnership with the Mono Lake Committee. Long-term ecological studies of this nature are relatively rare, which is unfortunate, since they are crucial in determining trends and analyzing how populations respond to environmental factors that fluctuate over many years.

47,532 gulls

The 2009 California Gull (*Larus californicus*) research data shows that the colony population was 47,532 which is in line with the long-term average. After the 2008 season, which had the second lowest recorded total of 36,994 gulls, it was encouraging to see the numbers back up in the average range.

Mono Lake is highly variable in certain spring conditions, and gull population size and reproductive success fluctuate accordingly. Research results show that the timing and extent of the brine shrimp bloom is especially crucial, but at the start of each season it's hard to know what to expect.

Blue bands in 2009

New in 2009, with the help of the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua grant (see page 7) we had enough money to buy color bands for the chicks in the study plots. All 754 chicks we banded received a pale blue color band over a metal US Fish & Wildlife Service band on the left leg. Through color banding we hope to better understand migratory movements of Mono Lake California Gulls. As marked birds join the nesting colony, future research opportunities will arise.

Additionally, we want to investigate the potential influence Mono Lake gulls have on the rapidly growing population in the San Francisco Bay Area, where

they are a new and significant predator on shorebird chicks. We suspect that Mono gulls may be moving there (or vice-versa) because the two populations show a weak negative correlation over the last 10 years. Also, the exponential growth in the Bay Area population indicates favorable

conditions that may be attractive to gulls from other populations. Immigration from populations like Mono Lake accounted for the pioneering breeders and likely some of the population increase, as local chick production alone could not account for such rapid growth. How much movement occurs between the two populations is unknown; color-band re-sights will help answer this. However, no significant downward trend has been found in the Mono Lake California Gull population, so it seems there is little evidence that large-scale emigration is happening. The possibility still exists and this research will continue to monitor trends.



Top: A California Gull with its blue band from Mono Lake spotted at Morro Bay.

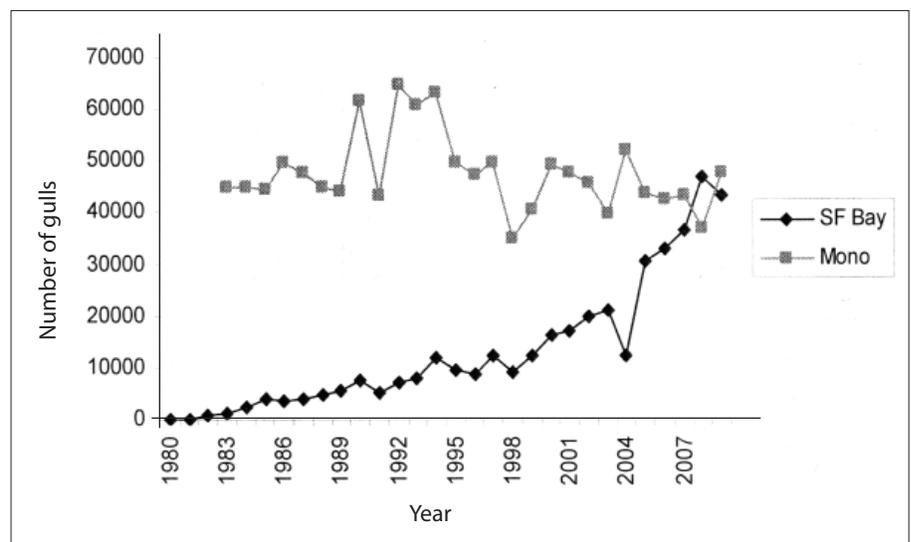
Above: Gull chicks waiting to be banded.

Impressively adaptable

Contrary to popular belief, the California Gull is an impressive bird, especially in its remarkable adaptability. It bends the mind to watch a California Gull chase alkali flies on Mono Lake's briny rim, and realize next month the same gull will be riding the ocean breezes over 30 miles off the Pacific coast.

Last fall I spent time as part of PRBO's research team on Southeast Farallon Island, a small rocky island 28 miles west of San Francisco, and

Continued on page 13



Mono Lake and San Francisco Bay Area populations of California Gulls.

California Gulls from page 12

part of the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge. There, I was able to see the fruits of the color-banding effort. Scanning the large concentrations of California Gulls that roost on the island in the evening after they spend the day foraging on the ocean I quickly found a color banded gull ... and then another ... and another! I was ecstatic. Approximately 0.5–1% of the juvenile gulls present were color-banded (we banded just over 3% of the Mono population). I am currently working with PRBO biologists at Farallon National Wildlife Refuge to add band-searching efforts to their protocol. That should provide many future sightings and better shape our understanding of migrational patterns.

In 2010 we plan to use individually numbered, field-readable bands. These enable us to not only identify California Gulls from Mono Lake, but also quantify and track the individuals involved. With these bands the gulls are more likely to be reported and will be easier to detect.

Like any hand-made craft, bird bands are expensive. Donations sent to the Mono Lake Committee in support of gull research would be greatly appreciated. And if you see a flock of California Gulls, check out their legs and contact the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595 if you see a band! ❖

Kristie Nelson is a PRBO Conservation Science biologist. Like the California Gulls she travels between the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge and Mono Lake each year.

More gull research information

For reports and more on the California Gull research visit monobasinresearch.org/online-reports.

