

Winter

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MONO



LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

A tribute to Eldon Vestal

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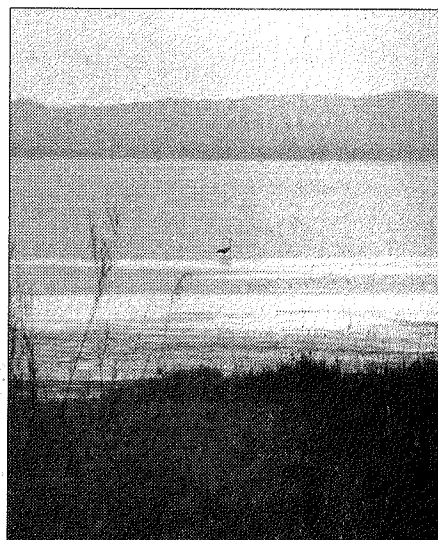


Winter is here in the Mono Basin, though mildly. This issue's cover photo, taken by Communications Assistant Arya Degenhardt, captures a view of the lake from the Aeolian Buttes on one of our few snowy days.

The start of the new year marks several changes here at the Committee. I've taken on an exciting new position as Assistant Executive Director, and I'm looking forward to helping see restoration implemented, Mono's protection assured, and the organization put on solid financial footing. I'll still be in Lee Vining, now paying more attention to the overall operation and direction of the Committee and a bit less to the production of the Newsletter. Fortunately, Arya has done an excellent job working on this issue and, we hope, is willing to be drawn in even further. Look for her touch as you read this issue.

On the pages that follow you'll find reports on a number of 1998 activities, from Outdoor Experiences to the Century ride. But in addition to all that we regularly do, 1999 promises the implementation of restoration plans long under development (see page 6). We'll also be introducing a new member-only area of the Mono Lake Website (www.monolake.org). So if you can't make it up to the lake in person, pay us a virtual visit, get an up-to-the-minute view of the lake, and help keep Mono on the road to recovery.

—Geoff McQuilkin



A goliath heron (*Ardea goliath*), the world's largest heron, spotted on the shore of Lake St. Lucia in South Africa. Both Mono Lake and St. Lucia are members of Living Lakes (www.livinglakes.org), a partnership which promotes lake protection and sustainable living around the world.

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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A tribute to Eldon Vestal

1914-1998

by Martha Davis

Editor's Note: On September 9, 1998, Eldon Vestal, the man most knowledgeable about the historical condition of Mono's streams, passed away. In October Martha Davis said the following at a service celebrating his life.

There are people who stand tall in our lives. People who are honorable, courageous, and kind. Who try to do the right thing in all that they do. Who speak out when something wrong is happening.

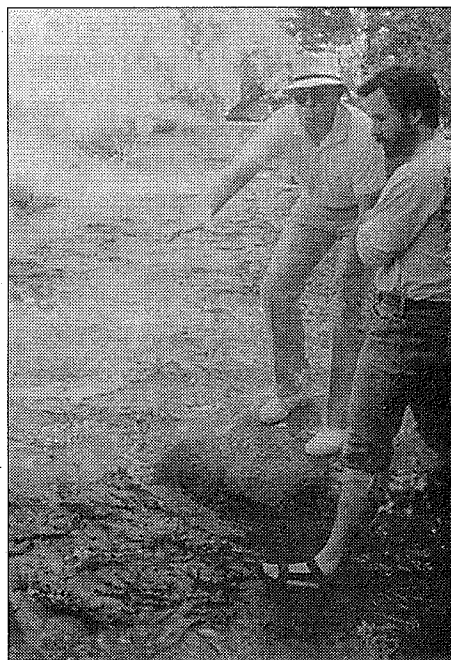
And by being who they are, they leave this world a better place.

That is what Eldon Vestal did. He gave to California a great gift—the opportunity to restore streams and fisheries in its state that have been devastated by water diversions. It was a gift born out of his integrity as a citizen and a professional fish biologist. And it is a story that—if you have not heard it—you should know because it is a shining example of how much of a difference one individual can make in this world.

I had the privilege of getting to know Eldon and Ethel Vestal as part of the effort to save Mono Lake. Eldon played a critical role both at the very beginning and at the very end of that battle.

Eldon was one of the State's first professional fish and game biologists. He worked in the Mono Basin from 1939 to 1950. Eldon knew Mono Lake's streams intimately and used a fly rod frequently—something he called “one of the tools of the trade.”

Eldon witnessed the construction of the aqueduct in the Mono Basin by the City of Los Angeles, and the start up of water diversions. In 1941, Rush Creek—the largest stream in the Mono Basin and an extraordinary German brown trout fishery—had been reduced to a trickle of water. So Eldon wrote a letter of protest to the City of Los Angeles, asking that the City leave some water in the stream



Eldon explaining stream dynamics in 1991.

to support the fisheries as State law required.

For his trouble, Eldon received from Los Angeles a pointed suggestion that he talk to his superiors at DFG, and his superiors told him to mind his own business. In 1950, Eldon was reassigned to another district. And LA continued its water diversions unabated from the Mono Basin.

The rest would be history if other citizens had not stepped forward—this time in the form of the Mono Lake Committee—to try to save Mono Lake. Lawsuits were filed and chased through every court in the State. One of the cases, led by the Committee's ally California Trout, challenged the legality of LA's water diversions from the Mono streams. Ruling in the late 1980s, the courts agreed with Eldon Vestal's opinion from 40 years earlier—Los Angeles never had the right to destroy the Mono Basin fisheries by taking all of the water out of the streams.

But the pivotal moment in this lawsuit came when the question was raised about

what should be done to undo the damage to the streams caused by the City's diversions. Los Angeles' entire legal argument rested on the premise that no one really knew what the streams and fisheries had been like prior to the start of LA's water diversions.

Wrong. Eldon Vestal knew.

So in the end I believe that it was fated that our attorneys would one day show up at Eldon's home—actually, more accurately, at Eldon's garage.

When Eldon first spoke to our attorneys, he allowed as he might have some information that could help document the pre-diversion conditions of the streams. So the attorneys were not prepared for what they ultimately saw in Eldon's garage: stacks upon stacks of dusty boxes holding Eldon's copious notes, records, and photographs on the Mono Basin streams. He had kept everything—except, as Eldon later apologized—his daily records.

When I first heard about this gold mine of information, my immediate thought was that his wife, Ethel, was a saint. In this day, who would be willing to keep—even in their garage—boxes upon boxes of documents that were almost half a century old?

Our attorneys asked Eldon if he had been back to the Mono Basin since 1950 to see the changes in the streams. Eldon said no. So he journeyed back to Mono Lake in 1990, his first visit in forty years. And he wept. Let me read to you what he said on the witness stand: “I wasn't prepared for what I found. In all my years as a fisheries biologist I've never seen a scene that was so devastating. The terrible incision, the frightful effects of flooding, erosion. And I thought ... it took thousands of years to build this habitat but just a short time in the life of man to destroy all this. I was a little choked.”

Eldon became the star witness both in

continued on page 22

An interview with Jeff Bailey

New Forest Supervisor joins the Inyo

Editor's note: Last May, Jeff Bailey became the new Forest Supervisor of the 1.9-million-acre Inyo National Forest. On October 30th Bailey met with staff at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center. This follow-up interview by Policy Director Heidi Hopkins begins a new phase in the long standing relationship between the Committee and the Inyo National Forest. Bailey brings extensive experience in wilderness management, winter sports administration, and special use permits. Since 1977 he has held Forest Service positions in Idaho, Colorado, and Washington, DC. He should feel right at home here in the Eastern Sierra as he enjoys horseback riding, Nordic and alpine skiing, hiking, and backpacking.

Among the skills and experience you bring to the Inyo National Forest, what do you see as most helpful to managing issues in the Mono Basin Scenic Area?

Well, there was a time in my life when I was in charge of the Arapaho National Recreation Area in Colorado. There were water-based recreation opportunities, and we had four lakes that we were responsible for. It is very similar recreation, we were very concerned about maintaining and protecting the scenic quality of the area, and that was written right into the law. So I think there is direct application, most all of my experience has been in recreation.

When I was a district ranger I had a district that managed water resources for recreation purposes, and it was a huge recreation district, one of the biggest in both Colorado and the US. So I think that my background fits very nicely. I'm also extremely strong in wilderness

management, and in an area called the Lands Program or Real Estate Program, where we authorize projects under special use permits. As a district ranger I was responsible for all of the resource management issues, not just recreation and wilderness, and I think that it helped me to understand a broad array of resource issues.

When I was in Washington, DC for a period of time I worked on congressionally designated areas. National Scenic Areas, National Recreation Areas, Wilderness Areas, and Wild and Scenic River Areas are all part of that equation. I was basically the number two person in the United States working on those issues, so I think the Inyo fits me well—I think I have a sensitivity and an understanding of at least some of the issues that the area is facing.

What do you see as the relationship between the Scenic Area and the Inyo National Forest as a whole?

It is an integral part of the forest, by which I mean they are inseparably connected. I think what is important is that we are worried about protecting the scenic quality not just, of course, in the Mono Lake area but across the entire National Forest with Highway 395, which is a Scenic Highway, going right through portions of it. We have millions of visitors who go up towards Yosemite and one of the big things we do as an agency is try to provide beautiful settings for people to enjoy whether they are directly recreating in them or passing through them. That is a huge role and responsibility that we have, and I think we're up to the task. I also think that there has to be continued integration of

the Scenic Area with the management of the Inyo National Forest, if nothing more than the ability to share resources. We have tremendously qualified and excellent specialists that have forest-wide responsibilities, including the basin, and those are the hydrologists, archeologists, soil scientists, wildlife biologists, and fisheries biologists. I think that is the strength of including the management of the Mono Basin with the expertise that we have across the forest.

