

Spring

1999



MONO LAKE

NEWSLETTER

Special Policy Map

1999 Field Seminars

Mono Lake Newsletter

Spring 1999

Volume 21, Number 4



MONO LAKE
COMMITTEE

Mono Lake Office

Information Center and Bookstore

Highway 395 at Third Street
Post Office Box 29
Lee Vining, California 93541
Phone (760) 647-6595

Los Angeles Office

322 Culver Blvd.
Playa Del Rey, California 90293
Phone (818) 716-8488

On the Internet

www.monolake.org
info@monolake.org

Staff

Shelly Backlar Development Director
Ramona Robbins Clark Retail Operations Manager
Arya Degenhardt Communications Coordinator
Rebecca Dohert Membership Coordinator
Heidi Hopkins Eastern Sierra Policy Director
Michael Klapp Web Graphics Specialist
Geoffrey McQuilkin Assistant Executive Director
Bartshe Miller Education Director
Gary Nelson Canoe Tour Supervisor
Shannon Nelson Administrative Director
Kay Ogden Marketing Director
Greg Reis Website Information Specialist
Kathi Richards Contoller
Frances Spivy-Weber Executive Director
Laura Walker Bookstore Manager

Board of Directors

Richard Atwater, Glendale
Martha Davis, San Francisco
Sally Gaines, Mammoth Lakes
Amy Holm, Los Angeles
David Kanner, Redwood City
Ed Manning, Los Angeles
Robert Marks, Santa Monica
David Marquart, Lee Vining
Jane Rogers, San Francisco
Guillermo Rodriguez, San Francisco
Tom Soto, Santa Monica

Officers

Sally Gaines and Ed Manning, Co-chairs
David Marquart, Treasurer
Tom Soto, Secretary
Frances Spivy-Weber, Executive Director
Brent Couer-Barron, Corporate Counsel

Directors Emeriti

Grace de Laet, San Francisco
Helen Green, Berkeley
Mary Hanson, Swall Meadows
Genny Smith, Mammoth Lakes

T

his issue's cover photo takes us down to Mono's shore, where the promise of spring hangs in the air. In fact, nary a snowflake is in sight as we complete this issue of the *Newsletter*—though we know that we'll be seeing more before the warm days of summer truly arrive.

Inside you'll find a close look at the policy issues facing Mono Lake and the Mono Lake Committee in 1999. There's a map showing their geographic diversity, a discussion revealing their content complexity, and a discussion of how the Committee chooses what to work on. It all starts on page 11.

You'll also want to read about the post-fire status of Lee Vining High School on page 16, and be sure to take a look at this year's Field Seminar lineup on pages 18–24.

This is the first newsletter in many years to have a team of editors working on it. We've both enjoyed working together to create this issue and hope that you find the pages that follow to be the richer for it.

—Geoff McQuilkin & Arya Degenhardt



A Los Angeles Department of Water and Power crew recently removed old concrete evaporation ponds near the lake. The Tufa State Reserve requested the action to restore natural conditions.

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.

The *Mono Lake Newsletter* is a quarterly publication on the Mono Lake Committee. Written material contained in this newsletter may be quoted or reproduced for review, news reporting, educational purposes, or related non-profit uses; a copy of the publication is requested. Reproduction or quotation for other purposes may be approved upon written request. ISSN #0275-6633. Copyright © 1999 Mono Lake Committee.

Roll out restoration!

In the final two weeks of 1998, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) released its Mono Basin Implementation Plan. The plan pulls the Water Board's various restoration directives since 1994 into a single administrative document—a DWP workplan for restoration. The plan also will serve as a guiding document for the Committee and others who are tracking or assisting with restoration.

Assembling all of the information in a single document was no small feat. Three Water Board orders and at least as many supporting documents developed since 1994 contained directives about restoration.

While the actions described by the implementation plan contained nothing substantively new (the Water Board orders govern restoration actions), DWP voluntarily added certain procedures that signal a welcome change from the past. Most importantly, DWP is offering to hold semiannual meetings, in the spring and in the fall, at which interested parties can discuss the upcoming season's activities and the end-of-season reports.

At the first such meeting this spring—sometime in April—the Committee expects to seek clarification




of certain elements of the Water Board orders that were left undefined. These include:

- what data and information will be posted on the DWP web site that is under development;
- refinement of protocol for operating diversion facilities, particularly how the Rush Creek augmentation will be achieved (augmentation is a procedure for diverting a portion of Lee Vining Creek's flow to increase the peak flow on Rush Creek¹);
- timing and protocol for the various aerial work to be done (aerial photography of habitat as well as aerial waterfowl counts).

Back in the Mono Basin, the Committee is preparing for its role in restoration this year. Activities include planning a day to plant more Jeffrey pines along Lee Vining Creek, training staff to monitor groundwater levels, spending time on the streams during the hard-to-predict peak flow period, and developing a photopoint program to visually track restoration.

Here's to another season of painted rocks—the scientists' colorful means of measuring bedload movement—rolling on down the streams! 🌲

Restoration and monitoring activities for 1999

- Rush Creek channel reopenings
- Posting of real-time stream data on the Internet
- Design for sediment bypass on Walker, Parker, and Lee Vining creeks
-  Jeffrey pine plantings on Lee Vining Creek below County Road
-  Placement of spawning gravel in Lee Vining Creek
-  Stream monitoring by scientists
- Spring survey
- Aerial photography of stream morphology and vegetation
- Aerial monitoring of waterfowl habitat areas around Mono Lake
- Aerial and ground surveys of waterfowl



this marker means Committee and volunteers will assist with these activities

Long-term timeline

2004

- Tree planting moratorium ends (excluding select areas scheduled for replanting in 1999-2000) and evaluation of natural revegetation commences.
- Five-year monitoring cycle ends (an extreme wet year prior to this date will "reset the clock" and trigger initiation of a new five-year monitoring cycle). Monitoring triggered at five-year intervals:
- aerial documentation of stream morphology
- vegetation transects in waterfowl habitat areas
- spring surveys

2007

- Grazing moratorium along streams to be reassessed for 2008 and beyond.

2009

- Deadline for assessing efficacy of Rush Creek augmentation¹
- Second five-year point for monitoring purposes (unless an extreme wet year has reset the clock).

2014

- If Mono Lake has not reached its target of 6391, the Water Board will hold a hearing on Mono Lake.
- Third five-year point for monitoring (unless an extreme wet year has reset the clock).

Heidi Hopkins is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She's already got a backpacking trip planned for the fall.

¹ Augmentation of Rush Creek using Lee Vining Creek water is a means of achieving restoration flows on Rush Creek in the absence of a facility for managing releases from Grant Lake dam.

Flames on ice

by David Carle

Editor's Note: One of Mono Lake's many restoration projects involves fire. Prescribed burns reopen densely thatched waterfowl habitat and return natural processes to the ecosystem. In this essay, written for the local Mammoth Times, State Park Ranger David Carle recounts this past winter's burn.

Ignition was at 11 AM, January 6, when temperature, humidity, and wind conditions were all "within prescription" at Mono Lake. Fire specialists stood close by, analyzing the behavior of the small test burn.

It flamed just fine. In fact, compared to prescribed burns of these wetlands in prior years, the fuel—a mix of sedges, grasses, cattails, and tules—was enthusiastically dry. It had been almost a snow-free early winter, with severe cold a few weeks earlier crystallizing whatever moisture remained within the thatch. "Thatch" is the name for the accumulation as each year's plant growth dies, come winter. The thatch, sometimes a blanket several feet thick above the standing water of the marsh, is a storehouse of plant nutrients waiting to be recycled into the ground by fire.

The parcel to be burned was ignited in strips, flames dropped from canisters of fuel called "drip torches." Carefully burnt strips along the parcel edge became a "black-line," an expanding fuel break. Once a broad enough safe zone was charred, hotter fire moved more rapidly through the rest of the parcel.

On this day the ground was covered by ice throughout the marsh. It was interesting to watch flames over ice. Heat rises, so the fire did not usually melt the "floor" of frozen water, except in the hottest spots, where dense stands of tules and cattails flared up. Once warmer weather eventually thaws the area, a stubble of stems will be revealed, above roots sunk in the wet ground, unaffected by the fire. In the spring, marsh plants will respond to the



fertilizing ash with vigorous sprouting, further encouraged by direct sunlight on the young sprouts, now that the blanket-cover of thatch is removed.

Burning wetlands is part of an ongoing effort to test the effectiveness of fire as a tool in waterfowl habitat restoration at Mono Lake. Unburnt marshland becomes so thick with decades of thatch-buildup that it is nearly impenetrable to ducks and geese. The standing dead vegetation has almost no food value for wildlife. Burnt marshes, however, respond with a greater variety of vegetation types and are more accessible to animals.

A fire regime has been a part of the Mono Basin ecosystem for thousands of years. Fires were naturally started by lightning or set by Native Americans to improve hunting and plant-gathering conditions. Tules, cattails, and willows had many uses that were aided by new growth following frequent burning. Coring through 9,000 years of marsh deposits in northeastern California shows dozens of major ash layers, indicating periodic major fires, with enough charcoal spread throughout to suggest that humans set regular, lower

intensity burns for thousands of years.

Decades of effective fire suppression have altered plant communities throughout California. The reintroduction of fire to ecosystems is a statewide policy for California State Parks, particularly within units managed for their natural values, as is the State Reserve at Mono Lake.

Two parcels were burned this January. The first was small, only five acres, but important to the research objectives, because the same area was burned three years ago. The response of re-burning will be compared to the freshly burned areas. More frequent burns may produce more open areas for waterfowl. This kind of frequency, 2 to 5 years, was the pattern generally followed by Native Americans in marshes. The second parcel burned was over 50 acres, large enough to begin truly evaluating the results of this effort.