To support color banding for Mono Lake gulls call Bartshé Miller (bartshe@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

Longtime gull researcher retires

Many people volunteer occasionally, but few dedicate a large portion of their lives to a volunteer adventure. For over 20 years Patricia Wilson made repeated trips to Mono Lake in her old Buick and logged countless hours recording data and banding chicks beneath the clamor of tens of thousands of California Gulls. She weathered thunderstorms, alkali dust, blazing sun, and occasional blizzards. She once unintentionally risked her life with PRBO researcher Dave Shuford when their research boat capsized during a sudden windstorm on the lake. Tricia ran a tight ship at the research base camp, and she cared deeply about the gulls, being ever mindful of their health and stress levels during the research activities.



Patricia Wilson, California Gull research volunteer.

All together, Tricia has probably spent a full year of her life on Krakatoa Islet (behind Negit Island) in the company of other researchers. Many of the nights on Krakatoa were windy or bitterly cold, others brought warm conversations and long nights beneath a starry Mono sky—all were memorable.

We congratulate Tricia on her accomplishments with the project, acknowledge her dedication and hard work—and on behalf of the California Gull population, which has certainly benefitted from her careful vigilance, send hundreds of thousands of thank yous.

Canoes and kayaks form 350 for the climate at Mono Lake



On October 24, 2009 Mono Lake Committee members, staff, and friends participated in an international grassroots campaign dedicated to creating an equitable global climate treaty that will lower atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations below 350 parts per million. Joining over 5,000 groups around the world, 50 intrepid boaters set out from Navy Beach under cloudless blue skies ready for the synchronized paddling adventure of forming a three, five, and zero with canoes and kayaks. As part of the Mono Lake Committee's ongoing work analyzing the effects of a changing climate in the Mono Basin, all had fun visually representing Mono Lake in the global climate conversation.

Streamwatch

Winter monitoring reveals dynamism, beauty

by Greg Reis

In winter, Mono Lake's tributaries sleep quietly under a blanket of snow, right? No way. A lot happens in a creek when temperatures change enough to make water go from a liquid to a solid—and back to a liquid again. Ice dams form and break, backing up water and releasing floods. Solid anchor ice builds up in channel beds, displacing so much water that the floodplains are inundated. Some side channels freeze over, leaving a sheet of ice hanging over a dry channel if the water recedes. Some frozen reaches get

buried in snow, insulating the creek from frigid temperatures.

Staff from the Mono Lake Committee and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) have been seeing the creeks a lot more than usual this winter. We are monitoring a temporary reduction in the winter flows granted by the State Water Resources Control Board (see page 8). DWP is monitoring ice in Lee Vining Creek weekly and flows in Lee Vining and Rush creeks

monthly. The Committee is measuring groundwater levels and side channel flow monthly, and observing ice when conditions warrant.

These observations are useful in evaluating the effects of the temporary flows, especially the effect of ice on fish habitat. The parties involved in the restoration are evaluating new flow recommendations for the creeks and will take what is learned from the current flow test into account. ❖

Lakewatch

Worst dust storm ever measured

by Greg Reis

In early November, Phil Kiddoo was worried. While he was checking air quality instruments on the northeast shore of Mono Lake for the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District, he observed what he described as “spectacular salt blooms”—really puffy, powdery, dry salt deposits, especially in the lower areas near the lake's edge—ideal conditions for a big dust storm if the wind were to blow.

On the Friday before Thanksgiving—November 20, 2009—the wind picked up before 9:00AM. Between 10:00 and 11:00AM, winds from the south-southwest averaged 46 miles per hour (mph) with gusts to 63 mph—remarkably consistent, Kiddoo says, since usually peak gusts are double the average wind speed. During this hour, instruments 3 meters off the ground measured 65,113 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) of dust particles less than 10 microns

in diameter (PM_{10}).

This is the highest hourly PM_{10} dust concentration ever recorded—anywhere in the world.

During the next hour, from 11:00 to 12:00PM, Mono Lake's exposed lakebed generated the second highest hourly PM_{10} concentration ever recorded (since hourly instrumentation was installed in May 2008): 48,935 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

The federal air quality standard is 150 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The daily average for this event was 14,147 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ —almost 1,000 times the Clean Air Act standard. Until this episode, the daily average exceeded the standard 123 times since 2000, and exceeded 1,000 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ 36 times with half of those in the last three years. 10,000 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ was exceeded only twice in the last 10 years—the highest was 10,465 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. One reason for the new record was that the wind blew hard all day, with speeds as high as 51 mph as late as 10:00PM, when it finally began to drop.

No one should breathe concentrations above 800 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. At the concentrations on that day—80 times this recommended level—Kiddoo wasn't sure a person could survive, and we wondered about the impacts to the resident animals. According to

mammalogist John Harris, nocturnal small mammals often plug their burrows and can likely stay down there for days. Indirect effects could include ingestion of dust and reduced insect populations. Larger animals would retreat to shelter as much as they can.

One has to wonder where PM_{10} levels will be in 2014 (see page 6). The air quality models that the State Water Board used in its decision were based on observations and a monitor in one spot. Kiddoo thinks the district will probably update its air quality models before 2014, since now there is better spatial resolution from having multiple monitoring locations.

Mono Lake is currently at 6381.7 feet above sea level, and has 9.3 feet to go to reach the 6391-foot target set by the State Water Board. The future management level (a foot higher than the target) is expected to bring the Mono Basin into compliance with air quality standards by flooding the dust-producing lakebed. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. He skied the hills behind town before work in the mornings this winter.

