



MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2012

The photo on the cover of this issue of the *Mono Lake Newsletter* was taken from the back seat of a Cessna flying at precisely 1,200 feet above Mono Lake during the annual fall Eared Grebe survey. Sixteen transects over the lake were expertly flown by LightHawk volunteer pilot Geoff Pope while local photographer Stephen Ingram followed the study's photography protocol of holding his camera out the window to capture images of the small dots peppering the vast lake surface.

I sat in the back seat like a kid finally tall enough to ride her first rollercoaster. We lifted off and before we had reached cruising altitude I had taken over 100 photos. Hair and camera straps flapped in the wind, and my forehead and camera lens bounced on the windows as I spastically tried to take it all in.

We could see the Rush Creek delta all the way up to the headwaters and the partially submerged landbridge below Black Point. There are ponds and lagoons along the lakeshore in the craziest colors—bright yellow, deep purple, and unreal red. Craggy tufa groves rise out of algae-green water and bathtub rings circle the lake deep into the sagebrush desert. At one point I was looking out the far window when Stephen tapped my knee. Down below was the perfect spiral of foam you see in the photo on the cover.

My reaction to the spiral was a mixture of wonder and familiarity. I simply thought, “Yep.” I’ve never seen anything like that on the lake before, but that’s one of the things about Mono Lake—you grow to expect its surprises. They’re out there every day, tossed in with all that wild and staggering beauty, and if you keep your eyes out, eventually you’ll catch one in action.

It is with this spirit that we offer you the Fall 2012 *Mono Lake Newsletter*. I hope you find some neat surprises in the pages that follow.

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



COVER PHOTO BY ARYA DEGENHARDT WITH AERIAL SUPPORT BY LIGHTHAWK

BARTSHÉ MILLER

In October, Sierra Solar installed more solar panels at the Mono Lake Committee headquarters. These panels, above the Information Center & Bookstore, will offset approximately half of the office and store electricity use, and were made possible by a generous Mono Lake Committee member bequest donation.

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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Caltrans' (not just a) rockfall project

New project has potential to fix visual scars of the past

by Lisa Cutting

Residents and visitors familiar with the scenic section of Highway 395 north of Lee Vining along the west shore of Mono Lake love its winding way nestled between the lake and mountain slopes. Often you can see birds on the shoreline or the dance of light on the lake as the sun sets. But in some sections, that relaxed curving route requires extra attention to the highway because occasional rocks tumble off the slopes and into the roadway, causing problems for motorists.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has proposed to address the rockfall issue through its most recent project planned for the Mono Basin—the Lee Vining Rockfall Safety Project. As proposed, the project will address six unstable roadcuts along a one-mile section west of the highway beginning two miles north of Lee Vining near the popular visitor site, Old Marina. Of the six slopes, the three southern slopes are smaller and will not be as difficult to fix as the three slopes to the north. According to the Mono Lake Committee's vegetation restoration experts, the three southern slopes can be stabilized primarily through soil rehabilitation and aggressive revegetation.

The northern slopes are more problematic because of steep angles, deep rills, and the complicated soil composition of ancient lakebed sediments. These three slopes will require a physical engineering treatment to hold the hillside in place. Additionally, revegetation of this area will be more challenging.

Caltrans released a project study document in August, with a public comment period that ran through September. The Committee provided detailed comments seeking project improvements, as did more than 650

Mono Lake supporters and key public agencies. Of critical concern: making sure that the project doesn't result in water quality issues, slope instability, and negative visual impacts.

Proposed construction treatments

In the Draft Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration/ Environmental Assessment, Caltrans identified two design options for the three northern slopes. The Committee pointed out that Design Option 1 is unacceptable because it involves using mesh drapery that would require removing much of the existing vegetation to install. This would be a huge step backward from current conditions because (1) extensive vegetation would have to be removed, and (2) the slope would still slough off material under the drapery, making any revegetation success highly unlikely. When soil is not fixed in place, plants can't get established to advance the

soil stabilization process, and water quality degradation from erosion becomes an issue.

Design Option 2 has real potential to permanently stabilize slopes but it needs to be modified in order to be effective. Like Option 1, some vegetation would need to be removed to install anchored mesh. Unlike Option 1, Option 2 would hold the slope firmly in place with much less movement of rocks and material. What the plan needs is the addition of a performance-based revegetation component that would "jump start" revegetation on the slope. With time, small plants would provide additional stabilization to the slope and soils, which would ultimately result in mature plants and well-established, healthy soils. The combination of stable soils and plants would prevent sediment runoff toward Mono Lake and greatly reduce the visual scars created during project implementation.

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The Rockfall Project slopes are located close to Mono Lake. One of the Committee's concerns is that slope erosion can produce sediment that impacts adjacent wetlands and the lake.

PHOTO © 2008 MONO LAKE BASIN BY DAVID CARLE AND DON BANITA



A historical view of Highway 395 looking north in what is now the Rockfall Project area. Early roadcuts are visible even prior to 1932 when the highway was paved.

Committee advocates for project improvements

The Committee's comments presented a detailed case that a comprehensive revegetation plan with clear performance standards for all six slopes is necessary for the project to be successful.

If you look at the areas adjacent to the rockfall slopes, they are just as steep, yet are quite stable due to a combination of grasses, shrubs, and piñon pine. Well-established vegetation holds the slope in place naturally and minimizes rockfall and soil erosion. It's a great model for what is possible on the cut slopes that currently shed rocks. To really solve the rockfall problem without creating large new erosion and visual problems, the project should use wire mesh to stabilize the cut slopes and then implement an aggressive revegetation plan supplemented with natural plant recruitment.

In order to ensure successful revegetation over time, the Committee is calling for Caltrans to include quantified performance criteria as part of the project plan. This results-oriented approach would guarantee that the revegetation work is successful over time despite any setbacks along the way. Explicitly identifying numeric goals, such as target densities of specific plant species, would leave

no room for ambiguity of whether or not the revegetation component of the project is successful. That way Caltrans, the Committee, and all agencies involved would know the exact status of the revegetation plan at any point in time.

The current project plan calls only for hydroseeding—a process that sprays a slurry mixture of seed and mulch onto the slope that may or may not produce successful seedlings. Hydroseeding is not usually adapted to the specific soils of the project area, so even though native seeds would be used, this one-time revegetation approach is not enough. The project should specify the type and density of plants that are best suited to the slopes.

To demonstrate the potential of this revegetation plan approach, the Committee is working with Caltrans to initiate a pilot project in advance of the Lee Vining Rockfall Project. The Lee Vining Revegetation Project is scheduled for next year and will focus on collecting soil information and implementing experimental seed mixes and soil amendments to test how revegetation can best achieve slope stabilization. Data collected from the Revegetation Project can then be incorporated into the final design of the Rockfall Project.

Roadcuts traced back to very first highway projects

Why were the slopes cut in the first place? Ironically, it was a series of highway projects beginning in the early 1900s that first dictated the need to carve the slopes back to widen the original dirt road for paving. At that time, Mono Lake was much higher and there was even less space for a road. Also, this manipulation of the slopes occurred well before any modern-day environmental requirements were necessary.

Through the years, work on the highway has continued, and in 1983 a Caltrans project to add a passing lane between Lee Vining and Old Marina was approved as a Negative Declaration—meaning that the project would have no significant impacts to the area. However, this project did have significant impacts because it exacerbated the already destabilized slopes by cutting into them further, causing the visual scars that we see today.

History informs Committee's concerns

Previous Caltrans projects in the Mono Basin have not always been successful, especially with revegetation. One need only look north to Conway Summit or south to the median area on Highway 395 for examples of bare ground where plants struggle to reestablish. Reestablishing native plants once an area has been disturbed is challenging, but not impossible. Restoration science has been advancing through the years and much has been learned about the most successful revegetation methods. The Committee is working closely with an expert soil scientist who has more than 25 years of experience with erosion control, restoration, and applied research.

Mono Lake is a special place and deserves special consideration. Its distinctive designations include: Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, Outstanding National

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More time allowed to finalize aqueduct infrastructure improvement plans

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) has filed for two extensions of time to continue intensive discussion and analysis of the Los Angeles Aqueduct system in the Mono Basin. The California State Water Resources Control Board has approved both extensions, pushing the new deadline into the end of 2012.

The Mono Lake Committee remains focused on planning for a 21st century aqueduct that can deliver restoration flows to Mono Lake's tributaries at the times they need it the most, all while efficiently exporting

water to Los Angeles.

While the Committee has found aspects of the collaborative process, now in its second year, to be unnecessarily slow, the overall progress made has been substantial. For example, a key concern raised by DWP has been resolved: Joint modeling of streamflow and aqueduct operations has confirmed that the science-based stream ecosystem restoration flows will not impair water exports to which DWP is entitled.

The job now at hand is to bring the discussions to completion and submit

a final plan to the State Water Board. The Committee's team of policy staff, water experts, and attorneys continues to pursue this goal in collaboration with process participants at California Trout and the California Department of Fish & Game. A key challenge: securing commitments from DWP leadership in a very busy time. But the Committee remains optimistic that win-win solutions will carry the day—and solutions are just what is needed to accelerate the healing of Rush Creek and Mono's other vital tributary streams. ❖

Volunteers clear the way for restoration

by Lynette Villagomez

If you've ever tried to remove non-native plant species from your garden you have an idea of how difficult they are to completely eradicate. Last summer, Mono Lake Intern Max Henkels and I led weekly restoration outings as part of the Mono Lake Committee's ongoing efforts to control non-native plants in the Mono Basin. Luckily, we had help from dedicated volunteers and a grant from outdoor clothing company Patagonia, because with weed removal, you definitely need a little help from your friends.

Committee staff and volunteers began summer season work at Old Marina, helping Tufa State Natural Reserve staff clear the Lake Trail of white sweet clover—a rapidly spreading non-native plant. Next, we shifted removal efforts toward white sweet clover and woolly mullein at Mill Creek. Removing these plants along Mill Creek is especially important since the creek will be receiving more of its natural flow in the coming years (see Winter & Spring 2012 *Newsletter*).