The smoke from these fires is dramatic, but gone quickly as the flashy fuel goes out (unlike the persistent smoke of fires in timber, which smoulders, sometimes for weeks). If next winter you see smoke rising from the shore of Mono Lake, it will probably be another section of marsh, long protected from wildfire, feeling the healing touch of flames on ice. 🐦

Policy Notes

Mono Lake helps Bay-Delta


In February of this year Mono Lake Committee Executive Director Frances Spivy-Weber was appointed by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to serve on the Bay-Delta Advisory Council. The Council is made up of stakeholders representing business, agriculture, and the environment. Its job is to advise the federal and state governments on plans to restore the Bay-Delta ecosystem. The Council also seeks to improve water quality and water supply reliability for farmers and Southern California water users who tap into the State Water Project. Fran will be representing environmental interests from Southern California on the Council.

Ultra-low flush toilet ordinance upheld in Los Angeles

The Los Angeles City Council voted 9-4 to keep in place an ordinance sponsored by Ruth Galanter that requires people selling homes and apartments to have ultra-low flush toilets at the time of resale. This ordinance saves water, which is good news for Mono Lake and the Santa Monica Bay. It also creates jobs, which is great for the six Los Angeles community groups that distribute free toilets.

In 1998 Los Angeles was using no more water than it did in 1972, thanks in part to voluntary installation of these low-flush toilets. Now water savings should double over the next five to seven years.

Villaraigosa links environment and community development in LA

In February the Mono Lake Committee joined environmentalists in Los Angeles in a meeting with Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa. The meeting focused on ways to fund environmental programs which would help revitalize both urban communities and the Los Angeles and San Gabriel River watershed. If the Los Angeles area watershed was restored to capture more rainfall in groundwater basins and catchment areas, the region could decrease its import of Bay-Delta water and provide thousands of entry-level inner-city jobs. Villaraigosa enthusiastically began to organize a follow-up meeting to act on many of the suggestions discussed at the meeting. 

What on earth are TMDLs?

by Michael Weber

The water flowing down Mono Basin streams is as pure as one could want. This high quality makes these streams especially attractive to cities in Southern California, which need clean water to dilute the high concentrations of salt found in water diverted from the Colorado River. Indeed, water quality will only become more important in meeting the needs of more people in the future. A recent agreement between Los Angeles-based environmental organizations and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will help meet these needs by improving water quality outside of the Mono Basin. It all has to do with TMDLs.

The Clean Water Act of 1972 required a clean-up of the nation's waters, which led to reductions in pollution from sewage treatment

plants and industrial sources. (By promoting the use of low-flow toilets, the Mono Lake Committee helped sewage treatment plants in Los Angeles reduce the volume of sewage to be treated.) However, the government did little to stem the tide of pollution flowing from farm fields, city streets, and parking lots.

This will change under the recent consent decree between EPA and environmental groups. Under the decree, the EPA must start addressing these other sources of water pollution by setting Total Maximum Daily Loads or TMDLs for pollutants entering specific streams, lakes, and coastal waters.

Once set by the government, TMDLs will be divided among those groups or individuals polluting the water. For instance, the government

will set a limit on the amount of nitrogen that can enter LA County's Malibu Creek. This amount will be divided up among all of the polluters associated with Malibu Creek water.

Setting TMDLs for bodies of water in Los Angeles and Ventura counties alone will take many years partly because there are so many and such diverse sources of pollutants. Sources of pollution can range from farm fields to residential developments.

The payoff from the implementation of TMDLs will be waters that people can swim and fish in or use as sources for drinking water. And that is a good thing for Mono Basin streams.

Michael Weber is an environmental writer based in Southern California. He volunteered his time to gather this update for the Committee.

Upcoming Mono Lake events



• Warren Marr photography reception: Memorial Day weekend

We are very proud to have the extraordinary photography of Warren Marr here in our very own Bookstore and Information Center in Lee Vining. You might know of Warren Marr because he donated the inspiring photograph of Mono Lake on display in our Bookstore. Come see a collection of his images and meet Warren at a reception on Sunday, May 30 from 4-6 PM. If you can't make the reception be sure to stop by to see his work this summer!

• Celebrate Restoration Days: September 3-6

Mark your calendar and make your plans, because this year's Restoration Days will be lots of fun. Come for the garden reception at the Committee Information Center & Bookstore on the evening of Friday, September 3 and stay all weekend. On Saturday and Sunday there will be myriad chances to learn more about and help with restoration work in the Mono Basin. There will also be opportunities for hands-on learning about everything from ornithology to geology as well as special canoe tours on Mono. Keeping with tradition will be the Committee's Annual Meeting at County Park preceded by something new at the Rehydration Ceremony.

Participating in Restoration Days is a wonderful way to keep in touch with old friends while meeting fellow lake enthusiasts and learning more about the Mono Basin.

• Join the High Sierra Fall Century: September 18

Have you started training yet? If not, you've still got plenty of time to get ready for the High Sierra Fall Century on Saturday, September 18. The 100-mile course takes you into the quiet of the Mono Basin and includes awesome views of Mono Lake, the Sierra Nevada, and the White Mountains. You also have the option of a 35 or 60 mile ride. And, if you don't want to ride but want to participate, volunteering to help the cyclists is very rewarding and fun. (There will be a special party on Sunday for all volunteers!)

• Be a part of the Living Lakes Conference: October

Join us here in the Mono Basin for an international conference on stream restoration. Lake and stream specialists—as well as journalists from around the world—will be coming to the Mono Basin to discuss stream restoration efforts worldwide and the connection of these efforts to water supply, water quality, and sustainable living.

If you are interested in attending the conference, or want to learn more about Living Lakes, call the Committee for more information, visit www.livinglakes.org, or check out the Committee's award-winning Website at www.monolake.org.

Living Lakes is an international partnership of lake-protection organizations pursuing environmental conservation and sustainable development. The conference will be funded by the Global Nature Fund.

• Free Drawing offers great prizes: coming soon

The Grand Prize for this year's Free Drawing package, donated by Living Lakes sponsor Lufthansa Airlines, will be two round-trip tickets on Lufthansa Airlines! That's to anywhere they fly, and in Business Class seats! More great prizes are still being gathered, so don't forget to enter! Keep your eyes open for the Free Drawing package to arrive in your mailbox by summer. Enter as often as you like, just make sure you return your tickets to us by November 15, 1999. Good luck!

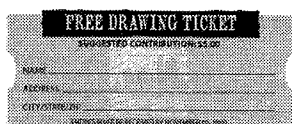


HIGH SIERRA



FALL CENTURY

Living
Lakes



Mono in the media

The long-term protection of Mono Lake depends on people caring about the lake and its resources. This sounds simple for those of us who already know about Mono's history, but many people haven't heard about Mono Lake or seen why protection of this extraordinary place is so important. Media mentions of Mono help spread the word about the efforts for recovery, educate more people about the situation, and ultimately translate into more advocates for Mono Lake.

Here is a partial list of articles that have appeared about Mono Lake during this past year:

Zukunftsfahiger Bodensee

Magazine of the Lake Constance Foundation, "Living Lakes oder der Bodensee und 750,000 Ultra Low Flush Toilets in L.A." February, 1998.

Los Angeles Times Editorial

"New Day for Mono Lake" March, 1998.

San Francisco Examiner

Travel Section: "Return to Mono Lake" May, 1998.

Aqueduct 2000

Magazine of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, "Mono Rising"

KZLA-FM The Sunday Show

"Mono Lake restoration" September, 1998.

The Osgood Files, CBS Radio

"Mono Basin restoration" November, 1998.

The Mercury

Newspaper of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa, "World's 'great lakes' threatened on all sides" November, 1998.

Audubon Magazine

Special 100th Anniversary Edition: The Century.
Mono Lake recognized as one of ten Audubon "legacies"
David Gaines recognized as one of 100 Champions of Conservation

La Opinion

"Jobs and water conservation" December, 1998.

Streamkeepers Log

California Trout publication
"Mono Storm Over: Caltrout II settled by historic board vote" Winter, 1999.

Mammoth Times

"Education Program and Web Site Win State Awards" January, 1999.

Keeping up on Mono Lake in the media is important for the Committee. If you can help us keep track please contact Kay Ogden (kay@monolake.org) at 760-647-6595 or send us any articles that you see.

State awards Committee's work



Kay Ogden (holding two plaques!) recently accepted awards for Best Website and Best Ecotourism Program on behalf of the Committee at the California Conference on Tourism in Sacramento.

Each year at the California Conference on Tourism, the California Trade and Commerce Agency and the Division of Tourism honor California companies and individuals for excellence in travel and tourism marketing and management.

The Mono Lake Committee was chosen to receive two awards for 1998: *Best Ecotourism Program* and, with a co-winner, *Best Website!* California Travel and Tourism Commission Executive Director Caroline Beteta presented the prestigious awards to honorees during a special luncheon in Sacramento on January 25.

"Seeing the Mono Lake Committee's logo on two huge projection screens during the luncheon was absolutely glorious!" said Kay, who accepted the awards for the Committee. "There was a loud and long ovation after the presentation for Best Ecotourism Program, and many people came up to me later to say how wonderful it was to see the Mono Lake Committee win these awards. I also had several people come up to me and ask 'what's the story with Mono Lake?' We still have work to do."



Lakewatch

Wet to the north, dry to the south— Mono Lake in the middle

by Greg Reis

As the lengthening days of spring loosen the icy grip of winter, thoughts turn toward the annual opening of the Tioga Pass Road to Yosemite, an event that transforms the Mono Basin. Where for the last few months a left turn onto Highway 395 required only a quick stop, suddenly one will actually have to wait for traffic. The Information Center and the town of Lee Vining will bustle with activity.