Realizing that you're just getting started here, what is your current vision for the Scenic Area and what are your goals for its management?

My vision would be that we maintain and protect the high visual quality that we currently have and look for opportunities to improve the visual quality. Also, my vision is that we operate in a very open and collaborative way, bringing in as many and varied members of the public as we can. I think one of our challenges is going to be that it is not too difficult to bring in the people that have a very local interest, but we must also try to bring in those people that have a more national interest or regional interest, regional meaning California, Nevada, or larger scale. This is the vision that I've shared in collaboration with our existing Forest Service team.

Recreation is an important element of the Eastern Sierra because of the many available opportunities and because it is an important basis for the regional economy. What recreation issues do you see arising in the Scenic Area and what will be your guiding principles in addressing those issues?

Well, one of the things that we are challenged with is providing recreational facilities—a case in point is the South Tufa Area. As you know, we're struggling with the level of development there. We need to be able to get people in to enjoy and appreciate the Scenic Area by providing the infrastructure to support them and at the same time not compromising the scenic value for which the area was created. I know that this topic is very near and dear to your heart, and it is to ours too; it is something that we're trying to balance.

The other item that comes to mind is that, as the lake level goes up, there are going to be either new demands placed on the lake, or demands returning that were there previously before the lake level went

down. I'm thinking about motorized recreation on the lake, potential marina operations. I think we're going to see people, if you will, coming back to the lake to recreate that maybe previously, had left because the water levels were low. I think that is going to create in some ways opportunities, and other ways issues, that we're going to need to deal with as a community of interests. We really need to think about how to address those issues that will be on our doorstep. To me that is a big challenge that is in front of us.

What role do you see for science in forest management?

I think it is incredibly important. We as an agency have been utilizing the best available science almost since we were created. What we are finding is that the actual scientists that we have, who work in a different branch of the Forest Service, the research branch, are moving out of the laboratory and providing more direct help to us. Our planning effort for the Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation is a good example. We have a team of scientists who are working right with us in developing the Environmental Impact Statement. Connie Millar, who was with the Pacific Southwest Experiment Station, spends her summers in the Mono Basin area conducting research and providing help to the forest.

I think it is extremely critical that we use all of the science that we have. One of the things that you and I had talked about previously is that even after you have all of the science that is possible, you still get issues. How do you define scenic quality? It becomes almost a value judgement. For one person this is scenically beautiful, to another person that is scenically beautiful. That is where you have to place some level of definition to it, and as soon as you begin to do that some people will see it in a different way. Science in many cases doesn't help us very much in trying to get to those value judgements. It is like the wilder-

ness plan draft that we have out on the street, where there is an issue of how many encounters with others constitutes a violation of your solitude, so to speak, and it becomes a value thing. One person could say, "if I don't see anybody, well then, that is what I'm looking for," and another might say, "if I see 10 people then I can tolerate that," so it becomes judgmental in a way. To get at those of things we do have social scientists that help us arrive at some general parameters, but it still always seems to get down to some pretty tough judgement calls that science sometimes helps us with and sometimes doesn't. In the end, you have both science and values that you're dealing with out there, and they are both important.

What do you see as the biggest challenge or challenges facing the Inyo, particularly as they might relate to the Mono Basin?

If I had to pick one I'd have to say budget, quite frankly. We're really struggling with how to make ends meet, how to get enough resources. To that end, what we're looking at are lots of creative ways such as the Fee Demo. The Mono Basin has a Fee Demo Program, which we're really taking a close look at to see if it is accomplishing the objectives we want. We're also going to be looking strongly at partnerships and I think what the MLC can bring to the equation is extremely important. I think we're going to be looking across the board at other possible partnerships that can really help us to stretch the dollars that we have. I think that the relationship with the State Parks is a partnership that we can grow and nurture because together we can do a lot more than individually, and that is really what it is all about. ↵

Policy updates

Restoration ahead!

In December, the Department of Water and Power released its draft implementation plan for stream and waterfowl habitat restoration. The plan pulls the Water Board's various restoration directives since 1994 into a single administrative document that specifies timelines and procedures for implementing restoration. In essence, the implementation plan serves as a workplan for DWP—and a guiding document for the Committee to watchdog progress and contribute directly as needed. It is encouraging to see dates set for things such as channel rewatering, revegetation, aerial photography, and the web page that will make real-time monitoring data available on the Internet in 1999. The Committee is currently submitting comments on the plan.

USFS tests water use at County Ponds

This past summer and fall, the Forest Service experimented with filling County Ponds as freshwater habitat for migrating birds. The County Ponds were identified in the recent State Water Resources Control Board decision on restoration as an important area to rewater for waterfowl habitat.

County Ponds are natural depressions on Mono's north shore, part of a predi-version lagoon system to the east of Black Point. Historically, excess irrigation water from the DeChambeau Ranch (water diverted from Mill Creek) was directed down to these depressions. When the lake level dropped and when irrigation ceased, the ponds dried up.

The Forest Service opened ditches and installed temporary pipes to improve and control water delivery to the two ponds. The west pond filled easily; the east pond proved more difficult to fill. Water intended for the east pond seeped underground and appeared again in a

marsh area lakewards of the pond.

The results of these tests will help the Forest Service determine what, if anything, needs to be done with the ponds to make them serviceable for waterfowl. This fall, ducks were observed using the ponds.

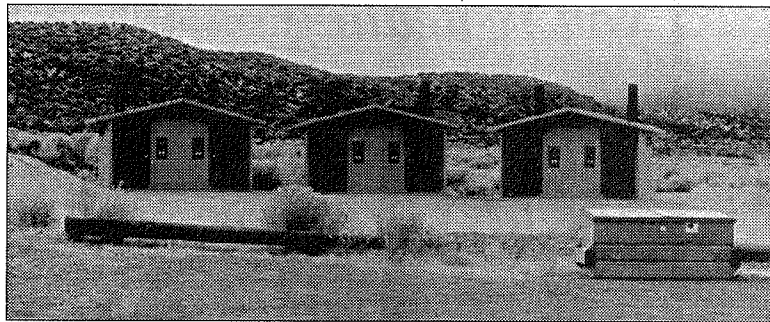
If the Forest Service finds a way to fill both County Ponds, it will bring the number of freshwater ponds in the area up to six.

Wiser washers

Washing machines have become the single largest user of water in homes today. While energy- and water-efficient washing machines have been in use in

Europe for years, they are relatively new to the United States. These machines—also called horizontal access washers—are said to be softer on your clothes, saving on wear and tear as well.

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is offering a \$300 rebate to its customers who buy the new machines. The Department expects the washers to use half the water and notably less energy than their older counterparts. Other water agencies are likely to follow suit, particularly if they start hearing from their customers. If you are in DWP's service area, call 800-544-4498. If not, call your water agency and ask for their conservation program officer and put in a request for a rebate program.



New toilets at South Tufa

This fall, vault toilets were installed at South Tufa, Mono's most heavily visited site. These are the first of several improvements planned for the area under a plan issued by the U.S. Forest Service in 1993.

Funding for improvements in the South Tufa area comes in part from fees collected at the Forest Service Visitor Center as well as at South Tufa. A reported 80% of fees collected go directly back to the area where they are collected for development of facilities, interpretive programs, and other purposes.

Because five years have gone by

since the original decision on South Tufa improvements, the Committee has requested that the Forest Service hold a public meeting to explain the rest of the planned improvements and consider public comment. With the new toilets in place, it's easier to see exactly how the experience at South Tufa will change with infrastructure "upgrades."

Our concern about the scale of South Tufa improvements was heightened when the Forest Service installed six toilets instead of the four called for in the 1993 decision.

East shore stories

Mono Lake's water conservation lesson for California

by Bartshe Miller

Sometime last winter, maybe during a raging windstorm, a section of boardwalk broke loose from County Park or Old Marina and journeyed 13 miles across Mono Lake, dodging Negit and Paoha Islands before making landfall on the opposite shoreline. Salt encrusted, and saturated with alkaline water, its 100-pound mass skidded across the flooded salt grass propelled by storm surge and an unremitting wind. In April, 1998 it rested several yards from the edge of Mono Lake.

There are many interesting stories like this, some unintentional consequences of a lake on the rise, a few anecdotal, one very significant, with great implications for the future of water use in California. Twenty years ago as the struggle to protect Mono Lake began, no one could have imagined that Los Angeles would emerge as one of the most savvy urban water users in the entire United States.

With the national average for residential water consumption standing at 180 gallons per person per day—indoor and outdoor use combined—Los Angeles citizens are some of the most efficient water users in the state. According to Department of Water and Power figures, Los Angeles residents use 135 gallons per person per day. With the recent wet years (which often allow people to become more casual about water use) this is an impressive statistic. The City's water use is perhaps the lowest among California's major urban populations, edging out per capita water consumption in many Bay Area communities while staying well below cities like Fresno and Sacramento.

