

# MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2019



Studying Phalaropes & Grebes

Tioga Inn Development Proposal

Free Drawing

Fall Catalog

**A**t the Mono Lake Committee we spend a lot of time thinking about inputs of water into Mono Lake. How much? For how long? In what patterns? From what sources? When will it arrive? Is it enough?

But during the recent windstorm-induced power outage (see page 17), I got to thinking about Mono Lake’s output.

It powers the phalaropes (see page 6) on their long migration to South America after they have stopped here to gorge on brine shrimp and molt. On their non-stop flight to Chile, Argentina, Peru, and Paraguay, each new feather, each tiny digestive system is powered by Mono Lake.

The abundant food in Mono Lake and Great Salt Lake fueled the growth of the North American population of Eared Grebes into the largest in the world. When Robbie assisted with grebe research in British Columbia last summer he held in his hands one-pound bundles of muscles powered by Mono Lake (see page 7).

For 25 years now Mono Lake has been a source of energy for the Outdoor Education Center (see page 12). It’s the reason students travel from Los Angeles to learn about the origins of their water and take that knowledge back home. This year that energy powered such overwhelming donations of hiking boots to the OEC program that we’re still looking for the “off” switch!

In August Mono Lake energized hundreds of people to write comment letters on the Tioga Inn proposal, fueling the effort to work toward a better project (see page 4).

Mono Lake powered ranger Dave Marquart’s long career with the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve (see page 8). Those who encountered him at the lakeshore in his flat hat were lucky to absorb some of his quiet energy for this place.

The lake powers generous donations, from those that fund intern positions and contribute to the Access Fund for OEC students (see page 13), to those in honor or memory of dear friends and family (see page 27).

And, the lake powers this *Newsletter*—as you read the pages that follow I hope you’ll feel the warm glow of Mono Lake right through your hands.

—Elin Ljung, Communications Coordinator



COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK KATTEL/MANN

NOEL SMITH/PHOTO

*In fall, the changing colors of aspen, cottonwood, and willow light up the canyons and riparian forests along Mono Lake’s recovering tributary streams.*

### Mono Lake Committee Mission

The Mono Lake Committee is a non-profit citizens’ group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas.



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Founded by David Gaines in 1978

The Mono Lake Committee is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, also known as the Mono Lake Foundation. Tax ID: 77-0051124

**MONO LAKE**  
NEWSLETTER

Fall 2019 • Volume XLI, Number 2

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# A bountiful year at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

If you wanted to summarize this past summer at Mono Lake in one word it would be this: phalaropes. The dainty Mono-loving migrators put on spectacular displays at South Tufa for many days, dipping and weaving in tight flocks of thousands. Visitors stopped in their tracks and canoes floated in place to watch the aerial acrobatics. Mono Lake Committee staff captured one dramatic episode on video and it quickly became our most-watched video ever; you can see it for yourself at [bit.ly/phalaropes2019](http://bit.ly/phalaropes2019).

The phalaropes have now headed to points south for the winter, but like many things at Mono Lake, their summer displays were possible thanks to protection work behind the scenes. New efforts to study the phalaropes are underway, highlighted by an exciting international meeting this past June (see page 6). We hope to see them again next year at South Tufa—and perhaps be even more capable of studying their health and success as a species at Mono Lake.

Mono Lake grew in size over the summer, with the surface level rising a foot, just as forecast (see page 16). The expectation is for another half-foot rise over the winter, leading to a net 1.5-foot year-to-year gain by April 1, 2020.

Now lake level thinking turns to the winter ahead. Will it be dry, average, or wet? The answer will be delivered by the unknown sequence of winter storms that awaits. As usual, it is prudent to plan for all possibilities. The good news is that the lake's level is approaching the range where it was before the recent five-year drought. The landbridge to Negit Island has been broken into a small island, and even in a dry-year scenario the lake would not fall so far as to re-expose the pathway for coyotes to nesting gulls. The electric fence that worked so well to protect the gulls in 2017 will stay rolled up in storage in 2020.

Planning for next year also includes thinking about Mono Lake's tributary streams. What flows will make their way down Rush, Lee Vining, Parker, and Walker creeks? There's no question that the right answer is the new, science-based Stream Ecosystem Flows. These sophisticated flow patterns maximize restoration and habitat benefits on the creeks by enhancing channel structure, scouring pools for fish, and spreading seeds and sediment across the floodplain to rebuild riparian forests.

Earlier in 2019, the Committee was successful in advocating for these flows to govern Los Angeles Aqueduct operations this year and we expect the same for 2020. They will ultimately be part of the revised Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) license to divert water from the Mono Basin, but that process has taken so long that the Committee has pushed to implement the flows on an interim basis. DWP operated in 2019 under a temporary license change and had to tackle the new pattern of operating its diversion facilities. The results were fairly successful (see page 16), although the new

outlet slated for construction at Grant Lake Reservoir is still needed to deliver the full range of high flows to Rush Creek.

On Lee Vining Creek the new operating rules worked as designed to ensure that the high spring flow passed the diversion dam undiminished. Past attempts to deliver the peak flow to the creek were frequently unsuccessful as they required forecasting flow patterns and quick action to halt diversion operations. The new rules are more complex but deliver a simple result: as streamflow rises above 250 cubic feet per second (a significant flow level and a sign of a coming peak), diversions must be shut off. When flow falls below 250 cubic feet per second, diversions can resume following a detailed table designed to maximize restoration benefits in the stream as well.

Summer also brought significant progress on the task of revising DWP's legal water licenses to include the provisions of the 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement reached by the Committee, DWP, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and CalTrout. The Agreement covers all the details of implementing the science-based next phase of stream restoration as required by the California State Water Resources Control Board.

Regular *Newsletter* readers know the process has been sidetracked by DWP for several years. The good news: the State Water Board has firmly redirected the process and DWP has submitted a timeline for completion of the environmental document that has held things up. That document is in final development now and will go out for public comment in January 2020, setting the stage for the entire process to wrap up by summer next year.

This is not the first timeline proposed in the last six years and Committee staff and attorneys are closely engaged to make sure the process stays on track to completion. To learn when important public comment opportunities happen please be sure we have your current email address at [monolake.org/action](http://monolake.org/action). ❖



Phalaropes flocked in spectacular formations at South Tufa this summer; see a video of their flight at [bit.ly/phalaropes2019](http://bit.ly/phalaropes2019).

# Tioga Inn development proposes significant adverse impacts

*Inadequate DSEIR prompts strong public response to Mono County*

by Bartshé Miller

**M**ono County is considering a newly-proposed development of unprecedented scale in the Mono Basin. The controversial Tioga Inn project proposes an expansion at the Tioga Gas Mart (often called the Mobil Mart), and includes a 100-unit “Workforce Housing Village” of two-story buildings on top of a highly visible bluff at the junction of Highway 395 and Highway 120 West.

The Tioga Inn project has an alarming number of “significant and unavoidable adverse environmental impacts,” as stated in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR) released this summer. Among these impacts are drastic changes to the scenic quality of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area and a new city-like skyline that will block clear views of the Sierra Crest as visitors travel along the Highway 395 Scenic Byway.

## **1,000+ comment letters**

In August, the Mono Lake Committee and over 1,000 individuals,

organizations, and agencies submitted comments on the DSEIR. Comment letters expressed concerns about impacts to Mono Basin scenic views, dark night skies, and to the small-town character of Lee Vining, among other issues.

Although the Tioga Inn proposal is a private development adjacent to Lee Vining, the impacts would go far beyond the physical property boundaries and threaten to compromise the scenic value of the Mono Basin, including views from South Tufa toward the Sierra escarpment. The scenic impacts, combined with the broad concern this proposal has raised within the local community, led the Committee to submit an extensive comment letter.

The Committee’s letter highlighted scenic impacts, hydrological concerns, effects on mule deer, and inconsistencies with the Mono Basin Community Plan. You can read the full comment letter, as well as the accompanying letter from our legal team, at [monolake.org/tiogainn](http://monolake.org/tiogainn).

## **Significant visual impacts**

The DSEIR proposes additional changes to the footprint and parcels surrounding the existing Tioga Gas Mart/Whoa Nellie Deli and existing residential units. Those structures, along with the ridgetop restaurant and two-story hotel, were approved as part of a 1993 Final Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan. While the hotel and restaurant have not been constructed since being approved 26 years ago, the same owner is requesting changes that would increase the approved amount of housing from ten units to 100 apartment-style units with up to 150 new bedrooms, supporting outbuildings, a 30,000 gallon propane tank, and expanded gas islands with additional pumps for the existing gas station.

Sixteen two-story buildings would be highly visible along Highway 395, from South Tufa, Panum Crater, and other key visitation sites across the Mono Basin. Additionally, the dark sky resources of the Mono Basin would be significantly altered despite night-sky compliant lighting, as the elevated siting of the development on the moraine would broadcast ambient light out across the Mono Basin.

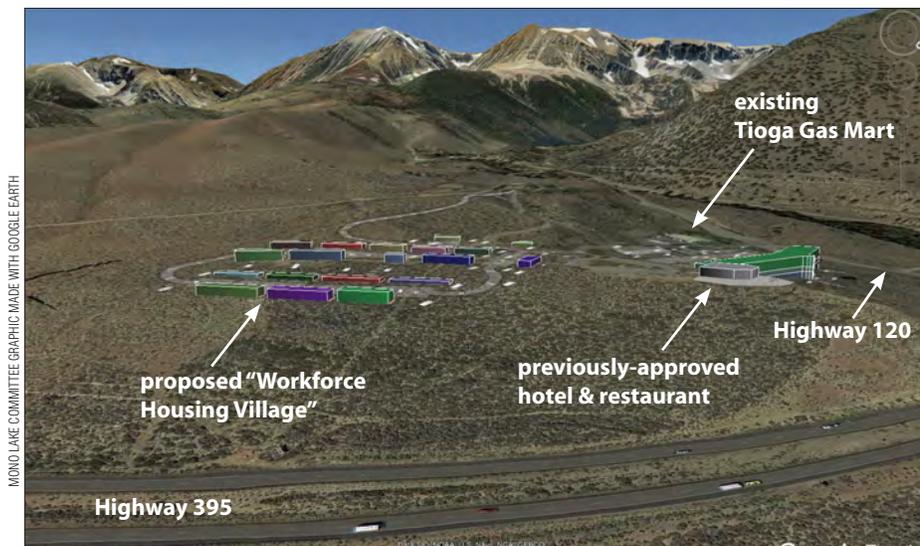
The DSEIR outlines an unacceptable number of adverse impacts that could be avoided if a more thoughtfully conceived project with adequate mitigations had been proposed. The current proposal expands and intensifies visual impacts in the project footprint and the DSEIR states that despite landscaping, construction, and design mitigation to minimize offsite views, the impact to scenic resources, visual character, and dark night skies is a “significant and unavoidable adverse impact.”

*Continued on page 5*



ELIN LIJUNG

*The location of the Tioga Inn’s proposed “Workforce Housing Village” (pictured here) means the project would significantly affect scenic views in the Mono Basin.*



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE GRAPHIC MADE WITH GOOGLE EARTH

A mock-up of the Tioga Inn project, looking west, shows the scale of the development if it were to be built as proposed in the DSEIR.

