

Fall

2000

MONO LAKE

NEWSLETTER



Fall Gift Catalog

New restoration projects underway!

Mono Lake Newsletter

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MONO LAKE
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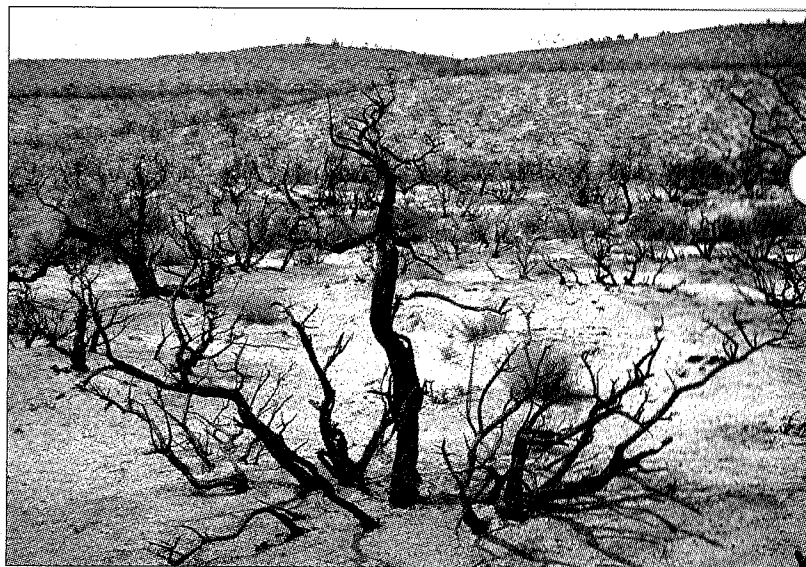


Amazingly clear water is one of the more subtle signs of fall in the Mono Basin. When you're down at the lakeshore with 25 second graders trying to catch brine shrimp you notice not only the clarity of the water but the scarcity of the brine shrimp. It's fall, and if the clarity of Mono's waters haven't told you then the chill in the early morning air and the changing colors of the aspen, cottonwood, and willow trees surely have.

Even though it is still sunny out, here in the office we're working up a storm. We've been keeping an eye on the local highway widening project, so check out the article on page 3 to see what has been happening. There are some wonderful stories from this year's Outdoor Experiences program and you can find those on page 6. Find out why the lake level is dropping on page 10, and why Mono Lake should receive Important Bird Area status on page 8. We've put together quite a collection of books and gifts in the Fall Catalog, so make sure to take a look in there too.

Have a wonderful fall!

—Arya Degenhardt



New growth flourishes amongst charred remains in the area burned in the May 2000 Lee Vining Canyon fire. Some rabbitbrush regrew enough to bloom late in the summer.

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.

Mono Lake is a part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, a member of the international Living Lakes partnership (www.livinglakes.org), designated as an Outstanding National Resource Water under the Clean Water Act and home to a National Forest Scenic Area and a California State Reserve.

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Bringing restoration into focus

launching two new restoration projects

Editor's note: The following two articles highlight the Mono Lake Committee's two newest restoration projects: the Photopoint Project and the Mono Basin Clearinghouse. Together they represent the Committee's contribution to the larger picture of restoration in the Mono Basin.

The Mono Basin Clearinghouse

by Greg Reis

On May 18, the Mono Lake Committee launched a new website: the Mono Basin Clearinghouse. Also known as the Digital Archive project, the new site creates a solution for the often-difficult task of researching Mono Basin scientific studies, history, and more by bringing this information together in one spot for easy access by researchers, members, and the public.

Over the past 25 years, extensive work has gone into understanding the resources of the Mono Basin, from hydrology models to geomorphology studies and from historical interviews to present day documentation. Today, much restoration work is proceeding on the damaged Mono Basin streams and is designed to adapt to changing results, thus requiring access to detailed monitoring information. In the past, the lack of a central gathering point for this and other accumulated scientific knowledge about Mono Lake and the Mono Basin has impeded top quality resource management and led to duplication of effort.

By gathering in one place all the relevant Mono Lake and Mono Basin reports, data, observations, oral histories, and photographic records, the clearinghouse will serve as a central point for discussion and the exchange of ideas on information by both scientists and the interested public.

We expect the Clearinghouse to

Restoration in the Mono Basin: Part Science, Part Art

by Lisa Cutting

Jeffrey pines are growing in the floodplains, willows line the stream banks, and Mono Lake is slowly rising. All of these are sure signs that restoration is occurring in the Mono Basin and confirms that nature can and will heal itself if given the chance. To keep up with this change, the Committee is launching the Photopoint Project—a documentary endeavor designed to keep track of restoration changes over time.


Restoration began in the 1980s with successful streamflow litigation and was formalized in 1994 with the State Water Resource Control Board's decision to protect Mono Lake. Throughout the entire restoration process the philosophy has been to reinstate natural processes so that the land can heal itself. This "holistic" approach has incorporated techniques such as raising the level of Mono Lake, providing stream flows that mimic natural flow patterns, planting areas not responding to natural reseeding, and reopening channels when channel complexity will not otherwise be achieved. Adaptive management—adjusting plans as the landscape responds to restoration measures—continues to be a key component in agency discussions and the decision-making process. And what is most inspiring about the work being done in the Mono Basin is that it is recognized nationally as a model for successful restoration.

To date, the restoration of Mono Lake

has focused on science—formulating plans, collecting data, opening channels, monitoring flows, and evaluating progress. But there is another part of the equation: people. How do we feel about what we are seeing? What emotions does it evoke in us? How can we involve ourselves in this recovery process that we are a witness to? And how can we share this story with others so that they too can experience the wonders of restoration at Mono Lake?

The Mono Basin Photopoint Project is one way that we can begin to answer these questions. The project itself is simple: participants choose a specific site in the Mono Basin that is coming back to life and photograph it each year. These photos will be collected and organized by the Mono Lake Committee and posted together on at www.monobasinresearch.com for everyone to view. As time goes on, we will accumulate a collection of photos that will show the actual effects of restoration as seen through the eyes of the non-scientific community—our own eyes.

The Photopoint Project will supplement the vast amount of scientific information with photos that actually show the changes in the shoreline coupled with lake level measurements; photos of the increased vegetation in the floodplains paired with revegetation transect studies. What a wonderful way to connect ourselves to restoration and really understand what is going on and how it all fits together.

The Photopoint Project was kicked off last month during Restoration Days. Professional photographers, locals from Lee Vining, and loyal Mono Lake visitors have all expressed their enthusiasm for the project. Because the project will span decades, you can become involved at any time. For more information, please contact Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. 

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Caltrans makes a mess of the Mono Basin

by Heidi Hopkins

Caltrans' four-laning of Highway 395 south of Lee Vining is mired in problems, and lots of folks are mad. Visitors are shocked at the swath of destruction and have voiced their concerns at both the Committee's Information Center and at the USFS Scenic Area Visitor Center. State agencies have handed out citations for stream and air quality violations. Even Mono County has become involved in scrutinizing Caltrans' management of its highway project.

The primary issue is the degree to which the Caltrans construction has exceeded the disturbance allowed by the project's environmental review. In a recent presentation before the Mono County Local Transportation Commission, Caltrans District 9 Director Tom Hallenback admitted that fill slopes projected to be no greater than six feet in the environmental review were in some cases as much as 24 feet when actually constructed; cut slopes planned to be six feet expanded to as much as 80 feet. The sagebrush hillside just south of the intersection of Highway 120 and High-

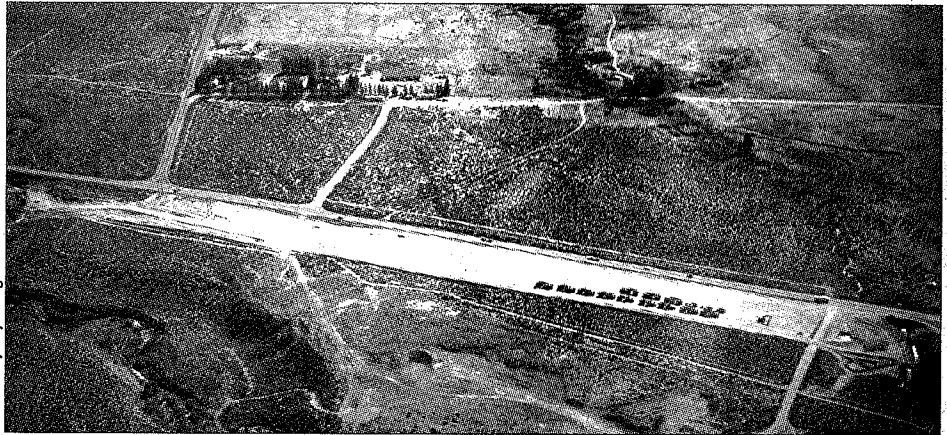


Photo by Arya Degenhardt

A battalion of Caltrans machinery in the cleared area between Rush and Parker Creeks. Note the existing two-lane section of 395 (and the size of the cars on the road) next to the swath cleared for the additional 2 lanes.

way 395 was shaved off—to the public's great consternation.