This amazing accomplishment has as much to do with the struggle to protect Mono Lake as the lessons of the last drought. The Mono Lake Committee helped provide replacement water for past Mono Basin diversions, and public relations, adept lobbying, astute strategizing, and education became important water conservation tools.

Drought demonstrated just how much the City could save through conservation

to LA since the last drought.

Saving water through water reclamation is another consequence of the Mono Lake success. A deal struck between the State, the City of Los Angeles, and the Mono Lake Committee in 1993 targeted state funds to develop a water reclamation plant in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. The East Valley water reclamation plant will soon return 35,000 acre feet of recycled water a year to the local aquifer,

replenishing groundwater supplies. And Central and West Basin's existing water reclamation facility in El Segundo already recycles 50 million gallons of tertiary-treated wastewater from Los Angeles' Hyperion plant. Each day, water from the El Segundo plant is available for groundwater recharge and commercial and industrial use, replacing traditional uses of fresh water. These projects and others coming on line make Southern California the national leader in water

reclamation. Not only is water reclamation offsetting diversions from the Mono Basin, but it is reducing the amount of treated sewage being dumped into the Santa Monica Bay.

Los Angeles, and in fact all of Southern California, has dramatically reduced consumption compared to twenty years ago when efforts to protect Mono Lake were just beginning. The distribution of ULFTs, development of water reclamation facilities, and the water industry's increasing realization that conservation and reclamation actually work have grown from the struggle to protect Mono Lake and the hard lessons of drought.

The southern third of the state is often blamed for a host of modern frustrations,

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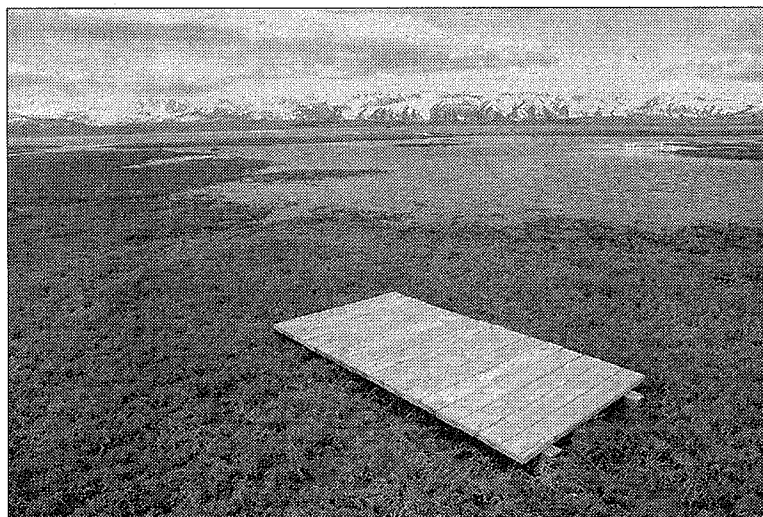


Photo by Bartshe Miller

efforts. In 1990, during the height of the 1988–1993 drought, the Department of Water and Power launched mandatory water rationing. The city cut water use up to 30% in 1991 with simple water conservation. With ongoing conservation efforts, like the continued distribution of ultra low-flush toilets (ULFTs) and other institutional efforts, the water saved during future droughts could be even more substantial. Even now, total residential use is nearly 20% lower than it was in the 1980s, and with the constantly increasing population of LA, this is an amazing statistic. You can still occasionally spot people hosing off sidewalks and driveways, but this is far less common than it once was, and odds are, it's an indication of who has moved

Outdoor Education at Mono Lake

A Los Angeles partnership turns five



Outdoor Experiences group Iglesia Poder de Dios from Reseda enjoying Rush Creek as part of their exploration of the Mono Basin.



Department of Water and Power General Manager David Freeman (right) recently visited the Committee's Lee Vining office with DWP staff members Jerry Gewe (second from right) and Glenn Singley (left). They joined with Outdoor Experiences Coordinator Mike Klapp (second from left) to announce a three-year agreement for the educational use of Cain Ranch.

This past summer the Mono Lake Committee's Outdoor Experiences program (OE) had its biggest year yet! Ten Los Angeles area groups and one local Eastern Sierra group each spent up to one week in the Mono Basin camping, hiking, and learning about the source of Los Angeles' water. Groups included the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Mothers of East Los Angeles, Asian American Drug Abuse Program, Korean Youth and Community Center, and others!

The Outdoor Experiences program is focused on watershed education through the use of muscle-powered outdoor recreation. Entering its sixth year, the Outdoor Experiences program owes its success to the unique partnership between the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Mono Lake Committee, and Los Angeles community organizations. Important funding has come from Southern California Edison, ARCO Foundation, Executive Partners in Environmental Resource Training Inc., and from contributions by Mono Lake Committee members. The young people that participate in the Outdoor Experiences program are typically associated with water conservation programs in Los Angeles, reside in inner-city communities, and rarely have the opportunity to travel beyond the Los Angeles area.

The Committee's OE team is looking forward to 1999 and the possibility of making new connections in Los Angeles, improving program activities, and building on the success of the last five years. If you would like more information on this exciting program, would like to contribute, or can suggest groups that might be interested, please contact Bartshe Miller (bartshe@monolake.org), Education Director, at 760-647-6595. ☞

20th Anniversary celebrated by all

by Kay Ogden

Twenty years. Twenty years of commitment, dedication, perseverance, and hard work. Most of us know the story of how a handful of students saw the magic of Mono Lake and couldn't walk away from the threats to its future. And now, we've achieved a level of protection for the lake, which is nine feet higher than in 1978 when the Mono Lake Committee was formed. What a wonderful reason for a celebration!

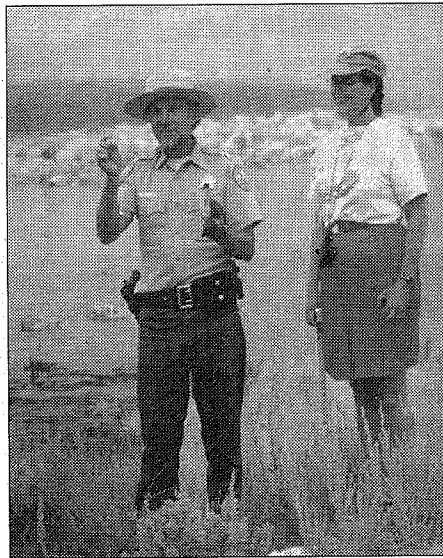
So this year's Restoration Days took on special significance as we celebrated the MLC's 20th Anniversary.

The four-day weekend was full of things to do, and all events were well attended even with the inclement weather. Very special thanks go to Nancy Lampson and Sharon Dillon of Lee Vining High School for allowing us to move our Friday evening kickoff "Music in the Park" to the school gym. Even though the rain moved us inside, it didn't dampen the enthusiasm! People brought picnics and danced, chatted with old friends, and bought goodies being sold by the Lee Vining sixth grade class.

From then on the weekend was full speed ahead with workshops, hikes,

tours, and get-togethers.

While the Saturday tradition of the Rehydration Ceremony and Annual Meeting remained, both have taken on new meanings in recent years. At this



Dave Carle and Frances Spivy-Weber try to predict the coming year's lake level at the Rehydration Ceremony.

year's Rehydration Ceremony, our pilgrimage from the parking area to the shore took only a few minutes, and we stood with water at our ankles where only dust had been in the past. Many of those who attended shared personal stories of what had brought them to the lake, and how things have changed over the years.

Former Committee Executive Director Martha Davis emotionally spoke of once again seeing phalaropes at the Rehydration Ceremony. Helen and Paul Green recounted their many trips to Mono's shore, and shared how this year was a celebration for them, too. Rich Howe was mentioned because, although he could not stay for Restoration Days, he had ridden his bike from Mojave to the lake, a reminder of past Bike-A-Thons

from Los Angeles to Mono Lake.

State Ranger David Carle recalled his forecast at last year's ceremony as to where this year's shoreline would be and he helped us mark a spot where we thought the water would be next year. The shoreline has changed so much that it was harder than you might think to find our prediction spots from last year. We all tried to get better bearings for our 1999 predictions!

Afterward, the group made its way to County Park for the Annual Meeting and the 20th Anniversary Celebration. We heard stories from current Committee staff members, past interns, scientists, Board Members, staff, Bike-A-Thoners, researchers, and friends. We also shared laughter, and shed some tears for those who were not with us for the celebration, especially David Gaines.

The Mono Lake Committee's goals for Restoration Days were not only to celebrate, but also to help people understand more about this remarkable place we all care so deeply about. With this in mind, here are a few stories from people who participated in the weekend.

"To Fran and The Mono Lake Staff, What a magical weekend celebrating our 20th Anniversary of SAVE MONO LAKE with you all— It was a joy and an inspiration to spend this many days with you dedicated and hard working people. We had a great time getting to know you and learned soooo much about your special place. (We thought we knew it!)"

"Thank you for a memorable time in our elder years. We vividly remember coming to a hearing at Lee Vining High School one winter day for Mono Lake after dropping our girls at June Lake for ski lessons, many years ago."

Virginia and Bill Hilker of Redondo Beach

"We loved wading through Rush and



Restoration Days bird walk at County Park.

Lee Vining creeks, thigh-high at times, counting willows (some of which we had helped to plant in previous years), learning about what works and what doesn't work in stream restoration. It was great to see that the creek channels have a definite plan of their own if given enough stream flow. How much fun it would be to take the same walk every month and watch the progress. Searching for pines and cottonwood higher up the banks was like a very special "Easter egg" hunt. We gloried in the ones that

made it, mourned the dried twigs that succumbed. We can't wait for next year. The Restoration Days are the high point in our trip to the Mono Basin. Thanks for organizing them.