### Impacts to deer, people, and the town of Lee Vining

If the project moves forward as proposed, it would further constrain and disrupt the migratory mule deer path out of Lee Vining Canyon, which would likely cause an increase in vehicle accidents with deer. Pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle traffic would increase along Highway 395 and the current “potential impacts associated with increased non-motorized transit (particularly pedestrian and bicycle) between the site and Lee Vining would be significant and adverse.”

According to the DSEIR, the “Workforce Housing Village” would increase the population of the town of Lee Vining by 300%. As a result, the DSEIR found significant “impacts on police, fire, schools, and other services.”

While the DSEIR claims that the project is not in conflict with the Mono Basin Community Plan, the Committee’s analysis reveals the opposite. The Community Plan is the result of a comprehensive, two-year visioning process that involved the Lee Vining and Mono Basin community, the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee, and Mono County staff, and has since been integrated into the Mono County General Plan.

The DSEIR glosses over a wide

range of Community Plan objectives and cherry-picks a few supporting points from a Community Plan that overwhelmingly does not support the scale and scope of adverse impacts the Tioga Inn project currently proposes. The Community Plan values include: “Small, compact communities with a clear edge between developed and natural areas ... a healthy natural environment with clean air and water, scenic grandeur, dark night skies, pristine wilderness, and open space.” The DSEIR specifically identifies significant, unmitigated adverse impacts to scenic grandeur and dark night skies, to name two examples.

### Actual workforce housing?

While the proposal describes a “Workforce Housing Village,” and workforce housing is much needed in Mono County, the project is slated to serve the needs of the unbuilt hotel and restaurant, not alleviate local or countywide needs. Further, nothing about the proposal requires or ensures that the housing will be affordable for those earning an average wage in Mono County, let alone for employees working at the future hotel and restaurant (if and when they are constructed). The DSEIR expresses a wide range of possibilities for the apartment complex: it may be rented out to local ski areas for employee housing, be housing for any employed resident of Mono County, or “provide sufficient housing to accommodate a majority of the projected 187 future onsite employees.” Much confusion stems from a DSEIR that is inconsistent within its description, objectives, phasing, and analysis.

### Mono County deserves better

While the current DSEIR outlines a project fraught with issues, alternative solutions could transform a scenic tragedy into a more regionally-compatible project. A number of possible mitigation options were left out of the DSEIR, including: siting off the bluff, project grading to reduce visibility,

*Continued on page 11*

## Comments still being accepted

The Mono Lake Committee sent out an email alert in August asking people to express their support for the Mono Basin’s world-class scenic views and dark night skies. Members and friends responded by writing more than 800 detailed comment letters about the proposed Tioga Inn project. Thank you!

Letters are still being accepted. According to Mono County, “The public is invited to comment until a

final decision is made regardless of the closure date of the DSEIR comment period. Comments can be submitted after the close of the DSEIR comment period and County staff commits to providing a response, even though not required, through public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.”

For more information and to submit a letter, visit [monolake.org/tiogainn](http://monolake.org/tiogainn).

# Phalarope researchers and their muses flock to Mono Lake

by Nora Livingston

If you've been to Mono Lake in late July, you may have been lucky enough to have seen the elegant aerial ballet of a flock of Wilson's Phalaropes. This summer there were thousands of phalaropes along Mono Lake's south shore, so visitors were fortunate to have the chance to witness these small shorebirds in magnificent flocks dancing above the reflective lake surface, turning on a dime, flashing their white bellies all at once before seeming to disappear in the dark mountain background when they turn their brown and gray backs in unison. This flocking behavior is a truly breathtaking sight to behold. It was a notable phalarope summer at Mono Lake in several other ways as well.

## Inaugural phalarope meeting

In June, an international group of researchers, land managers, and conservationists came together at Mono Lake to share knowledge and ideas about global phalarope conservation and saline lake management. Ryan Carle of the non-profit Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge and Dr. Margaret Rubega of the University of Connecticut hosted 30 attendees representing 15 agencies and organizations (including the Mono Lake Committee) from Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and the US—countries along phalarope migration routes. The meeting helped clarify specific threats to phalarope habitat and migration routes, identify gaps in existing phalarope data, and culminated in the formation of a Phalarope Working Group that will continue to meet and share information going forward. The meeting comes at a key juncture for phalaropes as interested parties are trying to gauge the conservation status and distribution of these birds amid growing concern over their numbers and the decline of many saline lakes in North and South America, which are critical habitat for phalarope migration.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RYAN CARLE

The inaugural Phalarope Working Group meeting brought 30 people to Mono Lake from countries along phalarope migration routes.



Phalarope surveyors counted birds through binoculars in a clockwise transect around Mono Lake.

## Research resumes

This summer, Carle and Dr. Rubega resumed transect surveys on Mono Lake to count Wilson's and Red-necked phalaropes, carrying on Dr. Rubega's work from the early 1990s and 2017. Phalarope research at Mono Lake has been sporadic and used differing methods—the Mono Basin Research Group, which did the first counts in 1976, surveyed the birds by bicycle, canoe, and on foot. Subsequent studies used more replicable survey methods that covered more of the lake area. These studies found significant fluctuations in the numbers of Wilson's Phalaropes at Mono Lake, ranging from 1,000 birds in 1992 to 93,000 birds in 1976. This year's counts totaled approximately 11,000 birds. Researchers have observed that the numbers of phalaropes that visit the Great Salt Lake in Utah also fluctuate greatly year to year, with 90,000 counted in some years and 600,000 counted in others. More data is needed to explain these fluctuations at both lakes.

The researchers from the international phalarope meeting proposed tagging individual phalaropes on their breeding grounds with miniscule VHF transmitters and tracking them using the Motus Wildlife Tracking System. When tagged animals and insects are in close proximity to a Motus tracking station, it sends data to researchers that can show patterns of species movement, improve population estimates, and fill in many data gaps. The Committee is working to secure funding to help include the Mono Basin in the tracking station network initiative. As there are currently no stations in the Great Basin,

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Getting a Motus tracking station installed at Mono Lake will contribute to local and global phalarope research. If you are interested in helping fund a tracking station for the Mono Basin, please contact Philanthropy Director Anna Christensen ([anna@monolake.org](mailto:anna@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595.

# For the love of grebes

by Robert Di Paolo

**T**hey're not an endangered species, they're not an invasive species, and they're not a mascot for a sports team—according to a recent paper these are indicators that we shouldn't expect Eared Grebes to start trending on Google anytime soon. In fact, a paper published in the National Academy of Sciences journal identified grebes as one of the least-popular bird groups in the United States.

I learned this not-so-fun fact while I was in Riske Creek, British Columbia, capturing Eared Grebes with Dr. Sean Boyd and his colleagues from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). While cradling a little one-pound grebe in my hands, the bird patiently waiting to be released, I felt baffled about why such a cool and unique bird was not more loved.

Eared Grebe aerial photo surveys at Mono Lake have been conducted almost every year since 1996, and the Mono Lake Committee has coordinated them on behalf of Dr. Boyd since 2008. The surveys expanded in 2013 from a single flight in mid-October to five flights taking place from mid-August to mid-November. The study was expanded in order to better understand the timing of Eared Grebe arrival and peak abundance at Mono Lake. After six years, a new picture of Eared Grebe migration is starting to emerge.

While it was assumed that Eared Grebes achieved peak abundance at Mono Lake by mid-October, the recent data (to be published later this year) suggests that migration patterns are much more dynamic, quite likely influenced by brine shrimp abundance and possibly El Niño events. The Committee's goal is to continue to support multiple surveys each year to allow for further correlation testing against El Niño events and brine shrimp populations.

In addition to the annual aerial surveys, in 2017 Dr. Boyd and his colleagues initiated telemetry studies to provide further insights into the annual migration patterns of Eared Grebes. It was for this reason that I had the opportunity to travel to Riske Creek to assist with the recapture of previously-tagged grebes.

While the telemetry data is limited so far to a few individuals from a geographically small area, the results are intriguing. Comparable telemetry research conducted in 1996 showed that most of the Riske Creek grebes went to Mono Lake to molt/stage in fall. New data shows that the majority of tagged individuals from Riske Creek are migrating to Great Salt Lake in Utah. Combined with the grebe counts at Mono Lake, this research is providing important baseline information to assess the migration patterns and population size of North American Eared Grebes, but expanded research is still needed to complete the picture.

Eared Grebe research provides an opportunity to better understand the importance of Mono Lake and the larger Pacific Flyway. The North American Eared Grebe population

grew to millions of individuals (more than any other species of grebe in the world) because of the incredibly large quantity of brine shrimp in hypersaline lakes like Mono Lake and Great Salt Lake. While Eared Grebes may not be endangered, the near total reliance of the North American population on Mono Lake and Great Salt Lake makes the species vulnerable to environmental changes, which is why Audubon has labeled the species as “climate endangered.”

Despite the important questions the Eared Grebe migration research might be able to help us answer, the effort to study them is still limited. ECCC staff often ask, “Why aren't US management agencies taking a bigger role in researching and tracking the Eared Grebe?” I think I will start responding that it's because the Eared Grebe is not a mascot for a sports team, but I do take solace in the fact that the Committee will continue to facilitate this critical research, no matter how popular the Eared Grebe is on Google. ❖

*Robbie Di Paolo is the Committee's Restoration Field Technician. While in British Columbia he explored many aspects of grebe research, including sampling the traditional donuts from Tim Horton's.*



*In British Columbia Robbie assisted Dr. Boyd with telemetry studies to determine annual migration patterns of Eared Grebes.*

# Tufa Ranger

*Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve Ranger, Dave Marquart, retires*

*by Arya Harp*

In July, longtime Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve Ranger Dave Marquart retired after 36 years of service at Mono Lake. To say that Dave is an institution at Mono Lake, and within the Reserve, is an understatement—in his tenure he saw much change, and through it all, he served as a dedicated caretaker of the resources and a skilled interpretive guide, helping countless people learn about and become inspired by Mono Lake.

The Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve essentially protects the central core of Mono Lake—the bed and waters of the lake itself and all state-owned portions of the lake’s 40-mile shoreline, including the majority of the tufa groves, for a total of approximately 49,000 protected acres. Dave’s charge was to keep a watchful eye on Reserve resources while protecting the experience of visitors, too. The consummate ranger, he was most often outside, talking to people at the lake and leading tours—knowing that giving people the opportunity to learn about and understand this place, and the opportunities it holds for quiet introspection and self-discovery, are important.

As Dave himself wrote, “Some of these lands are frequented by large numbers of visitors, while other more remote portions of the Reserve are seldom walked upon.” Dave has been key to maintaining that increasingly rare experience of popping out of your car to be greeted with all senses by a vast, open, and mysterious landscape unquestionably dominated by wild nature.

Dave has been with the Reserve since it was created—starting as a volunteer in 1982. Over this time he shared his knowledge of Mono Lake through countless tours and education programs for tens of thousands of visitors and school children. He trained and mentored Reserve, Forest Service, Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, Mono Lake Committee staff, and Mono Lake Volunteers in the art and science of interpretation—helping us share Mono Lake effectively with visitors. As the liaison and monitor for scientists and the media he also facilitated the research and discovery that furthers knowledge and understanding of this unique place.

In Dave’s time the Reserve weathered many threats, notably several proposals to close it and other parks in tight budget times without regard for the resource damage that would result. In the spirit of a true partner agency, he kept watch over Forest Service facilities during government shutdowns—



*By the time he retired in July, ranger Dave Marquart had led countless bird walks at County Park during his 36-year career with the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve.*

including checking on important visitor amenities like the bathrooms at South Tufa. Many visitors to Mono Lake don’t realize the tapestry of land management jurisdictions they cross in a simple walk to the lake at Old Marina, down the Reserve boardwalk below County Park, and at South Tufa. Dave worked deftly and methodically to keep all of the land management agencies and organizations that share an interest in Mono Lake working together to maintain a positive experience for visitors.