Just in time, a new feature on the Mono Lake Website is a listing of Tioga Pass opening and closing dates since 1933. Little known facts like these will literally be at your fingertips: the average opening date is May 30 (but June 4 in the 1990s); earliest was April 8; and the latest was July 8. This history will aid in breaking through many visitors' disbelief that they can't go where they want to go when they want to go, by familiarizing

them with the sometimes-inconvenient geography of our area.

This same geography brings precious water to this dry state, and along with other benefits, it more than makes up for the inconvenience. Consistent with predictions for a dry winter in Southern California (see Lakewatch, Fall 1998 Newsletter), the early-January snowpack was about 50% of normal. However, the March 1 snow survey found 6–8 feet of snow at 9–10,000 feet near Tioga Pass, and the water content had risen to 117% of normal for that date (99% of normal for April 1). Consistent with predictions, it was drier to the south, with the Owens Basin ranging between 65% and 100% of normal to date. To the north, however, some basins were reporting almost 200% of normal for March 1.

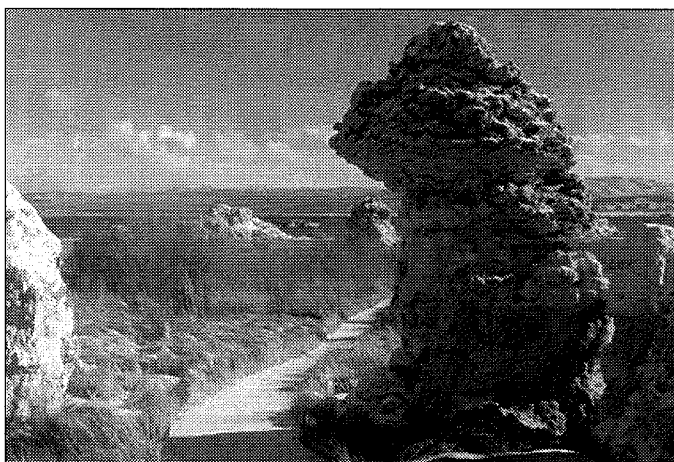
Mono Lake experienced a fast rise, from 6384.3 feet above sea level on

January 1 to 6384.8 on March 1. It inundated the upper Navy Beach warm spring, turned the new South Tufa trail into a mud puddle, and is flirting with the end of the old metal dock at Navy Beach.

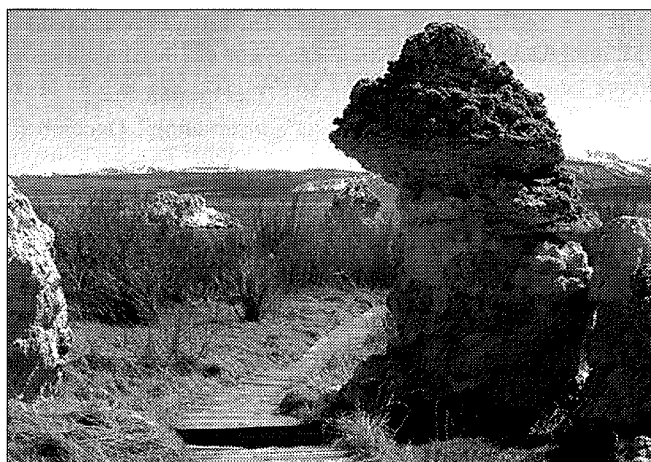
The forecast for Southern California through May is drier and warmer than average, so maybe Tioga Pass will open early, and maybe Mono Lake will rise slowly... but is the Mono Basin in Southern California? The divide between south and north is a grey one. Maps put us right in the middle so, as usual, the best way to know the forecast will be to wait and see. 🐦

Greg Reis is the Committee's Website Information Specialist. He has been making friends with Cecil the Walker Lake Monster.

Benchmarks ...



The view along the boardwalk at the County Park in March of 1995. Lake level: 6375. Note the tufa in the distance.



Four years later and nine feet higher, sizeable sections of the boardwalk have been lifted for the rising lake which is now at 6384 feet.

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of less political events at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

You know spring is edging in when you see bluebirds balanced atop the highway snowstakes. They look dubiously at the piles of snow beneath the trees and dart off to the warm, bright patches of light between the Jeffrey pines.


Other signs of spring are unavoidable as well: the weather warms slightly, the days expand, Orion sets early, snow melts out from the sunny spots in town, the creeks increase in vigor, and fresh flags snap in the wind at the Mono Cone.

Spring clouds begin to appear as well. In late March, one long thin cloud—two miles of moisture—perched over Mt.

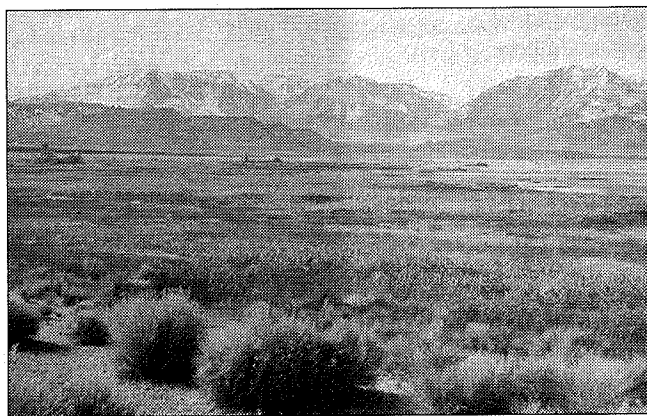


Ritter. It dipped at its center, making the cloud appear to have wings, a giant white gull leading the flock in from the coast for summer nesting at Mono.

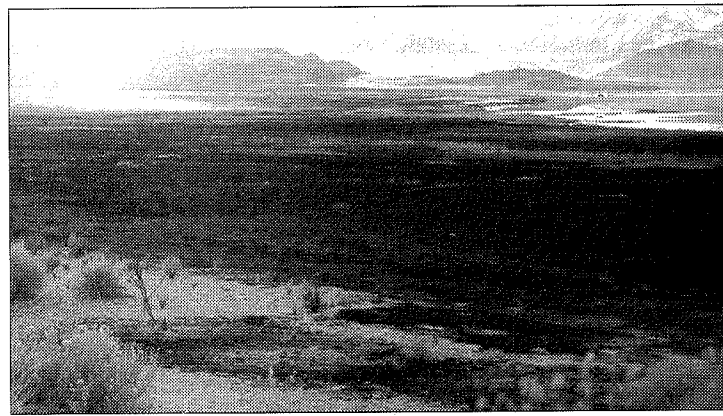
Avalanche chutes are another sign of spring, for now they are full of hard-packed, debris-saturated snow while the surrounding ground is bare. Reminders of winter storms, the chutes' snakelike paths off Mt. Gibbs and straight courses down from the Warren Bench are lingering reminders of the big snow storms now gone by.

With the change of season, the night gets darker. In mid winter the snowy mountains glow in the moonlight; now they are darker, absorbing light, inviting us with their newfound accessibility. 

... and more Benchmarks



January 1999. Approximately 11:00 AM just before the Tufa State Reserve controlled burn. East shore marsh vegetation was burned as part of the restoration and ecosystem management plan for the Mono Basin.



The same day, approximately two hours later. The controlled burn quickly and safely burned 50 acres of land right down to the shoreline. For details on the fire see page 4.

Talking with the Assistant Executive Director

Introductory note: We are proud to have Geoffrey McQuilkin as our new Assistant Executive Director. Geoff has been working with the Committee since 1990 in a variety of positions from Intern to Bookstore Manager to his most recent position of Communications Director. In this interview, fellow staff members got a chance to ask both serious and candid questions of our good friend in his new position.

How did you first hear about Mono Lake and the Mono Lake Committee, and how did you first get involved?

I first heard about the Mono Lake Committee when I was ten and I cut the article out of the LA Times that showed the landbridge being blown up to protect the nesting gulls. I remember having it on my wall for years. At some point after that I actually joined the Committee and I remember my parents giving me a Mono Lake poster for Christmas one year. My first trip to the Basin was in 1987. My friends and I wanted to go hiking in Tuolumne Meadows and somehow, amazingly enough, Tioga Pass was open on June 1. We drove up there and it snowed two feet on us so we hiked out and went to Mono Lake instead.

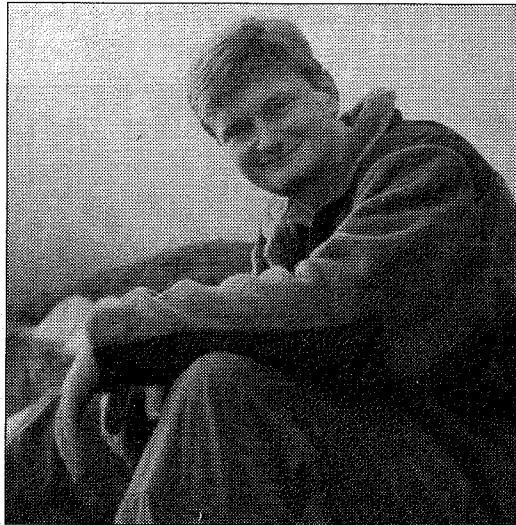
I met the Committee staff for the first time when I was in college and volunteered to work on the Bike-a-thon in 1988.

How long were you pronouncing "Mono" as "Ma-no" until someone corrected you?

I'm sure until I first came into the Information Center.

What would you like to see happen in the long term for the Committee?

Well, I think that one of the interesting things about the Committee is that we've always been a single-issue group focused on Mono Lake. And of course there are plenty of issues within that, but



we're not trying to find answers for all of the diverse environmental problems out there in the world. That gives us a lot of opportunities to look deeply into the issues at Mono Lake and adapt to the situation as things change here. So I see more education work on our part, but also more sharing of information about Mono Lake with people, and having the Committee be a center for gathering scientific research, writing, people's experiences, and putting them together on the Website and in our publications, and in the summer programs. I also see us holding on to the political power that comes from being a grassroots membership group. We have to have all those people's voices ready to stand behind the lake as future problems become clear.