Volunteers pull invasive white sweet clover plants from the banks of Mill Creek.

When invasive plants are removed ahead of time, native plants have a greater chance of reestablishing naturally.

The hard work of volunteers and Committee staff paid off—by the end of the summer we pulled nearly 780 pounds of weeds! Despite dedicated restoration work once a week for 12 consecutive weeks, there is still work to be done. Next summer the Committee plans to help clear

the path at Old Marina again, and to continue to work downstream at Mill Creek toward Mono Lake.

We would like to send special thanks to all of the dedicated volunteers and to Patagonia for making these critical restoration efforts possible. If you are interested in volunteering next year please contact Rosanne Catron (rose@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

A grand opening, a grand collaboration

by Bartshé Miller



ARNA DEGENHARDT

On August 3, Mono Lake Committee staff, friends, local contractors, and craftsmen gathered to celebrate the grand opening of the new Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore storefront. About a hundred people showed up to see the fully-renovated storefront, admire the new features, and thank those who transformed the space into a welcoming stop for visitors along Highway 395.

Grace de Laet's legacy

It was a fitting event to remember the woman who made the new storefront possible—Grace de Laet. Grace loved Mono Lake, birds, and people, and she knew how to bring people together to have a good time for a good cause. Grace passed away in 2008, but thanks to her bequest, hundreds of thousands of future visitors will be welcomed to Lee Vining with substantial improvements. On the early-August evening we acknowledged her spirit and generosity in a champagne toast.

Grace provided the impetus and the funding while architects helped Committee staff develop a vision. The experienced and thoughtful minds of Larry Strain and Sarah van Laanen of Siegel & Strain architects funneled two years of staff and board input to the drafting table. Volunteer Chris Degenhardt helped staff both polish the vision and understand the architectural process.

Local talent, local knowledge

We also thanked the many Eastern Sierra locals and businesses that worked to transform a storefront vision into rock, wood, metal, and concrete. Ed Escoto of Escoto Construction & Design was the contractor and Roy Freels managed the project day to day. Roy's cheerful, booming voice became a familiar sound around the Committee, and his engineering know-how and attention to detail was well-matched with the Committee's specific project needs.

Along with Roy, Jim Richards and Santos Quiroz were on the job almost every day from May through July. Santos put his handiwork to nearly every feature, while Jim went out of his way to customize some of the finer details in the Jeffrey pine benches, redwood pergola, and planters. Roy and Committee staff carefully selected wood that was either locally-milled Jeffrey pine or certified sustainably-harvested.

Thanks to an artistically-engineered effort by PDG Welding and Lancaster Construction, a scale Mono Lake map in blue concrete sits at the base of a stepped and recessed plaza area. From the top plaza step you can see both Mono Lakes!

Joe Suppa of Suppa Electrical installed outlets and energy-efficient, night-sky friendly, LED lights. Joe crawled

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beneath the Committee's floor and back through its dusty, subterranean history to run wire for outlets, lights, and the new handicap lift. The new, covered, outdoor lift allows for handicap access to the front entrance of the building, replacing an inconvenient ramp in the back alley. Both the lift and the new handicap parking space are key components of the storefront remodel.

Darren Tiwilger and BJ from Rock & Dirt transported and placed hand-picked granite boulders that provide a natural accent for the planters, concrete plaza, Trex deck, and railings. The boulders have a special place in the Committee's history since they come from the Simis property where the original Mono Lake Research Group camped 35 years ago and first hatched the idea of a Mono Lake Committee. The boulders were donated by property owner Jan Simis, and site logistics were arranged by Mono Basin local, Joel Ellis, who went well out of his way to search for appropriate rocks and to make the transfer possible.

Water is part of the vision

Jeff York of Walker River Plumbing installed the new drinking fountain and water bottle filler next to the Mono Lake map. Jeff patiently and persistently dealt with manufacturer delays and mishaps. Today, we can accurately claim that the Committee has the only spring-fed drinking fountain and water bottle-filling station on Highway 395. Jeff also installed a water meter for the Committee, the first water meter in Lee Vining history!

Regina Hirsch of Sierra Watershed Progressive made sure we had beautiful native plants to go with the new greywater system she and her staff installed during an earlier phase of the remodel. Water from the public bathroom sink and the swamp cooler drains through dedicated plumbing to sub-surface mulch boxes where the water irrigates aspen trees and other native plants. The Committee's greywater system is only the fourth commercial system in California.



A blue concrete Mono Lake map sets the 6392-foot management level in stone at the center of the plaza area and adjacent to the water fountain and bottle filler.



A beautiful scaled replica of the Sierra crest as seen from the east side of Mono Lake was created by Lee Vining resident David Dore.

The Lee Vining community behind the details

Lee Vining infrastructure is old, mysterious, and holds many surprises for those that dare to dig, construct, or renovate. When the remodel began we uncovered a few hidden sewage lines, a historic water line, and a neighboring waterline easement. Fortunately, local knowledge and prompt cooperation from the Lee Vining Public Utility District, Bill Banta, Tim Banta, and Tim Casey enabled new meter pits and hook-ups to proceed quickly. Jeff and Steve Hansen of Construction Specialty completed the new hook ups and helped the project move forward as efficiently as possible.

Local water comes from the mountains, and the mountains above Mono Lake can now be seen along the sidewalk in Lee Vining. Local craftsman David Dore created a scaled redwood replica of the Sierra crest as seen from the east side of Mono Lake that runs 13 feet long and weighs nearly 300 pounds. Passing visitors frequently stop and admire the massif, its colors, and textures. They can pick out Mount Dana, Lee Vining Peak, and Dunderberg Peak, among others.

We would like to thank our neighbors who tolerated the disruption, dust, extra vehicles, noise, and visiting construction dogs. We appreciate the patience of our alley neighbors Lily Mathieu, Bonnie Noles and family, and neighboring business owners Mike & Nancy Pinizzotto, and Kelly Miller. We also can't forget former Birding Intern Randy Arnold of Barefoot Wine & Bubbly for providing the champagne to celebrate it all.

As we lifted our glasses in thanks it struck me how long, complicated, and extraordinary a project it is to create a meaningful public space. Here in Lee Vining sits a modest symphony of vision, rock, metal, wood, engineering, and art performed collaboratively by those who love Mono Lake for the benefit of so many thousands of future visitors who wish to know it for the first time. Let's toast to that! ❖

12,574 Acres burn near Mono Lake

by Lynette Villagomez

This year's dry summer and above average temperatures made for dry fire fuels conducive to wildfires. Lightning from a thunderstorm ignited the Indian Fire on August 8 just southeast of Mono Lake and north of Highway 120 East.

At the fire's peak 571 personnel were stationed in Lee Vining and worked around the clock to contain the fire. By August 15 the 12,574-acre wildfire, which was fed by grass, sagebrush, and bitterbrush, was fully contained. Although wildfires are often important in maintaining or aiding in habitat health and diversity, the Indian Fire was of particular concern because of its location near critical Greater Sage Grouse habitat and Los Angeles Department of Water & Power transmission lines.

According to Becca Brooke, Bureau of Land Management Supervisory Resource Management Specialist, grass has already begun to grow in the burn area, but recovery will really be dependent upon this year's winter conditions. The public can assist with recovery by treading lightly within the burn areas which will help with vegetation recruitment.

The Mono Lake Committee is keeping an eye on the area especially on windy days, and occurrences of dust and blowing ash have already been observed. ❖

Lynette Villagomez is a Committee Project Specialist. Her plan for her first Mono Basin winter: learn to play the banjo.



NICK HOLT

Shortly after being ignited by a lightning strike, the growing Indian Fire created a pyrocumulus cloud seen here from South Tufa.

June Mountain closed for 2012–2013 season; town of June Lake is open and active

by Rosanne Catron

In mid-June, Eastern Sierra residents abruptly learned that the June Mountain ski area would be closed through the 2012–2013 season and that all employees would be laid off immediately.

The news of the closure came as a surprise to local business owners who depend on the ski area to bring customers to the town of June Lake in the winter. “The winter economy in past years was around three to four million dollars of sales ... in large part because of June Mountain,” says Ralph Lockhart of the Double Eagle Resort & Spa, who is also a June Lake Chamber of Commerce member and on the June Lake Revitalization Committee.

“However, even though the mountain is closed June still has that great family environment. You can still ski in Mammoth, and June Village is going to have events to make your stay more pleasant and interesting.”

So, for those who like visiting June Lake during the winter, don't despair! You can enjoy the magnificence of the June area on cross country skis, snowshoes, ice skates, or just by taking in the breathtaking scenery from one of the local restaurants or hotels.

For more information about winter recreation activities in the June Lake area, please visit monocounty.org/june-lake, junelakeloop.org, or email info@monolake.org.

Los Angeles files federal lawsuit over Owens Lake obligations

Near press time, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to limit its responsibility for huge dust storms that originate from the dry bed of Owens Lake and exceed federal clean air health standards.

The suit initiates litigation against regional, state, and federal air quality regulators as well as lakebed landowners. Mono Lake is not referenced at all in the 40-page filing.

The Mono Lake Committee has carefully reviewed the initial DWP filing. In the big picture, the lawsuit is not relevant to the California State

Water Resources Control Board order protecting Mono Lake.

The legal basis for the protection of Mono Lake and its tributary streams is deeply rooted in California's mandate that the health of Public Trust resources—notably Mono Lake, including its migratory birds, waters, wildlife, scenic views, and clean air—be protected for current and future generations. Also critical are state Fish & Game codes requiring streamflow below DWP's water diversion structures. The DWP lawsuit affects neither the Public Trust doctrine nor state fish regulations.