Many people know Dave through the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua—an event he helped create with the Committee that brings people together to connect with Mono Lake more deeply, and helps further the scientific research that provides critical insights into the ecological interworkings of the basin.

Dave witnessed many a rise and fall of Mono Lake, literally chasing the changing shoreline with boardwalk planks and trail signs at the lakeshore. His principled and thoughtful work at Mono Lake is on par with the legendary rangers who embody a conservation ethic and inspire a duty to protect the places we love. True to form, Dave has become an official Mono Lake Volunteer—putting to work his vast and deep knowledge and love for Mono Lake, and the people, agencies, and organizations working together to protect it. The Mono Lake Volunteer program is incredibly lucky to have him, and we are so glad that he and his wife Connie are staying here in the community so we can all experience the serendipity of getting to run into Dave down at Mono Lake. ❖

# Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting, Elin Ljung, Geoffrey McQuilkin, and Bartshé Miller

## Caltrans Rehab Project focuses on Lee Vining

In August Caltrans released the Project Initiation Document (PID) for the Lee Vining US 395 Rehabilitation Project. The project will now focus only on the town of Lee Vining, with new pavement, sidewalks, curbs, drainage systems, and traffic amenities to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists. The 1.2-mile project area will run from the junction of Visitor Center Drive and Highway 395 north of town through Lee Vining to just south of the junction of Highway 120 West. Additional considerations outlined in the PID include the possibility of a roundabout at the junction of Highway 120 to help reduce traffic speeds and collisions.

The project originally included 3.8 miles of Highway 395 north of Lee Vining to Cemetery Road, including scenic sections immediately adjacent to Mono Lake, but Caltrans has indicated that this stretch of highway is no longer being considered due to funding limitations. With the PID complete, the CEQA process begins sometime

in 2020 with a scheduled construction date of 2024. Caltrans has pledged to update Mono County, the Lee Vining Community, and interested parties throughout the project development.

## K-rail removal

A significant portion of K-rail (white concrete roadside barricades) on Highway 395 along the west shore of Mono Lake was removed by Caltrans this summer after a formal request from the community. The K-rail was installed after the 2016 Marina Fire to protect motorists from rocks shedding onto the highway due to the destabilized, steep burned slopes. The recent removal of more than 100 pieces of K-rail along the southern section of the Marina Fire area follows Caltrans' removal of a short section of K-rail along the northern portion last year.

Some K-rail and fencing remains adjacent to steep slopes that still pose a risk of falling debris and rocks. Caltrans has been clear that K-rail will remain in place to protect motorists until the slopes recover and become more stable. The Mono Lake Committee hopes to

see sections removed as those goals are met in localized parts of the burn area. The other Caltrans project in the same area—the Lee Vining Rockfall Safety Project (see Summer 2018 *Mono Lake Newsletter*)—continues to demonstrate success both with the engineered anchored mesh stabilization and the five-year revegetation project.

## Restoration proceeds below Tioga Lodge

This past summer work continued on Mono Lake's west shore below the Tioga Lodge to restore 7.61 acres of land damaged in October 2016 by unpermitted clearing and grading, and the diversion of Post Office Creek.

The majority of the restoration work was undertaken in 2018, including rehabilitating and rewatering the creek's original channels, converting debris piles to mulch, seeding native perennial plants, planting native willows, and controlling invasive plants. This year Jim Paulus, the Restoration Specialist overseeing the project, was pleased with

*Continued on page 10*



This summer Caltrans removed many of the white K-rail barricades along Highway 395 after a formal request from the community.



Restoration work proceeds below the Tioga Lodge on land that was damaged three years ago by illegal grading and diversions.

PHOTOS BY ELIN LJUNG

how the mulch derived from the site's debris piles has "provided good defense against invasive weeds."

Paulus said the goal is to return the site to "a more native riparian forest to enhance the biodiversity and habitat that is so rare around Mono Lake." With the bulk of the physical restoration work now complete, monitoring will continue through 2022, with success criteria and contingency measures in place to ensure that the vegetation recovers according to plan.

The habitat restoration plan dictating the rehabilitation and monitoring work was agreed upon in 2017 by the Tioga Lodge, California State Parks, the Department of Fish & Wildlife, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, and Mono County.

### **Dick Dahlgren passes**

Dick Dahlgren, a successful advocate for stopping the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power's (DWP) total diversion of Rush Creek, died this past July in Boise, Idaho.

In 1984, Dahlgren, an avid fly fisherman, found healthy brown trout in lower Rush Creek—a surprising discovery given that Rush Creek had been without water due to DWP water diversions via the Los Angeles Aqueduct. A big snowpack winter had caused Grant Lake Reservoir to spill, delivering not only water but trout over the spillway and back into Rush Creek. Once Dahlgren learned that DWP was planning to resume exports again later that fall, he quickly jumped into action.

Dahlgren successfully engaged Mono County Assistant District Attorney Stan Eller and Sheriff Marty Strelneck to issue and enforce a temporary restraining order protecting the valve from being shut off; he then rallied Mammoth Flyrodders, California Trout, Mono County, and the Committee to stop DWP. This legal challenge to DWP's drying of Mono Lake's tributary streams paved the way for future cases that ultimately secured water flows for fish in Lee Vining, Walker, and Parker creeks as well and shaped Mono Lake's future.



KEVIN BROWN

*After a decade hiatus, water flowed in the Mill Creek return ditch for a third year this summer, following long-established water rights to return a portion of Mill Creek's water to the creek after it went through the Lundy hydropower plant.*

The health of Mono Lake's tributary streams can be attributed in large part to Dick Dahlgren's dedication to the health of Sierra Nevada trout and focused, quick action to protect them.

### **Mill Creek return ditch**

Southern California Edison (SCE) completed a third year of test flows in the Mill Creek return ditch this summer, using the repaired existing infrastructure to return water to Mill Creek in accordance with long-established, adjudicated water rights. SCE began testing the return ditch in 2017 as a way to comply with an 11-year-old hydropower relicensing settlement. Since then, structural improvements and maintenance have increased the reliability and capacity of the system.

Flow testing results show great promise, but unfortunately the return ditch only returns a portion of the water rights associated with Mill Creek. SCE continues to explore ways to divert water into the Wilson system consistent with water rights while returning all of Mill Creek's legal allocation of water. The Committee remains engaged with SCE and the other settlement parties, actively exploring operational solutions.

### **New leader at DWP**

DWP has a new General Manager, the top position at the nation's largest

municipal utility. Martin Adams, who has been with DWP for over 35 years, was appointed by Mayor Eric Garcetti this summer and confirmed unanimously by the City Council in September.

Adams takes over at a transformational time. DWP is tackling big goals in pursuit of Los Angeles' landmark advances in water recycling and restructuring to operate on a 100% renewable power portfolio. Adams' experience and support within the ranks of the organization should give him a strong platform for action. "We know we have to ... rely less on fossil fuel over the years," commented Adams, "and get down to where we have no fossil fuel in our system. And we also need to focus on local water supplies." Adams also inherits some turbulence—DWP is under active FBI investigation over its billing system and related contracting.

Here at Mono Lake we know Marty well from over a decade of aqueduct and water management interactions. He negotiated the landmark 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement with the Committee and partners, sketched the outlines of the future Grant Outlet onto the concrete spillway in chalk during the Agreement celebration, communicates regularly with Committee leaders, and is well aware of the

*Continued on page 11*

details of Mono Lake management and restoration. His engineering creativity and constant energy, not to mention his appreciation of the Mono Cone restaurant, are positive signs that we will be able to continue to work together to achieve important Mono Lake goals.

### **Grazing proposal for the Jordan Basin**

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest has proposed opening old sheep grazing allotments—not grazed since 2009—for cattle grazing. The allotments, which span from Jordan Basin (located in the Mono Basin) in the south to Summers Meadow in the north, were closed to domestic sheep because of potential health risks to endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. Now, the Humboldt-Toiyabe has proposed a plan to allow cattle on these high-elevation meadows, even though cattle have never grazed in these areas before.

These allotments contain vibrant wet meadow habitat that is now flourishing and fully recovered from past grazing activity. Seeps, springs, and ephemeral creeks drain the slopes, adding to the fragility and ecological importance of the areas. It is well documented that cattle have greater negative impacts

on the land than sheep, especially near creeks and wet meadows. The current proposal does not require any fencing (which would be problematic for Greater Sage-Grouse anyway), but instead would rely on “range riders” to control and move the cattle.

The Committee provided detailed comments to the Humboldt-Toiyabe, which included concerns related to water quality impacts, damage to stream

and wet meadow habitat, impacts to sensitive vegetation and wildlife, and conflicts with recreational activities. It is important to note that these areas, most of them located at 8,000 feet or higher, are also the winter forage habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. Cattle grazing would reduce the amount of food available for the bighorn, especially in drought years. ❖



*Meadows from the Jordan Basin in the south to Summers Meadow in the north have been proposed to be reopened to grazing—by cattle this time instead of sheep.*

earthen berms, setbacks and one-story buildings, a reduced number of units, underground parking, separation of housing units, LEED certification, community connectivity, and sufficient mitigation funds. The Committee recommended these alternatives and mitigations as part of our comment letter in the expectation that a more thoughtful and creative project with fewer and less severe impacts could become a reality.

### **Next steps**

The Committee expects that Mono County and the proponent will re-evaluate the overall property plan with the above mitigations and alternatives and include consideration of the fact that the hotel and restaurant have not

been built in the nearly three decades since their approval. A new evaluation would enable improved project siting possibilities and more complete mitigations with fewer impacts. Such planning should involve the community, and the Committee is ready to participate as one of many stakeholders.

Because of the substantial changes needed to the proposal, the Committee has called for recirculation of the DSEIR once it has been improved so the public can review and comment on it again.

Mono County is required to respond to every individual, organization, and agency that submitted comments before the deadline, which, given the volume and diversity of comments,

will take some time. (The county is still accepting comments—see box on page 5.) Ultimately, a hopefully much-improved final SEIR will be released and the proposal will proceed to the Planning Commission for consideration and then to the Mono County Board of Supervisors for final action.

The Mono Lake Committee will continue to stay involved in the process. With better alternatives and mitigations, the Tioga Inn could be a project that is compatible with the scenic and natural values of the Mono Basin that residents and visitors have enjoyed for generations. ❖

# Outdoor Education Center turns 25

by Rose Nelson and Santiago Escruceria

“**W**here does your water come from?” This question has been asked to thousands of students visiting the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center (OEC) from Los Angeles over the past 25 years. At the beginning of their week-long stay in the Mono Basin, some students are unsure.

By the end of the week, there is no question. They have played in high Sierra snow, traveled to the northern extent of the Los Angeles Aqueduct at Lee Vining Creek, pulled invasive plants along Mono Lake’s tributary streams, and pondered the total ecological destruction narrowly escaped at Mono Lake. Through these experiences, they learn where their water comes from, about themselves as individuals, and their importance to the future of Los Angeles and the Mono Basin alike.