6417'

6391'

6381.7'

6372'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

Target lake level

Current lake level

Historic low, 1982

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



ARYA DEGENHARDT

The sounds of winter can be quiet and subtle, requiring careful listening. On a recent cold night beneath an overarching star-filled sky, one sound rose above the occasional whisper of the wind: the sound of water in Mill Creek, rushing from Lundy Canyon along its way to Mono Lake.

Was it a bit louder than usual on this frosty night? A sign of more water, perhaps, in this long-diverted creek?

Now, fair enough, gauging streamflow by ear is not an established scientific approach. Factors like changing winds, depth of snow, and thickness of ice all affect the results.

But I was confident the sound was louder, if not from those chilly creek tones then because of new information. Exciting new streamflow information at that.

For after more than a decade's work, the creek is indeed

running stronger. Just as the first snows came this year, Southern California Edison completed a new facility that puts water into the stream below its hydropower reservoir.

Where there was once no requirement for passing water through the dam, now there is. And the new release valve, welded straight into the side of the powerhouse penstock, is doing its job.

This time of year that additional water can be 10 percent of the creek's flow. That makes a real difference. And thus my near-certainty on that starry night that the sounds of Mill Creek tumbling by were a bit louder, a bit stronger, and a bit happier. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He followed a Bald Eagle on his way to visit the site of the new release facility in Lundy Canyon.

Benchmarks



ARYA DEGENHARDT

Dust billowed across Paoha Island on December 6, 2009—shortly after November's record-setting dust storms (see page 14).



EINLIJUNG

Paoha Island on January 29, 2010, a calm day at Mono Lake—the difference in air quality is clear.



SANTIAGO ESCRUCERIA

Closing circle closes the loop

Outdoor Experiences changes lives through watershed education

by Hillary Behr, Santiago Escruceria, and Logan Parsons

Just about every week from May through October in a quiet corner of the Mono Basin a new group of people, whose lives have just dramatically changed within the course of five days, gather together to mark the time. With a single candle and a special talking stick to represent the tradition of storytelling around a hearth, closing circle is a reflective time compared to the canoeing, hiking, education programs, and stewardship work that has defined the Outdoor Experiences program (OE) in the past week. This is where lessons learned at the northern end of the Los Angeles Aqueduct are shared and affirmed before the trip home to Southern California.

The Mono Lake Committee’s OE program brings students from Los Angeles and other metropolitan areas in California to the Mono Basin to learn about the ecology of the basin and their connection to it through the water they drink. The students are from middle school and high school and many of them have never been exposed to wilderness.

Through muscle-powered activities students gain a sense of personal empowerment, skills of self reflection, and life-changing experiences. The OE staff sees the effect of these activities during the closing circle the night before the group departs.

Closing circle provides students with an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings about their experience in the Mono

Basin. The group sits in a circle and each student is asked to share what they liked, what they learned, and what they will take home with them.

Liked

When asked to reflect on what they liked, students often remark on “firsts;” their first time seeing the stars, playing in the snow, being on top of a mountain, and walking at night alone. “What I really liked was experiencing all the things I’ve never experienced in the city— all the mountains, the animals, nature, the water, the plants, sights you can’t see in LA.” Comments like these show us that we are accomplishing our goal of sparking an interest in nature. This is the first step towards understanding and becoming good stewards of the natural world.



Top: Outward Bound Los Angeles canoes through tufa groves.

Above, left to right: Outdoor Education Instructors Logan Parsons and Hillary Behr and Outdoor Experiences Program Manager Santiago Escruceria.

Continued on page 17

Learned

Stewardship begins by practicing water conservation—a frequently-mentioned item as one of the week’s challenges. “I learned how to take a three-minute shower!” “I learned how to actually conserve water because I’ve been wasting a lot of water and Santiago actually taught me to conserve water ... how to maintain our resources ... because I never thought about stuff like that.” “I learned where our water comes from because I didn’t know where our water came from ... how it comes from this place.” The students come away with a clear message that water conservation directly benefits places like Mono Lake and that their actions directly affect these places.

At closing circle we see that the physical and mental challenges presented to the students have also fostered feelings of personal accomplishment and pride. “I liked the hiking. It felt like we really accomplished something.” “I liked stepping out of my comfort zone.” “I learned that going to Mono Lake is not just like any trip, but it’s believing in yourself. If you really try, like on the solo walk, you can do it.” It is our hope that these feelings of empowerment will lead the students to make positive choices in their own lives and their communities.

Taking it home

At the end of closing circle, students discuss what they will take home. They mention new friendships, memories of the sights and sounds, lessons of conservation, and new perspectives on the world. “I want to take back the peacefulness ... being able to just go outside, close my eyes, and listen.” “I’ll never forget that there’s more to the world than LA.”

We remind students that they can act as advocates for Mono Lake in their communities. Many want to continue practicing water conservation. Some express a desire to find ways to connect with nature in the city. While each student takes home something different, we consistently hear that their time spent at Mono Lake is something they will always remember. “I learned I shouldn’t take this experience for granted; that I should hold it and keep it forever because I know not many people get to see what Mono Lake is really about.” It only takes hearing one reflection like that to know that the OE program is making a difference. ❖

The OE team, Santiago, Hillary, and Logan, hosted 18 Outdoor Experiences groups on week-long adventures from May through November 2009.