On top of that, both the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District and the Lahontan Region of the State Water Quality Control Board got involved over violations during construction. Great Basin issued a fine for fugitive dust. Committee staff have been gathering evidence of violations, and, on

a tip from a passerby, Committee staff observed and photographed careless back-hoe work that put a load of sediment in Lee Vining Creek sufficient to muddy the stream down to the lake. Our calls that day to Lahontan resulted in a formal notice of violation—and much greater scrutiny overall.

Objections against Caltrans have been particularly loud in Lee Vining. The project's "negative declaration" identified no impacts to the town of Lee Vining, even though the project would straighten the curve into town and widen it to five lanes (to match the existing five lanes in town). Prior to the negative declaration's completion, residents raised concern over the potential for in-town traffic speed to increase—yet the document reflects no impact on Lee Vining. In a number of meetings over the last year or so, Caltrans representatives have conceded that the speed "might" increase and that such an increase "would likely lead" to a rise in the posted speed limit through town. Particularly frustrating to town residents is that Caltrans has refused to agree to a number of traffic-calming elements—slightly narrower



Photo by Greg Reis

Construction on Lee Vining Creek at the highway expansion site. Note sediment cascading into the creek. This sediment was tracked all the way down to the lake from this incident.

Continued from page 4.

lanes, additional well-marked crosswalks—that town residents have worked hard designing (with the help of outside traffic experts). The town had hoped these could be incorporated into Caltrans' sidewalk project due to begin in 2001.

Among the Committee's top concerns right now is whether this mode of operating will be repeated during the planned highway widening north of Lee Vining along Mono Lake (scheduled for 2004 construction). This widening project was originally generated by the community, which wanted bike lanes along the lake. In Caltrans' hands, the project design looks more like the standard "move cars faster" with curves tightened and shoulders widened to eight feet. Caltrans is offering retaining walls instead of cut slopes, but with our experience on the Rush Creek four-laning project we now recognize that we won't know *what* we're getting until it's there—and then the damage is done. The risks to the scenic integrity of the lake are

too great.

All told, these issues have garnered plenty of attention—from Mono County supervisors, the Mono County Local Transportation Commission, even state Senator Tim Leslie, who has offered to host a meeting in Sacramento on the matter. Given the outcry and high-level attention on Caltrans projects, we are pursuing opportunities to prevent further violations to the streams and to air quality that occurred in the past few weeks, to limit the impacts of the remainder of the Rush Creek four-lane project, and to add mitigation for the excessive disturbance to the landscape. In addition, there may be opportunities to garner Caltrans' support for streetscaping in Lee Vining to calm traffic and to greatly diminish the scope of (if not eliminate entirely) the planned highway-widening project along Mono Lake. 🐾

Heidi Hopkins is the Committee's Policy Director. She's gearing up for her first winter in her new home in Mono City.



Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway Opens

On September 9th, the Coalition for Unified Recreation in the Eastern Sierra (CURES) held a dedication ceremony for the opening of the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway. The Byway is a specially designated section of U.S. 395 from Little Lake at the mouth of Owens Valley in the south to the Nevada border in the north, and was established earlier this year. The route includes 23 interpretive sites, including two in the Mono Basin. Ironically, highway construction is presently ongoing in the Mono Basin, the heart of the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway, and is distinctly not scenic.

Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve resolution update

Negotiations between the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the State Lands Commission, and Mono Lake landowners regarding uses of the relicted lands have progressed. Still, Mono County's February resolution, which called for the elimination of the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve land base, remains in the hands of legislators in Sacramento.

As a result of the progress in negotiations, the Mono County Board of Supervisors discussed the possibility of rescinding their February resolution (R00-12) at a recent meeting (see Spring and Summer 2000 *Newsletter*). The resolution was passed with the intent of stimulating movement towards an administrative solution to

these land use issues. However, the resolution also included language that, if acted upon in the State Legislature, could eliminate the land base of the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve and could reopen the legislation that created the Reserve to modifications that might adversely impact protections for Mono Lake. Pressure from Mono Lake Committee members has been critical in preventing this so far. In fact, the Committee has received over 2,300 letters from members in support of the Tufa Reserve and opposing Mono County's resolution.

County Supervisors decided that the administrative negotiations were nearing conclusion and were at a phase where rescinding the resolution was

unwarranted. However, a date was set in December to address rescinding the resolution. A public hearing will be held then to determine whether the public feels that action is desirable.

It is important that the February resolution be rescinded as soon as possible. Furthermore, it is important that the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve legislation remain strong. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made, but will continue to call for Mono County's resolution to be withdrawn. For continued updates, keep checking our website at www.monolake.org, or contact Craig (craig@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 for more information on this important issue.

Outdoor Experiences—Summer 2000

by Kristen Drake

Jose, a thirteen year old from Los Angeles, was one of hundreds of children, teens, and adults who made the journey to Mono Lake as part of this summer's Outdoor Experiences (OE) program. Jose wrote this poem after he and his fellow OE participants, members of LACC's (Los Angeles Conservation Corps) Clean and Green program, watered tiny Jeffrey and lodgepole pine trees along Lee Vining Creek. Why does his poem speak poignantly and directly to the hearts of those of us who have come to care about Mono Lake, and its future? Here is a LA teen, who, upon his initial exposure to nature at its prime, recognized the need for restoration of our water resources. He is now part owner of the restorative process along Lee Vining Creek, ownership which is shared by every single OE participant this summer and in years past, who have planted trees and given water, and thus sustenance, to riparian zones.

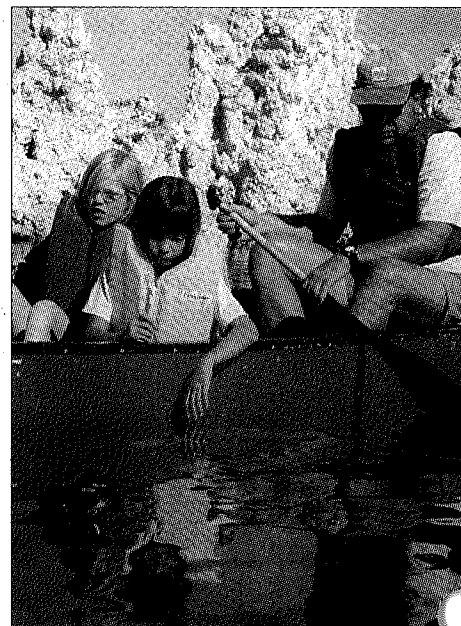
The serenity and evocative nature of the Mono Basin provide a near perfect habitat in which city-dwellers can learn about water conservation and connections to their water supply, all while discovering nature in and around Mono Lake. These discoveries manifest

Change

**You gives us our
needs by letting us
swim on you and drink you
But we still don't respect you
We trash you
We pollute you
We do a lot of bad things to you
But now is the time to change
Now is the time to help you**

—Jose Diego, June 21, 2000

themselves in the most interesting of ways, and what follows are a few of the summer of 2000 OE program highlights: While canoeing on Mono Lake, two young cousins arguing over who could be the best tufa tower, and deciding that one would be the actual tower, and the other would be the bubbly spring water emanating from the tower; a young man declaring to the entire group at the closing circle and campfire that he "felt like I did something positive for a change, watering those trees today. I made a difference;" three recovering addicts literally skipping through a