This has been the goal of the program since it began in 1994—to connect the people of Los Angeles to the source of their water. The very first group, the Mothers of East Los Angeles, Santa Isabel was one of the community groups working to retrofit homes in LA with ultra-low-flush toilets. The cascading effects of that trip to Mono Lake inspired community groups to install over a million toilets, helping Angelenos make a measurable dent in their water use. The insights from that inaugural year still echo 25 years later as thousands of students gain this deeper sense of what it means to conserve water. They are empowered to make change in their communities and they become part of the Mono Lake legacy, and family.

The OEC program has matured and flourished since its founding. We have grown from a handful of groups each summer to a full season with a waiting list. The variety of participants is vast and includes school groups, community environmental justice groups, previously incarcerated people, scout troops, and more.

The humble house where we run the program has also gone through many changes. Solar panels, double-pane windows, and drip irrigation have made the house a better model for sustainability. The long-term lease we have with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power means we are planning



MIRANDA NORRIN

Since 1994 the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center has been connecting students from Los Angeles to the source of their water.

more updates to the OEC headquarters as the program continues to evolve.

As we look to the next 25 years, we will continue to offer this powerful experience to as many people as possible. We seek to improve our facilities, break down barriers that keep people from experiencing the natural world, and foster relationships between the Mono Lake Committee and OEC alumni.

We asked Mark Lopez, grandson of the founder of Mothers of East Los Angeles, to comment on his experience with the OEC:

I look forward to the day my daughters Xole and Luna hit the age I was when I first visited Mono Lake—age eight—when its deepest scars were visible. I have visited every year since and multiple times some years, with four generations of my family and countless members of my community over the last 25 years. I’ve experienced and witnessed the deep connection and love that grows within once you feel connected to Mono Lake, and the correlating sense of responsibility to take care of this place. It happens almost instantaneously—I’ve felt it over the majority of my life, and my daughters will raise the fifth generation of my family with a perspective of only ever experiencing the healing of Mono Lake thanks to the Mono Lake Committee and all lovers of Mono Lake who have experienced the OEC program.

Let’s raise our water bottles to the past 25 transformative years, and to the future generations who will become part of the Mono Lake story through the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center. ❖

## No more boots needed

**T**hank you to everyone who responded to our request for used hiking boots. Your donations are being put to good use, and the OEC closet is overflowing with boots!

If you are interested in other ways you can support the OEC program, please contact Education Director Rose Nelson ([rose@monolake.org](mailto:rose@monolake.org)) or OEC Manager Santiago Escruceria ([santiago@monolake.org](mailto:santiago@monolake.org)).

# Intern program receives new support

by Anna Christensen

The Mono Lake Committee's intern program is the bridge that connects passionate people to the Mono Lake story. Internships allow individuals (young and old) the opportunity to be paid to work for a successful environmental organization and launch their own careers or propel them in new directions. Past interns fondly remember leading walking tours at South Tufa, answering challenging questions in the bookstore, guiding canoe trips with unbelievable scenic views, and recruiting new members to join the Committee.

In 2019, two families chose to honor family members with special contributions to support internships over the summer. This marks the first year the Committee made available the opportunity for memorial gifts in this manner.

The **Ruth Borun Internship** was created by the family to remember Ruth and her passion for environmental causes. Ruth joined the Committee as a member in the earliest days and enjoyed visiting the Sierra, hiking, and canoeing on Mono Lake. Ruth and her husband Dr. Raymond Borun raised three children in Los Angeles and enjoyed sharing their love for nature with their family by traveling to state and

national parks. This internship recognizes Ruth's passion for supporting both wilderness and young people.

The **Don Douglass Memorial Internship** was created by Don's widow Réanne Hemingway-Douglass to remember Don's pioneering spirit and love for the Eastern Sierra. In addition to being a wonderful father, husband, and friend, Don was an adventurer, entrepreneur, mountain climber, mountain biker, sailor, engineer, author, publisher, chart maker, and philanthropist. The Douglasses remember attending the first gatherings of the Committee, and for many years they called Swall Meadows home.

The Ruth Borun Internship for 2019 was awarded to AnnaLisa Mayer. Caroline Bottega received the 2019 Don Douglass Memorial Internship. To read more about these interns, see page 26.

Internships can be funded for one year or for multiple years into the future. If you are interested in investing in this program or would like to create a memorial gift, please contact Philanthropy Director Anna Christensen ([anna@monolake.org](mailto:anna@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595. ❖

## Lee Vining gets Trail Chic for the cause

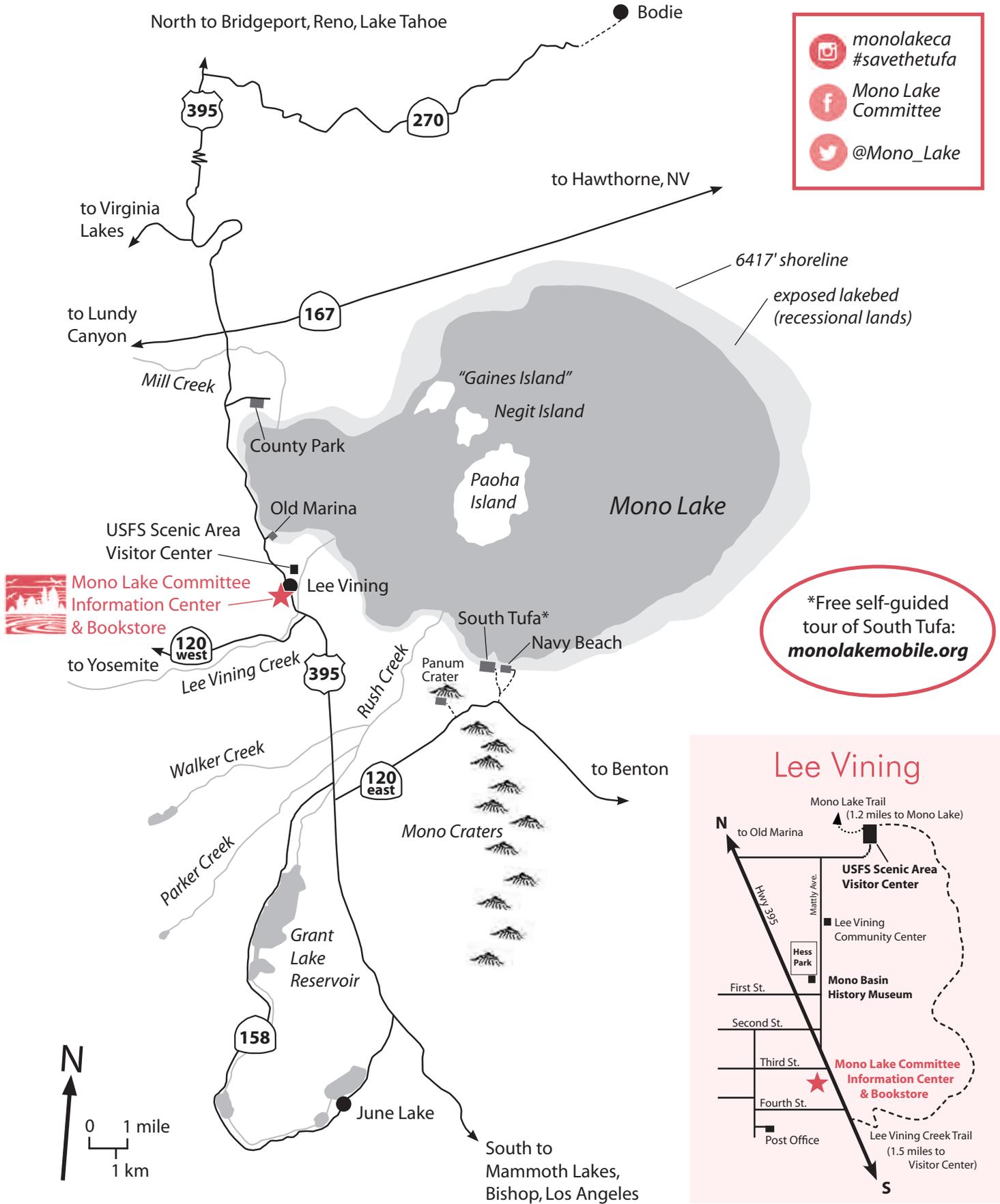


PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER BARTON & ELIN LUNG

With costumes for the cause including a family of singing sharks, human-watching birds, the invasive plant sweet clover, a dragonfly and her larva, and lost visitors searching for South Tufa, models walked an AstroTurf runway in Lee Vining this summer to benefit the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center Access Fund. The event raised \$4,600 of critical funding that will allow nine school groups to travel from Los Angeles to Mono Lake for five days of life-changing watershed education.

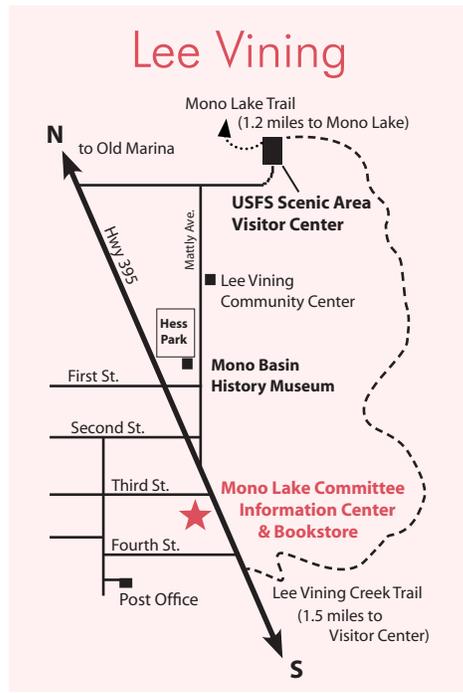
Thank you to everyone who walked the runway for their creativity and time, to Patagonia, Epic Café, The Mono Inn, Latte Da Coffee Café, Beaver's Sporting Goods, Bodie Mike's Barbeque, and Eric Verrinder for the support and donations, as well as the Mono Market for the delicious trail snacks. Special thanks to Randy Arnold and Barefoot Wine & Bubbly for this inspired concept, and for providing the amazing selection of wine that helps make this event a success. To learn more about the Trail Chic Fashion Show Fundraiser, visit [monolake.org/trailchic](http://monolake.org/trailchic). —Joslyn Rogers

# Mono Lake map



-  *monolakeca*  
#savethetufa
-  Mono Lake  
Committee
-  @Mono\_Lake

\*Free self-guided tour of South Tufa:  
[monolakemobile.org](http://monolakemobile.org)