Above: Communities for a Better Environment on top of Crater Mountain.

Below: A trust walk in the woods with Girl Scout Troop 5261.



Left: A Renaissance School student fishing for brine shrimp at Mono Lake.

Below: Los Angeles Infrastructure Academy students pull invasive plant species for a stewardship project.



PHOTOS BY SANTIAGO ESCOBIERA

The Mono Basin Field Station starts to look like one

by Bartshé Miller

Last October, thanks to generous Mono Lake Committee members, roofers installed a new roof on the Mono Basin Field Station. The old roof was losing shingles by the dozens with each passing weather system. The new roof has already displayed its “metal” against this winter’s Sierra snowfall. With the gale-force winds and feet of snow we’ve had so far this winter the investment couldn’t have been timelier.

In addition to the new roof, all the units at the Field Station are now identified with new door signs that include the Field Station logo. Units will retain their old numbers, but now they also have relevant names for the Mono Basin’s plants, birds, geologic features, and for the research work accomplished around Mono Lake. One example is the unit named “Vestal” in honor of Elden Vestal, the former Department of Fish & Game biologist who took extensive notes on the pre-diversion condition of Rush Creek, which contributed significantly to the current restoration effort we see today.

The new roof and new door signs are the



The Mono Basin Field Station has new building names and signs along with the new roofs.

latest physical improvements to this local research station that has hosted research projects continually since 2004. In 2009 the Field Station hosted Sage Grouse monitoring conducted by Fish & Game, and a number of songbird projects with PRBO Conservation Science, including Willow Flycatcher monitoring on Rush Creek. The University of Montana continued with another year of White-crowned Sparrow work,

a student from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo gathered data on arsenic concentrations in brine shrimp and alkali flies, and the Golondrinas de las Americas project returned for a second year studying swallows in the genus *Tachycineta*.

Even the hardest of field researchers can use a roof overhead, and accommodations and places to input data are limited commodities in the Mono Basin. Science and research makes for informed decision-making and the Mono Lake Committee is doing what it can to support further scientific work in the Eastern Sierra.

Outdoor Education Center from page 3

for linking these programs and creating new partnerships and relationships have never been richer.

For years the Committee has envisioned building an outdoor education center (OEC) that would prepare today’s diverse youth for the challenge of tomorrow’s water future. We envision that the center will provide a place for students to participate in education programs, stewardship and restoration projects, and connect with ongoing field research in the Mono Basin. The center will be the home for the OE program, improving the quality of students’ experiences with a facility specifically designed for outdoor education. The OEC will demonstrate green building and the latest energy and water efficiency technologies both inside and outside. It will provide an outdoor, watershed education program experience unlike anywhere else in California.

This year we are closer than ever to realizing that facility at Mono Lake. While the funding for constructing a dedicated center is yet to come, we have a solid foundation with a functioning site, a dynamic education program, and a strong education relationship with DWP and the City of Los Angeles.

Beginning this year we are considering how incremental phasing might slowly and affordably expand the capacity and quality of outdoor education at Mono Lake in the years to come.

Bartshé Miller is the Committee’s Education Director. He has been working on a conceptual OEC site plan in Photoshop; mastering the art of layers on snowy winter work days.

Streamflow report from page 3

First: Are the flow amounts (summer and winter base flows and spring peak flows) appropriate for the needs of the stream system? This will include looking at components such as bedload movement capabilities, floodplain inundation, groundwater recharge, trout requirements, and macroinvertebrate habitat.

Second: Can the current Los Angeles Aqueduct infrastructure reliably deliver the new recommended flows? If not, what improvements are necessary?

Third: How will DWP propose to manage the system to achieve both its goal of water exports and also its mandate to restore Mono Lake and its tributary streams? Is its proposed operational management plan reliable? How do we ensure that restoration goals are achieved and what assurances do we have if things start to go wrong?

While the final streamflow recommendations are just being released now, years and years of supporting studies, research review, and monitoring have provided the scientists with a wealth of information on which to base their recommendations. The Committee has also collected information throughout the decades that will be analyzed and evaluated to cross-check and independently verify all aspects of the flow recommendation process.

2010 Field Seminars



ARVA DEGENHARDT

South Shore Kayak

June 6

Stuart Wilkinson & Mono Lake Committee Staff

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

limited to 12 participants

Late spring reveals snow-capped mountains towering over a glassy Mono Lake—a great time to kayak! Join Stuart Wilkinson and a Mono Lake Committee staff member for a guided naturalist expedition along Mono's south shore. This natural history kayak tour will cover a wide variety of topics relating to this unusual Great Basin lake, such as geology, ecology, history, and politics. Expect to see underwater tufa towers, birds, brine shrimp, and lake-bottom springs. Some kayak experience is helpful, but not necessary; kayaks and safety equipment are provided. This seminar is being offered for the 14th year in a row, and is highly rated by past participants. Space is limited in this popular seminar, so register early!