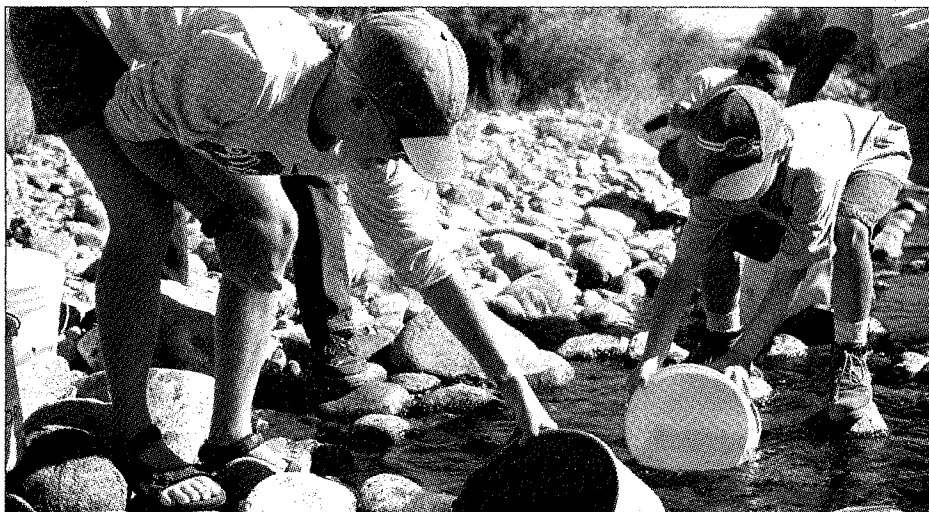


OE Coordinator Santiago Escruceria paddling with kids from the Hearthstone School group.

meadow at the base of Tioga Peak (11,513 feet) performing a "Sound of Music" imitation after reaching the "highest high" of their lives upon seeing the views of the Mono Basin from the mountain; getting caught in a hailstorm coming down from Lembert Dome in Yosemite that dumped 4 inches of hail in 30 minutes and brought a sense of "we can do anything now" to the group (and to the leaders!); and the simple joy of seeing children and adults effortlessly float on Mono Lake with smiles on their faces.

Many people who participate in the OE program at Mono Lake are in the process of changing their lives, whether it is shedding a past addiction, or becoming more aware of the environment, or both. As it was discovered with Mono Lake and its streams, "now is the time to change, now is the time to help you."

Kristen Drake is one of the Outdoor Experiences Coordinators. She and co-instructor Santiago Escruceria will never see Lembert Dome in the same light after their hailstorm hike this summer!



Outdoor Experiences Coordinator Kristen Drake watering trees near Lee Vining Creek.

Part III: Los Angeles' other water sources

by Greg Reis

Editor's note: The following article is the third in a four-part series that takes a close look at the sources and infrastructure of Los Angeles' water. The first two articles in the series covered the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and local groundwater sources—but these sources alone do not satisfy the city's water needs. How does LA make up the difference?

The LA Aqueduct provides about 65% of Los Angeles' water supply, and local groundwater sources provide about 15%. The bulk of the remaining 20% comes from the Colorado River Aqueduct and the State Water Project, through the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)—a water wholesaler.

MWD water is used to make up the difference between the local and Eastern Sierra supply and the demand in Los Angeles. LA has purchased from MWD anywhere between 20,000 acre-feet in wet years to 400,000 acre-feet in dry years—on average, 130,000 acre-feet per year. The ability to draw on this supply is an important "insurance policy" for dry years.

The rest of Southern California depends on MWD much more heavily—outside of LA's city limits, 60% of the 3.4 million acre-foot water supply for the 13 million people living in 4,700 square miles of Southern California comes from MWD. The rest comes from local sources and water reclamation plants.

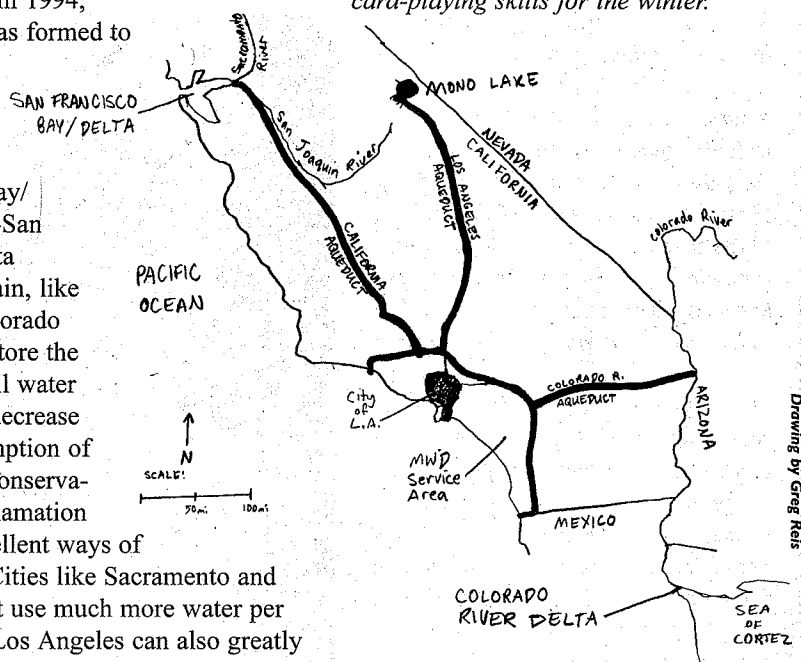
In 1941 MWD completed the Colorado River Aqueduct, which is 240 miles long, has five pumping plants, and 92 miles of tunnel. California is allotted 4.4 million acre-feet of water from the river, however in recent years has used 5.2 million acre-feet. Various strategies are being explored for reducing California's consumption of Colorado River water (such as water conservation, reclamation,

and marketing). At the end of the river in Mexico, the Colorado River Delta at the Sea of Cortez is suffering from excessive water diversions upstream. This once incredible wildlife oasis has been severely degraded from lack of water, and restoring it will require all users of the river to decrease their consumption. Water conservation in LA and all of Southern California can help.

In 1973 the State of California completed the State Water Project, part of which is the California Aqueduct, which runs 450 miles from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to Southern California. Fifteen pumping plants lift the water a total of 3,500 feet. 18 million acre-feet of water flows through the Delta each year, and excessive diversions and upstream dams have severely degraded this valuable ecosystem—just like the Colorado River Delta. During dry periods, water quality decreases and fish are sucked into pumps, and sometimes the San Joaquin River even flows backwards. In 1994, CALFED was formed to develop a long-term solution for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary. Again, like with the Colorado River, to restore the Bay-Delta all water users must decrease their consumption of water, and conservation and reclamation are two excellent ways of doing this. Cities like Sacramento and Oakland that use much more water per capita than Los Angeles can also greatly contribute to restoring the delta.

Other sources of water have been explored for decades as real estate and chamber of commerce boosters push unlimited population and economic growth. From towing icebergs from Alaska to new aqueducts and reservoirs to desalinizing ocean water, most ideas are expensive and unnecessary. The price of desalinized ocean water, for example, is double the \$349 per acre-foot wholesale price charged by MWD, and the desalinization process requires tremendous amounts of energy. There are currently no operating ocean-desalinization plants in the US. Desalinization and treatment of brackish groundwater is occurring in Southern California, however. Water conservation and reclamation are much more economical ways to replace reduced amounts of imported water, and these sources will be discussed in the final article of this series.

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. He's honing his late night card-playing skills for the winter.



Aqueduct connections to Los Angeles.

Drawing by Greg Reis

For the birds: Mono Lake and the Mono Basin

by Lisa Cutting

To the casual tourist driving along the shoreline of Mono Lake it may not seem readily apparent that the Mono Basin is home to millions of birds. But if you're adventurous enough and willing to travel beyond the paved road down to the lake, quite a treat awaits you.