Restoration Days were a spirit revival experience! 'Channeling' became a real life event, not just for the creeks. We really can make a difference if we try."

Helen and Paul Green of Berkeley

Several Lee Vining businesses get a special "Thanks!" for giving discounts

over the weekend— Best Western Lakeview Lodge, Nicely's, and the Tioga Lodge. Also, Bill and Serena Banta donated the use of their moveable fire ring for our campfire and s'mores at South Tufa on Sunday night.

The date for this year's Restoration Days is Labor Day Weekend, September 3 through 6.

Kay Ogden is the Committee's Marketing Director. She's trying her hand at Italian cooking this winter. 🍷

Restoration team tallies tree survival

by Greg Reis

Since I started working for the Mono Lake Committee in 1995, I've been lucky enough to get to know the Mono Basin streams well. I've also coordinated all of the Committee's tree planting and watering projects since that time.

Last summer I held the seasonal position of Canoe Program Coordinator, and I spent very little time along the streams. It was a real treat to spend an entire day walking Lee Vining Creek on Sunday of the Committee's 20th Anniversary Restoration Days weekend (thanks to canoe expert Michelle Hofmann for covering the canoe tours for me).

The day started at the Information Center, where a few familiar faces gathered to help with restoration work—not hard labor, but data gathering. Botanist Mark Bagley first took us to an overlook and described some of the past restoration work. Then we headed down to Lee Vining Creek to begin work.

In spring 1995, over 1500 trees were planted in the deforested area along Lee Vining Creek, and in September 1995 I tried to find them all.



Of the ones I had found, 70% of the Jeffrey pines were surviving, and so were just over 50% of the cottonwoods and willows, which was a surprisingly good survival rate. Now, three years later, we would try to find these, and tally their survival.

We broke into two groups and began counting. At certain places it was hard to distinguish between trees planted in 1995, trees planted in other years, and natural regrowth. They looked so different from three years ago—some cottonwoods were 8–10 feet tall!

I had been wondering for three years about how the trees were doing, and I finally found out. There were more surviving than I expected—a pleasant surprise!

After lunch (thanks to Bill and Virginia Hilker, who generously fed me, summer intern Bill Lickiss, and volunteer Clyde Underwood), Mark Bagley gave a talk on riparian vegetation. During this talk I was able to count more trees planted in 1995, and afterwards, while everyone enjoyed Dave Herbst's talk, I made my way back to Lee Vining, counting along the way.

We managed to count all of the areas that were planted in 1995 west of the main channel. Of those surviving the first summer, 59% of the Jeffrey pines survived, 86% of the cottonwoods, and 74% of the willows—a total of 381 trees! This well-established forest was made possible by our members, our staff, volunteers, youth groups from LA, Lee Vining school children, biologist Scott English, and cooperation and funding from LADWP. Thank you all for both your support and your hard work! Working together we can restore the health of the Mono Basin!

Greg Reis is the Committee's Website Information Specialist. He's spreading the word about sustainability this winter.

The Sierra Cycle Foundation and the Mono Lake Committee would like to thank the following volunteers, sponsors, and organizations whose wonderful support made this year's ride such a success:

Arctic Spray • Barkley Meat Company
 Best Western Lakeview Lodge
 Big Mountain Bottled Water • BikeVan
 Bill Cockroft • Brian's Bicycles
 CellularONE • Clif Bar • Clifford Mann
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 Dave Geirman • Dave Levy
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 Designs Unlimited • DFS
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 Frank Velut • George Tredick
 Glenn McKinnon
 Gordy and Kathy Johnson
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 Lara Andersen Lee Vining Market
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 Mammoth Lakes Fire Dept.
 Mammoth Lakes Lions Club
 Mammoth Mountain Bike Park
 Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
 Mammoth/June Publishing Company
 Mark Holloway
 McGee Creek Inn Resort
 Mike Hawkins • Mono County Sheriff
 R.A.C.E.S. • Mono Vista RV Park
 Nicely's Restaurant • Patagonia
 Paul Oster • Pete Bischoff • Power Bar
 Rene Klein • Sandy Pendley • Serfas
 Sharon and Pat Patterson
 Shelli B.W. Edwards • Sheri Pueblo
 Sierra Septic • Theresa De Graffenreid
 Tioga Lodge • Tony Romo
 Upper Crust Pizza Company
 US Foodservice
 Vons (Bishop and Mammoth Lakes)
 Whiskey Creek in Mammoth Lakes
 Women's Auxillary



Century cycling

by Kay Ogden

Great weather and excellent riding greeted cyclists for the Third Annual High Sierra Fall Century, held this past September 12! Three hundred riders came from all over the West to ride in the beautiful Eastern Sierra and to help celebrate the Mono Lake Committee's 20th Anniversary.

For the second year in a row, the Mono Lake Committee worked with the Sierra Cycle Foundation to organize and promote the 100-mile bike ride. The number of participants is increasing each year, and so is the number of new people hearing about Mono Lake and the Mono Lake Committee. The Mono Craters rest stop, with its incredible views of Mono Lake, was stocked with food, drinks and plenty of Mono Lake information. Committee staff and Executive Director Frances Spivy-Weber were stationed along the course ready to answer questions about Mono Lake and help support the riders throughout the day.

At the finish of the ride cyclists rested under a tent, swam in the pool, ate great food, listened to music, and talked about their day. Here are a few of their comments:

"... stunning scenery ... almost no

traffic — one of the two or three best rides of my life!! ... and in support of the Mono Lake Committee; keep up the good work." Jim Cope

"Everyone thought the ride was excellent ... We're all experienced riders and have done many rides like this. The event you put on ranks with the best we have participated in. You're very well organized and we would be hard pressed to recommend any changes or improvements." Garry Giem

"Thanks for the best supported, best planned, and the most scenic century course I have ever ridden. The courtesy of the staff, and the abundance of munchies at all the rest stops was far more than expected." Len Fernandes

"I really enjoyed the ride! The sag support was absolutely wonderful. This was the Best Ride I've been on ... will recommend it to all my friends for next year." Sally Gottlieb

So ... if you haven't made one of the rides yet ... start training for this year's Century Ride on September 18th!



MLC Executive Director Frances Spivy-Weber, volunteer extraordinaire George Tredick, and Education Director Bartshe Miller talk to cyclists at the end of the 100 mile bike ride.

Photo by Michael Krupp

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of less political events at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The things that go unseen in the Mono Basin are some times small, sometimes vast. The hawk snatching a deer mouse from the sagebrush, a tree growing in the sun, a moment's flare of color at sunset. And most times they happen just around the corner, down by the creek, over the top of a hill, around the back of a mountain peak.

Such was an early winter storm that threatened bad weather yet only delivered gusty winds and a brief sprinkle of rain to town. But that was in town; a bit further away the wind howled over the Sierra crest as clouds wrapped Mt. Conness, visibility went from miles to feet in minutes, and snow stacked up ankle high on bare ground. Blowing almost horizon-



tally on the ridge, the frozen flakes blasted over granite crags and then abruptly began to trace lazy spirals in the calm lee of the mountain. Just another fall day in the mountains.

The winter hasn't quite followed through from that beginning, though, and ice gripping the creekside boulders is perhaps the best reminder we have of the season, as snow is hard to find.

But every winter creates its own sights, snow or not. A stream of still days has allowed a thin crust of ice to form at the western edge of the lake. The delicate floes shift and move about, stacking up on each other, building ever changing patterns in the reflections of the sky. One day later, it's all different again.

Benchmarks ...

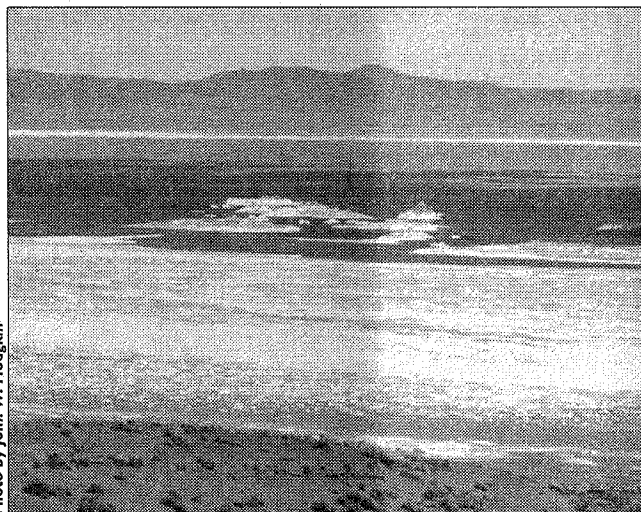


Photo by John W. Hodgkin

The view from the top of Black Point looking east toward the Negit Islets and the exposed landbridge with the lake level at 6376 feet in October of 1977.