Visions of the Past: First Discoveries

June 12–13

Terri Geissinger

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

The Mono Basin is filled with curious monuments to a bustling past—take a journey back in time and discover the fascinating history behind the Mono Lake area and the rich Bodie Hills. The past will spring to life as you hear stories of the discoverers, the prospectors, and the families who settled here and made the Mono Basin their home. Visit Dogtown, Monoville, Bodie (with a special visit to the Bodie Bluff!), Mono Mills, stagecoach routes, railroads, and gold mines. This seminar will focus on the people, the sites, and the stories that persisted long after the gold was gone. Terri Geissinger is a Bodie State Historic Park interpreter and guide. She is active in the Mono Basin Historical Society, and has a contagious love of history.

**Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars fill quickly every year—
call (760) 647-6595 or register online at monolake.org/seminars.**



ARVA DEGENHARDT

An Osprey pauses with its fish near Mono Lake.

Summer Birds: The Breeding Season in the Mono Basin

June 15–17

David Wimpfheimer

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This field seminar will concentrate on the identification and ecology of birds that breed in the Mono Basin and others that migrate by Mono Lake during the summer. In sagebrush meadows and riparian and montane forests, the class 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 birds and the natural history of California for over 20 years. His seasoned focus and knowledge always make for enjoyable and educational outings!

Photography at Burger's Sierra Retreat

June 25–27

Elizabeth Kenneday-Corathers

\$355 per person / \$340 for members

This brand-new field seminar will explore photography of the beautiful aspen groves and alpine landscapes above Mono Lake. Practical topics include landscape representation, macrophotography of wildflowers and other flora, painting with light, night photography, and time studies, as well as philosophical and ethical issues in photographing the natural environment. Accommodations will be provided at the rustic and comfortable Burger's Sierra Retreat above Lee

Vining, with all meals catered by Linda Dore Food Service. Photographers of all skill levels using either film or digital cameras are welcome. Elizabeth Kenneday-Corathers is an accomplished local photographer who is currently working on a photography book of the Mono Basin.

The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

July 9–11

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 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.



EMMIT LINTZ

Arrowleaf balsamroot blooms in a beautiful display each spring.

Miwok-Paiute Basketry

July 16–18

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—used for gathering pinenuts, acorns, and berries. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels. Participants 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 descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika^a, 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 20th century.

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

July 24

Greg Reis

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began transporting 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 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 15 years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration and he keeps close track of Mono Basin water management.



The five-siphon bypass, a stop on the aqueduct tour.

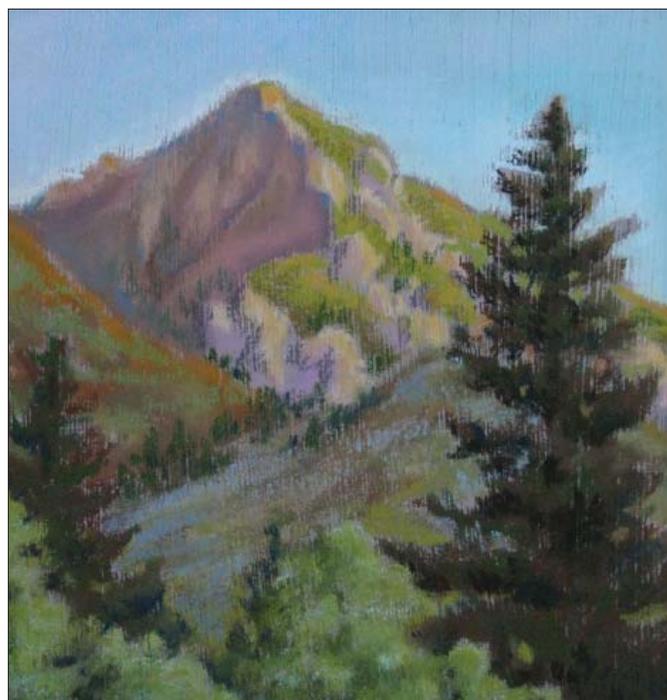
Capturing the Trees & Skies of Mono Lake on Paper

July 30–August 1

Ane Carla Rovetta

\$160 per person / \$145 for members
limited to 12 participants

The fragrant forests and radiant skies of the Mono Basin are pure inspiration. During this weekend of sketching we will concentrate on the unique shapes of clouds and trees in the vast landscape, recording impressions on toned paper using handmade charcoal provided by the instructor. After exploring the “gestalt” of our subjects, participants will render their final pieces in the medium of their choice. Everyone will go home with at least one finished painting and several drawings that can be expanded upon later. These fun investigations are geared towards artists of all levels and are a perfect follow-up for graduates of Ane Carla's landscape pastel weekends.



“Afternoon Sun on Gilcrest Peak,” pastel painting by Ane Carla Rovetta.

Introduction to High Country Plants & Habitats

August 6–8

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.

Fly Fishing in the Mono Basin

August 13–15

Pete Pumphrey & Roberta Lagomarsini

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

This introductory fly fishing seminar will cover equipment options, varieties of flies and their uses, trout and their habits, basic casting technique, stream strategies, and landing and releasing fish. The class will include casting instruction at the Conway Ranch fish-rearing facility and will move to a streamside location for considering 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. Pete Pumphrey and Roberta Lagomarsini are guides licensed by the State of California and have been teaching fly fishing for over ten years.



ELIN LIJUNG

The Mono Basin offers many opportunities for excellent fly fishing.