What things are you working on right now that are moving us towards those goals?

Probably the biggest thing has been the Website and all the potential it offers to power a restoration clearinghouse effort. Now I think we're now at the point where we've got the expertise to do some really neat things. No one else is really going to be keeping track of the various restoration reports and information in a centralized way so it's up to us.

What are your new responsibilities as Assistant Executive Director and how are they different for you and the Committee?

Before I was primarily working on the Newsletter and other communications projects, and while I'll still be doing some of that, it won't be as hands-on. Overall, I'm responsible for the operation of the Lee Vining office, where most of our staff are located, and helping Fran where needed. Right now I'm more internally focused on just making sure that the Committee is running efficiently, that our programs are working successfully, that our budget is balanced, and that we're making the best use of members donations. As the year goes on, and those projects are completed, I hope to see that focus grow outward a bit more.

Describe one of your favorite kinds of days in the Mono Basin.

Summer time, summer days, of course. Living in the Mono Basin has gotten me interested in weather because you can see so much weather, you can see so far, and you can see things coming. Those are great days when you can watch the clouds build up over the lake and turn into an afternoon thunderstorm.

How did you get to be such a nice guy?

Well, you'll have to ask my parents. But thanks. ☺



Geoff with fellow interns in 1990.

Charting a course in a complex world

by Heidi Hopkins

The Mono Lake Committee has evolved over the last twenty years, responding to changes in the world around us and to the shining rise of Mono Lake. Still, the Committee's original mission remains essentially intact: to protect the values that make the Mono Basin productive to migratory birds and other wildlife and a wellspring of inspiration to the visiting public.

Thanks to our tremendous success at Mono Lake, "Mono Lake Committee" has become a household word in many circles, both regionally and statewide. This recognition brings responsibility. Today, more than ever before, we have to maintain our focus on our primary goals.

The Committee frequently receives requests for our participation in a wide range of environmental issues, particularly issues affecting the Eastern Sierra. For example, as a member of the Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce, we were asked to sign a resolution opposing open pit mining in Mono County. As a business in Lee Vining we were asked to join the effort to seek changes in the way the Tioga Pass Road is managed. As an environmental group that succeeded in regaining water from the City of Los Angeles, we frequently are contacted by folks who are working on the various problems at Owens Dry Lake and at Walker Lake, Nevada.

Over the years, the Committee has learned that it's important to prioritize and focus our efforts. We've learned this in part by necessity, in part through trial and error. Most importantly, the Committee can't do everything. On the other hand, most issues deserve our consideration.

To help guide us in deciding what we will and will not take on—and the amount of time we will devote to an issue—the Committee has developed a decision-making process and a matrix of priorities through which staff filter every incoming issue or request.

Decision-making process

The Mono Lake Committee is a commit-

tee, and its decisions are decisions by committee. The primary decision-makers are staff and board members. Opinions expressed by Committee members at large weigh heavily in decisions.

Depending on the level of importance of any particular issue, there are three basic ways the Committee reaches a decision. For straightforward matters, staff recommend a decision, which is forwarded to the executive director for approval. For more complex issues, staff and the executive director jointly reach a decision, sometimes with the input of selected board members. The most complex decisions are referred to the Committee board of directors. Staff attend and contribute their opinions at these board meetings.

Matrix of priorities

Above all, the Committee is guided by its mission of "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." But while the mission serves as a guidepost, it is not the pragmatic filter we need to decide among competing demands on a daily basis.

When a particular issue arises the Committee first asks: Is the issue within the Mono Basin watershed or, if not, might it significantly affect Mono Basin resources? "Located within the Mono Basin watershed" is straightforward. "Affecting Mono Basin resources" much less so. There are many issues outside the Mono Basin that can and do directly affect resources in the Basin—LA's efficient use of water, federal and state rules on clean air, California's need for safe drinking water in the future, to name a few. But the issue is neither in the Mono Basin watershed nor likely to significantly affect its resources, in most cases we will not take on the issue.

Next, we examine where an issue fits within our organizational priority areas. First and most important, will the issue affect the *resources*—the lake, streams and wildlife of the Mono Basin? Second, will the issue affect the *visitor experience* at Mono Lake?

Finally, if further prioritization is necessary—for example, to decide how much staff time to devote to a particular issue—we have another filter: first priority, the lake and tributary streams; second priority, the basin as a whole.

An important element throughout our decision-making is how the Committee's positions on issues and the actions we propose to take may affect our local community.

Charting our course

Even with these simple rules at hand the Mono Basin still manages to present us with complex issues for which our course is also complex. For example, CalTrans' four-laning project will improve stream crossings and help visitors travel more safely in the Mono Basin; the project also will increase traffic speed in Lee Vining and along Mono Lake, negatively affecting local businesses and the visitor experience. Proposed gravel pit expansions will move operations away from Rush Creek—in certain senses an improvement—but also will expand the size and visibility of industrial operations in the Mono Basin. Lively discussions take place in our weekly staff meetings and on the phone to our board members as the twenty-year-old Mono Lake Committee considers what it will and will not take on.

In the following pages we outline a select group of issues that have met our criteria and are important for Mono Lake's healthy future. Please contact Heidi at (heidi@monolake.org) with questions or observations you may have. ♪

Mono Basin Issues Outlook 1999

The Mono Lake Committee is involved in many Mono Basin issues. This map shows areas where our attention will be focused in 1999. You can find additional information about these issues on pages 14–15, in each of our quarterly Newsletters, and on our Website at www.monolake.org. For more information on how we decide what to work on see page 8.

1 Mono Basin Implementation Plan

The Water Board approved restoration plans late in 1998. In 1999, the Committee will be working with DWP and other parties to clarify certain details that were left unspecified in the Water Board's restoration order and to establish the restoration protocol that will be used for the next 10–20 years.

2 North shore ponds

The Forest Service is enhancing existing artificial ponds to help mitigate for lost waterfowl habitat. The Committee wants to see the Forest Service incorporate water efficiencies into this enhancement project since the water is drawn from Mill Creek, one of Mono's tributary streams that has been dewatered by a century of irrigation and hydroelectric diversions.

3 Mill Creek

The Water Board did not require DWP to pursue rewatering Mill Creek for waterfowl purposes. Nonetheless, the Committee will continue to be an advocate for water efficiency in the north Mono Basin where Mill Creek water is diverted and used.

4 Scenic Area commercial development

A conceptual plan for commercial development in the Scenic Area has triggered a close examination of how the Scenic Area Private Property Guidelines apply to new commercial development in the Mono Basin.

5 Research at Mono Lake

The Committee is supporting research into the ecological mechanisms linking changes in the lake and in gull breeding productivity.

6 Tree planting program

The Committee is organizing volunteer days in June and September to plant pines on higher areas of the floodplain where natural regeneration is more difficult.

7 Four-lane expansion of Highway 395

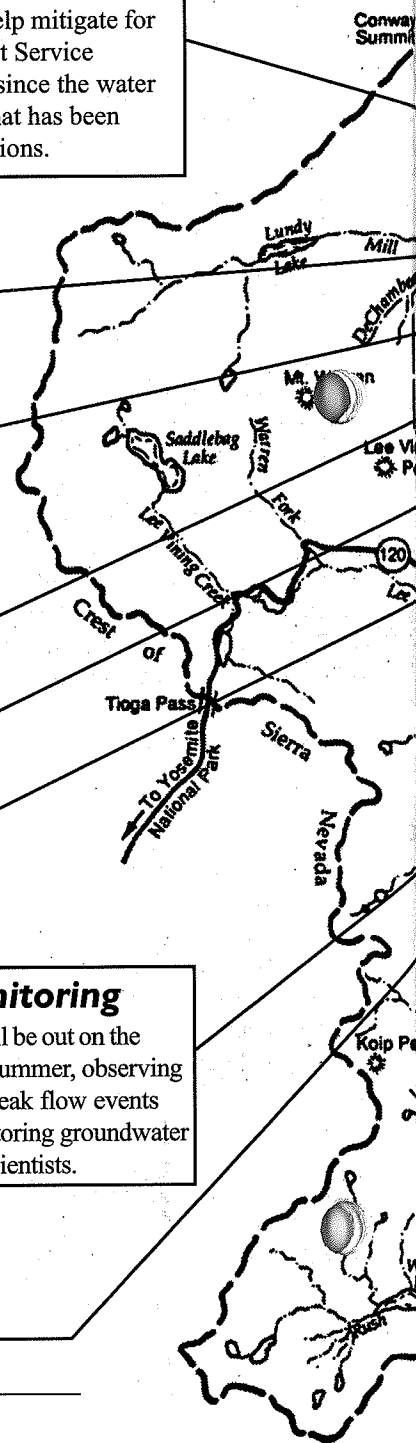
Caltrans is engaged in a number of highway-widening projects in the Mono Basin that are likely to impact the quality of life and business climate in Lee Vining.