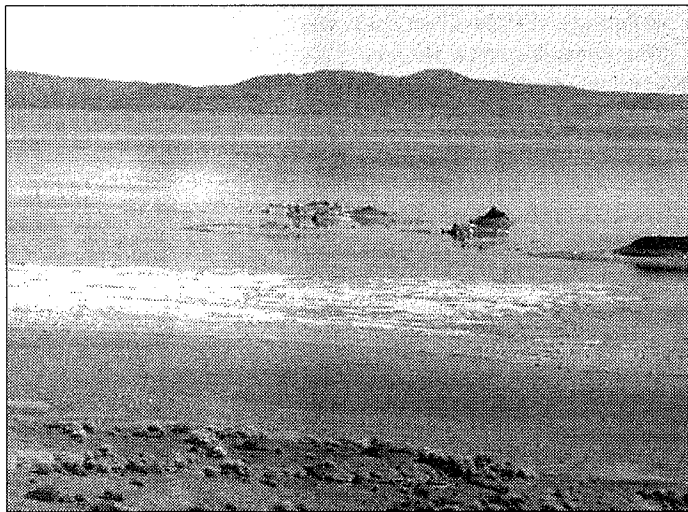
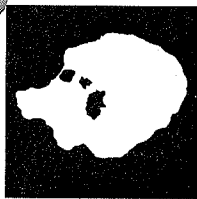


Photo by Arya Degen

The islets and much less exposed lakebed in November of 1998. Lake level at 6384 feet, eight feet higher!



Lakewatch

Don't worry about the weather, just keep conserving water

by Greg Reis

I think that last year's El Niño spoiled us. This fall, everyone is asking what kind of winter it will be—expecting an accurate prediction. Unfortunately, El Niños as strong as last year's are rare; therefore rarely can such accurate long-term climate predictions be made.

There is, however, a climate pattern associated with the moderate La Niña we are currently experiencing. La Niña is a term that refers to unusually cold sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific. During this type of event, rainfall is generally below normal in the southern US and in California—especially Southern California. On the other hand, the Pacific Northwest is generally wetter than normal, with precipitation in the normal range falling somewhere in between the two regions. What does this mean for Mono Lake which lies in that middle zone? Well, maybe a dryer than average winter—or maybe not.

Thanks to the past four wet winters, Mono Lake has risen nearly ten vertical feet. At today's 6,384.2 feet, it is well ahead of schedule on its rise to 6,392 feet above sea level. The streams have been full, and floods have brought new life into riparian areas. DWP's diversions have remained low enough that each year Grant Lake Reservoir has spilled, giving Rush Creek higher flows—more like the natural flow pattern and just what the stream needs to restore itself.

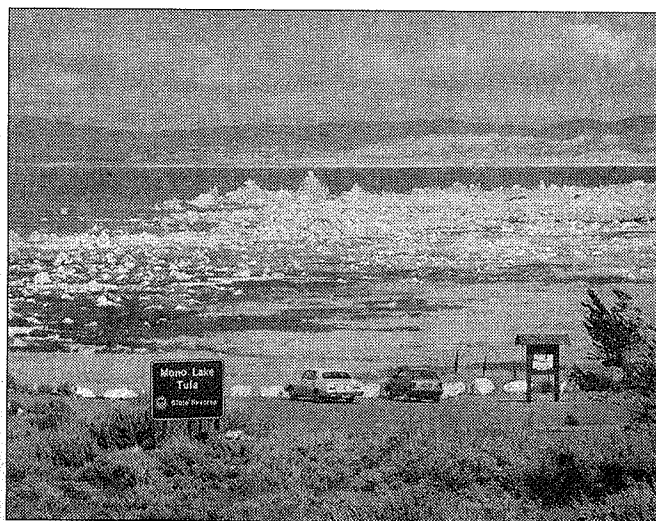
Larger inflows to the lake have caused salinity to drop, alkali fly habitat to increase, the Negit Islets to be protected from predators, dust storms to decrease, lake-fringing lagoons to increase, and the walk to the lake to shorten. Meromixis has set in, a condition whose impacts on gull productivity will receive research attention this year. In short, we've got a little breathing room.

Droughts are a natural occurrence, but we are dealing with an ecosystem

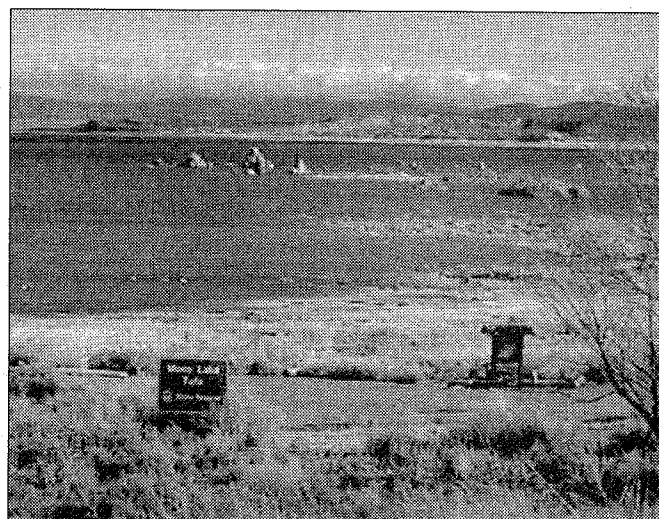
stressed from artificial drought, and the natural resilience of the lake and streams has been reduced. A ten-year drought now would have much more serious consequences than it would have had back in 1940. We have a small buffer for drought, but that buffer will grow as Mono Lake approaches 6,392.

Thanks to the hard work of the Mono Lake Committee and others over the last 20 years, we have the luxury of not having to dread dry years as much. California and Mono Lake are more drought resistant than they were 20 years ago. Thanks to the Water Board decision, there are strict rules in place that will raise Mono Lake to 6,392—in spite of a drought or two along the way. And in another 20 years, if we stay vigilant and continue to work as hard as before, we will continue to have this luxury: the luxury to say, "Don't worry about the weather, just keep conserving water." 🐦

... and more Benchmarks



View of the shoreline at the site of the Old Marina during the summer of 1982. Lake level: 6372.4

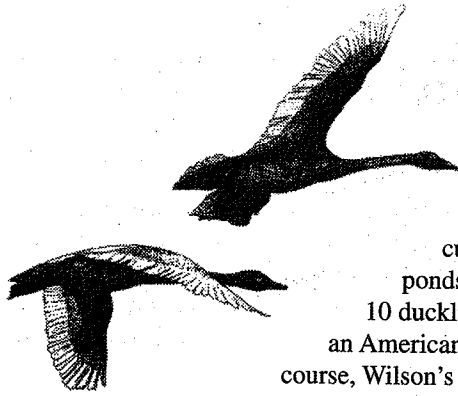


The Old Marina shoreline at lake level 6384.3. See what an 11.9 foot rise can do!

Photo by Arya Degenhardt

Naturalist notes

A Mono Basin chronicle



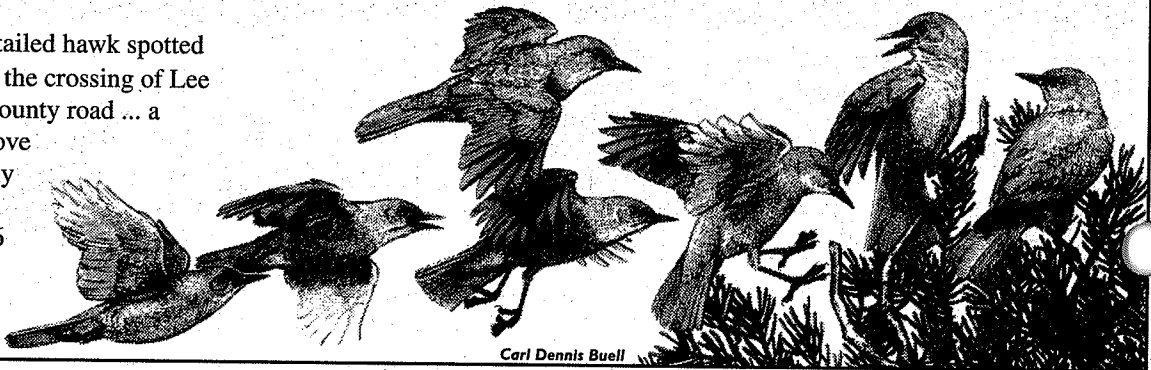
August: down on Rush Creek low flows expose new pools, cut-off meanders, cut banks, and larger point bars, evidence of the work of the high spring flows ... ponds along the north shore are teeming with families of birds ... a northern pintail with 10 ducklings ... 170 male, female, and immature yellow-headed blackbirds share a pond with an American coot and two chicks as well as a female gadwall and her nine young ... and of course, Wilson's phalaropes ... gathering one evening are three Bonaparte's gulls in winter plumage ... great blue herons ... black-crowned night herons ... white faced ibises ... northern shovelers ... the fall Shorebird Count uncovers some local treasures ... three brants ... a short-eared owl and 31 Baird's sandpipers on the northeast shore ... 48 species of birds and 10,594 individuals in one day ... rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*) finally starting to paint the basin yellow with its bright bloom ... a solitary solitary sandpiper ... dozens of hummingbird moths pollinating the bouncing bet (*Saponaria officinalis*) along Lee Vining Creek ... and crickets loud enough to be heard all the way along the creek trail.