Identifying High Country Wildflowers

August 20–22

Mark Bagley

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

At the headwaters of Lee Vining Creek amidst a rich summer display of wildflowers, shrubs, and trees, this class will identify a great diversity of plants using Norman Weeden's *A Sierra Nevada Flora*. This seminar will start with a lecture and hands-on session to introduce the basics of plant identification for beginners. The group will then move to the field for easily-paced short walks at high elevations with much more time stopping and keying out plants than walking. This seminar is suitable for beginners or those with some experience with keying. Mark Bagley is a consulting botanist in the Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert who has been leading field seminars in the Mono Basin since 1988. He is well known among past seminar participants for his easy-going pace and engaging teaching style in the field.

Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 27–29

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—used for gathering pinenuts, acorns, and berries. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels. Participants 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 descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika^a, 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 20th century.

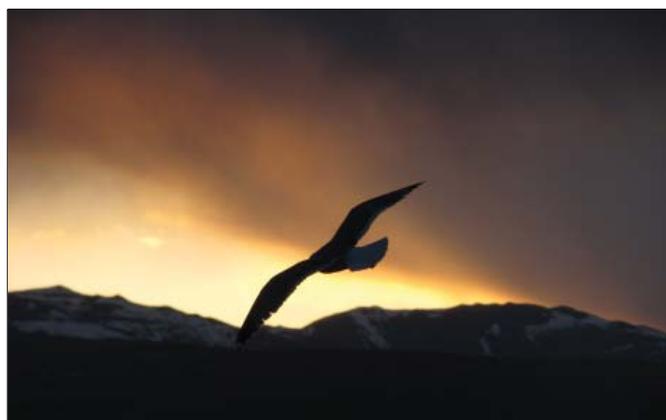
Birding the East Side

August 27–29

David Lukas

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This field seminar will concentrate on the identification and ecology of birds in the Mono Basin and the 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*.



NORA LIVINGSTON

California Gulls wheel over Mono Lake all summer long.

monolake.org/seminars or (760) 647-6595 to register



BARTSHE MILLER

Two elusive bighorn sheep spotted in Lundy Canyon.

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

September 11-12

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 11 out of the last 12 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.*

Fall Bird Migration

September 18-19

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, 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!

Visions of the Past: Bodie, Masonic, Aurora

September 18-19

Terri Geissinger

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

In the Bodie Hills, all within 20 miles of each other, lie three ghost towns full of stories of 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 leader Terri Geissinger is a Bodie State Historic Park interpreter and guide. She is active in the Mono Basin Historical Society, and has a talent for making history come alive.



NORA LIVINGSTON

Violet-green Swallows grace Mono Lake's shores in the warm months.

Mono Basin & Bodie Fall Photography

September 24-26

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 seventh 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 16th year in a row of this popular seminar.

Arborglyphs & Aspen Natural History

October 9–10

Richard Potashin & Nancy Hadlock

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

A century of sheep grazing brought Basque sheepherders 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.



Basque sheepherders carved arborglyphs in nearly all of the Mono Basin's aspen groves.

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 monolake.org/seminars.

More extensive seminar descriptions are available online at 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 2010.

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.

Tioga Pass Run benefits Mono Lake

by Ken Corathers, Run Director

Last year saw a new level of partnership between the Mono Lake Committee and the locally legendary Tioga Pass Run. The run, which starts in front of the Mono Lake Committee and ends at the Yosemite entrance station at Tioga Pass, has been held every year since 1981. The course is 12.4 miles with an elevation gain of 3,163 feet.

The run is a great way to enjoy the area and support its protection and restoration at the same time—it raised \$1,500 for the Mono Lake Committee!

Many thanks

Thank you Officer Doug Northington and Sargent Bob Bielh of the Highway Patrol, Mono County Paramedics John Almeida and Kevin McBride, the Lee Vining Volunteer Fire Department, the Lee Vining Catholic Church, and John & Lynette Armstrong of the Eastside Velo Club. Special thanks to race day volunteers Jill Adams, Dorothy Burdette, Dick & Judy Erb, Laurie Gehrman, Aimee Libby, Ron & Kay Nelson and Laura Walker.



Left: Dan Yarborough of Bishop, 1st place finisher.



Right: Michael Walecke of Lee Vining, age 13, and Mark Steelman of Watsonville, age 71—the youngest and oldest participants.

The following individuals and businesses also supported the Tioga Pass Run: Tom & Anne Duffy of Oak Park, Footloose Sports in Mammoth Lakes, State Farm Agent Linda Wright in Mammoth Lakes, Mammoth Hospital SPORT Center of Mammoth Lakes, Asics America, Crank Sports, Doug Nidever—The Mountain Guide in June Lake, Patti Gallucci's Kuna Crest Massage of June Lake, Sage to Summit of Bishop, Mono Market in Lee Vining, Tioga Toomey's Whoa Nellie Deli in Lee Vining, Alex Printing of Bishop, Base Camp Café in Mammoth Lakes, Trail Runner Magazine, and KMMT

KRHV Radio of Mammoth Lakes. ❖

Ken Corathers is especially grateful to Bill Taylor, Randy Walker, Sherryl Taylor, and Elizabeth Corathers for making it possible for him to run in the event.

Tioga Pass Run
September 12, 2010
tiogapassrun.com

2009 Free Drawing winners drawn

Congratulations to all the lucky people who won prizes in the 2009 Free Drawing! And thank you to everyone who entered the drawing as well—your contributions support education and protection programs at Mono Lake.

Mammoth Mountain adventure package: Michael & Mary Salyards of Bishop. Wilson's Eastside Sports gear package: Grace Anderson of South Lake Tahoe. Reif Erickson painting: Barney Tower of Ojai.