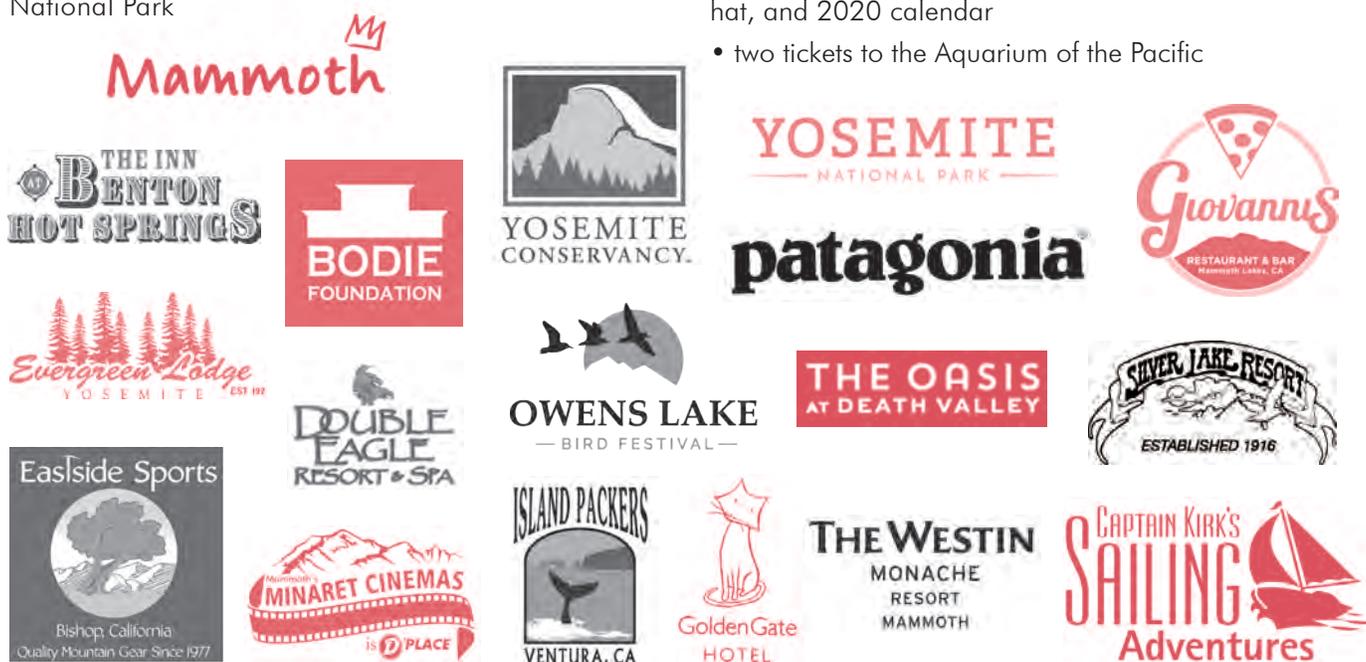
# Free Drawing to protect Mono Lake

## Tickets due by December 10

**T**hank you to the generous businesses and organizations who donate the wonderful prizes for the Mono Lake Committee's annual Free Drawing, which is one of our largest fundraisers each year. Mail in your tickets today (find them in the center of this *Newsletter*) for a chance to win and see all the prize details at [monolake.org/freedrawing](http://monolake.org/freedrawing). Thank you, and good luck!

### You could win one of these fabulous prizes:

- Mammoth Mountain and June Mountain ski pass
- two-night stay at Wawona Hotel in Yosemite, plus an outdoor adventure and gift pack from the Yosemite Conservancy, a National Parks annual pass, and copies of Dan Suzio's *Death Valley Photographer's Guide* and Lonely Planet's *National Parks of America*
- one-night stay at the Double Eagle Resort & Spa, breakfast and a boat rental from Silver Lake Resort & Café, ceramics from Moon Shadow Gallery, a movie at Minaret Cinemas, and gift cards to Stellar Brew, Giovanni's Restaurant, and Hermitage Organic Café & Juicery
- one-night stay at The Oasis at Death Valley and a round of golf for two at the Furnace Creek Golf Course
- sailing trip on San Francisco Bay with Captain Kirk's Sailing Adventures and lodging at the Golden Gate Hotel
- two-night stay at the Inn at Benton Hot Springs
- tickets to the California Academy of Sciences and a stay at the Golden Gate Hotel
- one-night stay at Evergreen Lodge, just outside Yosemite
- Island Packers cruise adventure to Channel Islands National Park
- one-night stay at the Westin Monache Resort in Mammoth Lakes, boat rental at Convict Lake Resort, a horseback ride with Frontier Pack Train, movie tickets for Minaret Cinemas, and gift certificates to Stellar Brew, Elixir Superfood & Juice, The Stove, and Whitebark Restaurant
- Mono Lake Committee canoe tour for four
- tickets for a Bodie Heritage Tour
- season pass to Tamarack Cross Country Ski Resort
- Mono Lake Committee half-day custom guided trip, a Mono Lake hat and water bottle, and an REI camp chair
- registration for two for the Owens Lake Bird Festival
- a day aboard the USS Midway in San Diego
- tickets for two to The Huntington
- Patagonia Nano Puff jackets
- Patagonia Black Hole backpack or duffel bag
- dinner at Convict Lake Resort, movie tickets for Minaret Cinemas, and gift cards to Great Basin Bakery and Eastside Sports in Bishop
- Mono Lake Committee gift packs with *The Mono Lake Story* DVD and a Mono Lake glass travel cup, T-shirt, hat, and 2020 calendar
- two tickets to the Aquarium of the Pacific



## Mono Lake rises over a foot

by Greg Reis

**O**ur early spring forecast for Mono Lake to rise a foot by August was correct, and as of September 1 the lake stood at 6383.0 feet above sea level. This rise returns the lake to where it was seven years ago, after the first year of drought, and within a foot of the highest elevation reached during the past decade (6384.0 feet in 2012). In less than three years it has risen six feet higher

than the drought low. A three-year rise of this magnitude has not occurred since the late 1990s, when a series of wetter-than-average years raised the lake 10.6 feet in four-and-a-half years.

Mono Lake's level drops in late summer and early fall, and wet years are no exception. This seasonal cycle—muted in wet years—produces seasonal mudflats that benefit shorebirds on their fall migration. The lake usually reaches

a low point around December, when evaporation slows and fall and winter storms begin to contribute precipitation to the lake. A typical winter would raise the lake about a half a foot higher than its current elevation by next April—but as we know, in California winters are rarely typical, and usually end up dry or wet—so anything from a slight drop to a greater than two-foot rise is possible. ❖

## Streamwatch

### Wet year streamflows fall short due to lack of a Grant Outlet

by Greg Reis

**T**his year was a wet year in which the Stream Ecosystem Flows (SEFs) specified in the 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement were temporarily approved and implemented.

SEFs are higher during snowmelt runoff and lower in winter, which is more like the natural streamflow hydrograph and extremely beneficial for stream restoration.

The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) attempted to deliver the SEFs with its existing infrastructure. It had success at lower flows, but not in delivering the critical high flows. Grant Lake Reservoir spilled June 16–July 17, and a peak flow of 497 cubic feet per second (cfs) in Rush Creek downstream of Grant Dam occurred June 22–23, falling short of the planned wet year peak SEF of 650 cfs for five days. Southern California Edison's (SCE)

upstream hydropower operations control the spring flows, and typically prevent more than about 500 cfs from reaching Grant and its spillway. Since 2012, SCE has modified operations to store less water in its Rush Creek reservoirs due to seismic safety issues, but this has not resulted in releases of higher magnitude flows. Unfortunately, even in a wet year when Grant spills, SCE's recent reduced storage operations still fall far short of delivering the peak flows that will be required in DWP's new license.

2019 operations demonstrate that the future Grant Outlet remains as critical as ever for delivering a more natural hydrograph to Rush Creek. An upgraded outlet will be able to provide the operational capacity needed for releasing SEFs to Rush Creek. Construction of the outlet will begin after the State Water Board approves the new license in 2020.

On Lee Vining Creek, DWP followed the SEF diversion table fairly closely, usually keeping diversions below required limits based on inflows. A 430 cfs peak was passed undiverted downstream, achieving a key restoration goal. Following the peak flows, while

Grant was still spilling, there was a 16-day period where Lee Vining Creek flow was used to augment Rush Creek flow by as much as 46 cfs. The diversion table on Lee Vining Creek was followed on all but two days, allowing Rush Creek flows to be slightly higher; however, it still did not result in a higher peak flow on Rush Creek as DWP had hoped. Augmentation of Rush Creek's peak flow from Lee Vining Creek is not authorized under the Agreement; however, it is authorized under the current license.

Parker Creek and Walker Creek remained undiverted this year and will be free-flowing under the new license. They experienced peak flows of 72 cfs and 43 cfs, respectively, which, combined with releases from Grant, produced a 600 cfs peak in the Rush Creek bottomlands. ❖

*Greg Reis is the Committee's Information & Restoration Specialist. He is always impressed at how high Parker Creek's late summer flows are compared to much larger Rush Creek's late summer flows.*

6417'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

6392'

Management lake level

6383.0'

Current lake level

6372'

Historic low, 1982

# Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELLERY MCQUILKIN

The departure of summer began slowly with a tinge of yellow in the green aspen leaves and a nighttime freeze or two. Then the season switch flipped as a low pressure system off the coast drove raging winds to Mono Lake.

Around homes entire crops of ripening apples blew off trees and spread across lawns. An 18-wheeler loaded high with hay bales blew over, and fresh hay lofted east on the wind, no doubt providing unexpected treats for migrating deer. White spray whipped across the lake; obviously it was no time to go canoeing but my canoe tried to launch on its own when the wind lifted it from storage and it commenced a block-long trip down the street.

It was the first time that the power company proactively shut down the local grid due to fire danger. As the wind picked up the computers shut down, businesses closed, and Lee

Vining, June Lake, Bridgeport, and Mammoth went dark. At night, but for a few car headlights, the Mono Basin was as dark as it was a century ago. The stars shone more brightly, the edges of the Milky Way were more visible, and only the mountains broke the view of the constellations.

We seem to have crossed into a new time in which the fire and weather effects of climate change are enough to cause us to abandon round-the-clock electricity. This made me wonder, if we can self-impose blackouts across vast regions of California, how about self-imposing meaningful carbon pollution cuts to slow climate change and make our future brighter? ❖

*Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He is enjoying accompanying his daughter Ellery on science expeditions to investigate the movement of local glaciers.*

## Benchmarks



August 2016: After five years of drought, tufa on Mono Lake's south shore was landlocked and surrounded by thick vegetation. Mono Lake was 6,378 feet above sea level.



PHOTOS BY ANDREW YOUSSEF

September 2019: Three years later, Mono Lake stands five feet higher at 6,383 feet above sea level and the tufa is once again surrounded by water—there's also a new Osprey nest!



# MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

## INFORMATION CENTER & BOOKSTORE

### Fall Catalog



#### BRINE SHRIMP T-SHIRT

Show your love for Mono Lake's endemic brine shrimp like Ellie, Krista, and Caroline in this super soft ladies' cut T-shirt, made of 60% cotton, 40% modal. This T-shirt, screen printed with a *Mono Lake Committee exclusive* brine shrimp design, is sure to be a favorite. *Brine shrimp T-shirt, gray-blue, ladies' sizes S-XL: \$29.95*



#### CALIFORNIA GULL HOODIE

Anna, Andrew, and AnnaLisa are nice and cozy in these heather gray 50% cotton, 50% polyester hoodies. The front chest sports the Mono Lake Committee logo and the back features a line drawing of clouds, the sun, and Negit Island within the outline of a California Gull, one of Mono Lake's most iconic bird species. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive. California Gull hoodie, heather gray, unisex sizes S-XL: \$49.99*



BACK

#### HOLIDAY CARD SETS

Artist Wendy Morgan's original designs of Golden-crowned Kinglets, Steller's Jays, and Mountain Chickadees are perfect for delivering winter season's greetings. Each set includes 10 cards of the same design with the message "May you have a Happy Holiday and joyous New Year" printed in red ink inside.