Nor would the lawsuit invalidate the official 1995 plan under the Clean Air Act for attaining compliance with federal clean air health standards in the Mono Basin. That plan is based on the expectation that Mono Lake will rise to its State Water Board-ordered management level.

Still, should DWP find success with its claims, future air quality oversight could be affected in the Mono Basin, where similar air quality regulations and enforcement mechanisms apply. With this in mind, the Committee will continue to watch the DWP litigation closely as it develops. ❖

Rockfall project from page 4

Resource Water, California State Scenic Highway, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, a globally significant Important Bird Area, and an internationally recognized Living Lakes Network site. Highway projects in this area require special attention, without exception.

A significant Mono Lake Committee concern is that the project will create a large, lasting visual impact to Mono Lake's scenic west shore. While it's true that roadcuts already exist, the project as proposed would scrape these partially vegetated slopes bare, producing a much greater area of disturbance. The Committee is trying to minimize this visual impact while recognizing that the situation will need to get worse in the short term before it can get better. Project success hinges on successful revegetation.

The Committee is focused on the long-term combined goal of slope stabilization and effective revegetation with recolonization of native plants, as the way to ultimately address the rockfall problem and fix the existing scars from past projects.

Protecting the water quality of Mono

Lake is also critical. Mono Lake's Outstanding National Resource Water designation by the State Water Board in 1994 means that under no circumstance can Mono's waters degrade from the water quality baseline established at the time of designation. While the project area is exclusively on the west side of the highway, the Committee knows that extreme runoff events or slope erosion have the potential to discharge sediment into the water, especially as Mono Lake continues to rise.

A new Caltrans era?

Many years have passed since the last Caltrans project in the Mono Basin and we are seeing some signs of change. Committee staff have been visiting the rockfall site with Caltrans staff regularly over the past year to gain an understanding of the engineering options and constraints and to share thoughts on how the project can best protect Mono Lake. Caltrans has also reached out to the local community and agencies including the Forest Service and California State Parks. The Committee is optimistic that this project can move forward in a way

that addresses the immediate rockfall problem and resolves the long-term issue of cut slopes and their associated visual impacts once and for all. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She's not sure what magic alchemy occurred in her garden this year but she had a bumper crop of tomatoes!

What's next?

In September over 650 Mono Lake Committee members and supporters wrote letters to Caltrans on the Rockfall Project. Thank you!

Caltrans plans to evaluate and respond to all comments submitted on the project, incorporating changes as they can. Then the environmental document will be finalized and released to the public early next year.

Caltrans will continue to work with the Committee and other agencies to address specific concerns in advance of any final project release. Construction is slated for 2014.

Keeping up with Mono Lake's avian species

by Erica Tucker

Did you have the opportunity to visit Mono Lake this summer, and, if so, did you notice the birds? Looking offshore at the tufa towers, you may have seen giant nests of sticks containing Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). And for those of you who gazed further out on the lake and noticed small, dark, diving birds, you may have been watching Eared Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*). Your curiosity connects you to the founders of the Mono Lake Committee—researchers studying Mono Lake's ecosystem—as well as to the Committee's ongoing work to support scientific research in the Mono Basin.

Osprey

The Osprey is a fish-eating bird that began nesting on fishless Mono Lake's exposed tufa towers in 1985. Researchers theorize that these elevated towers are safe from predation, which makes up for the longer "commute" to fishable water nearby. Regular monitoring of nesting activity and success began at Mono Lake in 2004, and this research continues today with Environmental Scientist Lisa Fields of California State Parks.

This was a banner year for Mono Lake's Osprey, with many active nests that delighted visitors who watched nest building, chick feeding, and fledging. Fifteen chicks hatched in June and were banded in July—2.5 times more chicks than fledged last year, with an average of 1.9 young successfully fledging per active nest.

This was the fourth year of Osprey chick banding. A silver numbered band placed on each leg enables researchers to track an individual bird's movements. One banded bird returned to nest on Mono Lake this year, and one Mono Lake band was recovered from a dead bird on the Gulf Coast of Texas—1,500 miles away! In the past decade, the population of Osprey at Mono Lake has increased, and has had overall

greater success compared with other regional populations at Lake Tahoe and Donner Lake.

Osprey research has been supported by grants from the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, and private donations are accepted through the Bodie Foundation (bodiefoundation.org). You can learn more about Osprey from Lisa Fields at the 2013 Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua June 14–16, 2013.

Eared Grebes

Eared Grebes spend their entire lives either flying or on water, and it is estimated that 15% of their lives is spent under water. These birds nest in the northern Rockies and southern Canada, and visit Mono Lake mid-migration. While here in the fall, they molt and gorge themselves on brine shrimp—fattening up for the next leg of their journey south to the Salton Sea and the Gulf of California.

The migrating Eared Grebes at Mono Lake, in conjunction with those at Great Salt Lake, represent an estimated 90% of the world's population. In 1996, Sean Boyd from the Canadian Wildlife Service in British Columbia received funding to research where Eared Grebes were going after breeding in Canada. Through the use of radio transmitters, he learned that half came to Mono Lake.

Initial research involved tallying Eared Grebe numbers by boat, but Boyd developed protocol for conducting photo surveys from small aircraft. By flying transects of Mono Lake and photographing the surface at ten-second intervals, individual grebes can be counted and their total number can be estimated more accurately.

In 2008, funding ran out and Boyd contacted the Committee for assistance. The Committee now coordinates the aerial photo survey with assistance from LightHawk volunteer pilots and local volunteer photographers. We gather the photo data and submit it to Boyd and his students who analyze it.

Numbers of grebes at Mono Lake have fluctuated from over 1.8 million in 2000 to just under 600,000 in 2010, with last year's count around 900,000 birds. This year's Eared Grebe survey took place on October 13 with volunteer pilot Geoff Pope of LightHawk and volunteer photographer Stephen Ingram. The resulting photos are being analyzed by Boyd as this issue goes to press.

For every research question answered, more questions develop. The Committee continues to support bird research and monitoring in order to better understand the Mono Basin ecosystem, and how management decisions affect it. ❖

Erica Tucker is a Committee Project Specialist. She took advantage of the great Lee Vining apple harvest this fall: apple sauce, apple cake, apple juice, apple crisp...



PHOTO COURTESY OF RON WOLF

Fifteen Osprey chicks hatched at Mono Lake in June.

Measuring success at the Outdoor Education Center

by Jessica François

Since 1995, the Mono Lake Committee's Outdoor Experiences program has brought inner-city youth to the Mono Basin for unique watershed education. Participants stay at the Outdoor Education Center for five days of hiking, canoeing, and learning about the Mono Basin and water conservation. Year after year, students have expressed how their experiences in the program have made them advocates for water conservation and environmental protection as well as stronger leaders and better citizens due to their time at Mono Lake.

This year, the Outdoor Experiences staff took steps to better understand and track participants' knowledge and personal growth.

Assessing knowledge

We began the 2012 season with a goal to launch a system for assessing student progress. In traditional Mono Lake Committee fashion, we wanted to have data to guide future decisions for the program.

We designed a questionnaire to give every participant at the beginning and end of their trip to Mono Lake. The questionnaire gauges participant knowledge of Mono Lake and water conservation, and measures student willingness to become an advocate for water resource protection. The nearly identical pre- and post-trip questionnaires highlight changes in participants' knowledge as well as in their attitudes and convictions.

So far six groups have completed the questionnaires, and the findings are remarkable. Every group has shown significant increases in knowledge of Mono Lake and their watershed as well as an increased willingness to conserve water and to become positively involved in local water issues. This data

confirms what education staff have been observing for years, and identifies areas where our teaching can be improved.

Meaningful changes

In addition to gathering data, the staff collected personal narratives from students. A "memory book" was available for students to share their own thoughts and reflections. These ranged from comical to heart-rending.

Most students wrote about the things they learned. One high school junior wrote, "Guess what? I witnessed AP chemistry and AP biology in action." A student from an addiction recovery program wrote, "I realized I didn't know who I was and how drugs gave birth to somebody else. Now I remember who I was. And I'm going to try to get my life back." These accounts highlight the breadth of enlightening experiences participants have.

Connecting the dots

Tracking student progress did not stop with the assessments and memory book. In September, education staff made a visit to Los Angeles to meet with groups to discuss their trips' long-term impacts.

The participants were excited to discuss their experiences. Many said that the trip helped them become more goal-oriented. One high school student said, "Mono Lake gives you time to think about what you want to do. It helps me get a mindset to get a plan for the future ... go to college, what college I want to go to, things like that." In addition, we learned that several adult participants had landed jobs in the months after their Mono Lake visit.

The trip to Los Angeles was successful in strengthening lines of communication between the Outdoor Experiences staff at Mono Lake, leaders, and participants in Los Angeles.

The Committee will use the 2012 baseline data to compare subsequent groups and strengthen programs in the future. We have always known that this program changes lives; now, we are measuring those changes more accurately. ❖

Jessica François is the Committee's Outdoor Experiences Instructor. For her, summer is for bouldering and fall is for homemade Indian food.



A student from South El Monte High School takes a moment for quiet reflection at Mono Lake.

JESSICA FRANÇOIS

Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting, Angela Glaser, and Elin Ljung

Lee Vining Airport stockpile shrinks by one foot

There's good news for folks looking out towards Mono Lake from Lee Vining this fall: During five days in August, one vertical foot of soil was removed from the ten-acre stockpile at the Lee Vining Airport, improving the view.

The soil removal was the next stage in efforts to rehabilitate overly extensive earthmoving as a result of a Mono County project to resurface Lee Vining's airport two years ago. The resulting stockpile disturbed wildlife habitat and obscured views of Mono Lake from several points along Highway 395.

Before the project was finished and the heavy equipment left the site, Mono Lake Committee staff and others worked with Mono County to get the stockpile reduced and contoured to match the surrounding slope, but it still stood out.