California Gulls, Eared Grebes, phalaropes, American Avocets, Western Sandpipers—the list goes on and on. And the reason is simple. In addition to providing a permanent home for nearly 100 species of birds, Mono Lake is also a major migratory bird staging area for approximately 200 different species. These birds depend on Mono Lake as a critical food source—feeding on brine shrimp and the alkali flies before continuing their intercontinental journeys.

With the significance of Mono as

critical habitat clear, in 1991 the lake became an international member of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). WHSRN's goal is a commitment to shorebird conservation and the protection of valuable wetland areas critical to migratory birds in North and South America.

But that is not enough. The tributary streams and upland sagebrush of the Mono Basin also provide important habitat for species such as the Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, and Sage Grouse. Recognizing this, the Mono Lake Committee has just recently nominated the Mono Basin as an Important Bird Area (IBA) through the National Audubon Society—California. If granted, the designation would be another way of formally recognizing this area's global significance to healthy populations

of resident and migratory birds.

Currently, our IBA application is under review by both Audubon—California and the American Bird Conservancy. It is important to note that the IBA program is not regulatory nor does it create any additional management restrictions. The purpose of the designation is to systematically identify areas important for birds. By promoting good land stewardship and management practices, the Mono Basin will remain healthy and functioning. And whether the Basin provides a permanent home or a rest and a meal, birds will be able to depend on this corner of the world for what they need. 

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Environmental Resource Coordinator. She is gearing up for her first complete winter in the Mono Basin!

Birders from England explore Mono's shores

Mono Lake's renown as an excellent spot for birdwatching continues to spread world wide! Over Labor Day weekend, this group of 16 bird enthusiasts from the United Kingdom explored several sites at the lake as part of a larger California birding expedition. Birdwatching Magazine editor David Cromack (kneeling, center) and crew were as knowledgeable about the lake and its avian migrants as many California visitors!

Their visit not only underscores Mono's spot on the list of key California natural areas, it also is an example of the benefits to the local economy of lake protection. In fact, local business owners have happily noted increasing numbers of visitors focused on bird watching and photography, particularly in the slower economic shoulder seasons.



Photo by Geoffrey McQuilkin

State of the Lake presentation well received

by Craig Roecker

After 22 years of Mono Lake advocacy, the Committee has developed quite an expertise on Mono Lake and the Mono Basin, but in recent years staff have realized that that knowledge could be shared more fully with leaders in the local community. So, this year the Committee launched a new annual presentation called "State of the Lake" to do just that, and we are happy to report that it has been a wild success!

The presentation focuses on Mono Lake and its tributaries and, based on the Sierra Business Council idea that three types of wealth contribute to overall prosperity, is composed of three parts. A natural wealth section details the health of the lake ecosystem, restoration of the recovering streams, scientific research, and the overall status of the Mono Basin environment. A section on social wealth reviews Mono related education programs that reach visitors, residents, and students. And lastly, a section on economic wealth examines the benefits Lee Vining and the region have received from lake tourism and Mono Lake protection.


Accompanied by slides, the State of the Lake lasts about 30 minutes and has been presented to the Mono County Board of Supervisors, Mammoth Lakes Town Council, Mono County Planning Commission, Mono County Collaborative Planning Team, the Lions Club in Mammoth, visitors at Restoration Days, and the State Water Resources Control Board during their recent field trip through the area.

The local newspaper published a cover story derived from State of the Lake information, presented as an interview with Mono Lake, which was very well received. (You can read the article at http://www.mammothtimes.com/times2000/MonoLake08_03.html) KDAY radio in Bishop also aired a radio interview about the State of the Lake.

Overall, the Committee has had a number of requests for the presentation and many, many compliments from those who have seen it.

In 2001 State of the Lake presentations will be made in the late spring to an even larger number of groups. One new feature for 2001 will be the incorporation of the results of a visitation and recreation survey that the Committee is now conducting at South Tufa. The results will profile lake visitors in terms of what activities they participate in, why they come to Mono Lake, and what recreational activities they think are appropri-

ate at Mono Lake. This should be a useful tool for the Committee, for local business, and for our local policy makers.

A bullet-point handout accompanies the State of The Lake presentation, and is available at www.monobasinresearch.org—the new Mono Basin Clearinghouse Website. Join us next year at Restoration Days to see the presentation in person! 

Craig Roecker is the Committee's Mono County Outreach Coordinator. To see how much his puppy Ritter has grown see the staff photo on page 22!

Pacific Gas & Electric Company powers education programs

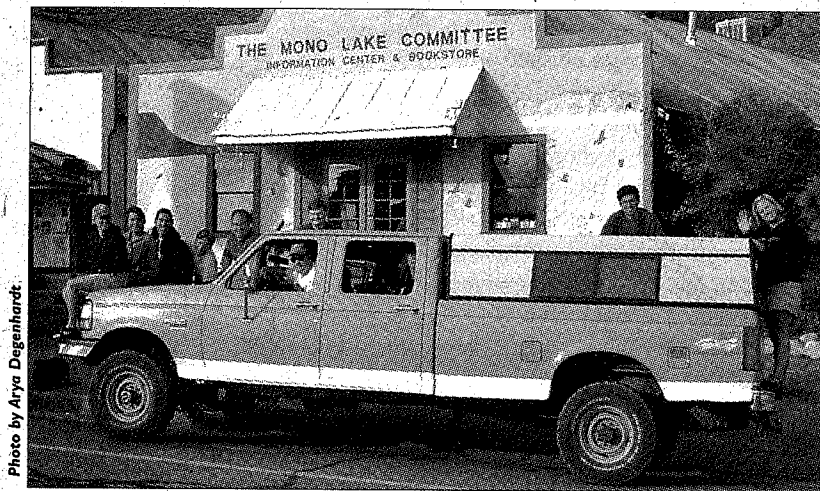


Photo by Arvo Degenhardt

Committee staff demonstrates the carrying capacity of Big Blue at the Lee Vining office.

The 1995 4WD Ford truck pictured above, affectionately dubbed "Big Blue" by Committee staff, was donated to the MLC by Pacific Gas & Electric Company in August. Big Blue's main tasks are hauling canoes, equipment, and researchers to and from the lake, transporting Committee recycling, and assisting with special events and education programs such as Restoration Days and the Outdoor Experiences program. Special thanks to Guillermo Rodriguez, Silvia Aldana, and Lisa Kinimaka at Pacific Gas & Electric Company for facilitating this generous donation—it is very much appreciated!



Average runoff years haven't led to lake rise

by Greg Reis

In mid-September, Mono Lake fell below zero on the lake level gauge (6383.85 feet above sea level), and due to problems with surveying the elevation, a new one hasn't been installed yet. As of September 1, the lake stood at 6384.0 feet above sea level, the lowest it has been since July 1998. This is the first year since the Water Board decision that the lake is lower than the previous year.

A series of average years should produce small rises in lake level, in about 20 years reaching the target level of 6392 feet. Surprisingly this did not happen this year or last year, with slightly below average runoff. If last year had seen average runoff and no exports took place, the lake would have risen only 1/4 foot. "The lake should not be stabilizing at the current level with just 16,000 acre-feet of export," says hydrologist Peter Vorster, since the average lake level today in absence of DWP exports would be around 6427—a 25% larger surface area with as much more evaporation.

Vorster suspects that above-average evaporation may be playing a role in moderating the lake level rise; however, summertime measurements at Grant Lake Reservoir through September 1999 show that evaporation has been near average the past few years. But last winter evaporation could have been higher than average, and direct precipitation onto the lake was well below average—the combination of the two factors probably accounting for the missing lake rise. Groundwater recharge around Mono Lake's shoreline could also explain part of the missing rise. DWP is considering doing some new runs with the Mono Lake hydrologic model to see if it can explain the recent behavior of the lake.