9 Gravel pits

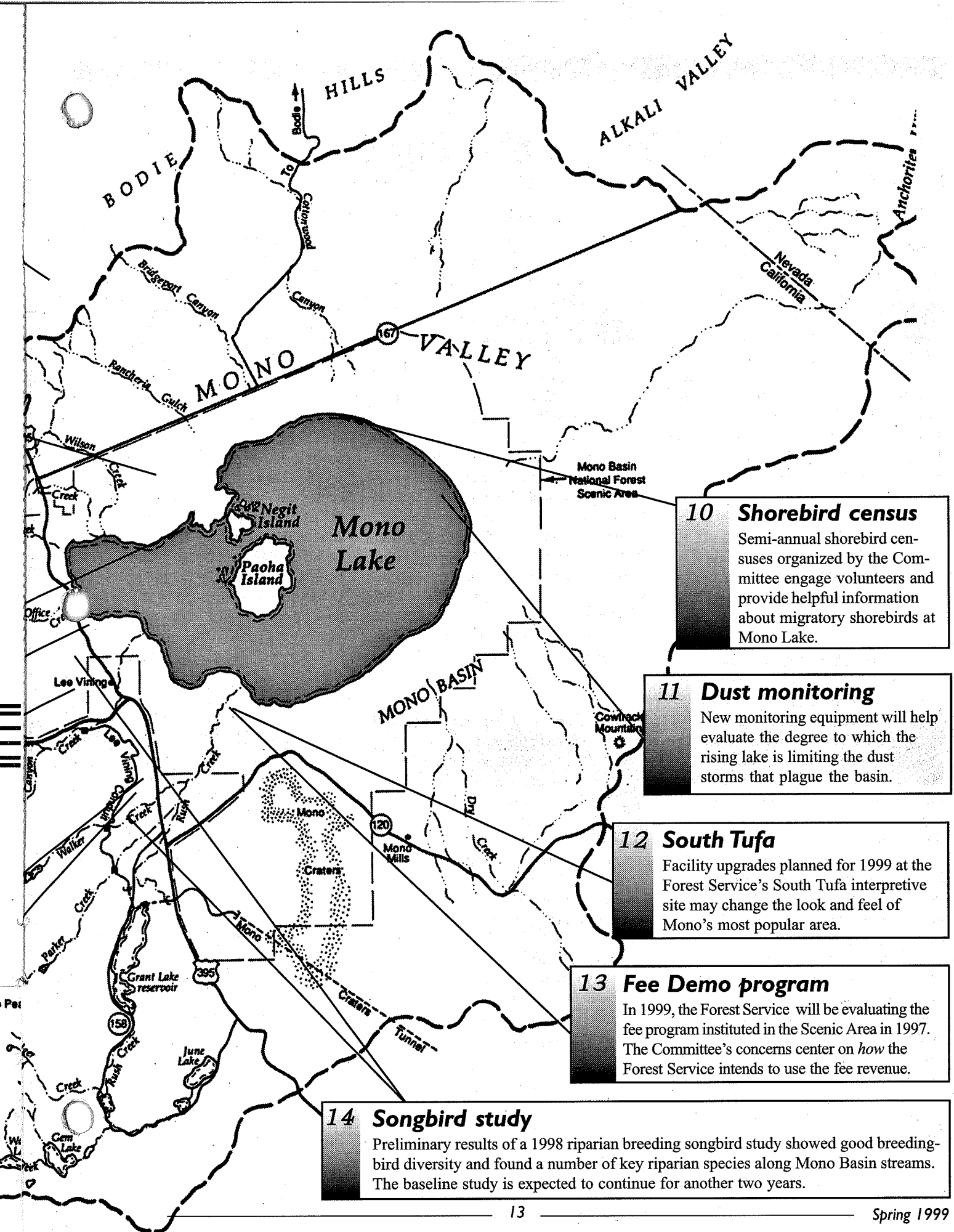
Two existing gravel pits that straddle Rush Creek are expanding operations. The expansion will move operations away from the stream and create bigger pits.

8 Stream monitoring

Committee staff will be out on the streams again this summer, observing and documenting peak flow events and regularly monitoring groundwater levels for stream scientists.



Help us protect and restore Mono Lake!



Looking at the big picture

1 Mono Basin Implementation Plan

DWP has embarked on its first year of Water Board-ordered restoration. Late last year, DWP circulated its Mono Basin Implementation Plan, an administrative document that spells out DWP's many restoration responsibilities over the coming decades. As part of the plan, DWP is offering semi-annual meetings at which monitoring results and the upcoming season's restoration activities will be discussed by interested parties. The first meeting, tentatively scheduled for this April, will be an important time to clarify elements of the Water Board order on restoration that were not fully defined. See page 3 for more details.

2 North shore ponds

In its decision on waterfowl restoration, the Water Board focused on enhancing waterfowl habitat at the north shore's County Ponds and ordered DWP to pay up to \$250,000 for this purpose. County Ponds are natural depressions that emerged when the lake dropped below 6405 feet and that collect irrigation run-off from historic Dechambeau Ranch. The Forest Service, the current owner, rewatered the ponds in 1998 with its historic Mill Creek diversion right. In 1999, the Forest Service expects to develop a plan for the area that describes the "desired condition" and management prescription to enhance the area's cultural and wildlife benefits. The Committee supports the work and wants to ensure that the Forest Service uses the water diverted from Mill Creek with maximum efficiency for the benefit of waterfowl at the County Ponds.

3 Mill Creek

Even though scientists recommended restoring Mill Creek, the Water Board did not approve further study of the proposal, which it deemed to be outside the scope of its proceeding. This decision does not close the door on increasing flows in Mill Creek, but it means there won't be major action at this time. Mill Creek is the primary source of water for a number of diverse landscapes in the north Mono Basin that currently are undergoing ownership or land management changes. The Committee's involvement with these properties—the Conway Ranch, County Ponds (see previous paragraph)—will be to serve as a strong, continuing voice for water efficiencies, allowing protection of existing historic values and water for the natural riparian, fishery, and waterfowl habitats supported by Mill Creek.

4 Scenic Area commercial development

A conceptual plan for commercial development in the Scenic Area that was floated by the Forest Service has triggered a close examination of how the Scenic Area Private Property Guidelines apply to new commercial development in the Mono Basin. The key issue is how the strict building limitations imposed on residential landowners apply to commercial developments. The Committee currently is reviewing the guidelines. The guideline examination is timely, as Mono Lake's rise is definitely heightening commercial interest in Mono Lake.

5 Research at Mono Lake

Mono Lake and its watershed are exciting laboratories for ecological and restoration research because of the increased lake level and streamflows mandated by the Water Board decision. We have a very incomplete understanding of how rapid changes in the lake level and streamflows affect ecological functioning. This summer, the annual gull monitoring work will be expanded to include research on ecological mechanisms linking changes in the lake and gull breeding productivity. Alkalai fly monitoring, which is not occurring this year, is also critical, and we hope to help fund it in the future. The Committee hopes to support the many lines of research that must occur to increase our understanding and inform the adaptive management of the watershed. We want to see that these different lines of research can be integrated and effectively communicated to managers and the general public.

6 Tree planting program

DWP's Mono Basin Implementation Plan calls for volunteer help with plantings. While the stream restoration plan recommends a five-year moratorium on planting along much of the rewatered streams, pending monitoring results of natural regeneration, the plan identifies plantings on certain higher areas of the floodplain, where natural regeneration is more difficult. The Committee is organizing several volunteer planting days in June and September.

4 Four-lane expansion of Highway 395

Caltrans is engaged in a number of projects in the Mono Basin. In 2000, the agency plans to widen the two-lane stretch of Highway 395 south of Lee

Vining to four lanes (five lanes for the quarter-mile between Highway 120 and Lee Vining). In addition, Caltrans will widen the highway along Mono Lake north of Lee Vining, creating eight-foot shoulders and improving several turnouts for better viewing of the lake. Separately, the town of Lee Vining has secured funds to plan a "Main Street" project, focused on visual improvements and pedestrian safety. Because the highway widening projects on either side of town will likely increase the speed of traffic in town, the Main Street improvements are timely, and will be designed to counter this increase. The Committee is participating in the town planning process.

8 Stream monitoring

Committee staff continue to directly monitor the streams, particularly during the peak flow period. We monitor groundwater levels at a number of established "piezometers" (hollow, 6" pipe sunk into the ground that allow the relative height of the water table to be measured). We also observe and photograph the streams during the peak (or peaks) noting any threshold events such as channel abandonment and sediment movement. Scientists monitoring the streams for DWP utilize our data and observational notes in their yearly analyses.

9 Gravel pits

A flurry of gravel pit proposals have been brought before the Mono County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The existing pits, which operators are seeking to expand, straddle Rush Creek. The Committee does not oppose the existing gravel pits, which were in operation before the Scenic Area was established. But our message to Mono

County is that it needs to view such expansion proposals in a long-term context. Mining is an element of the economy—but so are the resource values of Rush Creek and the spectacular views across the Mono Basin.

10 Shorebird census

Bird migration is at best a risky business. Today, migration conditions are aggravated not only by the significant loss of historic wetlands during the last century, but also by contamination and impoverishment of prey populations at the wetlands that remain. Mono Lake is one of a number of western Great Basin lakes that provide critical food and shelter along the way. A key starting point in learning what humans can do to enhance birds' chances for safe passage on inherently risky annual journeys is to assemble the facts. In the spring and fall volunteers participate in shorebird counts along the entire lakeshore, which help monitor shorebird and waterfowl numbers.

11 Dust monitoring

A new monitoring site is being developed by the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District on Mono's east shore to help assess progress towards air quality attainment. Air quality samplers will soon be installed to assess particulate pollution due to wind storms. The Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District is in charge of monitoring air quality progress as the lake rises. While many sites that previously generated dust storms have improved with the rising lake (due to coverage both by water and by new vegetation), others continue to be a problem, sending up huge dust plumes on windy days.

12 South Tufa

Late last year, the Forest Service began implementing its five-year-old facility development plan for South Tufa. Toilets were installed last fall. Other planned upgrades, which will be installed in 1999 and beyond, include shaded picnic tables, an upgraded trail system and paving of the road and parking lot. At the Committee's request, given the lag between the approval of the plan in 1993 and implementation in 1999, Forest Service has agreed to review the proposed development.