*Holiday card set, 10 cards with envelopes, 4 1/2" x 6 1/4", please specify Golden-crowned Kinglets, Steller's Jays, or chickadees: \$14.95*



GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS



STELLER'S JAYS



CHICKADEES

order at [monolake.org/store](http://monolake.org/store) or (760) 647-6595

**MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO T-SHIRT**

Show your support for the Mono Lake Committee like Kevin and Nora in this classic design in autumn orange. This 100% cotton T-shirt has the Mono Lake Committee logo printed on the front chest and full back in light gray. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*  
*Mono Lake Committee logo T-shirt, autumn orange, unisex sizes S–XL: \$18.00, XXL: \$21.00*



**NEW!**

**PERFORMANCE FLEECE LOGO BEANIE**

Merryn and Robbie are ready for winter adventures and chilly evenings in these 100% polyester performance fleece beanies featuring the Mono Lake Committee logo embroidered on the front in blue. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*  
*Performance fleece logo beanie, dark gray, one size: \$22.00*

**NEW!**

**MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO TRAVEL PACK**

Chloe wears this Chicobag travel pack, which is extremely lightweight without sacrificing functionality. When expanded, this 15-liter pack measures 17½" x 9½", includes space for a water reservoir, and has stretchy side pockets for water bottles of different sizes. It is packable and folds into its own 6" x 8" pocket when not in use. The bag is forest green, weighs just over 7 ounces, and is custom printed with the Mono Lake Committee logo. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*  
*Mono Lake Committee logo travel pack, forest green, one size: \$45.00*



**GOLDEN MASALA CHAI**

This tea from Blue Lotus Chai is the perfect warming beverage to enjoy during the fall and winter seasons. Potent and spicy, this powdered black tea requires only ¼-teaspoon per cup (scoop included), so each tin contains enough tea for at least 100 cups. Just add boiling water and your preferred milk and sweetener, and you'll have a customized cup of delicious tea. *A Mono Lake Committee staff favorite!*  
*Golden masala chai, 3 ounces, gluten free, vegan, Non GMO Project Verified, naturally caffeinated: \$18.95*

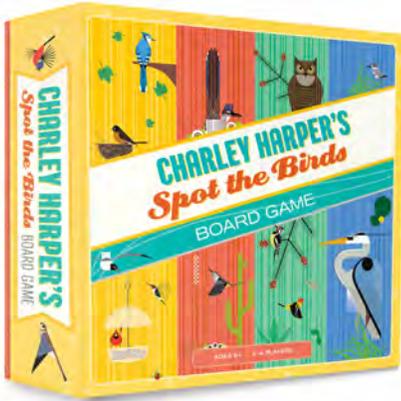


**HANDMADE CERAMIC MUG**

Cozy up with your favorite hot beverage in this beautiful handmade mug by local artist Michael Cooke. These one-of-a-kind mugs are dishwasher and microwave safe with lead-free glazes in rich shades of orange, bronze, and brown. *Handmade ceramic mug, 12 ounces, handmade items will vary slightly: \$29.00*



order at [monolake.org/store](http://monolake.org/store) or (760) 647-6595



**CHARLEY HARPER'S SPOT THE BIRDS BOARD GAME**

Kids ages six and older will have a hoot as they travel across the game board's five different bird habitats while recording the species they spot along the way. Players learn about different birds and habitats and about being good stewards of the earth while enjoying Charley Harper's iconic illustrations.

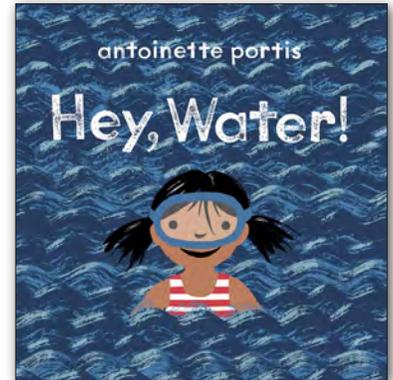
*Charley Harper's Spot the Birds board game, 2-4 players, playing time 30-60 minutes: \$29.95*

**HEY, WATER!**

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY ANTOINETTE PORTIS

Children ages 4-8 will enjoy this book's exploration into water's many different forms: from lakes and streams to faucets and tears—water can be found everywhere! Spare text and lovely illustrations make this a great book for early readers.

*Hey, Water!, hardcover, Neal Porter Books, 48 pages, 9"x 9": \$17.99*



**GOODBYE AUTUMN,  
HELLO WINTER**

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY KENARD PAK

Young children ages 3-6 will enjoy this jaunt through nature and town alike as they say goodbye to the features of fall and greet the coming signs of winter. Digitally enhanced watercolor and pencil illustrations make this seasonal book a delight to look at and read.

*Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter, hardcover, Henry Holt and Company, 32 pages, 11¼"x 9": \$17.99*

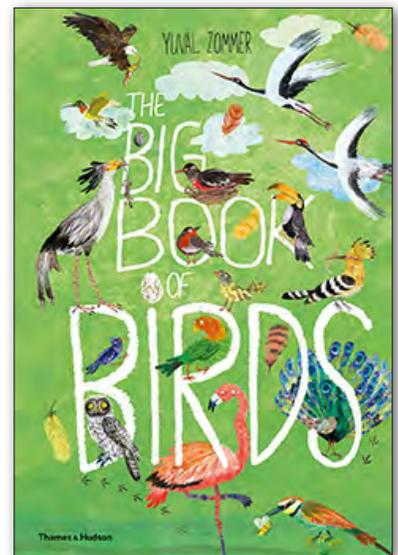


**THE BIG BOOK OF BIRDS**

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY YUVAL ZOMMER

This large-format, fact-filled picture book is a fabulous introduction to birds. The eye-catching watercolor illustrations make it an entertaining book for young children and older kids will enjoy reading the fun and informative text. Recommended for children 6-8 years old.

*The Big Book of Birds, hardcover, Thames & Hudson, 64 pages, 9½"x 13¾": \$19.95*



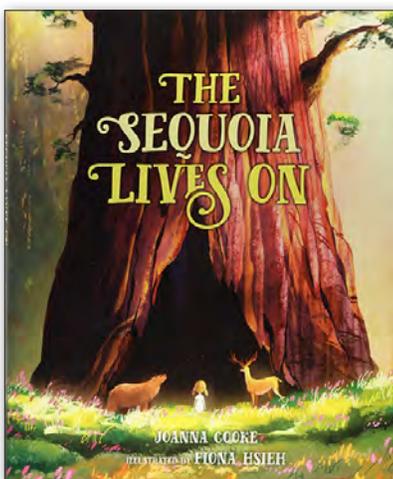
**THE SEQUOIA LIVES ON**

WRITTEN BY JOANNA COOKE

ILLUSTRATED BY FIONA HSIEH

This beautiful book explores the incredible features of the ancient and massive giant sequoia, from tiny seed to tremendous tree. The painted illustrations are captivating, and combined with the educational text, create a great book for the young and inquisitive. Recommended for children 4-8 years old.

*The Sequoia Lives On, hardcover, Yosemite Conservancy, 32 pages, 8"x 11": \$16.99*



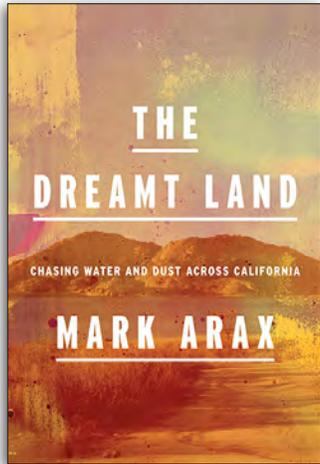
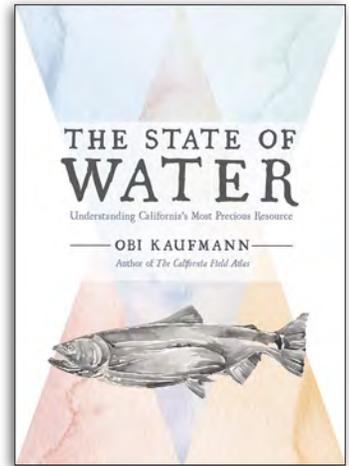
order at [monolake.org/store](http://monolake.org/store) or (760) 647-6595

**THE STATE OF WATER: UNDERSTANDING CALIFORNIA'S MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE**

BY OBI KAUFMANN

This new release from Kaufmann, author of the best-seller *The California Field Atlas*, focuses on California's most complex and controversial resource: water. Rich with hand-drawn maps, watercolor illustrations, and a thoughtful conservation ethic, this book is a great choice for those interested in knowing more about California's water systems and challenges.

*The State of Water, hardcover, Heyday, 144 pages, 5¼"x 7¼": \$20.00*



**THE DREAMT LAND: CHASING WATER AND DUST ACROSS CALIFORNIA**

BY MARK ARAX

Follow journalist and Central Valley native Arax on a heartfelt, water-centered trip through California. His book blends reporting, memoir, and history to create a portrait of our state's water and infrastructure, and the growing demands put upon these systems. *The Dreamt Land* is a poignant telling of the limits that have been pushed to manifest the California dream, and how those risks threaten the very state they've created.

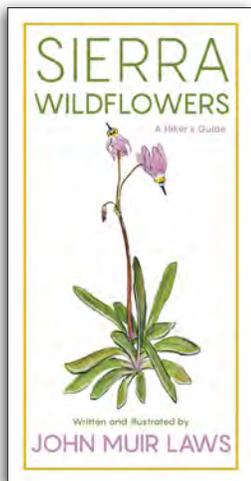
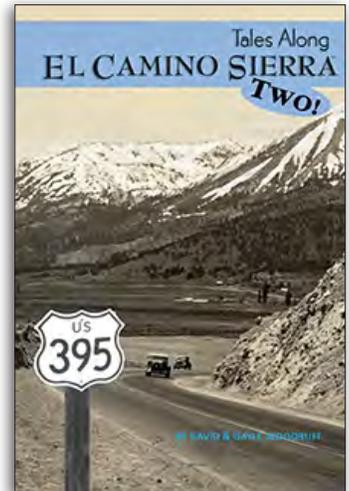
*The Dreamt Land, hardcover, Knopf, 576 pages, 6¾"x 9½": \$30.00*

**TALES ALONG EL CAMINO SIERRA TWO!**

BY DAVID & GAYLE WOODRUFF

These two local authors have put together another top-selling compilation of lesser-known Eastern Sierra history stories following the success of their first volume. This book is a great companion for your next trip on Highway 395.

*Tales Along El Camino Sierra Two!, paperback, El Camino Sierra Publishing, 155 pages, 6"x 9": \$10.95*



**SIERRA WILDFLOWERS: A HIKER'S GUIDE**

BY JOHN MUIR LAWS

This new pocket guide is the perfect book for those already dreaming of the blooms that next spring and summer will bring in the Sierra. Full of beautiful painted-from-life flower illustrations and natural history notes, this is a worthwhile addition to any field guide collection.