This past summer, resurfacing work at Bridgeport's airport, Bryant Field, required fill material to smooth out the runway. The creative solution was to remove 2,000 cubic yards of material from the stockpile at Lee Vining's airport, thereby benefiting both locations.

The revegetation plan for the Lee Vining Airport, developed with Committee involvement, will involve a combination of tilling, native seed, and carbon-rich mulch. —EL

State Park financial mismanagement in Sacramento

In mid-July, the *Sacramento Bee* broke disappointing news that the California Department of Parks & Recreation in Sacramento had been sitting on nearly \$54 million in surplus money for over a decade.

The news was particularly frustrating in light of the past year's efforts by citizens, non-profit groups, and supporters of California's state parks to keep open 70 parks that were slated for closure. The discovery led to the subsequent resignation of State Parks Director Ruth Coleman, as well as the departure of a number of other leadership staff.

Fortunately for struggling parks, in late September Governor Jerry Brown signed two bills into law that are intended to increase funding and transparency for state parks. Assembly Bill (AB) 1478 directs \$20.5 million of the "found" money toward parks that had been slated for closure, and establishes a two-year moratorium on closing parks that extends to summer 2014. AB 1589 requires the Department of Parks & Recreation to develop a plan for increasing self-generated revenues in state parks. The Committee supported both pieces of legislation. —EL

Arsenic-tolerant bacteria makes news once again

The scientific process is akin to climbing a mountain. Like mountaineering, science is not always about the destination and "bagging the peak," but about the journey. This is an important lesson to learn both on a ridge top and in a laboratory. Scientists and science enthusiasts had this learning opportunity in July when two independent studies were published on arsenic-tolerant bacteria collected at Mono Lake.

The bacteria, a strain of *Halomonas* called GFAJ-1, first made headlines in December 2010. At that time a team of scientists announced that GFAJ-1 was able to survive off of and incorporate arsenic into its DNA in the absence of phosphorous—an element crucial for life (see Winter & Spring 2011 *Newsletter*). Now, new, independent research reports that the bacteria is only arsenic-tolerant, and still depends on phosphorous to carry out crucial cellular functions.

The discovery of GFAJ-1 is not as ground-breaking as was first believed. However, it is a remarkable organism able to thrive in extreme conditions, and its discovery speaks to the mysteries held in this unusual place. Mono Lake continues to inspire curiosity and research as science climbs on. —AG

Mono Basin Community Plan completed

After three years of community workshops, detailed surveys, and countless discussions, the Mono Basin Community Plan has been finalized and approved by the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee, the Mono County Planning Commission, and the Mono County Board of Supervisors. The plan encapsulates Lee Vining's collective vision for the future

Continued on page 13



In August, earthmovers removed 2,000 cubic yards of soil from the stockpile at the Lee Vining Airport—reducing its height by one foot and improving the view of Mono Lake from town.

MORGAN LINDSAY

and offers guidance for a variety of planning projects and a solid foundation on which community decisions can be made.

In addition to the standard planning elements related to transportation, building development, and infrastructure improvements, the document also includes language that recognizes the need to protect the wide open natural landscape of the Mono Basin and the area's rich historic heritage. To see the complete plan go to: monocounty.ca.gov/rpac-mono-basin/page/mono-basin-community-plan. —LC

Committee supports Forest Service with extra intern

Naturalist-led walks at South Tufa are one of the most important ways visitors experience and learn about Mono Lake. During the summer of 2011, and as a result of an unexpected mid-season budget cut, the Forest Service cancelled its daily 1:00PM tour abruptly, leaving only the State Parks-led 10:00AM tour and the Mono Lake Committee-led 6:00PM tour.

For 2012, the Forest Service prioritized staffing for South Tufa tours, but didn't have quite enough resources to cover its seven tours each week. To ensure that this important program would be available for the public, the Committee hired an additional intern to help cover 1:00PM tours when needed.

Working together, the Forest Service and the Committee were able to provide midday South Tufa tours every day for the entire summer interpretive season (81 days), reaching hundreds of visitors. Mono Lake Interns led 21 of those tours, for 248 people total, providing crucial coverage of a quarter of the summer's 1:00PM South Tufa walks. —EL

Mono County water program gets funding boost

The Inyo-Mono Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP) received news this past summer that it has been recommended to be awarded nearly half a million dollars to continue its regional effort to respond to local



The Mono Lake Committee hired an extra intern to ensure that three daily interpretive tours at South Tufa were available to visitors throughout the summer.

water project needs. The Department of Water Resources allocates Proposition 84 dollars to IRWMP groups throughout the state for projects that address water quality, water supply, flood management, habitat protection, and land use planning. The recommended funding will support a suite of planning-related projects including, but not limited to, a West Walker River restoration plan, a stormwater plan for the town of Mammoth Lakes, an Oak Creek restoration plan near Fort Independence, and a long-term sustainable finance plan for the Inyo-Mono IRWMP itself.

Currently, through funding already received, an upcoming project will remove uranium from the Coleville High School water supply system and provide water storage capacity for fire protection for the school and local community. Many more project needs exist throughout the Sierra Nevada, and thanks to the collaborative efforts of IRWMP and the many stakeholders involved, improvements are starting to happen. —LC

Mammoth Water District & DWP working on settlement

Early in 2011, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) filed two lawsuits against the Mammoth Community Water District, claiming to have historic water rights

to Mammoth Creek that predate the water rights the District has used for over 50 years to supply water to the town of Mammoth Lakes.

At an initial hearing in the spring, both parties agreed to keep future hearings in Mono County (see Summer 2012 Newsletter). Over the summer Judge James Garbolino, a retired Placer County judge, was appointed to the case; however, the District and DWP have expressed interest in coming to a negotiated agreement and have delayed court proceedings to attempt settlement. —EL

Mammoth Fly Fishing Faire a success

During a beautiful early fall weekend in September, nearly 400 enthusiastic fly fishers converged on Mammoth Lakes for a weekend of all things fly fishing.

The Southwest Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers hosted the gathering, which featured instructional classes, on-the-water seminars, conservation talks by local agency staff, and a film series that included the Committee's film "The Mono Lake Story." Committee staff were on hand to answer questions and give informal updates on the restoration progress of Rush and Lee Vining creeks.

Mark your calendar for next year's Faire, planned for September 20–22, 2013 and until then, tight lines! —LC ❖

Streamwatch

Little rain and early snowmelt result in low summer flows

by Greg Reis

The October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012 Water Year recently came to a close. During the 2012 Water Year, only 6.2 inches of precipitation fell in Lee Vining—45% of average. At Ellery Lake it was the third-driest year since 1925.

The lack of May–July precipitation, when combined with a snowpack that melted the fifth-earliest on record, caused streamflows to reach record lows for July. In late July, the inflow to the Walker Creek diversion pond dropped below 2 cubic feet per second (cfs) and Parker Creek

dropped below 10 cfs.

Rain finally came down in August—so hard that Parker Creek peaked on August 19, at 32 cfs—150% of the magnitude of the June snowmelt peak. The Gem Lake rain gauge recorded almost 4 inches in August—more precipitation than has fallen in any single month since January 2010.

Consistent with the current approved plan, this year the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power diverted Parker and Walker creeks for water supply for the first time since they were rewatered in 1990. They were diverted

for irrigation prior to 2000 and for stream studies in 2008 and 2011.

The Grant Lake Operations & Management Plan calls for diversions from Parker and Walker creeks into the aqueduct just during dry years, but prior to 2008 the diversion gates were welded shut, so nothing was diverted in 2007—the only other dry year since the plan was approved. In order to provide optimum flows in the Rush Creek bottomlands, the 2010 Synthesis Report recommends no longer diverting these two tributaries to Rush Creek. ❖

Lakewatch

Mono Lake drops 1.3 feet

by Greg Reis

As of October, runoff was 55% of average for the 2012 Water Year and 49% for April–September. Grant Lake Reservoir peaked at 94% of capacity in late May. Since it didn't spill, only dry-year minimum flows were released to Mono Lake.

During the water year, Mono Lake dropped 1.3 feet to 6382.4 feet above sea level—about the same level it was in October 2008. This was only the second time since 1989 that the lake dropped more than a foot—the other year was 2007, when it dropped 1.4 feet. Over the last 23 years, it rose at least a foot in eight different years, dropped a foot or less in eight years, and stayed fairly steady (less than a ¼-foot rise or fall) in five years. In 1989, a lake level injunction won by the Mono Lake Committee halted water exports when the lake was



High winds can create foam along Mono Lake's shore.

below 6377 feet—before then, due to excessive water diversions, the lake fell over a foot in most years.

Because the lake level fell so far this year, meromixis (chemical stratification), is likely to end after one year—the shortest period ever measured by the 30-year limnology monitoring program. Fall and winter winds whip up dramatic waves and foam on Mono Lake's surface, and also cause seiche (sloshing back and forth) below the surface. Salts and

minerals from the lower, denser layer will mix into the upper layer of the lake, ending the period of meromixis that has persisted since last winter, and allowing nutrients from the bottom of the lake to mix to the surface, providing abundant food for the next generation of brine shrimp. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information & Restoration Specialist. He always enjoys nature's extremes, whether wet or dry. (And puns too.)

6417'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

6392'

Management lake level

6382.4'

Current lake level

6372'

Historic low, 1982

ROSANNE CARLSON

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



Mists of many kinds migrate about the Mono Basin, most often in the changeable form of clouds. As the seasons move through, these clouds have a strong tendency to depart their appointed home in the sky and embark on adventures. One day it will be a vertical wall of snow-cloud mix, descending from Tioga Pass and enveloping Lee Vining. On another they will form a diffuse grey blanket, low overhead and tucked up against the Sierra slopes, stretching across the streams and lake toward the distant eastern horizon.

Other times the white vapor hugs the ground, crawls up and over ridges, descending canyons in long thin tendrils, leaving us to wonder if we are in John Muir’s “Range of Light” or on John Muir’s foggy California coast.