13 Fee Demo program

In 1997, the Forest Service began charging fees at the Scenic Area Visitor Center and at South Tufa as part of the Congressionally mandated Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. The legislative intent of the "Fee Demo" program is "to demonstrate the feasibility of user-generated cost recovery for the operation and maintenance of recreation areas or sites and habitat enhancement projects on Federal lands." In 1999, the program will be evaluated. Committee comments on the program will focus on *how* the Forest Service intends to use the fee revenue. We believe the Forest Service should devote fees to restoration and interpretation, not to facility development.

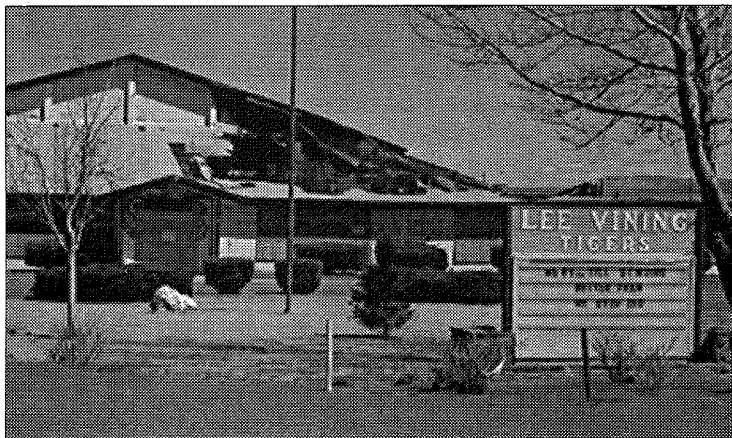
14 Songbird study

In 1998, Point Reyes Bird Observatory and the Bureau of Land Management spearheaded a riparian breeding songbird study in the Eastern Sierra. The first season of data collection showed a trend towards greater breeding-bird diversity and a greater percentage of key riparian species (such as the Yellow Warbler, Warbling Vireo, and Song Sparrow) in the more northerly study sites, including the Mono Basin. This may be due to the broader riparian areas found along the more northern streams. Committee staff participated in volunteer surveys, which comprised one element of the full study.

Fire brings end, new beginning to high school

by Gary Nelson

On September 19, 1998, Lee Vining High School (LVHS), including the Lee Vining Branch Library, was destroyed by an arson fire. Firefighters from Lee Vining and neighboring communities fought the blaze throughout the day while students, teachers, locals, and passersby joined to help rescue items ranging from 30-year-old trophies to brand-new computers.



announced the terms of a settlement, under which the high school would be almost completely gutted down to the masonry and then rebuilt as it existed prior to the fire, with required code upgrades. Anything not damaged in the fire, and not required by code to be upgraded, will be reused. For example, insurance would not pay to replace the old single-pane windows unless they were

The following Monday saw the impromptu reincarnation of the high school at the community church. During the next two months, each school day began with the ringing of the church bell as community members, contractors, and school employees worked frantically to build a temporary high school on the elementary school football field.

Finally, after the Thanksgiving holiday, students and staff moved into new facilities consisting of six modular buildings. Although these buildings have proven to be more than adequate as a temporary place to continue the educational process, it is clear that the loss of Lee Vining High School is a tragedy which has affected every part of this small community. In the words of local contractor and school board member Jeff Hansen, "The day before the fire, the school meant a lot to people. The day after the fire, it meant a whole lot more."

For decades the high school served as a focal point for community activities: games, plays, dances, meetings, assemblies, and graduations. Important parts of Committee history have taken place at LVHS. On January 23, 1989, the high school gym was used for part of the memorial service for David Gaines and Don Oberlin. One by one, friends and colleagues filed up to the microphone to share memories and offer moving

tributes to Dave and Don.

Many Committee members can recall happier times at LVHS. Its ball fields and locker rooms have served as a home away from home to Bike-a-thon and Century cyclists for many years. After toiling through the desert, cyclists found the cool green expanse of the football field to be the perfect place for a well-deserved rest, except when the sprinklers accidentally came on at 4:00 AM.

Just last September, the Committee prepared to kickoff our 20th Anniversary celebration with "Music in the Park." It soon became clear that the weather was not going to cooperate. A frantic call to high school Principal Nancy Lampson resulted in her graciously allowing people to use the gym for music, dancing, and "indoor camping" throughout the weekend.

Today the gym is silent except for the sound of fluttering wings. Pigeons now roost in the rafters above the buckled and shattered hardwood floor. Rays of sunlight stream through the huge hole in the ceiling, illuminating rectangular "clean" spots on the smoke-stained walls where Hi-Lo League championship banners once hung. Thankfully, these banners, as well as trophies, yearbooks and other tangible symbols of Lee Vining Tigers tradition were saved and now await a new home.

Last January, the insurance company

damaged.

The rebuilding of LVHS is a golden opportunity to modernize the facility with improvements such as double-paned windows and technology upgrades. One intriguing proposal is to install a stream study laboratory to augment the biomonitoring of Lee Vining and Rush creeks that has been done by LVHS students in conjunction with entomologist Dave Herbst of the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory.

It has become apparent that donations will play an important role in how LVHS will take shape since the school does not appear to qualify for state hardship grants under newly revised criteria. If Lee Vining is to have a high school and library that reflects the unique character of its community, and is to be equipped to study its extraordinary natural surroundings, it will be largely through the efforts of people who care about the school, its students, and their future.

Donations of time, money, equipment, or ideas will be gratefully accepted by the Lee Vining High School Fire Restoration Fund, P.O. Box 268, Lee Vining, CA 93541, 760-647-6366.

Donations to the fund are tax deductible. 🐾

Gary Nelson is the Committee's Canoe Tour Supervisor. He saw a bald eagle while gearing up for this year's tours.

Naturalist Notes

A Mono Basin chronicle

January: Winter storms are preceded by crisp clear days that leave the sky and mountains perfectly reflected in the lake's surface ... wind seems to bring the much anticipated snow ... Cooper's hawk hanging around in town ... a bald eagle flying south over the lake ... the first winter record of a hooded merganser in the basin ... a golden eagle flies close enough to make eye contact at Panum Crater ... poconip holds back morning sunshine until early afternoon as we are shrouded in fog ... trees are covered in rime until the sunshine breaks through ... and the blue moon this month will leave the month of February a little darker.

February: Sharp-shinned hawk chasing juncos ... nowhere to hide in heavy snow ... large sheets of ice cover the west shore of the lake ... an old lake level gauge nearly covered by waters that are still rising ... down at South Tufa last summer's new trail is once again a muddy puddle ... the warm spring that once sat on the shore is now completely submerged ... only gurgling waters mark its presence now ... and it seems that the dock at Navy Beach is next ... a pair of hooded mergansers ... cinnamon teals ... and a northern shoveler all out at the ponds on the north shore ... bald eagle harassing a ruddy duck at the lakeshore ... the American dipper is bobbing back at the culvert on Rush Creek ... violet-green swallows over Mill Creek signal spring is on its way ... and the red-tailed hawk carrying nesting material seems to know it too ... but the true indicator is the gulls spotted on the last day of this full-moon-less month ... on the 23rd Venus passes very close to Jupiter and lights up the sky above Mt. Dana.

March: In like a lamb ... another month of two full moons ... swallows bustling down at Rush Creek ... the remains of two predated duck nests with gouged, bleached, empty eggs in each nest at the mouth of Wilson Creek ... new growth on lupine (*Lupinus arbustus*) and desert peach (*Prunus andersonii*) down by the creeks ... a raccoon running across the highway ... and the first no-see-um (family *ceratopogonidae*) bite of the season ... snowy plover seen but not heard down on the shore ... another warm spring is submerged and gurgling happily through the green, algae-laden lakewater ... just waiting for the brine shrimp to do their thing ... eight double-crested cormorants flying in formation ... a bald eagle circling low ... Pacific tree frogs (*Hyla regilla*) in Lee Vining Canyon ... an American kestrel on the move ... a side blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*) spotted out in the desert hills ... meadow-larks heard singing in grassy fields ... mountain bluebirds are back ... Gaines Island, the remnant of the landbridge to Negit Island, is surrounded on either side by equal amounts of open water.

INTERESTED IN BIRD SIGHTINGS AT MONO LAKE?