If the climate is getting warmer, as many scientists believe, then evaporation from the lake and sublimation from the snowpack will be higher, and the as-

sumptions behind the models used in Decision 1631 may need to be reevaluated. The decision provides for such a reevaluation in 14 years if the lake hasn't reached the target level by then. Until then, let's hope we get a few more wet years to keep the lake from falling very far—and if we are lucky, enough wet

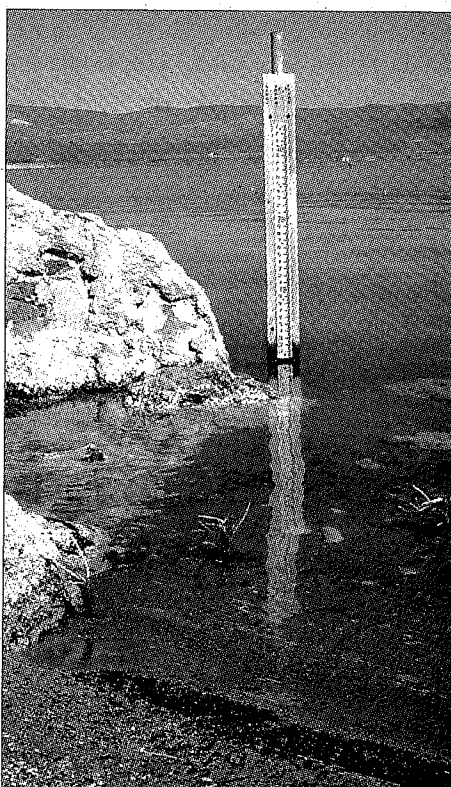


Photo by Arya Degenhardt

Lake level gauge with Mono Lake below the lowest measure mark.

years to get us over 6391. We will definitely get dry years—in fact, we are due for a dry year. The last five years have been the wettest string of five years since records for Mono Basin runoff began in 1934.

Rush Creek continues to suffer from the lack of adequate facilities to release Water Board-required minimum flows into the creek below Grant Lake Reser-

voir. When restoration plans were being written, the Mono Lake Committee argued that the construction of a new outlet from the reservoir directly into lower Rush Creek would be the only way to achieve the required flows, but the \$10 million price tag prompted the Water Board to allow DWP to attempt other methods. So far, the "Rush Creek Augmentation" method has not been successful. This past spring continued the trend when DWP used Lee Vining Creek water to attempt filling Grant Lake Reservoir in time for it to spill peak flows in coordination with releases from Edison's upstream reservoirs. This augmentation was not only unsuccessful in creating peak flows in Rush Creek; combined with a cold snap on May 11, it also caused Lee Vining Creek's flow to fall below the minimum level specified by the Water Board (as previously happened in 1996).

Rush Creek peaked on July 1 at only 207 cubic feet per second (cfs), ten days after it peaked at 374 cfs above Grant Lake Reservoir. Unimpaired by dams, Rush Creek would have peaked at almost 600 cfs at the end of May. A new Rush Creek release facility continues to be the only sure way to achieve the required flows—critical for restoration—are delivered (see Fall 1999 *Newsletter*).

On May 28, Lee Vining Creek peaked at 287 cfs (the natural peak would have been about 100 cfs higher) and Walker Creek peaked at 28 cfs. On June 25 Parker Creek peaked at 49 cfs. On July 18 DWP began exporting its allowed 16,000 acre-feet of water from Grant Lake Reservoir, worth \$5.6 million (at MWD's wholesale price of \$349/acre-foot).

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. He has recently become a Lee Vining homeowner—congratulations Greg!

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of less political events at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

A full moon rises every 29.53 days, but how often do we notice, and for how long? A glance out the car window, a glimpse of moonlight in the backyard, a brief sighting over the streetlights and power poles of the city? 30 seconds watching the moonrise? But 30 days later, there's always another chance—like tonight, as the moon

rose behind Black Point, sky yellow out behind

the jet black, craggy volcanic hilltop. Then the moon made a full appearance, hung for a moment, and slowly disappeared, top to bottom, behind a rogue cloud lingering over the lake. My shadow flickers across sagebrush when the cloud lets trickles of light through, then turns strong and steady as the cloud relinquishes its hold, and stretches thirty feet away to the west.

Swimming in the lake at dusk one night was a pastel experience, a shimmering time of silver blue floating on the

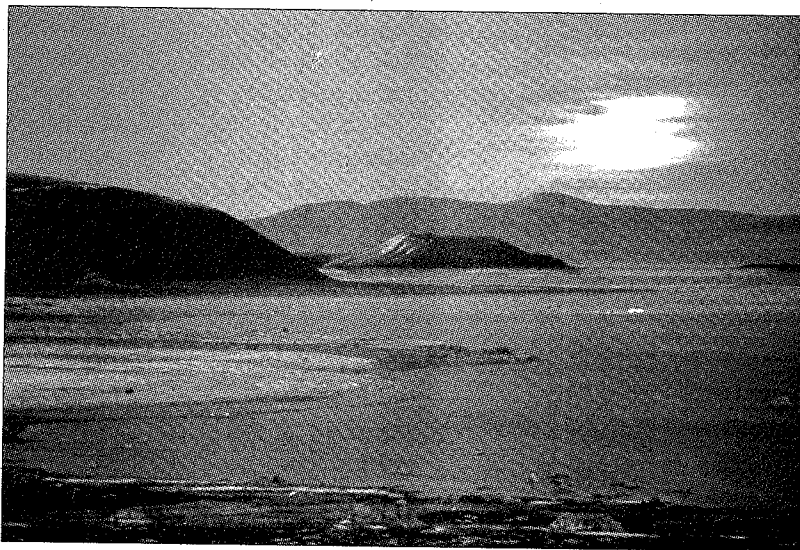



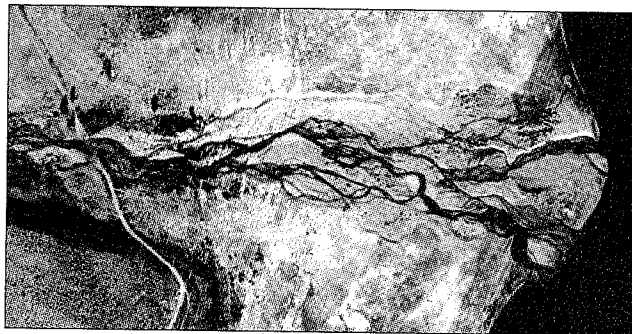
Photo by Richard Knepp

water, as if some airbrush artist was creating the scene. The sky splashed its gray colors into the blue water with a west wind driving ripples and phalaropes through the scene at will. Water at eye level merges with sky to form one vast undulating surface, no end in sight, the sound of waves' curling onto the shore, all speckled with birds.

And what is summer without the birds? This year the phalaropes have made themselves known

again. At County Park they rise in sudden flocks, bank a few turns, and descend back into place. On the west shore they spin and search for food. Come the end of the day, they stream eastward, five, fifty, five hundred at a time, in search of a better nighttime place to float away the hours, getting ready as always for the epic nonstop journey to Argentina and Bolivia, following a cyclical pattern far from our control but never too far from our destruction. At least for now, those nights are largely worry free, here at Mono, for them and us. 

Benchmarks



Aerial view of Lee Vining Creek delta. The exact date of the photograph is unknown—best estimate is early 1980s.

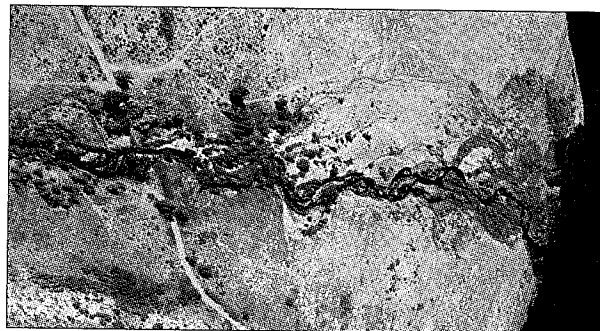


Photo by Arya Degenhardt

Lee Vining Creek delta August 2000. Note the changes in both vegetation and stream channels.

Policy notes

CALFED Bay Delta Program moves to implementation phase

In late August the state and federal governments officially adopted an agreement regarding California's water management, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The Mono Lake Committee has participated in many of the stakeholder processes to ensure that this ambitious 30-year program will emphasize water use efficiency, water quality, enhanced management of groundwater for storage and use, and restoration of degraded ecosystems throughout the northern California Bay-Delta system. Committee staff worked with environmental and community groups as well as local to national government entities, and on paper the outcome was largely successful. Now, as with the 1994 decision on


Mono Lake, the true success will come in the implementation of the program.