Yosemite Escape package: P.B. & C.P. Thompson of Idyllwild. Yosemite adventure prize: Kim Cortes of Suisun City. Wine Country tour: Maria Barber of San Diego. Picture perfect package: Jeannette Dearden of Seal Beach. Mono Meltaway vacation: Tina & Jim McQuiston of Nevada City. Hope Valley getaway: Melissa Nabors of Lancaster.

Wave Rave snowboard: Hudson & Ruth DeCray of Bishop. Nicola Voorhees watercolor: Laura Henne of San Diego. Photograph by Dave McCoy: Trudiee Troost of Valencia. Pat Crowther painting: Craig Lanway of Pleasanton. Patagonia



Ellery and Caelen McQuilkin drew the lucky Free Drawing winners.

jackets: Trudia Pauley of Turlock and Keith & Sandy Burnside of Orange. REI backpacks: Derek McLaughlin of Port Hueneme and Diane Harlan of Martinez. Hand-tied fishing flies by Doug Virtue: Bob Finch of Tiburon.

Mono Lake Committee shopping spree: Edith Gaines of Los Angeles. California Trout membership and jacket: Janice Wang of Sacramento. Local author book set: Robert Hicks of Oak Hills. Eastside Magazine subscription and T-shirt: Larry & Karen Johnston of Mammoth Lakes.

Comedy Traffic School gift certificates: Sue Nash of Idyllwild and Suzanne Menne of Walnut Creek. Mono Lake Committee gift packs: Sharon Yarborough of Yerington, NV, Catherine Moroney of Pasadena, and Dan Hopkins of Stevenson Ranch.

The Committee would like to extend a huge thank you to the Free Drawing sponsors for donating such wonderful prizes. Want to help make the 2010 Free Drawing a success? If you have a vacation getaway, airline tickets, or an outdoor tour to donate please contact kristin@monolake.org.

Volunteer spotlight: Ken & Elizabeth Corathers

by Rosanne Wilson

“You should see it driving from June Lake—there’s poconip, there’s snow on Paoha and Negit—the basin is beautiful.” As Ken and Elizabeth Corathers talk about the Mono Basin, their faces light up. This joy is reflected in their volunteer activities—coordinating the annual Tioga Pass Run and watering Jeffrey pine seedlings along Mono Basin creeks. Elizabeth “was enthralled” with Mono Lake from a young age, when she glimpsed the lake from her family car as they drove to Bodie. Then, in 1980, Elizabeth was part of the Committee’s early fight for the lake, sleeping in a tent in David Gaines’ backyard. She describes that time as inspiring, saying “I had seen everybody get bulldozed by people like DWP,” so when the lake was protected, “it was a big amazing event for environmentalists of the twentieth century.” As for Ken, he has been visiting the Mono Basin for years, first living and working here in 2003, and then moving here permanently with Elizabeth in 2006.

In the course of their volunteering, the couple enjoys “meeting so many young people that are committed to the environment. It really gives us hope that so many young people care.” Elizabeth describes the Committee’s work as “Vital. Clearly, Mono Lake wouldn’t be there if it weren’t for the Committee. And that’s a fact.” The two emphasize that the work of the Committee and volunteers is ongoing: “the pressures to develop the Mono Basin are huge,” says Ken. Elizabeth adds, “Just because you save the lake in 1994, doesn’t mean that in 2024 it’s going to remain unless somebody’s vigilant.”

When they’re not volunteering, you will probably find Ken and Elizabeth outdoors. Ken is a self-described “fun hog,”



Mono Lake Volunteers Elizabeth and Ken Corathers.

saying he likes to, “ski, bicycle, swim, run, climb, hike, kayak. I’m a big proponent of human-powered recreation.” His favorite aspects of the Mono Basin are the vistas: “Mono Lake to Mount Dana, such amazing contrasts.” As for Elizabeth, she says, “It doesn’t matter what the season is, or the time of day, it just has this ethereal quality that is so compelling.”

Volunteers are an essential part of the Committee’s work. If you are interested in volunteer activities please contact Erika (erika@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. ❖

Rosanne Wilson is a Committee Project Specialist. She just added a new member to her household—a baby bearded dragon named Yoshi.

Staff migrations

by Erika Obedzinski

Each winter and spring, we get ready for the education programs and extended store hours in the summer months ahead—if you or anyone you know would be interested in working at Mono Lake this summer, visit monolake.org/mlc/jobs for more information or to apply. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Erika (erika@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 or visit monolake.org/mlc/volunteer.

This past summer and fall we had two talented Outdoor Education Instructors, **Hillary Behr** and **Logan Parsons**. Through their work in the Outdoor Experiences program, hundreds of youth from Los Angeles and beyond learned about the Mono Basin and their relationship to it through water. After a road trip up the coast of California and across the country, Hillary is back in her home state of New Hampshire pursuing work in environmental education and

organic farming. Logan has returned to coastal Monterey where she is working as a teaching assistant for the science illustration program at California State University at Monterey Bay, as well as continuing her work as a freelance illustrator. Check out her beautiful art at parsonsiillustration.com.