YOU CAN FIND UPDATED MONO BASIN BIRD SIGHTINGS

IN THE LIVE SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE AT

www.monolake.org/live



© 1999 Dennis Bissell

1999 Field Seminars

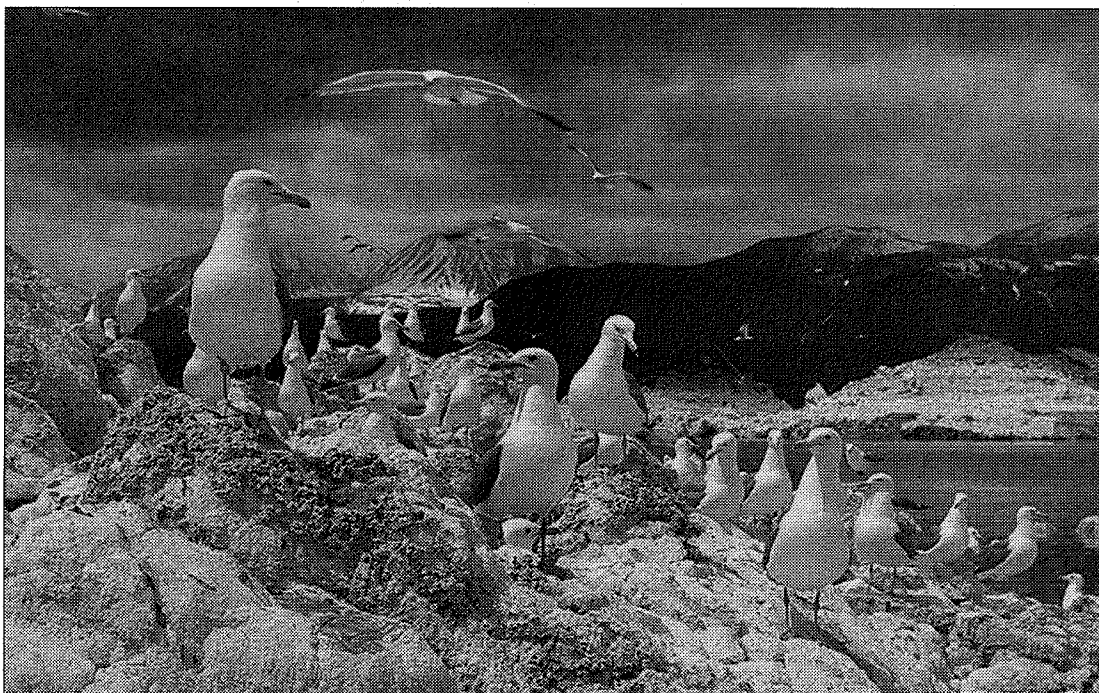


Photo by Moose Peterson

California Gull Research: Gull Response to a Rising Lake

Dave Shuford/ Point Reyes Bird Observatory

May 22–26

\$120 per person per day; overnight; meals included

In 1998 the gull research results indicated the fourth lowest fledgling rates since monitoring began in 1983. Join a research team directed by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory and Cornell University in collecting data on the gull colony. Gain hands-on experience in field survey techniques while investigating whether the lake's changing chemistry—due to a rapidly rising lake—is affecting gull reproductive success. This rare adventure of visiting Mono Lake's spectacular Negit Islets and observing at close quarters the second largest California gull rookery in North America is for the stout of body and heart.

Birds of the East Slope

David Lukas, June 12–13

\$90 per person/ \$75 for members

In spring, the east slope of the Sierra Nevada becomes home to a fascinating mix of birds. Desert birds, waterbirds,

and forest birds are all present. Over the course of two days, this field seminar will focus on local breeding birds in a wide range of habitats. Learn the finer points of identifying these species by sight and song. Well-known for his enthusiasm and knowledge, David Lukas has led over a hundred bird watching and natural history programs for The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, and other groups. His book *Watchable Birds of the Great Basin* will be released in May 1999.

Biological Monitoring and the Health of Mono Basin Waters

David Herbst, June 26–27

\$90 per person/ \$75 for members

How do we know if environmental restoration is working? What are the options and appropriate measures of the health of an aquatic habitat? How have Mono Lake and its streams changed, and what can we expect for the future? These are some of the questions that this seminar focused on the ecology of waters in the Mono Basin will explore. Dr. David Herbst has conducted research on aquatic habitats in the Mono Basin for over 20 years and applied a variety of approaches to evaluating the impacts of stream diversion and the progression of environmental change. (continued)

Call 760-647-6595 for registration and information. Ask for the seminar desk.

1999 Field Seminars

In both the lake and streams, participants will use aquatic insects and other invertebrates as tools for interpreting the health and recovery of altered aquatic ecosystems. This seminar will be hands-on, learning how to sample, sort, identify, and evaluate aquatic life forms while wading across streams and along the shallows of Mono Lake.

California Gull Research: Chick Banding

Dave Shuford/Point Reyes Bird Observatory
July 2-5

\$120 per person per day; overnight; meals included

See description of California Gull Research seminar above.

Mono Lake Photography: Scenic and Wildlife Wonders

Moose Peterson, July 9-11

\$95 per person/ \$170 for members

Discover and photograph the wildlife wonders of the Mono Basin with renowned wildlife photographer Moose Peterson. This seminar begins Friday night with a slideshow presented by the instructor, and the next two days are spent in the field capturing sunrises, shorebirds, waterfowl, sunsets, and other wonders. Journeys are made to Mono's shore, Lee Vining Canyon, and other locations as time permits.

Native American Basketry

Lucy Parker, July 16-18

\$135 per person/ \$115 for members

\$50 materials fee (group campsite in Jeffrey pine forest included and optional)

Learn to weave baskets in the tradition of the regional Paiute. Past course projects have included coiled baskets of seasoned willow and Pomo-style baskets used for gathering nuts and berries. Lucy Parker is a descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika'a, and Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother, a master basket weaver, and will pass on some of her knowledge in this special three-day camping seminar. You do not have to camp to participate, but the evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories.

Prehistoric Peoples and Their Environments

Wally Woolfenden, July 24-25

\$90 per person/ \$75 for members

This field seminar is designed for anyone with an interest in anthropology and the natural sciences who wants to learn more about prehistoric people and the Mono Basin environments in which they made their home. The class will explore geological and archaeological sites throughout the Mono Basin and talk about the evidence and methods used by scientists to reconstruct past environments and the ways that people adapted to them. Dr. Wally Woolfenden has lived and worked on both sides of the Sierra Nevada as an archaeologist and paleoecologist for the Forest Service since 1977. He has recently studied vegetation and climate history from pollen deposited in the sediments of Owens Lake and Glass Creek Meadow.

The Story Behind the Land: Geology of the Mono Basin

Tim Tierney, July 31-Aug 1

\$90 per person/ \$75 for members

Perhaps nowhere else in California is the geology more varied than in the Mono Basin. Both glaciers and volcanoes have left their mark here. Explore weird mineral towers, volcanoes, and glacial remains. The first day will be spent exploring the area by car and foot. Day two will focus on thoroughly exploring a few special points of interest. A close inspection of nearby hot springs may also be included. Tim is a geologist and author of the Committee's field guide *Geology of the Mono Basin*.

High Country Wildflowers

Mark Bagley, August 14-15

\$95 per person/ \$80 for members

The Sierra promises a fantastic wildflower show! The headwaters of Lee Vining Creek, near Tioga Pass and Saddlebag Lake, feature some of the best and most accessible locations for studying the magnificent flower displays of the High Sierra. After reviewing the basics of plant structure, the workshop will journey through sub-alpine forests, across meadows and fell fields, along cascading

Call 760-647-6595 for registration and information. Ask for the seminar desk.

1999 Field Seminars

creeks, and around jewel-like lakes identifying up to 150 species of flowers, trees, and shrubs. Mark Bagley, a consulting biologist in the Eastern Sierra, will lead this field seminar's easily paced 2-4 mile hikes at the 10,000 foot elevation, making many stops to look at the flowers.

Fall Bird Migration

Dave Shuford, August 28-29

\$90 per person/ \$75 for members

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. As a result, early autumn is the time of year to see the greatest diversity of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at Point Reyes Bird Observatory for twenty years. He has conducted numerous surveys and research projects in the Mono Basin and beyond, and is well acquainted with where to find birds in the Eastern Sierra.

Surviving on the Edge: Sierra Bighorn Sheep in the Mono Basin

John Wehausen, September 4-5

\$90 per person/ \$75 for members

Controversy surrounds the fate of the Sierra bighorn, one of the most endangered mammals in North America. This field seminar will involve discussions of the biology and conservation of these animals with a high probability of viewing them. John Wehausen is a research associate at White Mountain Research Station in Bishop. He has been investigating various aspects of the Sierra bighorn and working for their conservation since 1974, and in the late 1970s he initiated the restoration program that brought bighorn back to the Mono Basin. This seminar involves moderate hiking at the 10,000-foot elevation and above.

Paoha Island Kayak

Stuart Wilkinson and MLC Staff, September 11

\$60 per person/ \$50 for members

Wind and weather permitting, visit Paoha Island for a picnic lunch! Join Stuart Wilkinson and a Mono Lake Committee staff member for a guided naturalist expedition to Paoha Island. Your leaders are well-versed in Mono Lake geology, ecology, history, and politics, and this natural history kayak

tour will cover a wide variety of topics relating to this unique high desert lake. Plan on four to five hours for the tour. Some kayak experience is recommended for this trip to Paoha Island. Kayaks and safety equipment are provided.

Mono Basin Fall Photography

Richard Knepp, October 8-10

\$150 per person/ \$125 for members

The Mono Basin in autumn is one of the greatest photographic experiences in the country. Spectacular foliage and skies combine with exceptional light, presenting ample subject matter for photographers in both color and black and white. Join accomplished photographer Richard Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, and fall color in nearby canyons. Subjects for discussion include composition, exposure techniques, filtration, basic theory of the Zone System, and developing a personal vision. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested.

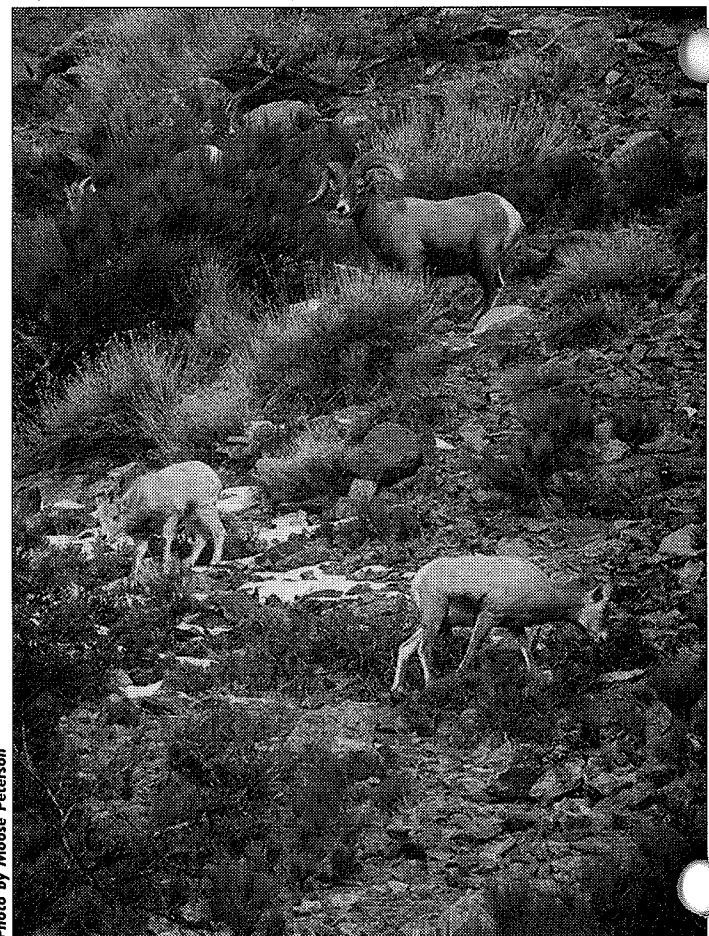


Photo by Moose Peterson

Call 760-647-6595 for registration and information. Ask for the seminar desk.