Over the next seven years of the pact, water agencies, local communities, and the state and federal governments are expected to invest \$8.6 billion in many aspects of water management. As part of the Committee's mission to protect Mono Lake, we will continue to speak forcefully in this process, making sure these funds are used to meet the real water needs of California—both for Mono Lake and other natural areas throughout the state.

Mono Lake Committee plays a large role on CALFED Drought Panel

Frances Spivy-Weber, Committee Executive Director for Policy, and Rich

Atwater, Committee Board Member, were appointed by Governor Gray Davis to serve on the drought preparedness panel called for in the CALFED Bay-Delta Program agreement.

The panel will focus on short-term responses to drought, since the overall CALFED program is designed to improve the state's long-term capability to withstand the stresses of drought. The program, however, will take years to achieve its goals, and if there is a drought in the interim, everyone wants to be clear on a plan of action. The panel will meet four times during the fall to develop the plan. 

Rules for the 2000 Free Drawing

The deadline for the 2000 Free Drawing is drawing near so send in your tickets—conveniently attached in this Newsletter—to make sure you get a chance to win one of this year's prizes!

Following are the rules and regulations for the Free Drawing.

1. All prizes in the 2000 Mono Lake Committee (MLC) Free Drawing have been donated by friends of MLC. As a result, no substitutions or exchanges or cash redemptions can be made. In the case of some prizes, such as trips, dinners or other services (all of which are subject to availability), certain donor terms and conditions may apply. Transfer limits apply in some prizes. In addition, all prizes are provided solely by the donors, and the Mono Lake Committee assumes no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any

property loss; damage, personal injury or death occurring during a trip or in connection with any other prize. Certain restrictions and blackout dates apply to all trips and prizes.

2. Winners will be determined in a random drawing to be held by the Mono Lake Committee in Mono County, on November 13th, 2000. Prizes will be awarded in order of donor-stated value. All prizes will be awarded. The odds of winning one of the prizes are determined by the number of entries received.

3. Entries by mail must be received no later than midnight, November 10, 2000 to be included. We cannot be responsible for lost or misdirected mail. Mail tickets to: Mono Lake Committee, P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541.

4. Only official entry tickets will be

drawn. No facsimiles permitted. All tickets must be filled in with name and address to be valid. Write to the Committee for more tickets.

5. There is no obligation to make a contribution to enter.

6. Winners will be notified by telephone or mail. Any winner who cannot be located by certified mail sent to the address on entry form within 30 days of notification will forfeit the prize; an alternate winner will be selected.

7. Employees of the Mono Lake Committee as well as their dependents are not eligible to win.

8. Any taxes, licensing fees, registration, insurance or other consumer related charges on any prize are the sole responsibility of the prize winner.

9. Names of all prize winners will be published.

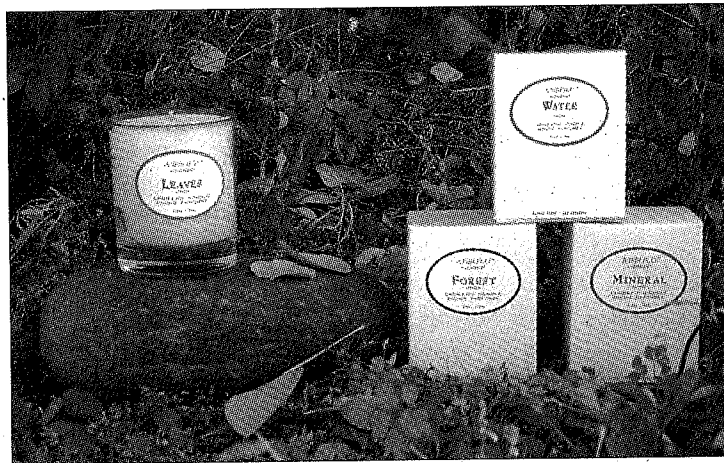
MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

Fall Gift Catalog 2000

AROMATIC CANDLES

Enjoy subtle and exquisite fragrances of nature. These candles are infused with a high concentration of fragrance oil to fill any room in your home with a pure scent and long lasting, evenly-burning light. Available in Leaves, Forest, Mineral, and Water scents.

Scented candles, burn time 40 hours, 5.8 oz, please specify scent: \$10.95 each (#3491)

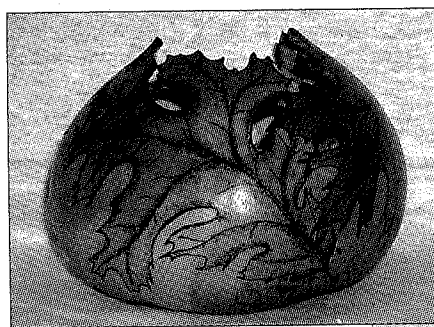


MONO LAKE BLESSING BOTTLES

Inspired by Credo Mutwa, a Zulu leader from South Africa, and local Native American Lucy Parker, both of whom honored Mono Lake with traditional blessings over the past year. Each attractive blessing bottle comes with layers of herbs and minerals, along with a discription of the benefits of each. Gift card comes with an inspirational David Gaines quote.

Small blessing bottle: \$10.00 (#3485)

Large blessing bottle: \$28.00 (#3483)



HAND-PAINTED LEAF GOURDS

Mono Lake Committee member and artistic supporter Dianne Campbell helps bring the beauty of fall to your living room! Each gourd is grown, selected carefully, cleaned, and carved by hand. Dianne draws each leaf by hand with a wood-burning tool, uses dyes to create the vibrant fall leaf colors, and applies a UV protective coating. Because each gourd is a natural and organic squash (in the cucurbit family), size and shape may greatly vary. These gourds, though they look quite lovely and delicate, are really quite sturdy.

Small Gourd, roughly 4" in diameter: \$19.95 (#28)

Medium Gourd, roughly 5" in diameter: \$30.00 (#27)

Large Gourd, roughly 6½" in diameter: \$49.95 (#29)

Hand painted gourd pitchers and birdhouses not shown, but also available—call for more information.

CALL (760) 647-6595 BETWEEN 9-5 DAILY TO ORDER.

MONO LAKE CATALOG



CLOISSONNÉ PINS BY WILLIAM SPEAR

William Spear is the leading artist in wildlife enamel pins. Our black and white images cannot possibly capture the detail and depth of color in these pins. Layers of enamel are brushed on by hand, and each piece is fired individually at temperatures exceeding 1500 degrees Fahrenheit. Each pin comes in a matchbook gift box along with a fact sheet of species information.

These pins are perfect for your cap, lapel, vest, jacket or backpack, and make great stocking stuffers too!

Chickadee pin, 1" long and ½" wide: \$8.50 (#2961)

Plover pin, 1 ½" tall and 1 ½" wide: \$12.00 (#2984)

Great Horned Owl pin, 1 ¼" tall and 1 ½" wide: \$16.00 (#2971)

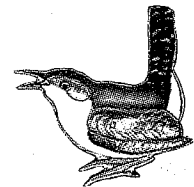
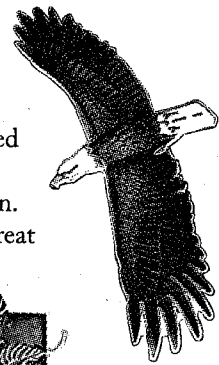
Brown Bear pin, 1 ¼" tall and 1 ½" wide: \$14.00 (#3026)

Peregrine Falcon pin, 1 ¼" long and 1 ½" wide: \$12.00 (#2983)

Bald Eagle pin, 1" long and 2 ¼" wide: \$16.00 (#2952)

Wren pin, 1" long and 1 ½" tall: \$10.50 (#2993)

Brine Shrimp pin, 1 ½" tall and 1 ½" wide: \$6.95 (#2956)



PUTUMAYO WORLD MUSIC

Putumayo world music introduces the music of other cultures and expands awareness of exceptional underexposed artists. Putumayo is committed to supporting non-profit organizations, that do good work in the countries where music originates, and is a member of Business for Social Responsibility, Social Venture Network, and Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities.

This music has been a longtime favorite of Mono Lake Committee staff members. Want a CD we do not have listed?