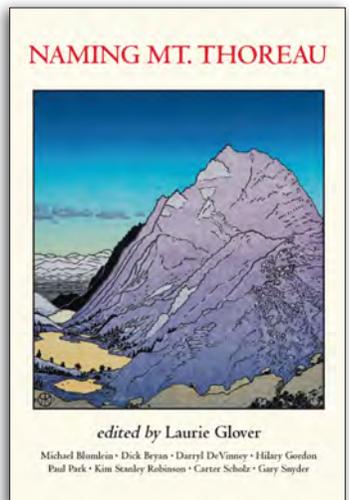
*Sierra Wildflowers, paperback, Heyday, 120 pages, 4½"x 9": \$15.00*

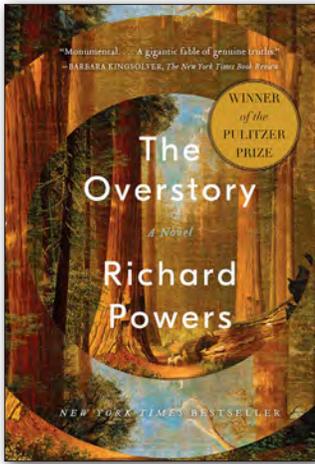
**NAMING MT. THOREAU**

EDITED BY LAURIE GLOVER

This collection of essays arose from the simple undertaking of ascending a mountain; it is a meditation on friendship and influence, proximity and distance. This compilation's authors started out to rename USGS peak 12,691 "Mt. Thoreau" to honor Henry David Thoreau for his writing that has been so important to generations of Americans seeking to define their relationship to wilderness and nature, and their work, like Thoreau's, is a call to close attention.

*Naming Mt. Thoreau, paperback, Artemisia Press, 167 pages, 6"x 9": \$16.95*





**THE OVERSTORY**

BY RICHARD POWERS

This 2019 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is a passionate work of environmental writing. *The Overstory* is told through interlocking stories that unfold into a portrait of the natural world and humanity's role in it. This book's unconventional structure and perspective-shifting content are sure to entertain and change the way you look at trees.

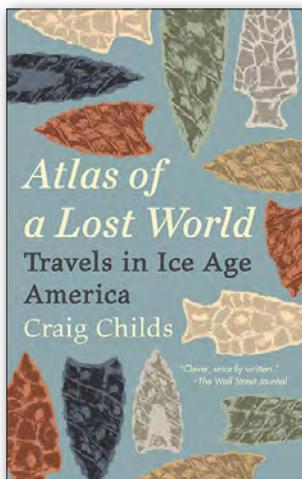
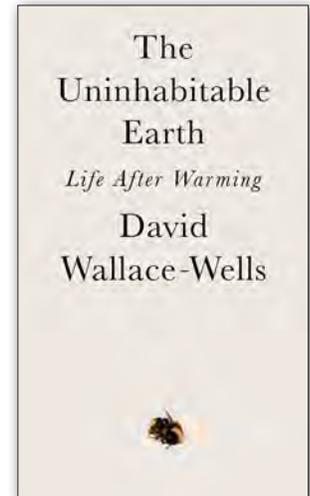
*The Overstory*, paperback, W.W. Norton & Company, 512 pages, 5½"x 8¼": \$18.95

**THE UNINHABITABLE EARTH: LIFE AFTER WARMING**

BY DAVID WALLACE-WELLS

While not exactly optimistic, this #1 *New York Times* bestseller is an important new book for understanding the severity of the risks posed by climate change. Delving into topics like global politics, technology, capitalism, and the trajectory of human progress, this book is an emerging and defining work on climate change and its implications for life on earth.

*The Uninhabitable Earth*, hardcover, Tim Duggan Books, 320 pages, 5¾"x 9½": \$27.00



**ATLAS OF A LOST WORLD: TRAVELS IN ICE AGE AMERICA**

BY CRAIG CHILDS

Childs' newest book blends science and personal narrative to unearth the world of Ice Age explorers and megafauna. How people first came to the Americas, survived, and thrived, is a story that spans from the Pleistocene to today, and is captivatingly told in this book.

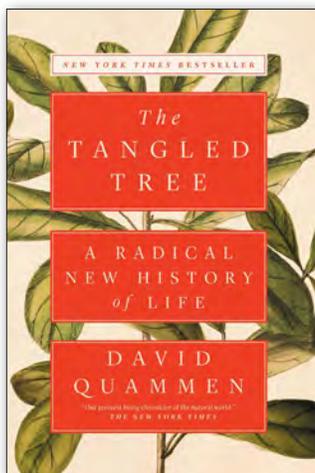
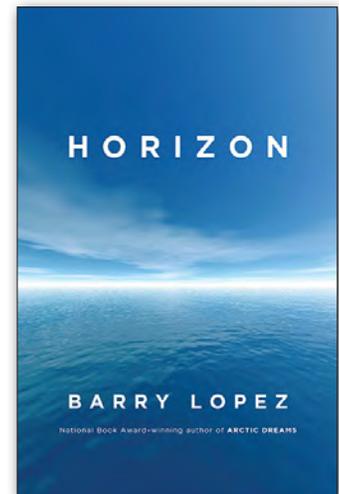
*Atlas of a Lost World*, paperback, Vintage, 288 pages, 5"x 8": \$17.00

humanity's thirst for exploration. *Horizon* is a tremendous book authored by one of America's great thinkers and writers as he visits the earth's extreme places in search of purpose and understanding.

*Horizon*, hardcover, Knopf, 592 pages, 6¾"x 9½": \$30.00

**HORIZON**

BY BARRY LOPEZ



**THE TANGLED TREE: A RADICAL NEW HISTORY OF LIFE**

BY DAVID QUAMMEN

*The Tangled Tree* explores how the molecular study of evolution through the sequencing of DNA has led to the surprising discovery of horizontal gene transfer—a process by which genes move between different species. As it turns out, the tree of life is more twisted than we could have imagined—we now know that roughly 80% of the human genome arrived via horizontal gene transfer in the form of viral infection. This fascinating and well-informed book explains this complex process and its role in past and future evolution.

*The Tangled Tree*, paperback, Simon & Schuster, 480 pages, 6"x 9": \$18.00

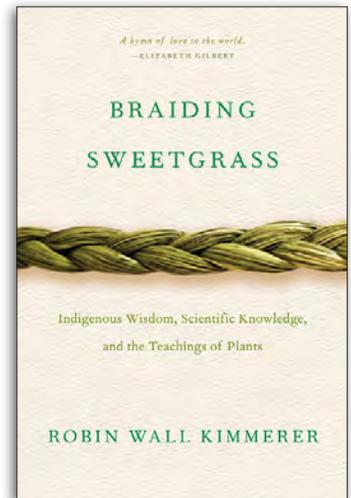
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**BRAIDING SWEETGRASS: INDIGENOUS WISDOM, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE,  
AND THE TEACHINGS OF PLANTS**

BY ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

Indigenous botanist Kimmerer offers a holistic and scientific approach to understanding the natural world. This top-selling book is a beautiful blend of science and spirituality, and pushes readers to acknowledge the reciprocal relationships between us and all other living things.

*Braiding Sweetgrass, paperback, Milkweed Editions, 408 pages, 5"x 8¼": \$18.00*



**THE NICKEL BOYS**

BY COLSON WHITEHEAD

Whitehead's newest novel follows on the heels of his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Underground Railroad*. A work of historical fiction centering on the African American experience, this story follows a black boy in Jim Crow-era Florida whose innocent mistake lands him in the Nickel Academy juvenile reformatory. Based on a real Florida reform school that operated for over 100 years, this novel is an important read.

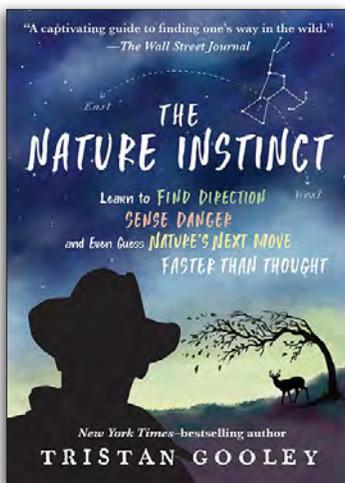
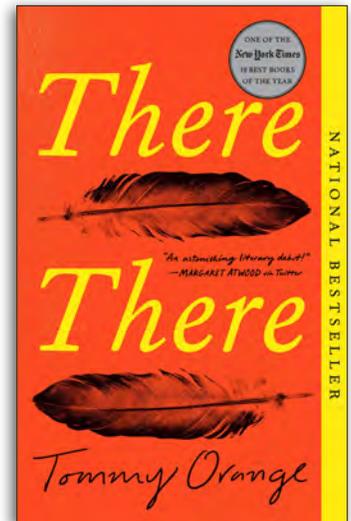
*The Nickel Boys, hardcover, Doubleday, 224 pages, 5¾"x 8½": \$24.95*

**THERE THERE**

BY TOMMY ORANGE

This acclaimed and best-selling novel follows twelve characters, all from Native American communities, who are all interconnected in ways they do not yet know. Their stories give a voice to the struggles unique to the urban Native American community, and tell a contemporary tale of painful histories, spirituality, and sacrifice.

*There There, paperback, Vintage, 304 pages, 5"x 8": \$16.00*



**THE NATURE INSTINCT**

BY TRISTAN GOOLEY

In his newest book, master outdoorsman Gooley helps readers unlock an intuitive understanding of their surroundings. This book is a great guide to focusing the senses and reconnecting with an instinctual knowledge of landscapes.

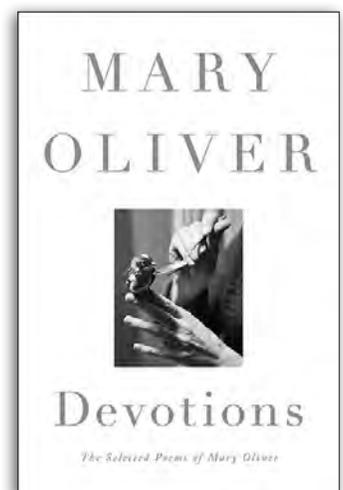
*The Nature Instinct, paperback, The Experiment, 384 pages, 5¾"x 8": \$16.95*

**DEVOTIONS: THE SELECTED POEMS OF MARY OLIVER**

BY MARY OLIVER

This beautifully curated book of selected poems highlights over 200 works by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver. These poems span over 50 years of her writing career and showcase her brilliant verse. A wonderful book for any admirer of poetry.