One fall morning a string of small puffy clouds hovered out over Paoha, making the island appear to be a steamship chugging north across Mono Lake’s briny water.

New this year to the ever-changing mix: cloud and ash, rising off the summer’s wildfire burns east of the lake. These clouds of unusual composition spent the day riding the winds, streaming across the dry hills, and catching sunlight in bright glowing bands, proving that with weather and water we have never seen it all. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee’s Executive Director. This fall he is coaching his daughter Ellery’s soccer team, the Ninja Peach Popsicles.

Benchmarks



The dry channels of lower Lee Vining Creek in 1979. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power began diverting Lee Vining Creek in 1941.



Lower Lee Vining Creek, October 2012. Note growth of evergreen and deciduous trees along rewatered channels. Water was first returned to the creek in 1986.



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION CENTER & BOOKSTORE

Fall Catalog

See all products
in color online at
**MONOLAKE.ORG/
STORE**



PIKA T-SHIRT

What's cuter than three pikas? Probably nothing, quite honestly.

Project Specialists Lynette, Nick, and Angie are sporting our new pika T-shirt designed by scientific illustrator Logan Parsons. The back graphic features two pikas in their typical rocky habitat collecting grasses for winter. The front left chest has a pika sounding a warning call atop a granite perch. The T-shirts are tan 100% preshrunk cotton.

Pika T-shirt, tan, S-XXL: \$25.00



FRONT



BACK

RED-TAILED HAWK T-SHIRT

Outdoor Experiences Lead Instructor Terry and Mono Basin Field Station Caretaker Vern love birds! Here they're wearing our beautiful long-sleeved T-shirts with David Sibley's Red-tailed Hawk color illustrations on the front and flight silhouettes on the back. Printed using water-based inks on a cream colored, 100% unbleached, pre-shrunk cotton shirt.

Red-tailed Hawk T-shirt, cream, S-XL: \$23.00



RED-TAILED HAWK T-SHIRT BACK



PIKA



CHICKADEES



SWAN



RAVEN

HOLIDAY CARD SETS

BY WENDY MORGAN AND SEPTEMBER VHEY

Wendy Morgan's graphic art notecards capture a cheerful pika holding a bundle of gathered holiday grasses in its mouth and two chickadees sitting on branches with a bright red background. September Vhey's watercolor paintings of a swan sitting with red glass ornaments and a raven prancing among hanging gold ornaments make artistic and beautiful cards. Each set comes with 10 cards of the same image with the message "May you have a Happy Holiday and a Joyous New Year!" inside.

Holiday card set, 10 cards with envelopes, please specify pika, chickadees, swan, or raven: \$13.50

order at www.monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

MINI BARRICK CANDLES

These hand-dipped, unscented candles have been a huge hit in the bookstore. Add a splash of color to any décor with a choice of lime green, sea blue, or purple. Their teardrop shape has a base that is 2¼" across and they stand 5" tall.

Mini Barrick candle, please specify lime green, sea blue, or purple: \$15.00



LIME GREEN

SEA BLUE

PURPLE

VANCE FAMILY SOY TRAVEL CANDLE TINS

Amy Vance began crafting candles when she could not find any she was comfortable burning around her children. Her candles are made using GMO-free soy with plant based, all-natural fragrance. They are so "green" that you can throw the leftover wax in your compost. They come in two tin sizes; the large, 16-ounce candle burns for over 50 hours, and the small, 6-ounce candle burns for over 30 hours. They come in three scents: Peace, which has floral notes; Spice of Life, with holiday spices; and Hiking Trail, with a hint of juniper and cedar.



Large travel candle tin, 16-oz, please specify Peace, Spice of Life, or Hiking Trail scent: \$16.00

Small travel candle tin, 6-oz, please specify Peace, Spice of Life, or Hiking Trail scent: \$8.00

MINIATURE SIERRA WILDFLOWER NOTECARD SET

These sweet notecards feature beautiful paintings by Susan Greenleaf of Bishop, California. The notecards come in a pack of 10, with matching envelopes. Each card features a different Eastern Sierra wildflower.

Miniature Sierra wildflower notecard set, 10 cards with envelopes, 3½"x 2½": \$9.00



COFFEE MUG

HANDMADE MUGS

BY MICHAEL COOKE

Michael Cooke spends winters in Bishop, California elbow-deep in clay creating these two styles of functional art. The pale green café latte mug has brown drip detailing and a new, larger handle. The tall coffee mug has Cooke's signature brilliant blue glaze.

Handmade mug, 14-oz each, please specify green café latte or blue coffee mug: \$29.00



CAFÉ LATTE MUG

HANDCRAFTED CUTTING BOARD

BY LUKE HAMMACK

Lee Vining craftsman Luke Hammack collects, mills, and cures Black Acacia wood to make these one-of-a-kind cutting boards. They are perfect for cheeses, breads, and fruit, and each cutting board comes with care instructions to help it last a lifetime.

Handcrafted cutting board, approximately 12"x 5¾" though boards vary slightly: \$40.00



order at www.monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

HAND-BLOWN GLASS ORNAMENT

Each of these hand-blown glass ornaments has an individual design indicative of the Nepali artist who created it. Ornaments measure 3" in diameter and come in a sage-green box topped with a silver Mono Lake Committee logo.

Hand-blown glass ornament: \$14.00



ASPEN LEAF ORNAMENT

Add a little sparkle to your home this winter with these real aspen leaves electroplated with either 18-karat gold or rhodium silver. The leaves vary slightly in size, but are approximately 3" in height and are strung with either a silver or burgundy ribbon for hanging.

Aspen leaf ornament, please specify silver or gold: \$16.00



BRINE SHRIMP ORNAMENT

A traditional holiday hit, these brine shrimp ornaments by Wild Bryde are a great tribute to the *Artemia monica* of Mono Lake. Each ornament comes packaged in a dark blue envelope and makes a wonderful holiday gift.

Brine shrimp ornament, please specify silver or gold: \$10.00

EASTERN SIERRA FELTED SOAP

Big Pine, California resident Coleen Randolph is back again with felted soaps in new scents. A favorite item in the store, these soaps are handcrafted from olive oil, coconut oil, palm oil, goat's milk, essential oils, and felt. The felt shrinks as the soap is used. Each 2½" x 3½" box comes with the Mono Lake Committee logo and mission statement printed on the outside.

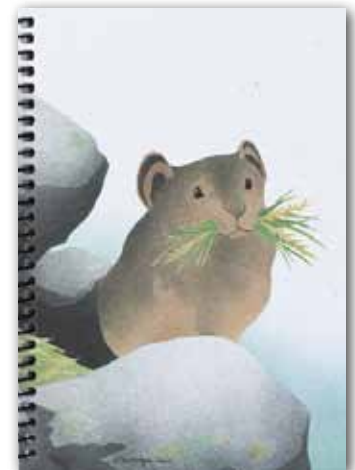
Eastern Sierra felted soap, please specify orange spice, sandalwood, vanilla oak, or chamomile: \$10.00



PIKA JOURNAL

If you love Wendy Morgan's pika notecards, you'll love this journal, featuring the same adorable pika with a mouthful of hay. The pika journal is filled with blank, heavyweight, recycled, acid-free paper and will add cheer to any desk.

Pika journal, 60 pages, 7¼" x 6" including spiral binding: \$14.00



CLEAR GLASS MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO MUG

This elegant clear glass mug has a white Mono Lake Committee logo on one side, a hefty base, and a large handle for easy sipping. Pair with a favorite tin of tea or some cocoa to create the perfect holiday gift.

Clear glass Mono Lake Committee logo mug, 13-oz: \$8.50



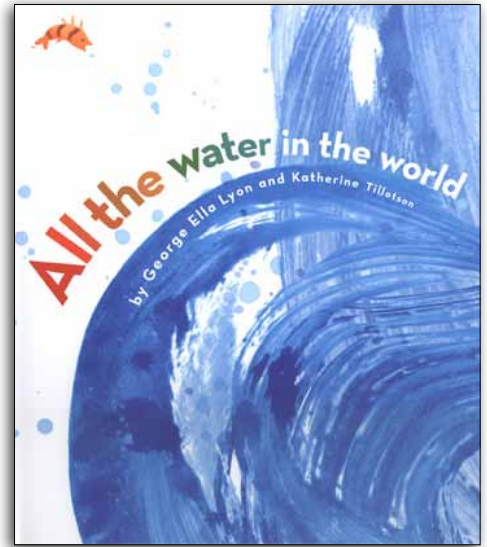
order at www.monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

ALL THE WATER IN THE WORLD

BY GEORGE ELLA LYON AND KATHERINE TILLOTSON

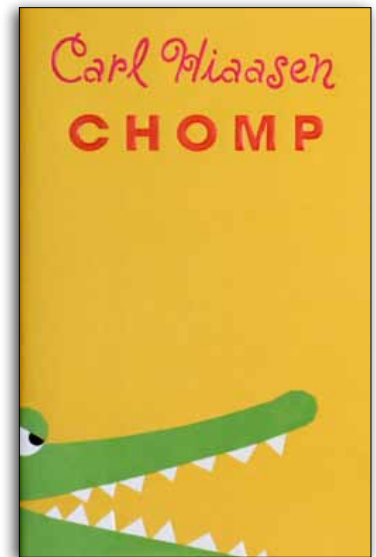
Wonderfully vibrant and lyrical, “All the water in the world” describes the water cycle from earth to sky, desert to ocean. Tying the water cycle to “you and me” in the end, an important environmental message makes this book a great tool to teach kids about conservation. Although the book says it’s for ages 4–8, adults will surely be enamored with the beautiful illustrations as well.