September: bear tracks out in the Jeffrey pine forest ... a red-naped sapsucker hanging around the high school for Restoration Days ... pied-billed grebes, western grebes, and the first of the eared grebes to venture towards South Tufa while bats dart above heads and through the groves ... Sabine's gull sighted at various locations on the north shore ... an immature bald eagle at Bridgeport Reservoir ... an immature wood duck in June Lake ... saw-whet owls calling out by the craters ... a lazuli bunting feeding its young at the County Park ... and a jaeger harassing phalaropes on the west shore of Mono ... spadefoot toads on the north shore ... new snow covers Mt. Wood to Koip Peak and dusts Mt. Dana as well ... Tioga Pass is open ... closed ... open ... closed ... open ... and the 1.4 inches of precipitation we've had down here is double the average for this time of year ... winds are picking up and the lake is taking on its silver-blue winter hue ... California gulls hanging around with that solitary Sabine's gull, killdeer, eared grebes, American coots, and a flock of terns down along Rush Creek ... a bobcat and over 100 pinon jays spotted by a school group out at Panum Crater.

October: kayaking along the west shore uncovers many eared grebes and ruddy ducks ... springs well up healthily from below the water's surface between Mill and Wilson creeks ... and a piece of the County Park boardwalk most likely swept away by rising water's found stranded out to the east ... an albino eared grebe ... a sora hiding amongst the willows by the boardwalk ... the striking fall colors are reflected in the glassy waters of the lake as patches of aspen light up in a brilliant display of color signaling the coming of winter ... a sharp-shinned hawk harassing flickers at Old Marina ... leaves are falling rapidly due to cold temperatures making for a short but sweet set of colors ... ants processing woody debris left behind in the avalanche chutes above Old Marina ... evening grosbeaks and Clark's nutcrackers feeding on pine nuts above Log Cabin Mine amongst the lodgepole (*Pinus contorta*) and whitebark (*Pinus albicaulis*) pines ... blue grouse up by Lee Vining peak ... five bighorn rams spotted from the summit before a storm.

November: two wood ducks in the pond along DeChambeau Creek at Simis Ranch ... two female white-headed woodpeckers out at Indiana Summit ... Tioga Pass closed November sixth by the first significant winter storm of the season ... a loggerheaded shrike hanging out by Lee Vining Creek ... eared grebes in the thousands along the west shore seem to gravitate towards offshore springs ... days later their numbers more than quadruple ... while some California gulls are still sticking around ... high winds bring cold snows and patchy clear skies for the Leonid meteor showers ... a flock of snow geese off in the distance by "Gaines Island" were really something to see.

December: a red-tailed hawk spotted multiple times down at the crossing of Lee Vining Creek and the county road ... a kestrel on the move above the office ... chilly chilly winds blow away small dustings of snow ... 356 tundra swans, and it sure feels like winter.



Carl Dennis Buell

Think globally, paddle locally

by Gary Nelson

Looking back on the past canoe season (our tenth!) I am very proud of the growing partnership in outdoor education between the Mono Lake Committee and the Lee Vining schools.

It all started a while back on our first high school canoe trip when one senior told me that it was his first time out on Mono Lake. Talking with other students made me realize that some Mono Basin youths knew far less about the natural world surrounding them than many of our seasonal visitors.

After that first trip I proposed that the Committee offer canoe trips to all classes at both the elementary and high school. The Committee immediately supported the idea and agreed to provide canoes, equipment, and staff members for guides. Since then we have taken out grades 1-12 on canoe trips to many places around the lake, including an all-day trip to Negit and Paoha islands.

Early this September we took high school teacher Jeff Putman and his science class canoeing on Mono Lake on a perfect fall day. After studying the freshwater layer at the mouth of a creek we paddled on to a tufa grove and were treated to excellent views of a pair of osprey. The students, as usual, showed an exuberance for learning that is not always evident in the classroom. Jeff asked if we could go out again later that month. I told him sure, as long as anything unforeseen didn't happen.

Unfortunately, it did. On September 19, fire destroyed Lee Vining High School (LVHS). The next few days were a blur. Furniture, books, and equipment salvaged by students, teachers, and members of the community had to be moved between the two schools.

A few days after the fire I told Jeff that I was still willing to take his class canoeing whenever things settled down. Fortunately, my remark was overheard by

another teacher, Kristin McBride, who immediately suggested, "Why don't we just take the whole school out?"

Wondering, "Why didn't I think of that?" I calculated that by tying two canoes on my roof rack and towing the canoe trailer with its six canoes we would indeed be able to launch all LVHS students and staff in one flotilla. "Let's do it!" I responded.



Photo by Arya Degenhardt
Lee Vining High School students and teachers after a day of paddling on Mono Lake.

The day of our expedition dawned windy. Driving down to the lake, I anxiously watched the branches on the sagebrush and rabbitbrush for signs of movement. In my ten years of canoeing I never wished so fervently for a calm day. Larry Ford was waiting for us at the launch site and said that the wind had died down about 20 minutes earlier. It was still calm a short while later when LVHS students and staff gathered near the canoes on the beach. Pointing out towards the lake I reminded them that although the school had burned down, our best classroom was still here.

Amid hearty cheers we launched and headed east through moderately choppy water towards an isolated tufa tower. The last time I had been out to this huge formation it was on the tip of a peninsula jutting out into the lake. Mono's waters had risen two feet since then, so as I expected, we found the tower as an island for the first time since the early 1970s.

The barrier beaches behind the tower had been breached by wave action, forming a network of lagoons.

Unfortunately, we didn't have much time to enjoy this amazing place because the wind had come up in full force. Looking out from our sheltered lagoon through the inlet, we saw rows of two- to three-foot breakers forming up. I had a quick conference with Larry during which

we decided to try and make it back since it was an onshore wind, and we had good strong paddlers.

Before this outing our school canoe trips had been on calm water where we could drift lazily, and where paddling was almost an afterthought. But as we launched out through the inlet it was clear that the lake had become a force to be reckoned with. Three- to four-foot swells separated by only four to five feet demanded that we steer a zigzag pattern, tacking back and forth so that our bows encountered the waves at an angle.

As the crest of a wave reared my stern seat upwards, I looked around and saw the other boats doing fine. Even over the sound of the wind, I could hear shouts of youthful exuberance punctuated by the squeals of wave-soaked passengers. While the students were really having fun, and probably wished that the waves were ten feet high, I was definitely feeling the weight of responsibility. But as Navy Beach came into view my anxiety was replaced by a feeling of pride as I realized that we had given these students a tough assignment: taking nature on its own terms. As far as I was concerned they had gotten straight A's and, for a couple of hours at least, could put aside images of the burned school and get their lessons from the greatest teacher of all.

Canoe Admiral Gary Nelson is spending his winter recovering after taking more than 100 local students canoeing this fall.



HANDCRAFTS BY JACK TREFRY
 "Living in this magnificent place has inspired my current work. The rich pure colors of the landscape and the sky are reflected in my glazes. I strive to create beautiful forms which can be used daily."
 —Jack Trefry



POTTERY

Jack Trefry, a Lee Vining resident, has been a potter for 25 years (see Jack and his son Chris on the opposite page). His pottery is hand-thrown, oven and microwave safe, and contains no lead. These pieces will remind you of the Mono Basin for years to come. Available in Mono Ruby (blue and mauve tones), Sierra Sky (teal and mauve tones), and Fall Meadow (oatmeal and brown tones). Sizes and colors may vary.

Mug, measures 4 1/2" tall and holds 16oz : \$14.00 (Item #2007)

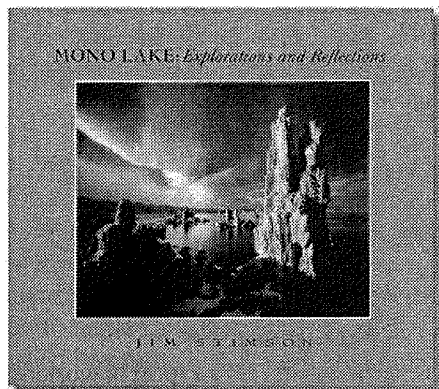
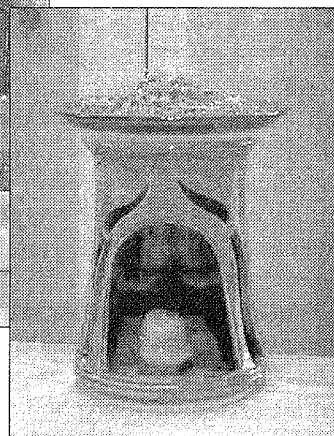
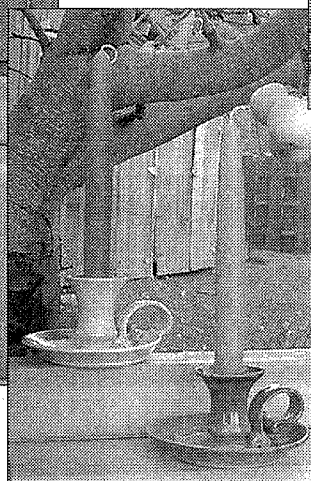
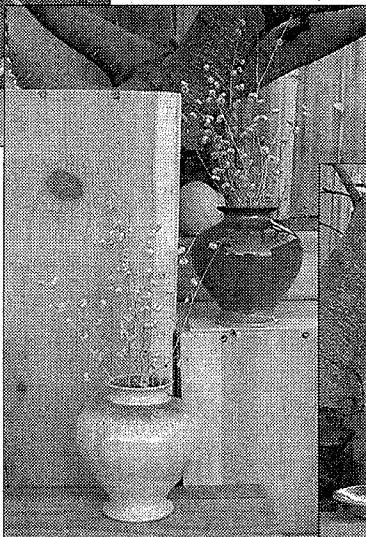
Small vase, stands 5" tall : \$9.00 (Item #2008)

Medium vase, stands 6" tall : \$16.00 (Item #2009)

Candlestick, stands 6 1/2" tall : \$12.00 (Item #2010)

Handled candle holder, stands 3" tall : \$11.00 (Item #2011)

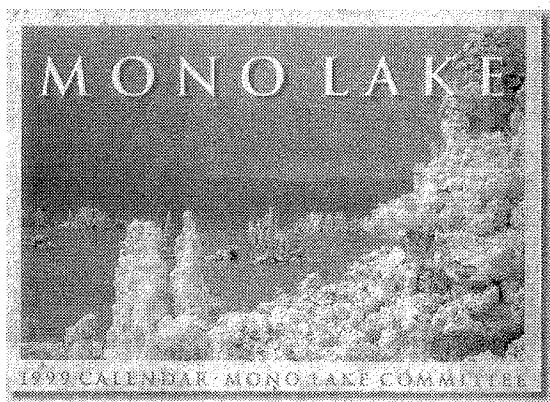
Sierra Scents, stands 5" tall, and comes with a bag of sage and juniper to burn : \$19.00 (Item #2012)



MONO LAKE : EXPLORATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Renowned photographer Jim Stimson's photographs of Mono Lake are introduced with a thoughtful essay by Charles Wilkinson in this beautiful coffee table book. A favorite of Mono Lake lovers, this hardbound collection has 51 color plates which take an intimate look at this austere landscape.