Call us and we will get it for you!

Women of the World Celtic II featuring exceptional female artists, exquisite voices and beautiful melodies that will raise your spirits. Compact disk: \$15.98 (#2111)

The Best of World Music African, artists such as John Chibadura, Toure Kunda, Pierre Akendengue, O'Yaba, Sipho Mabuse and more. Compact disk: \$15.98 (#49)

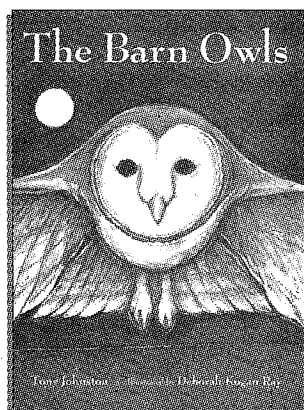
The Best of World Music Volume 1: World Vocal, artists such as Strunz and Farah, Samite of Uganda, Gilberto Gil, and The Bhundu Boys. Compact disk: \$15.98 (#51)

Best of World Music Volume II: Instrumental: artists such as Outback, Acoustic Alchemy, Bela Fleck, Jean Luc Ponty, and more. Compact disk: \$15.98 (#53)

The Best of Folk Music, artists such as Mary Black, Dougie Maclean, Greg Brown, John Gorka and Catie Curtis. Compact disk: \$15.98 (#3597)

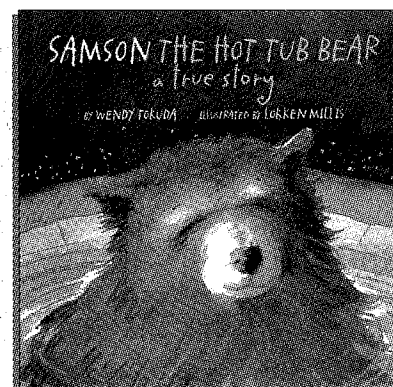
CALL (760) 647-6595 BETWEEN 9-5 DAILY TO ORDER.

MONO LAKE CATALOG



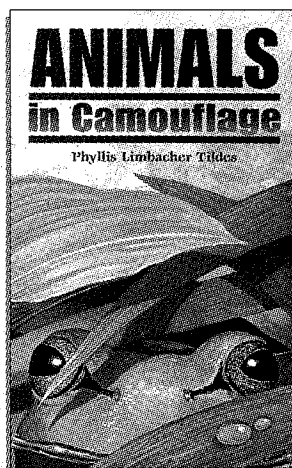
THE BARN OWLS

Written by Tony Johnson and beautifully illustrated by Deborah Kogan Ray, the text is a strikingly simple poem about the barn owl's life. Visit the quiet mysterious world of an owl and watch the world as an owl does, through the days and nights.
Hardcover, Talewinds Press, 32 pages: \$15.95 (#1705)



SAMSON THE HOT TUB BEAR

This is the true story of the antics of a hot tub-hopping bear that wanders out of the forest and into people's hearts. Written by NBC anchorwoman Wendy Tokuda who covered the real-life story of Samson. This book shows how public opinion and public action can influence a community.
Hardcover, Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 32 pages: \$15.95 (#1049)



ANIMALS IN CAMOUFLAGE

A wonderful book by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes with vivid illustrations that guide children through the pages. Discover which animals blend with the snow, what creature disguises itself as a plant, and which loses its spots as it gets older. This book first hides then reveals each creature—making it fun reading for young children.
Softcover, Charlesbridge Press, 32 pages: \$6.95 (#1703)

PUPPETS BY FOLKMANIS

You don't have to be a kid or a teacher to play with these puppets. We provide the puppet, and you provide the imagination! Each puppet comes with a facts of interest card, as well as a story or song to accompany each animal.

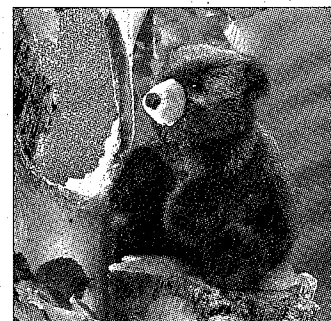
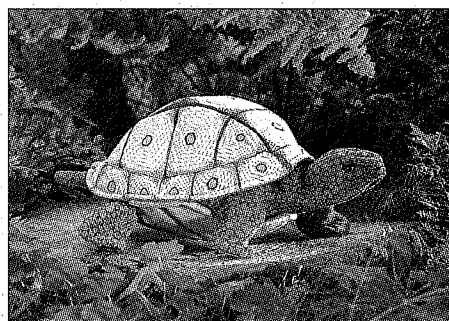
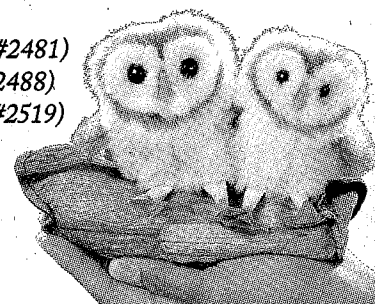
Baby Black Bear puppet, 10" tall, movable limbs and head: \$14.00 (#2481)

Chipmunk puppet, 10" tall, movable limbs and an 8" tail: \$18.00 (#2488)

Tortoise puppet, 11" long, movable limbs and retracting body: \$17.00 (#2519)

Baby Barn Owls, 4" high on a 6 1/2" by 2 1/2" log, two owl puppets are attached with velcro and removable: \$12.00 (#2480)

Two-handed Bear puppet, 23" tall and 11" wide, you can operate the bear's arms and mouth: \$49.95 (#3055)



CALL (760) 647-6595 BETWEEN 9-5 DAILY TO ORDER.

MONO LAKE CATALOG



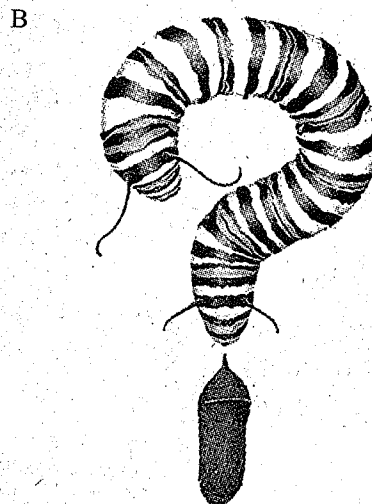
KID'S T-SHIRTS

A. Frog Life Cycle is a realistically printed design on an organic, unbleached, off-white cotton shirt.

Kids sizes, S (6-8) (#3669), M (10-12) (#3670), L (14-16) (#3671): \$15.00

B. Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly Metamorphosis is a two-sided design with the cocoon in the shape of a question mark on the front and the butterfly on the reverse. True-to-life colors on a green background.

Kids sizes, S (#43), M (#44), L (#45): \$15.00

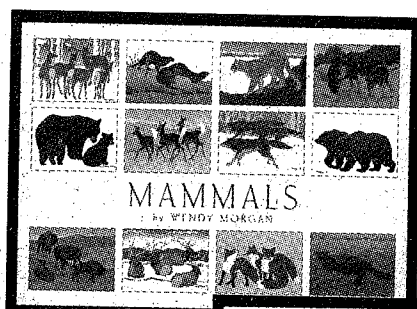
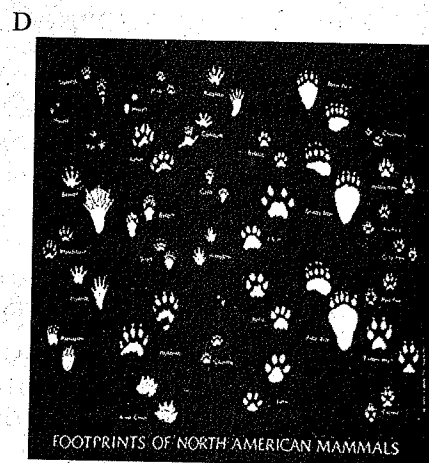


C. Tiger Salamander is striking design with its black and yellow colors on a red background.

Kids sizes S (6-8) (#77), M (10-12) (#78), L (14-16) (#79): \$14.00

D. Footprints of North American Mammals glow in the dark on this shirt! Learn the tracks of bears, chipmunks, bobcats, coyotes, and more. 35 different tracks to learn and love!