All the water in the world, hardcover, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 32 pages, 11”x 9½”: \$16.99



BAMBOO TUMBLING TOWER

Can you make this tower grow as fast as a stalk of bamboo? Stack the bamboo pieces on top of each other and build a tower as high as you can without knocking it over! Not only is this game good family fun, it is also sustainable and eco-friendly. Recommended for ages 6 and up.
Bamboo Tumbling Tower, 10½”x 3 ½”: \$10.00



CHOMP

BY CARL HIAASEN

There is never a dull moment in the life of Wahoo Cray, a boy who lives near the Florida Everglades and whose father is a professional animal wrangler. Adventures abound as Wahoo tries to cover up for his father when a TV show’s star, Derek Badger, goes missing in the Everglades. *Chomp* is the latest in Hiaasen’s environmentally-themed books for young readers.

Chomp, hardcover, Alfred A. Knopf, 290 pages, 8½”x 5½”: \$16.99

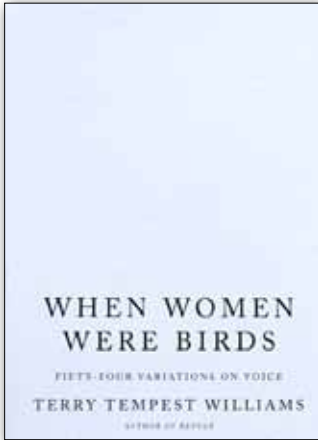


EASTERN SIERRA TRIVIA CARD GAME

“True or false: Lakeview was the proposed name of Lee Vining when it was first subdivided by Chris Mattly in the early 1900s.” Find out the answer to this question and 49 others in the Eastern Sierra Trivia card game! Eastern Sierra Trivia cards are perfect for travel or home. Historical photos accompany each trivia question, with answers on the back of each card. The cards come in a 3¾” x 2½” tin box.

Eastern Sierra Trivia card game, 50 cards: \$11.00

order at www.monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595



WHEN WOMEN WERE BIRDS

BY TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS

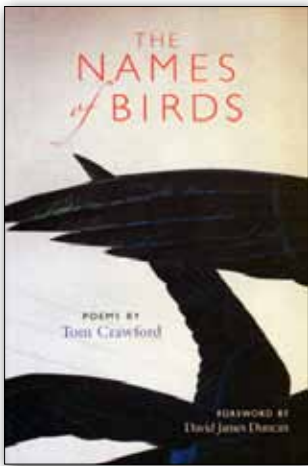
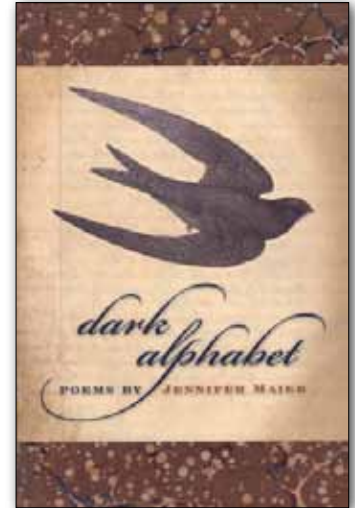
Once again, Williams excels in her craft—jumping between life experiences with mothers, place, nature, and relationships. In a fashion uniquely hers, this memoir gives Williams’ followers a deeper sense of reflection on the loss of a loved one.

When Women Were Birds, hardcover, Sarah Crichton Books, 208 pages, 8”x 5½”: \$23.00

DARK ALPHABET
BY JENNIFER MAIER

Jennifer Maier poeticizes the everyday, sometimes disguising witty punch lines and mournful events for a second reading. A pick for the Tuolumne Meadows Poetry Festival this year, Maier’s poem “Poetry Birds” hangs as a broadside by graphic artist Jim Cokas in the Mono Lake Committee Theater & Gallery exhibit.

dark alphabet, paperback, Southern Illinois University Press, 80 pages, 9”x 6”: \$14.95



THE NAMES OF BIRDS

BY TOM CRAWFORD

After doing a reading at the Parsons Memorial Lodge Summer Series in Tuolumne Meadows this year, Crawford won the hearts of the Mono Lake Committee staff with his new book of poetry *The Names of Birds*. Transposing characteristics of birds with everyday human emotions and experiences makes this an especially appealing collection.

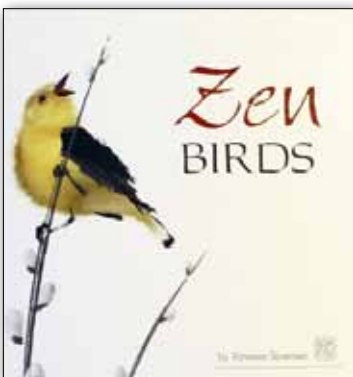
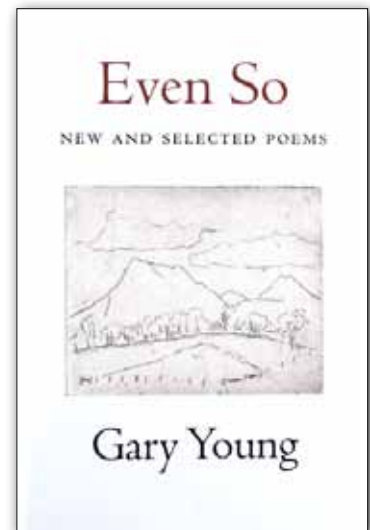
The Names of Birds, paperback, Sherman Asher Publishing, 141 pages, 9”x 6”: \$14.95

EVEN SO: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS

BY GARY YOUNG

Young’s collection of almost entirely untitled new and selected poems is a tribute to humanity and sense of place. His poetry is part observation of backyard nature, and part simple truth about death, life, and everything in between.

Even So: New and Selected Poems, paperback, White Pine Press, 229 pages, 9”x 6”: \$18.00



ZEN BIRDS

BY VANESSA SORENSEN

Sorensen pairs traditional Asian-style painting with magnificent haikus in this gem of a book. With a bird illustration and matching haiku on every page, it is hard to sit down and read one haiku and not find yourself enjoying the entire book. This book is a perfect match for any birder, naturalist, artist, or poet!

Zen Birds, hardcover, Adventure Publications, 70 pages, 6¼”x 6”: \$8.95

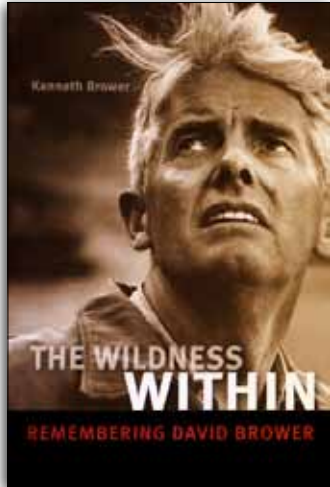
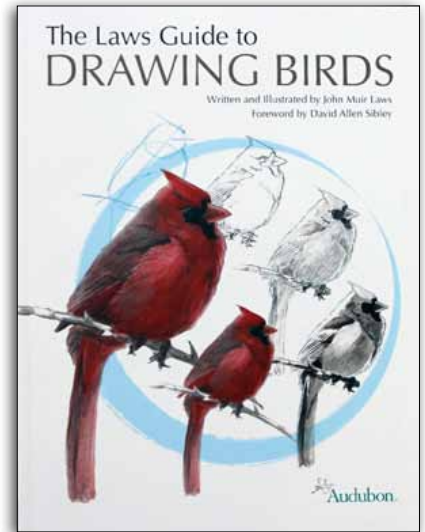
order at www.monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

THE LAWS GUIDE TO DRAWING BIRDS

BY JOHN MUIR LAWS

Laws has created a book that is not only a guide to drawing birds, but also a guide to improving the manner in which one observes avifauna. Valuable to artists of every level, the hardest part of painting birds may now be keeping one in your scope!

Laws Guide to Drawing Birds, paperback, Heyday, 116 pages, 11"x 8½": \$24.95



THE WILDNESS WITHIN

BY KENNETH BROWER

Brower compiled 19 interviews with prominent conservationists who have been influenced by his father, the late David Brower. Through their tales of adventure, tragedy, and humor, David Brower is shown to be not only an iconic climber, father, and friend, but the leader of this modern movement.

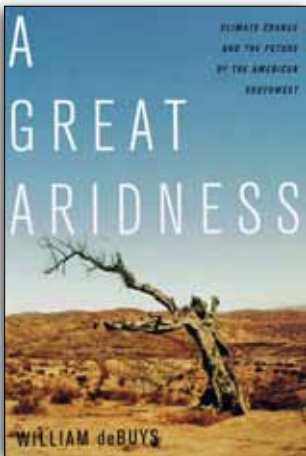
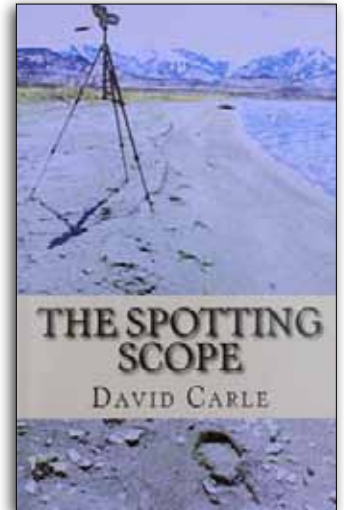
The Wildness Within, paperback, Heyday, 291 pages, 9"x 6": \$20.00

THE SPOTTING SCOPE

BY DAVID CARLE

Carle's second novel delivers intrigue with a spoonful of wit. Add the fictional Saline Lake in the Sierra Nevada as a backdrop to an environmental battle and a backcountry search and rescue mission, and you have a page-turner. Consider it for your next book club!

The Spotting Scope, paperback, Phalarope Press, 208 pages, 8½"x 5½": \$16.95



A GREAT ARIDNESS

BY WILLIAM DEBUYS

In one of the most recent and excellently crafted books examining climate change and its effects on the American southwest, deBuys travels alongside the region's foremost researchers and scientists in their quest for answers. Looking at past and present, deBuys makes a great argument that the Southwest's lack of water will soon be felt by a great many, including those outside of the region.