*Devotions, hardcover, Penguin Press, 480 pages, 6½"x 9½": \$30.00*





**BRINE SHRIMP ORNAMENT**

Liven up your holiday decorations with a brine shrimp ornament. Ornaments measure 3 inches tall and serve as a festive tribute to the endemic *Artemia monica* of Mono Lake. This *Mono Lake Committee exclusive* is available in either silver or gold.  
*Brine shrimp ornament, please specify silver or gold: \$10.00*



**FELT WILDLIFE ORNAMENTS**

These handmade felted black bear and chickadee ornaments are made from 100% wool, making them as eco-friendly as they are adorable. They make the perfect holiday décor or can adorn your house year-round.  
*Felt wildlife ornaments, please specify black bear, 3": \$16.50, or chickadee, 1": \$12.50*



**FIR NEEDLE SOAP**  
 This fresh and festive eco-friendly soap from Sierra Essentials is hand-crafted near Lake Tahoe and contains the finest organic ingredients and essential oils. Enjoy this vegan, gluten-free, best-selling soap during the holidays, or any time you want to be transported to the forest.  
*Fir needle soap, 5½ ounces: \$8.00*



**CABIN SPRAY**

Transform your space into a cozy mountain cabin with this festively fragranced room spray from Good & Well Supply Co. The scent, "Roam," is a hand-blended combination of pine needle, vetiver, and sandalwood, lending the perfect woody smell to any room.  
*Cabin spray, 3.4 ounces: \$25.00*

**MATTE STERLING SILVER HOOP EARRINGS**

Joslyn wears these clean and classic top-selling earrings made by local artist Lothlorien Stewart of Mostly Sweet Jewelry. Each lightweight pair is handmade in her El Portal workshop, and features a unique matte finish, sleek natural design, and secure closure.  
*Matte sterling silver hoop earrings, 1½" diameter: \$55.00*



**TRAVEL TIN CANDLES**

Let these candles from Good & Well Supply Co. shed their soft light and lovely aromas in your home or on the go. Each clean-burning, GMO-free soy wax candle has a USA-grown balsa wood wick and is packaged in a pretty travel tin, so you can take it with you.  
*Travel tin candles, 4 ounces, 20–25 hours burn time, please specify fragrance: Roam (pine needle, vetiver, and sandalwood), Meadow (wild lavender, cedarwood, and camphor), or Solstice (blood orange, bergamot, and florals): \$15.00*

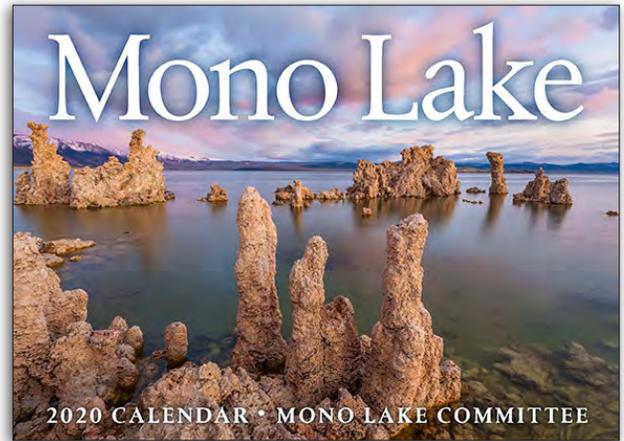


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**MONO LAKE 2020 CALENDAR**

The Mono Lake 2020 Calendar features stunning images of our favorite wild and wonderful watershed. Bring Mono Lake into your home 366 days of the leap year, with views of the Mono Basin's tufa towers, sunsets, streams, wildlife, storms, fall colors, and winter landscapes as captured by skilled photographers. Printed in the USA on recycled paper. Call us for holiday gift shipping options and for special bulk pricing on orders of two or more calendars.

*Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*  
 Mono Lake 2020 Calendar, 13"x 9½": \$14.95



**SOLAR INFLATABLE LANTERN**

Let this lantern illuminate your next outdoor adventure! This 75-lumen lantern is solar powered, collapsible, waterproof, and custom printed with the Mono Lake Committee logo on the bottom. Each lantern also includes a USB cable for charging in the absence of sunlight.

*Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*  
 Solar inflatable lantern, 5"x 5"x 5", packs flat:  
 \$24.99

**MONO LAKE CARD SET**

Featuring the popular art of Wendy Morgan, this *Mono Lake Committee exclusive* card set features 12 local and beloved wildlife species from Eared Grebes to coyotes. These cards are blank inside making them great for any occasion.

*Mono Lake card set, 12 notecards with envelopes, 4½"x 6¼": \$19.00*



AMERICAN AVOCET



COYOTE



OSPREY



WESTERN TANAGER



MULE DEER



BLACK BEAR



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SAGE GROUSE



MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD



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# Staff migrations

by Jessica Schneider

In a blink, summer 2019 came to a close and another excellent group of seasonal staff headed out into the world, in one way or another changed by their time spent in the Mono Basin.

When not answering questions on the front counter, Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Kevin Brown** also presented his talk, “Save the Pupfish! History, Water, and the Surprising Persistence of the Devils Hole Pupfish,” at our Refreshments with Refreshing ‘Ologists lecture series.

**Merryn Venugopal** is sticking around the Eastern Sierra for the winter after a great summer as Information Center & Bookstore Assistant. We were fortunate to have her professionalism and experience with retail systems at the front counter all season.

Back for her second season as Canoe Coordinator, **Alison Kaplan** captained the Mono Lake Intern crew in leading weekend canoe tours for 680 guests, plus canoe tours for Lee Vining Elementary School and High School students, and a dozen custom tours too.

Each summer, Mono Lake Interns undergo two full weeks of training. Following the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, they immediately start conducting daily South Tufa tours, weekend canoe tours, Information Center & Bookstore shifts, pop-up interpretation in front of the bookstore, and answering phones in the back office. On top of these tasks they are expected to write Mono-logue posts, help at the Outdoor Education Center, assist with stream monitoring, help with the Trail Chic Fashion Show Fundraiser, and work the Tioga Pass Run. Each intern has individual projects as well.

Birding Intern **Krista Fanucchi** took her expert ornithology knowledge to County Park and up Lundy Canyon for a summer of well-attended weekend bird walks. Krista helped with the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua and assisted with Point Blue Conservation Science’s gull research and phalarope counts organized by Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge and California State Parks (see page 6).

Mono Lake Intern **Caroline Bottega** had a busy summer checking piezometers to measure groundwater levels on tributary streams, maintaining the Mono Lake Committee’s social media accounts, and keeping town stocked with Mono Lake information as town ambassador. She is now in Jackson, Wyoming, working with the Teton Science School’s AmeriCorps program. Caroline was this year’s Don Douglass Memorial Intern (see page 13).

**Meghan Cihasky**, Mono Lake Intern, monitored willow growth on Rush Creek, worked on the invasive plant interpretive program, and helped with a plethora of other office tasks. She is attending the University of Colorado at Boulder this fall.

As a Mono Lake Intern, **Chloe Isaacs** helped with the

Committee’s social media, served as internet community ambassador, kept membership items stocked in the back office and bookstore, and helped retrieve data from field cameras. She is now working at Pinnacles National Park as an Interpretation, Education, and Visitor Services Intern.

**AnnaLisa Mayer**, Mono Lake Intern, organized the local Great Sierra River Cleanup day, worked on the invasive species interpretive program, monitored willow growth, did the thankless task of keeping the heavily-used South Tufa packs cleaned and organized, and helped with membership. AnnaLisa was this year’s Ruth Borun Intern (see page 13).

Mono Lake Intern **Ellie Neifeld** organized an impressive agenda of Refreshments with Refreshing ‘Ologists talks on Wednesday afternoons in the Mono Lake Theater & Gallery throughout the summer. She also kept the bookstore’s brine shrimp tank clean and stocked with Mono Lake’s *Artemia monica*, and helped retrieve data from field cameras.

A huge thank you to all of our seasonal staff who helped introduce so many visitors to the wonders of Mono Lake! ❖

*Jessica Schneider is the Committee’s Office Director. She is looking forward to the changing of the season and is excited to cross-country ski all winter long.*



The 2019 Mono Lake Committee staff.

ANDREW YOUSSEF



# From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

The season of green and gold has returned to Lee Vining—green leaves with a sprinkle of gold, green rabbitbrush topped with a riot of gold flower heads. It's a beautiful time of year in the Mono Basin. Thank you to all who sent contributions in honor or in memory of friends and loved ones. Your thoughtful gifts help our efforts to protect and restore this special place, season after season.

## In honor

**Ted Bosley** of Glendora sent a contribution in honor of **Mike Prather**. **Bob Brown** of Thousand Oaks gave a gift “in thanksgiving for **Dave & Janet Carle** and their care for our planet.” **Margret Lohfeld** of Los Angeles made a donation in honor of her brother **Martin Engel**—“the kindest person I know.” **Donna Pozzi** of Sacramento sent a contribution in honor of the retirement of **Dave Marquart**. **Joyce Schieferstein** of Walnut Creek made a donation in honor of the birthday of her son **Craig Schieferstein**. **Wendy & Steve Smit** of Healdsburg gave a gift in honor of **Ann Howald**. The **Resources Legacy Fund** sent a contribution in honor of their retiring colleague, **Mary Scoonover**.

## In memory

**Nancy Damsen** of Corralitos gave a gift in memory of **Sofia Sherri**, the mother of her neighbor **Kerry Skyles**. **Linda Frederico** of Rolling Hills Estates sent a contribution in memory of **Joan Dunesme**, the mother of her co-worker **Jill Dunesme Franzke**. **Kathleen Gaines** of San Rafael made a donation in memory of **Edith Gaines**. **Elizabeth**

**Harris** of Durham, NC gave a gift in memory of “my friend and colleague **John Boynton**.” **Frank Hauser** of Oakland sent a contribution in memory of **Mildred & Ed Bennett**. **Jennifer Herron** of Anacortes, WA made a donation in memory of her father **Donald Moore**. **Greg Humphrey** of Bishop gave a gift in memory of his wife **Bettie Rose Humphrey**. **Robert & Barbara Lagas** of Columbia, MD sent a contribution in memory of Barbara’s uncle **Douglas Humm**—“he thought the efforts to restore Mono Lake and the surrounding areas were wonderful.”

**Anne Kellogg** of Los Osos made a donation in the name of **Lizzie Hines-Bescoby**, “who spent many years bringing the Mt. Baldy School junior high kids to visit Mono Lake.” **Sue & Jeff Maples** of Carson City, NV sent a contribution in memory of **Elizabeth “Betty” Anderson**. **Verna Morgan** of Seal Beach gave a gift in memory of her husband **Gordon Morgan**. **Gordon Ray** of La Honda sent a contribution in memory of **Wallie Ray**. **Scott Rosoff** of Palmdale made a donation in memory of his sister **Robyn Dawn Rosoff** and his parents **Lea & Irv Rosoff**. We

received a gift from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous in memory of **Judy McLeary** of Walnut Creek.

We received donations in memory of **Michael Robinson** from **Kim Brandt** of San Clemente, **Willa Killeen** of Fountain Valley, and **Margaret Christiansen** of West Des Moines, IA. We received donations in memory of **Pam Stanley** from **Michele Merchant** of Bridgeport, **Barbara Magnus**, and **Keith & Sue Eyrich** of Irvine, Pam’s brother and sister-in-law. ❖



Giant blazing star at the shore of Mono Lake.

## Phalaropes from page 6

this will push Mono Lake to the forefront of research once again.

## A hemispheric scientific community

This great collective effort speaks volumes about the rich scientific community that cares about Mono Lake and its bird populations. The Committee

supported the meeting and thanks the Sierra District of California State Parks and the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua’s Jeff Maurer Research Grant for funding this year’s surveys at Mono Lake; Ryan Carle and Dr. Margaret Rubega for organizing the phalarope meeting; the Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation, US Forest Service International

Program, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, and Manomet for funding and sponsoring the meeting; and Aves Argentinas and Argentina Natura International for their effort to establish the largest National Park in Argentina at Laguna Mar Chiquita, the winter home to large concentrations of Wilson’s Phalaropes. ❖



# MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

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## Winter Field Seminars

### **Mono Basin Winter Photography**

January 10–12, 2020

with Joe Decker

### **Mono Basin Winter Wander** (half day)

February 1, February 15, March 7, March 21

with Nora Livingston

Call (760) 647-6595 or visit [monolake.org/seminars](http://monolake.org/seminars)  
to sign up today!

## **WILD & SCENIC** FILM FESTIVAL

HOSTED BY THE MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

**March 11–13**

**Sierra Madre  
Santa Monica  
Los Angeles**

a fundraiser for the

**Mono Basin Outdoor  
Education Center**

[monolake.org/wildandscenic](http://monolake.org/wildandscenic)



## **“High Sierra by Hand and Foot”**

paintings by  
Faith Rumm

Stop by any day, 9:00AM to 5:00PM, through  
February to see these beautiful paintings.