Hardcover, 115 pages: \$55.00 (Item #114)



1999 CALENDAR DISCOUNT!

It is never too late to put us on your wall! Bring the Mono Basin into your home with this full color calendar featuring Jim Stimson, Dennis Flaherty, Larry Ulrich and others. Quantity limited!

1999 Calendar: \$7.95 (Item #1204)

1999 Mono Lake Committee

field seminars

Mono Basin Winter Photography

Don Jackson, March 19-21

\$195 per person / \$170 for MLC members

Explore the dramatic and sublime scenery of the Mono Basin in winter! This new photography seminar will investigate snow-capped tufa, lofty granite peaks, icy creeks, and the beautiful, soft light of winter. Join award-winning photographer and workshop leader Don Jackson and an adventurous group of peers in creating unique images of Mono Basin scenes that happen only in winter. Workshop includes classroom instruction, discussions and critiques, and on-location photography. Visualization, use of light, dynamic composition, metering, filters, and other topics will be covered. All formats of adjustable cameras are welcome. Possibility of harsh weather conditions requires proper clothing and that you be in good physical condition. You must know the basics of using your camera, as this is not a workshop for novice photographers, and you will need to bring samples of your work for the critique sessions. Seminar begins Friday evening at 6pm. *Optional: If you would like to attend this workshop but need a refresher course or help with your camera, you can attend the pre-workshop class held earlier on March 19th for an extra fee of \$50. Limited to 4 people.*

California Gull Research: Nest Count

**Dave Shuford/Point Reyes Bird Observatory,
May 22-26**

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

Will this be the year that the California Gulls return to nest on Negit Island? Your participation and seminar fee will allow 16 years of research to continue on Mono's islands and provide you with a field expedition and desert island adven-

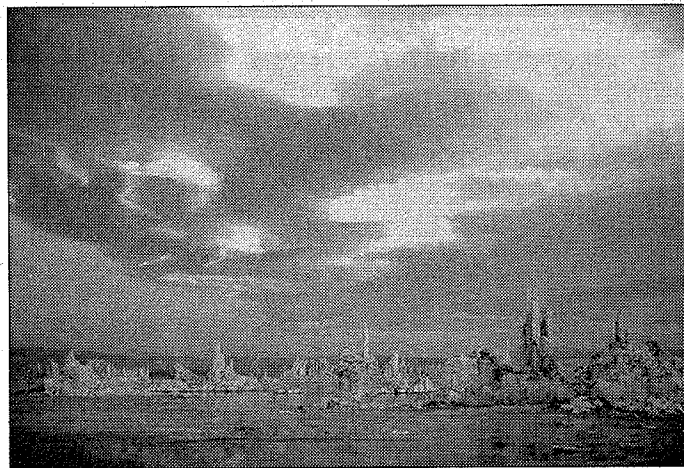


Photo by Don Jackson

ture you will not soon forget—an experience for the stout of body and heart. You'll enjoy the rare adventure of visiting Mono's spectacular Negit Islets (and camping on the mysterious Krakatoa Islet), and you'll observe at close quarters the second largest California Gull rookery in North America.

Birds of the East Slope

David Lukas, June 12-13

\$90 per person/ \$75 MLC 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 MLC 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

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

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. In both the lake and streams, seminar participants will see how to 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

\$195 per person/ \$170 for MLC 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 MLC 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 MLC members

This field seminar is designed for anyone with an interest in anthropology and the natural science 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 MLC 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*.

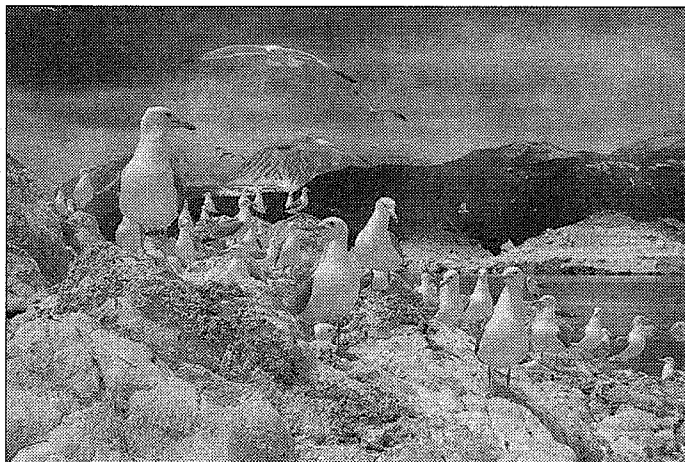


Photo by Moose Peterson

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



Photo by Moose Peterson

High Country Wildflowers

Mark Bagley, August 14-15

\$95 per person/ \$80 for MLC 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 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 21-22

\$90 per person/ \$75 for MLC 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 MLC 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 MLC 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 MLC 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.

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

1999 Field Seminar registration information

Register by phone

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 can not 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.

Free Drawing prize winners!

For our 20th Anniversary, this year's Free Prize Drawing had some of our most exciting prizes ever!

Margie Smith of Newport Beach won tickets to Six Flags Magic Mountain and Mary E. Richardson of Rancho Palos Verdes won 4 tickets to Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, both donated by Six Flags California. Both Tom Reynolds of Weaverville and Judith Walters of Rosamond won the Restoration Weekend at Mono Lake from Best Western Lakeview Lodge, Sierra Hospitality Group, Inc., The Mono Inn, The Tioga Lodge, and the MLC.

Eva Zimmerman of Berkeley won the Romantic and "Rogue"ish River Holiday from Pine Meadow Inn and Orange Torpedo. Gary Braman of Milpitas won a 4-night stay in Bend, Oregon donated by Committee Board member Dave Marquart. Dee Pruyer of El Cerrito won a bottle of Beringer 1993 Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon from Beringer Vineyards. David Rorick, Jr. of Oceanside won two days of skiing at Heavenly in Lake Tahoe donated by Heavenly Ski Resort. Susan Anstrand of Albany won a two night stay at The Ahwahnee at Yosemite from Yosemite Incession Services.

Robert C. Andrews of Hemet won a day of skiing at Alpine Meadows from

Alpine Meadows Ski Resort.

Henry Firestone of Camarillo, Douglas Peters of Mill Valley, and Lynn M. Heintz of Fresno all won 20th Anniversary MLC Fun Paks from the Committee. Barbara Bazan of Calpine won a Tributary Whitewater Tour from Tributary Whitewater Tours. Fred Wilmot of Adelanto won the Explore San Diego package from San Diego Mission Valley Hilton and Atlas Hotel Management. Victor and Shigeko Shibata of Sacramento won a Sea World Get-away from Sea World, the Hanalei Hotel, and Atlas Hotel Management.

Margaret Brown of Bakersfield won a hot-air balloon trip from Balloons Above Napa Valley. Mary H. Thompson of Milpitas won a kayak trip from Kayak Tahoe. Robert and Barbara Brandriff of Berkeley won the Disneyland Vacation from Stovall's Best Westerns of Anaheim and Disneyland.

Horatio A. Cogswell of Camarillo won a complete Cadillac Desert video series. Dora Williams of Ross won a Catalina Cruise from Catalina Cruises. Jennie Kwok of San Francisco won the Magnificent Mammoth Lakes Vacation from Mammoth Mountain, Royal Pines Resort, and Giovanni's.

Steven C. Brown of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, won the signed Ansel Adams Lithograph from the Ansel Adams Gallery. David Whitney of San Mateo originally won the So. Cal Adventure Package from Knott's Berry Farm and Movieland Wax Museum but has generously donated it back, so the new lucky winner is Dorothy A. Tomson of Sacramento. Steve Shaw of Bakersfield won a Llama Trek from Trailhead & Co.

And our Grand Prize winner, Mary S. Wall of Larkspur, won two Round-Trip Tickets on Southwest Airlines donated by Southwest Airlines Company.

Thank you to all of the sponsors and to all of you who participated this year!



Membership Coordinator Rebecca Dobert picks 1998's lucky prize winners.