A Great Aridness, hardcover, Oxford University Press, 369 pages, 9½"x 6¾": \$27.95

CALIFORNIA GLACIERS

BY TIM PALMER

As Palmer captures California's glaciers in his photographs, one gets the sense he is memorializing them, as his accompanying text mourns the shrinking ice. Simply put, this book serves two purposes: one as a beautiful coffee table book, and the other as a visual reminder of the effects of a changing climate.

California Glaciers, hardcover, Heyday, 126 pages, 8¼"x 9¼": \$29.95



**GIFTS
THAT HELP
KICK THE
SINGLE-USE
HABIT**

RESCUE WRAP: HANDMADE GIFT BAGS

BY ARYA DEGENHARDT

Using mill-end fabric, Arya Degenhardt sews gift bags that are a perfect one-of-a-kind alternative to wrapping paper since they can be used again and again. The bags come in four handy gift sizes: bar-of-soap, paperback-book, wine-bottle, and cutting-board.

Handmade gift bag, please specify size, bar-of-soap: \$8.00, paperback-book: \$10.00, wine-bottle: \$10.00, or cutting-board: \$12.00



MESH PRODUCE BAG SET

Perfect for packing to the grocery store, these reusable bags beat regular plastic bags hands down. Made from recycled plastic bottles, they keep apples, oranges, onions, and potatoes (and other fruits and vegetables) fresh for longer by letting ethylene gas, a ripening agent, escape. The set of three can be machine- or hand-washed, and should be line-dried.

Mesh produce bags, set of 3: \$12.00



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE STEEL PINT CUP

Klean Kanteen has created steel pint cups in a valiant attempt to reduce the amount of single-use plastic and paper cups in the world.

Each 16-ounce cup is made of food grade, BPA-free stainless steel and is dishwasher safe. The silicone ring (sold separately) makes it easy to clip your empty pint cup to anything for on-the-go convenience, and since the pint cup only weighs 3½ ounces, you can bring it everywhere.

Mono Lake Committee steel pint cup, 16-oz: \$14.00

Silicone pint cup ring, please specify lime green, dark green, or orange: \$4.00



FRONT

BACK

SNACK STACK TIFFIN

Easy to tote and clean, these snack-sized tiffin sets make lunching and snacking on the go a breeze. The two tiers are great to separate your snacks, and the handle makes it easy to take everywhere. Help kick the single-use habit and (re)use your own tiffin instead of paper or plastic bags.

Snack stack tiffin, 4¾" x 5", top tier holds 2 cups and bottom tier holds 2½ cups: \$19.00



TO-GO WARE BAMBOO UTENSIL SET

Keep your utensils close with this travel flatware and chopstick set made from bamboo. The spoon, fork, knife, and chopsticks fit into the handy utensil holder made from recycled plastic bottles. The utensils are hand-finished with top-grade natural, food-safe wood oil and are heat- and stain-resistant as well as dishwasher safe.

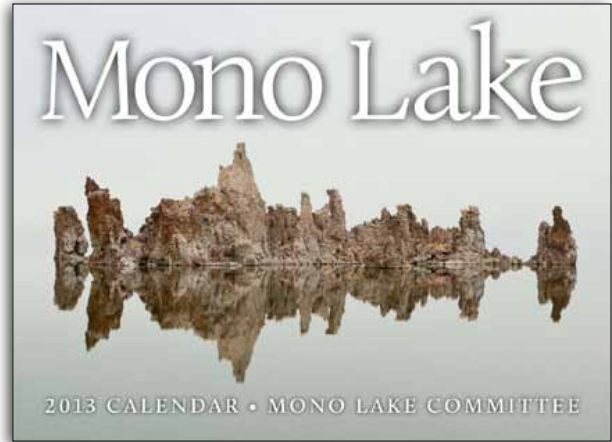
Bamboo utensil set, please specify black, orange, plum, or teal utensil holder: \$13.00

order at www.monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

2013 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

The *2013 Mono Lake Calendar* features images of tufa groves, shoreline sunsets, birds, fall colors, winter scenes, and dramatic weather in the Mono Basin. Month grids have inset images of wildlife and scenic photos too. Bring Mono Lake into your home 365 days of the year, and consider our bulk discounts and holiday shipping options for gifts this season. Printed in the USA on recycled paper.

2013 Mono Lake Calendar, 13"x 9½": \$11.95



2013 CALENDAR
BULK DISCOUNTS
 buy 2-5 pay \$9.95 each
 buy 6-10 pay \$8.95 each
 buy 11+ pay \$7.95 each

Easy gift idea! Want your calendars shipped to your holiday list? No problem. Just provide us with the address information when ordering, and we will package and send each calendar separately. Please note that shipping rates apply to each address (see mail order form below). Each calendar will be sent in a recycled cardboard mailer and we'll even add a holiday note from you.



NEXT GENERATION GIFT MEMBERSHIP

This holiday season, pass on your love for Mono Lake to a young person in your life with a Next Generation gift membership. It's simple! You pay \$35, and your Next Generation member becomes part of the Mono Lake family. They will receive the *Mono Lake Newsletter*, the *Mono Lake Calendar*, discounts in the bookstore, special website access, and the chance to speak up for Mono Lake. Renewal notices will come to you each year until your Next Generation member is ready to make membership gifts themselves. Sponsor the next generation of Mono Lake advocates! *Next Generation gift membership, please specify name and contact information of the Next Generation member: \$35.00*

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

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE MAIL ORDER FORM

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Daytime phone _____
 Check (to Mono Lake Committee) MasterCard Visa Discover
 Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____
 Signature _____

Quan.	Item	Size	Color	Price	Total
Shipping & Handling: use rates at left					
				Subtotal	
				CA residents-add 7.25% sales tax to subtotal	
				Total	

SHIPPING & HANDLING	
Up to \$25	\$6.50
\$26-\$50	\$8.50
\$51-\$150	\$10.50
Over \$150	Free!

California law requires us to charge sales tax on sales and shipping and handling for deliveries in California. **International Shipping Rates by weight.**

Phone: (760) 647-6595 Fax: (760) 647-6377 Mono Lake Committee, P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541

Free Drawing to restore Mono Lake

Send in your tickets by December 15th to win....

An Apple iPad 3 with a camera, HD video recording, 4G LTE wireless capability.

A Kindle Fire that can hold up to 20 million books, movies, TV shows, and songs.

Wine-and-cheese tasting and vineyard tour at Muir-Hanna Vineyards in Napa Valley for eight people.

A camping package from Wilson's Eastside Sports of Bishop including the latest from Vasque, MSR, Osprey, Mountain Hardwear, Black Diamond, Smartwool, and Cascade Designs.

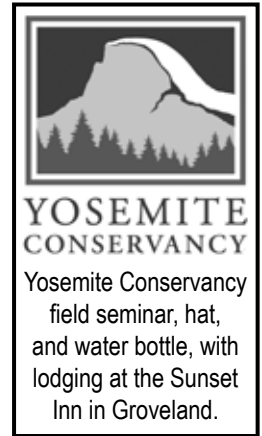


Wilson's Eastside Sports



CAPTAIN KIRK'S
SAILING
Adventures

A sailing trip on San Francisco Bay with a stay at the Golden Gate Hotel.



YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY

Yosemite Conservancy field seminar, hat, and water bottle, with lodging at the Sunset Inn in Groveland.

Dinner and lodging at Yosemite's Wawona Hotel.



Lake Tahoe escape at Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley.

Membership and T-shirt from Friends of the Inyo.



FRIENDS OF THE RIVER

A whitewater rafting trip for two down the American River.

LowePro Birding Backpack and Toploader Pro camera bag.

Two unique 11x14" matted prints of the Mono Basin landscape by local photographer Robb Hirsch.

REI Trail daypack and trekking poles.



Wave Rave Snowboard Shop's signature Steepwater 164 snowboard.

Mono Lake Committee logo T-shirt, hat, water bottle, coffee table book, and 2013 Calendar.



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

A \$250 gift certificate to the Mono Lake Committee bookstore.

A two-night stay at the world-class Double Eagle Resort & Spa, with dinner at the Eagle's Landing Restaurant.

Mammoth Mountain Ski Area season pass.

A tour of the Mono Basin with Board Chair Sally Gaines and Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin, including a \$50 gift certificate to the bookstore and lodging at Murphey's Motel.



Sierra Star Golf Club season pass.



Patagonia clothing: men's R3 Hiloft jacket and women's Re-Tool fleece.



A boat trip with Silver Lake Resort, dinner at Base Camp Café, and a movie at Minaret Cinemas.



RAINBOW TARNS BED & BREAKFAST
At Crowley Lake



Giovanni's
INTOUCH
MASSAGE • MICRO SPA • BOUTIQUE



A guided fly fishing trip with Rob McGillicuddy, a massage at InTouch MicroSpa, dinner at Giovanni's, and a movie at Minaret Cinemas.



Eastern Sierra vacations!

Meals at Base Camp Café and Giovanni's, movies at Minaret Cinemas, and a stay at Rainbow Tarns Bed & Breakfast.

Tioga Pass Run draws over 100 athletes

by Angela Glaser

The route from Lee Vining to the entrance of Yosemite National Park offers breathtaking views and one grueling hill—12.4 miles that climb 3,164 feet in elevation. Every year, an adventurous group of athletes brave the elements to conquer Tioga Pass on foot. In September, 118 runners and walkers participated in the 32nd annual Tioga Pass Run, which raises money for the Mono Lake Committee.

The event would not have been possible without the dedication and effort put forth by race director Alana Levin. Alana has organized the run for the past two years, and sadly, she will be passing the torch. We extend our deepest thanks to her for the time and passion she has shared with us in helping make the Tioga Pass Run a success.