We are fortunate that Bishop native and summer Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Rosanne Wilson** stayed on this winter to focus on grant-writing projects as a Project Specialist. Rosanne’s local knowledge, positive approach, and hard work benefit the work we do to fulfill the Mono Lake Committee’s mission. ❖

Erika Obedzinski is the Committee’s Office Director. After many days of cold poconip fog this winter she’s looking forward to many sunny high country hiking days.



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

Mono Lake Committee members are awesome! I want to extend a big thank you to every member for your tremendous loyalty and support while journeying through this tough economic time with us. Together we've adapted in smart ways that make certain our priorities—Mono Lake and its tributary streams, surrounding lands, and wildlife—are healthy now and for the future.

—Geoff McQuilkin

In honor

Laurie Buffington of Tahoe City gave a gift in honor of her father, **Wilbur Vaughn**. "Mono Lake has held a very special place in his heart for most of his 86 years, and he is a longtime supporter of the Mono Lake Committee. I felt that a gift to this great organization would be a meaningful way to help celebrate his birthday." **Kathleen Dear** of Rochester, NY made a donation in honor of her friend **Gail DeToro**. **Mel Levet** of Portland, OR gave a gift in honor of **Jan & John Le Pouvoir**. **Sallie Robenolt** of Beaufort, NC sent a contribution in honor of **James Robenolt**. **Carol Winter** of Iowa City, IA made a donation "toward your work and research at Mono Lake" in honor of her daughter and son-in-law, **Kirsten Winter & Charles Van Tassel**.

In memory

Kirk Dixon of Sparks, NV made a donation in memory of **Larry Voors**. **Margaret Eissler** of El Portal gave a gift in memory of her sister **Christie Eissler**. **Julie Graef** of Santa Cruz sent a contribution in memory of **Charlene Dwyer**, "who loved Mono Lake

throughout her 86 years." **Martha Haile** of Baltimore, MD made a donation in memory of **Mike Jacobs**. **Rolf Jacobs** of East Palestine, IL sent contributions in memory of **Gerald & Christine Jacobs**. **Carol Mathews** made donations in loving memory of **Robert Mathews**, "who always cared about Mono Lake." **Larry & Nancy Oakley** of Reno, NV gave a gift in the name of **Gene Oakley**—"He dearly loved the Eastern Sierra, especially Mono Lake." **Ted & Sue Schroeder** of Reno, NV made a donation in memory of **Mark Jones**. "Mark will always be part of Mono and the Sierra Nevada." **Jean-Marie Spoelman** and **Virginia Hallberg** of Fremont, and **Anna Wilcox** of San Leandro, sent a contribution in memory of **Barbara Fraser**. "Mono Lake was her favorite place and she enjoyed many happy times there." **Jensen & Alice Young** of Piedmont gave a gift in memory of **James M. Young**.

The **Cordova Camera Club** of Fair Oaks made a donation in memory of **Pauline Fredrickson**. "Pauline was a native Californian and an avid

photographer who spent a great deal of time visiting the Eastern Sierra and Mono Lake in particular. Over the years we have enjoyed seeing the many beautiful and inspiring pictures she brought back from her trips to this area, and we know that she would want to help you continue your work toward the preservation and restoration of Mono Lake." The **Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society** sent a contribution in memory of **Nellie Gryk**, a longtime Society member. "Since Ms. Gryk was an avid birder who was particularly interested in the protection of the Mono Lake ecosystem, the Board of SMBAS chose to honor her memory by making this donation to support your work."

Gifts in memory of **Troy Bellomy** came from: **Nelson Brugh & Tim Valley** on behalf of Anew C.T. in Centennial, CO; **Michael & Ninamarie Gaffney** of West Chester, PA; **David & Elaine Owen** of Roscoe, IL; **Jim Sherry** of Lenexa, KS; **Marla Suttner** of Paramus, NJ; **William & Jean Tappan** of Soldotna, AK; **Travis, Stacey, & Michael Treacy** of West Chester, PA; **Ji Yinwook**, an employee of Samsung Techwin in Korea; and from **Samsung Opto Electronics** in Ridgefield Park, NJ.

Gifts in memory of **Jeff Maurer** came from: **Margaret Eissler** of El Portal; **Del & Linda Hubbs** of Lone Pine; **Jan Ramsey** of Eureka; and **Kerri Timmer** of Grass Valley. ❖

Ellen King is celebrating her third anniversary as the Committee's Membership Coordinator. Does time fly when you're having fun? Definitely!

Music & Ecology Camp at Mono Lake

Explore Mono Lake through this independent camp for instrumentalists ages 12–18 from June 20–26, 2010 in the Mono Basin.

Study the ecology and natural history of the Mono Basin and Sierra Nevada while horseback riding, hiking, and boating on Mono Lake. Play instruments in coached chamber groups, private

lessons, and classes on improvisation, and performance. For more camp information visit musicandecology.com or call Cole & Priscilla Hawkins at (530) 753-1927.





MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

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Show your love for the Sierra!

**Register for your Sierra license plate:
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Sales of Sierra license plates will help fund the protection of
your favorite places and projects in the Eastern Sierra.

Volunteer at Mono Lake!

Help make a difference for
Mono Lake in a hands-on
way! Free
volunteer
training
begins in
late May.



Contact Erika
at (760) 647-6595 for more information.

"Not your mama's Bike-A-Thon..."



August 25-29, 2010

Lone Pine to Mono Lake



more information at monolake.org/reunionride

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua

June 18-20, 2010



registration begins April 15, 2010
at birdchautauqua.org