East shore stories

continued from page 7.

inefficient water use among them; however, Los Angeles' reputation as a careless watermonger is no longer valid.

The recent history of Mono Lake and Los Angeles holds a valuable lesson for the future of water in California and the West: conservation and reclamation do work. We now have the opportunity to meet urban water needs while reducing impact on their watersheds.

In all cases this makes good sense, and in some it is the legal requirement. The California Supreme Court's 1983 Public Trust ruling established that the water rights of Los Angeles could be modified to protect the Public Trust values of

Mono Lake. No longer could California cities sequester new supplies of water with disregard to the Public Trust values of healthy ecosystems, recreation, and aesthetics. Some people will point out that the landmark Public Trust decision is what really guarantees Mono Lake's protection. To a large degree they are correct; however the decision contains some very interesting wording: "before state courts and agencies approve water diversions they should consider the effect of such diversions upon interests protected by the public trust, and attempt, so far as feasible, to avoid or minimize any harm to those interests."

This conjures up deeper questions. What is feasible? The fight to protect

Mono Lake precipitated institutional changes in the Southern California water industry that today more than compensate for past Mono Basin diversions. But have these changes gone far enough? Is it possible for water conservation and reclamation to go further? Are there other alternatives that minimize impacts on watersheds? The water industry claims that conservation and reclamation cannot keep pace with population growth and increasing demand, and argues that it is already doing all that can be done. The history of water in the West demonstrates that "so far as feasible" is a question of perspective and priority.

With an estimated 49 million people in California by the year 2020, and the threat of drought further limiting an already limited fresh water supply, one could make a gloomy educated guess about the future of California's water. But our understanding of the future can now be enlightened by our past, for Mono Lake has demonstrated that with singular dedication, feasible solutions can appear where none were before. Mono Lake does not have to be the exception in the history of California water.

In the late 1970s, when efforts on behalf of Mono Lake gathered momentum, no one envisioned sections of boardwalks floating on the lake's rising waters or the transformation of water use in Los Angeles. These are the unforeseen consequences of two decades of hard work on behalf of a remote saline lake and on behalf of the City of Los Angeles. Mono Lake is a catalyst, where the water needs of people can finally be balanced with the water needed to sustain healthy watersheds. The water problems facing California today are much bigger and more complicated than Mono Lake, but the solutions may be similar. With the fate of the Bay-Delta, climatic uncertainties, and substantial population growth looming ahead, the lesson of Mono Lake becomes increasingly relevant.

Bartshe Miller is the Committee's Education Director. He most recently pondered water conservation while traveling in Chile. S

A tribute to Eldon Vestal **continued from page 3.**

the courtroom and later in the State Water Resources Control Board proceedings. Through Eldon, the judge and the Water Board learned about the wonderful resources that had once existed in the Mono Basin and what Mono Lake's streams needed to undo the damage caused by decades of LA's diversions.

In the end, Eldon said it best. On the day of the Mono Lake decision in September, 1994, Eldon testified one last time before the State Water Resources Control Board. He said: "I've been waiting more than fifty years for this moment ... The City of Los Angeles was a tremendous political power, and challenging them seemed like grabbing for a bite out of the moon."

Eldon's legacy only begins at Mono Lake. There are streams and fisheries up and down the state that have suffered because the same law that was not properly enforced at Mono Lake was not enforced elsewhere in California. Just this summer, a California Appellate Court ruled that the San Joaquin River must be re-watered. And in one of the great ironies of life, Eldon—once again—had been the star witness in the case. The reason? The

district Eldon transferred to when he left Mono Lake in 1950 was the Friant District. There he witnessed the same state law being violated, as the operation of the new Friant Dam transformed the San Joaquin River into a cobblestone wash. While Eldon did not testify directly on the witness stand, his notes and declarations have been central to the case.

In interviews following the Mono Lake decision, Eldon would be quoted as saying, "It is hard to believe that notes and records and photographs and so on would be of some value more than half a century hence. It is extremely gratifying to have worked toward giving something back to the State of California."

It is we who are grateful to you, Eldon, and to you, Ethel, and to your family. For your courage, for your caring, for your integrity in standing up for what is right. You have given all of us in California a great gift. And the sound of the flowing waters in California's streams is the most fitting memorial to the man who made all of this possible.

Martha Davis serves on the Committee Board of Directors and roams water policy circles throughout the state.

Member Corner: News from the membership desk

by Rebecca Dobert

From the mailbag

A letter came to us from the **Adventures Section** of the **Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club**, reminding us how diligent all you activists are out there...

"Recently... [we] conducted a series of outings relating to the history and controversy surrounding the Los Angeles aqueduct. We visited the San Francisquito dam disaster site, we walked around Lake Hollywood and over Mulholland dam, we toured the Owens Valley and Mono Basin aqueduct sites and spent half a day exploring Mono Lake. The outings were designed partially as a fundraiser to benefit the Mono Lake Committee; to help further assist the successful work you have done to preserve this unique and essential lake from extinction. We applaud the steps you have taken to educate the public on waterwise conservation and for spearheading campaigns that have successfully provided solutions to benefit both the lake and the City of LA."

We applaud and thank you for taking the time to educate yourselves about the water issues in your world!

Once again, we send thanks to the folks at the **Tuolumne Lodge** who have started a tradition of donating all the loose change that is collected by their staff all summer; you'd be surprised how much money hikers can drop! See you all next summer.

Matching gifts

The matched gift program is ending 1998 on a healthy note! The **Charles Schwab Corporation** matched the gifts of **Susan Mills** in Bakersfield and **Brian Hilden** of Corte Madera. My former employer, the **Times Mirror Company**, doubled the contributions of **Jeanne Karpenko**, and **Pacific Enterprises** weighed in with a gift matching that of **Stanton Kahan** - both of Glendale.

The **Washington Mutual Foundation** contributed to **Valerie White's** gift, the **Charles Stuart Mott Foundation** to **Edmind J. Miller's** of Ann Arbor, Michigan, **Nissan** to **Daniel Carlton's** in Seal Beach, and the **Anchor Brewing Company** to **Gordon MacDermott's** out of San Rafael.

In memoriam

Many members wrote to express their sadness at losing longtime Committee member, friend, and champion of Mono Lake **Eldon Vestal**. His dedicated work toward the historic effort to save the lake will always have a special place in the heart of those who savor Mono's returning health (see article page 3).

Barbara Nelson stopped by our store in Lee Vining and gave a generous gift in honor of the memory of **Nick J. Piccolo**.

Ola Vorster, mother of researcher Peter Vorster, passed away this fall. We thank the **Bay Institute of San Francisco** and **Stephen and Miriam Youngerman** for sending donations in her memory.

Special thanks

David and Paula Stratkin of Los Angeles sent a gift to commemorate the marriage of MLC Assistant Executive Director **Geoff McQuilkin** and his lovely wife **Sarah Taylor**.

Rebecca Dobert is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. She's training her dog to help her open the mail.

Staff migrations

The natives are restless! With the winter lull in visitation comes some significant shuffling of staff positions here in the office.

Geoff McQuilkin will be redistributing his time in order to accept a position as Assistant Executive Director. He'll be taking on management at the Lee Vining office and the Committee budgets in 1999, all while working closely with Executive Director **Frances Spivy-Weber** to plan the Committee's future.

Ramona Clark, our new Retail Sales Manager, will now be working closely with Bookstore Manager **Laura Walker**! Together they will be making sure that the Information Center and Bookstore has great merchandise and a welcoming atmosphere. Ramona worked in the Information Center this summer, but if you haven't come in to visit Ramona since then, she'd love to meet you and may even give you a hug!

Greg Reis is managing the MLC

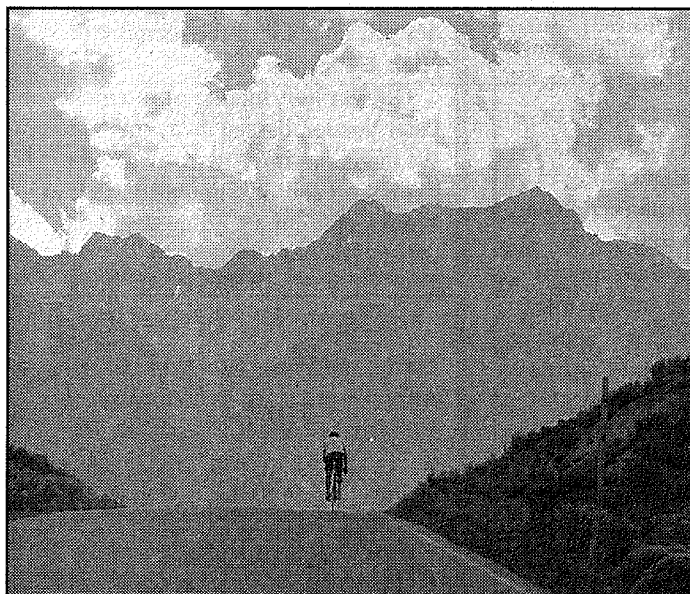
website as Website Information Specialist. He is also using the knowledge and skills gained from working on the Mono Lake Website to help build the new Living Lakes Partnership (www.livinglakes.org) website.

Mike Klapp is around the office more often these days as he is currently our Web Graphics Specialist. When he is not wrestling with Java Script, Mike is volunteering his time working on a satellite OE program for the year 2000.



Join us!

Restoration Days 1999: September 3-6



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September 18th, 1999

www.monolake.org/century



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