1999 Field Seminars

New research in 1999: Gull response to a rising lake

Join researchers this summer on Mono Lake's islands to investigate whether the rising lake's changing chemistry is affecting gull reproductive success.

California gull research played an important role in securing protection for Mono Lake. Today, it is a critical tool for assessing ecosystem health. In 1999, focused research questions will guide the gull work: How does the foraging behavior of gulls feeding on shrimp and flies compare? What are the consequences of a fly-dominated and shrimp-dominated diet for chick growth survival? Is there anything about the dispersion of shrimp and flies that would affect their quality as prey? Paying volunteers are needed to help make this research continue!

Join a research team directed by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, collect data on the gull colony, and gain hands-on experience in field survey techniques. You'll enjoy the rare adventure of visiting Mono Lake's spectacular Negit Islets, and observe at close quarters the second largest California gull rookery in North America.

Sign up to help for one to five days in late May or early July. You'll camp on Krakatoa Islet, inside the movie set volcano from the 1950s Hollywood classic *Fair Wind to Java*. You can expect very rugged field conditions, variable weather, outstanding views of Mono Lake, and the hue and din of 40,000 nesting gulls. You bring your gear, curiosity, and energy, and we provide training, hearty meals, fresh water, and boat transportation.

☞ Registration information ☞

Call the Mono Lake Committee at 760-647-6595 to register and ask for the seminar desk. A more complete seminar description is available upon request. Sorry, we cannot accept registration by mail.

Registration information

Seminars are limited to fifteen people except where noted. If a seminar receives less than six participants, the seminar will be cancelled two weeks in advance and full refunds will be given. If you cancel three weeks prior to the seminar start date, we will refund your payment (less a \$10 processing fee). No refunds after that date, but tuition can be applied to another class in 1999. We accept VISA, MasterCard, and Discover or personal checks payable to the Mono Lake Committee. Participants must sign a liability release form. All seminars operate under permit from the Inyo National Forest.

Discounts

Mono Lake Committee members receive discounted seminar prices where noted. If you are not a current member of the Mono Lake Committee, you may receive the discount by joining when you register.

Ruth Galanter named Defender of the Trust



Photo by Herley Jim Bowling

Committee board member Tom Soto presented Councilwoman Ruth Galanter with the 1998 Defender of the Trust award at a ceremony in Los Angeles.

Last December, the Mono Lake Committee honored Ruth Galanter with its annual Defender of the Trust Award over breakfast at the City Club in Los Angeles. Councilwoman Galanter was recognized for her successful efforts to protect Mono Lake, particularly as chair of the City's Commerce, Energy, and Natural Resources Committee, which oversees the Department of Water and Power. She has been a strong proponent of water conservation, and shepherded a regulation requiring the retrofit of all homes and apartments with low-flush toilets prior to resale through the Council last July; she also defended the regulation against a challenge this January.

The award event was an impressive showing of Mono Lake Committee friends, representatives of community groups that distribute low-flush toilets, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power officials, officials from West and Central Basin Water Districts and the City of Los Angeles, and environmental groups in Los Angeles. Representatives of The Gas Company, Southern California Edison, and Lawry's Restaurants—representing Living Lake sponsor Unilever—also attended. The striking glass and wood award itself is an annual contribution of Committee member Alexa Williams who owns Technical Glass in North Hollywood.

We give an enormous thank you to board member Tom Soto whose firm, PS Enterprises, underwrote the event, and to board co-chair Ed Manning, who flew down from Sacramento to be the early-morning Master of Ceremonies.

In 1993 the Mono Lake Committee began the tradition of honoring individuals who make extraordinary personal efforts to champion Mono Lake. Past award recipients include: Harold Gilliam, environmental writer for the San Francisco Examiner (1993); George Peyton, attorney and liaison with National Audubon Society (1994); Bruce Dodge, lead attorney for MLC on Mono Lake litigation (1995); and Martha Davis, Committee executive director from 1984-1996 (1997). *—S*

Celebrate music and Mono Lake this fall

The Mono Lake Committee and the Water Resources Center Archives at the University of California, Berkeley, are delighted to announce that violinist David Abel and pianist Julie Steinberg have generously volunteered to play a benefit concert for Mono Lake.

The duo will perform on Sunday afternoon, November 7, 1999, at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley. Proceeds from this fund-raising event will be split between the two organizations. The Archives will use their portion to make the

Mono Lake collection of documents and photos, which were donated by the Mono Lake Committee in 1997, more accessible to the public.

Tickets for the fall concert will go on sale in September. Corporate sponsorships of \$500 or more will receive special ticket and benefit packages.

For sponsorship or ticket information please contact Shelly Backlar (shelly@monolake.org) at 818-716-8488 or Kathy Dieden (kdieden@library.berkeley.edu) at 510-642-2666.

Member Corner: News from the membership desk

by Rebecca Dobert

In Memory

Doug and Diane Orloff and Mary Dobrowalski of Moorpark all sent donations in memory of **Dr. Elliott McClure**. A Defense Trust member of the Mono Lake Committee, Dr. McClure spent 60 years studying birds from North America to Southeast Asia, and he wrote one of the definitive books on the banding of birds. He will be missed by many.

Ola Vorster, mother of Committee consulting hydrologist **Peter Vorster**, was remembered with a gift from **Deborah Alexander** of Santa Monica.

Joan Broer of San Francisco, sent a generous donation to the Defense Trust in remembrance of her parents, **Cecil and Lucille Broer**, who were longtime residents of nearby Hawthorne, Nevada.

Shirley Hicklin, faithful supporter of the Mono Lake Committee has passed away. Shirley supported the Committee over the years and wanted to insure that our work continues by acknowledging the Committee in her will.

For members only—Online

In March we launched a new section of the Mono Lake Website just for members! Grab your best buddy and your membership number (found on the back of this Newsletter) and click on over to participate in the members-only discussion forum, see expanded WebCam and weather information, or even read this newsletter online.

You'll also find access to membership services such as registering address changes, and you can even securely renew your membership (and sign your buddy up too) online.

Matching gifts

Hambrecht & Quist matched the gift of **C K Newman**. **Jean McCormack** of Boulder, Colorado, had her gift matched by **Sun Microsystems**. **Alan Magree** of San Francisco had his matched by our friends at **Mal Warwick & Associates**.

The **Levi Strauss Foundation** doubled the donation of **John Lehman Jr.**, while **Microsoft** matched the gift of **Darryl Richman** in Bellevue, Washington.

The **BankAmerica Foundation** generously gave to match the gifts of **Richard Morrison** of Lafayette and **Edmund Ow** of San Francisco.

Finally, **PG&E** came through with matches to the gifts of **David Gassman** of Oakland and **Raymond Grech** of Daly City.

Accolades

A hearty congratulations to **Nell Soto**, mother of Committee board member **Tom Soto**. She was elected to the California Assembly, representing the 61st district in Ontario, California. We send her wishes for good luck, we are all proud of her success!

Speaking of board members, **Guillermo Rodriguez**, of San Francisco, helped to secure a grant from **PG&E** to help underwrite the costs of promoting water policy education among California Community groups.

Thanks to **Peter Todebush** of Hayward, whose financial and in-kind donations have helped us upgrade the ever-popular WebCam. WebCam thanks also go out to the Greensfelders of Nevada City, and Dana and Lina Jeffries of Ben Lomond.

From the mailbag

With our participation in the **Living Lakes** project for **Expo 2000** in Hannover Germany, Mono Lake's popularity is growing on an international scale. New members have been signing up via our Website from Austria, Germany, and elsewhere. You too could have the chance to participate in **Living Lakes**—our grand prize for the **Free Drawing** this year is two tickets from Lufthansa, good for anywhere they fly—including Hannover!

We enjoy hearing from our members around the world and recently received this note from Germany:

This morning I read an article in my daily newspaper (I'm living in Germany) about the Mono Lake. I didn't know before about this lake and its beauty. Then I went to your website, and I just want to tell you how well done it is! If this lake were in my near I would have visited it this afternoon :-). The pictures are great, and your works looks so, too!

So I want to wish you the best for your work—and if I ever visit California I'll see the lake. Sure.

*Bye,
Detlef*

Recycling Alert

We're doing our best to recycle but it's tough to deal with office paper up here in the mountains. If you're visiting and have easy access to recycling, please let us know and we'll give you a box to take home . . .

Rebecca is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. She's looking forward to summer days without firewood.

Gull research anyone?

Join me, 40,000 other gulls,
and a team of researchers at
Mono Lake this summer!

Research field seminars are
scheduled for May 22-26,
July 2-5. Details are inside!



MONO LAKE
C O M M I T T E E
Highway 395 at Third Street
Post Office Box 29
Lee Vining, CA 93541

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mono Lake Committee

Postmaster: Address Service Requested