The run depends on the hard work of volunteers as well. Thank you to Jill Adams, Kathy Cecere, Ken Corathers & Elizabeth Kenneday-Corathers, Dick Erb, Laurie Gehrman, Connie Henderson, Cheryl James, Kris King, Tony King, Dave Marquart, John &

Doris Reilly, Bill & Sherry Taylor, and Lee & Igor Vorobyoff.

A special thank you goes to those who worked to keep the runners and volunteers safe—Sergeant Michael O’Sullivan from the California Highway Patrol, Richard K. Brown and the Southern Sierra Amateur Radio Society, and Chris Lizza from the Lee Vining Volunteer Fire Department.

Finally, many thanks go to local businesses that sponsor the run: Tioga Pass Resort, Mono Market, Mammoth Hospital SPORT Center, Mammoth Mountaineering Supply, Sage to Summit, Alex Printing, Footloose Sports, Whoa Nellie Deli, Crank Sports, Designs Unlimited, El Mono Motel & Latte Da Coffee Café, Double Eagle Resort & Spa, Silver Lake Resort, and KMMT-KRHV Radio. ❖

Angela Glaser is a Committee Project Specialist. She took advantage of the exceptionally warm summer by swimming in 14 different Sierra lakes and rivers.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD ERB

Tioga Pass Run first-place finisher Eric Lynch takes it in stride. Eric finished in 1:33:24.

Tioga Pass Run
September 8, 2013
tiogapassrun.com

Trail Chic: Walking the runway for outdoor education



PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDY SCHNEIDER

On July 27 the Mono Lake Committee and Barefoot Wine & Bubbly held a fashion show fundraiser for the Committee’s Outdoor Experiences program. Volunteer models inspired by all things outdoors—paddlers, birders, mountaineers, retro-backpackers, alien hikers, an alkali fly, and even a non-native invasive weed—strutted down the astroturf runway. Many thanks to enthusiastic cyclists-turned-models from the volunteer organization Bike & Build for rolling into town and straight down the runway as well as to event sponsors Barefoot Wine & Bubbly, Patagonia, Wilson’s Eastside Sports, and the Mono Market for a fun and successful fundraiser.

Staff migrations

by Rosanne Catron

As the phalaropes, Eared Grebes, and California Gulls migrate to their winter homes, we experience significant staff migrations in the Mono Lake Committee office as well.

Board Member **Vireo Gaines** recently migrated west to Albany, where she married Jeff Schiller in June. Congratulations are also in order for Information Center & Bookstore Manager **Jessica Horn**, who married Clif Ashley in September. Many happy returns!

A notable fall migration is Policy Coordinator **Morgan Lindsay**, who has moved to Ashland, Oregon and is working for the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center. During her four years with the Committee, Morgan proved herself invaluable as a key member of the policy team, helped coordinate events such as the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, and worked in the field on restoration and monitoring—all with her signature aplomb and good cheer. Morgan's hard work and passion have made a difference for Mono Lake.

From May to September our seasonal staff manages to pack in a lot. Together with the Forest Service and the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, the Committee was able to offer a full interpretive schedule of walks and tours for the public (see page 13). Our seasonal staff also covered the Information Center & Bookstore counter, fielding over 1,300 hours of questions from members and visitors and signing up over 900 new members.

Canoe Coordinator **Angela Glaser** brought her zeal for interpreting the local ecology to the canoe program and we are happy that she will be applying her organizational skills and enthusiasm to event planning as a Project Specialist this winter.

Birding Intern **Erica Tucker** put her boundless energy and passion for birds into the Bird Chautauqua and weekly bird walks at County Park. We are pleased that she will be working part-time during the winter as a Project Specialist.

Intern **Benjamin Hand** lent his diligence to stream monitoring on Mill Creek, organizing historical Mono Lake Committee documents, and hosting an educational series of lectures with local researchers. Intern **Max Henkels** co-lead weekly restoration walks, assisted with gull research, and since he was always ready to lend a helping hand, we were happy to have him for event support.

Volunteer-turned-Intern **Nick Holt** was able to help us with our perpetual IT needs as well as with restoration and monitoring field work. We will continue to keep Nick busy, as he is staying on part-time through the winter as a Project Specialist.

We were happy to welcome Intern **Erik Lyon** back for his second summer at the Committee. Erik jumped right in to stream monitoring field work as well as filming and editing a video about the storefront remodel, all with his usual cheer.



The 2012 Mono Lake Committee staff. Top row, left to right: Max Henkels, Bartshé Miller, Benjamin Hand, and Geoff, Ellery, and Caelen McQuilkin. Second row: Angela Glaser, Nick Holt, Jessica François, Ellen King, Santiago Escruceria, Elin Ljung. Third row: Whitney Patterson, Terry McLaughlin, Erica Tucker, Lisa Cutting, and Morgan Lindsay. Bottom row: Arya Degenhardt, Rosanne Catron, Jackie Williams, and Lynette Villagomez.

Intern **Whitney Patterson** monitored Rush and Lee Vining creeks and applied her meticulous organizational skills to an exhaustive and much-needed inventory of the research library. When Intern **Lynette Villagomez** was not co-leading weekly restoration walks or doing stream monitoring, you could find her snapping pictures of Mono Lake to increase the Committee's social media presence. We are happy to have Lynette stay on as a Project Specialist as well.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Jackie Williams** always had a smile on her face and useful information for visitors. Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Jessica Workman** was calm, patient, and helpful even on the busiest of days. Both Jackie and Jessica kept the store running smoothly through an extra-busy season with the storefront construction underway.

We send a huge thank you to all of the seasonal staff for their hard work throughout the season! If you are interested in a summer job with the Mono Lake Committee, please visit monolake.org/jobs starting January 1. ❖

Rosanne Catron is the Committee's Office Director. This summer she learned that no matter how many times you see a pika they are still really cute.



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

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

In honor

Joan Egrie of Newbury Park gave a gift in honor of **Virginia Brothers**.

In memory

Charles & Susan Atlee of San Luis Obispo made a donation in memory of **Jan Work**. **Elizabeth Hall** of Vallejo sent a contribution in memory of her husband **Lowell “Bud” Hall**—“Bud and I enjoyed many visits to Mono Lake.” **Fred Lucas** of Woodland Hills gave a gift in memory of his mother **Alice Lucas**, “who dearly loved Mono Lake.” **Joanna Lukas** of Redwood

Valley sent a contribution in memory of **Ed Lukas**. **Norma Mastin** of Madera gave a gift in memory of **Burdette White**. **Carol Mathews** of Walnut Creek sent a contribution “in loving memory of **Robert Mathews**.” **Claudia & Dan Rico** of Pacific Grove made a donation in memory of their beloved son **Joe Stapp**. **Libby Weisheit** of Tiburon gave a gift in memory of **Lawrence Weisheit**. We received an anonymous donation in memory of **George E. Binder**.

Wish list

Do you love bears? We do too, which is why we’re looking for someone who might be interested in donating a bear-proof trash and recycling container for the new storefront. Our wish: *bearsaver.com* model CE232-CR, which runs \$1,400 with shipping. Contact Ellen King (ellen@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 if you can help us out! ❖

Ellen King is the Committee’s Membership Coordinator. She led the office cheering squad for the San Francisco Giants this fall.

Remembering State Park Ranger Jim Pence

by Bartshé Miller

The Mono Lake community grieves with the passing of Ranger Jim Pence. While at home on September 26, Jim died of heart attack at age 49. Jim had just retired in May as a California State Park Ranger after 30 years of service. He had served as a ranger for the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve since 2006.

Mono Lake Committee staff remember Jim for his constant smile and service on behalf of Mono Lake and the Tufa State Natural Reserve. Over the years we frequently saw Jim in the field around Mono Lake, and he would often swing by all the popular Mono Lake sites while on patrol to see how things were going. You could count on Jim for three things: a smile, a cheerful greeting, and an offer to help out any way he could.

During Jim’s first year as a ranger at Mono Lake, he swam 200 yards through the salty water to rescue a flailing Osprey

chick that had discovered the waters of Mono Lake before it discovered flight. Jim had been off-duty that evening but he never hesitated to do what needed to be done whenever it was needed.

Mono Lake can be a difficult and isolated place for State Park rangers to stay the course, but Jim settled in and made the Mono Basin his home. He was dedicated to Mono Lake and he maintained a much-needed and positive presence despite declining budgets, declining State Parks staff levels, and the threatened closures of the Tufa State Natural Reserve.

Making difficult decisions and taking action on behalf of visitors and the Tufa State Natural Reserve is not always easy, and Jim often had to do this alone, with the nearest backup ranger in Bodie. Still, Jim remained upbeat. When you ran across Jim in the field, he left you with

a lingering tendency to look up. Like the mountains around him he lived his life at a certain altitude, and you were always welcome to join him.



Family, friends, and California State Parks staff paid tribute to Jim’s life at a memorial service on October 20 in Coloma.



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

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Mono Lake Committee

The Forgotten Season Winter Photography in the Mono Basin

with instructor *Richard Knepp*

January 18–20, 2013
\$225 per person / \$200 for members



sign up for all other seminars
starting on **February 1, 2013**

Call (760) 647-6595 or visit monolake.org/seminars.

Shop the fall catalog for all your holiday gifts!



See pages 16–23 or visit monolake.org/store.

the 12th annual

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua

June 14–16, 2013



registration opens

Monday, April 15

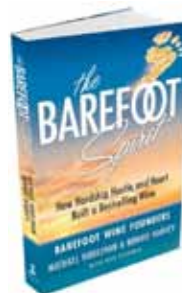
at birdchautauqua.org



Mono Lake is in a new book....

The Barefoot Spirit

by the Barefoot Wine Founders



An inspirational story of grassroots activism, grassroots marketing, and the wine industry for entrepreneurs, business people, non-profit leaders, and anyone passionate about wine.



Special offer for **Committee members**: buy the ebook today and get the book with free delivery when it's released!

Visit thebarefootspirit.com and enter "MLC" before 12/31/12 and 50% of the authors' proceeds go to the Mono Lake Committee.