Kids sizes, S (6-8) (#46), M (10-12) (#47), L (14-16) (#48): \$15.00



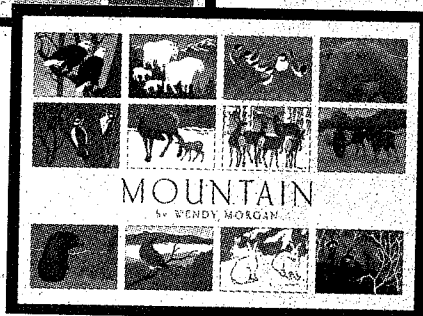
NATURE NOTECARD SETS

Enjoy the beauty of mammals, and send the mountains to your friends! Each set comes with twelve blank notecards and envelopes—all printed on acid free paper. These cards are beautifully packaged with a velcro closure, and make the perfect ready-made gift.

Cards and envelopes measure 4 1/2" by 6 1/2".

Mammal Card Set, box of 12, includes bears, foxes, mountain lions, river otters and more, with envelopes: \$13.95 (#2425)

Mountain Card Set, box of 12, includes eagles, woodpeckers, bears, raccoons, deer, and more, with envelopes: \$13.95 (#2430)



CALL (760) 647-6595 BETWEEN 9-5 DAILY TO ORDER.

MONO LAKE CATALOG

THREE RAPTORS T-SHIRT

Retail Assistant Heather Cleary takes a break from the store to check on the Red-tailed Hawk nest on Lee Vining Creek in our new raptor shirt. An Osprey, Golden Eagle, and Bald Eagle are depicted on a white shirt with a pale blue background. Each adult shirt is printed on heavy weight 100% pre-shrunk cotton.

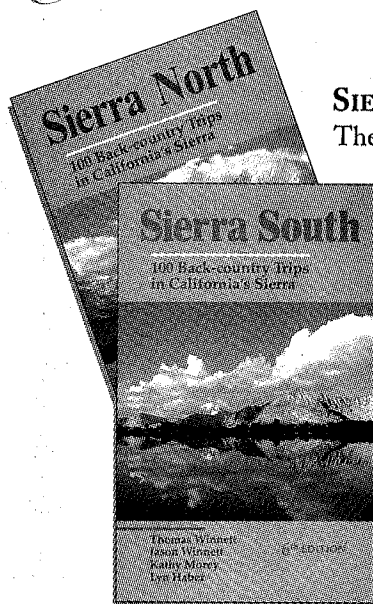
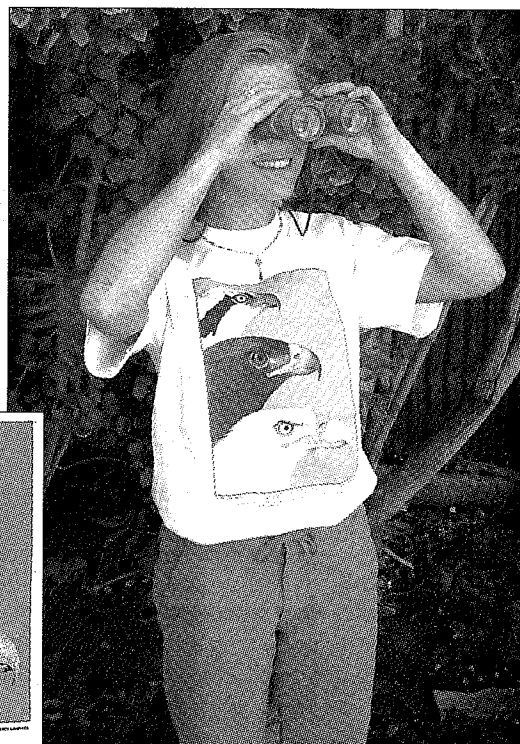
Adult sizes, S (#39), M (#40), L (#41), XL (#42): \$19.00



THERMAL TRAVEL MUG

Show your support with this double-insulated commuter mug by Aladdin. This Mono Lake Committee mug comes in both blue and green with a silver logo. Each mug stands 6 3/4" tall, holds 1 1/2 cups of your favorite hot or cold beverage.

Travel Mug, specify blue or green: \$5.95 (#3615)



SIERRA NORTH: 100 BACKCOUNTRY TRIPS IN CALIFORNIA'S SIERRA

The Sierra offer some of the most spectacular hiking and backpacking opportunities in the country. Ranging from short day hikes to long treks each trip is described in detail in this classic book which includes everything you need to plan a trip—with information on permits, maps, the best hiking seasons, and step by step directions. Covers the area from Carson Pass to Mono Creek. *Softcover, Wilderness Press, 309 pages: \$15.95 (#1110)*

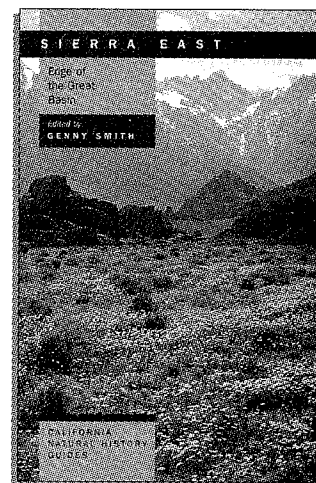
SIERRA SOUTH: 100 BACKCOUNTRY TRIPS IN CALIFORNIA'S SIERRA

Sierra South is your guide to the climax region of the High Sierra—the southern half! This book picks up where Sierra North leaves off—covering the area between Mono Creek and the southern end of Sequoia National Park—with Mount Whitney, the Kings Kern Divide, and the John Muir wilderness in between. Includes a daily diary, elevation profiles, updated route info, a trail map, and more. *Softcover, Wilderness Press, 314 pages: \$14.95 (#1113)*

SIERRA EAST: EDGE OF THE GREAT BASIN

Edited by Eastern Sierra expert and Committee Board Member emeritus Genny Smith, is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in the Eastern Sierra. This book emphasizes the relationships and ingenious way that plant and animal life have evolved and adapted to the Eastern Sierra's harsh environs. Maps, diagrams, photographs and illustrations bring the chapters on geology, weather and climate, plant communities, arthropods, native fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals to life.

Hardcover, University of California Press, 488 pages: \$48.00 (#1610)



CALL (760) 647-6595 BETWEEN 9-5 DAILY TO ORDER.

MONO LAKE CATALOG



SAVE MONO LAKE PIN

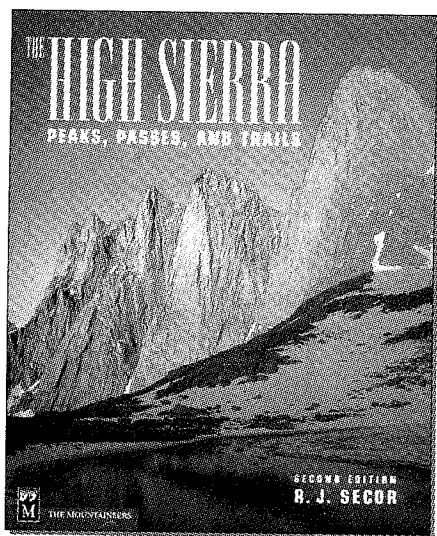
Avocets, phalaropes, grebes, brine shrimp, brine flies, tufa, and a California Gull together in front of the setting sun, all on one beautiful pin.

Save Mono Lake Pin, please specify gold or silver, 2 1/8" wide by 1 3/4" tall: \$24.95 (#2165)

MONO LAKE LONG SLEEVE T-SHIRT

Intern from Germany Mona Kremer and Information Specialist Greg Reis are wearing the new Mono Lake T-shirt for fall! With cream letters on a slate blue 100% preshrunk cotton T-shirt, this design is classic. The green and maroon oval logo shows the moon rising over Mono Lake.

Mono Lake long sleeve, adult sizes, S (#2159), M (2160), L (#2162): \$21.00



THE HIGH SIERRA PEAKS, PASSES, AND TRAILS

The definitive guide to the mountains and trails of the Sierra. More than 80 new routes have been added to this comprehensive guide—the only book to cover all known routes on more than 570 Sierra peaks.

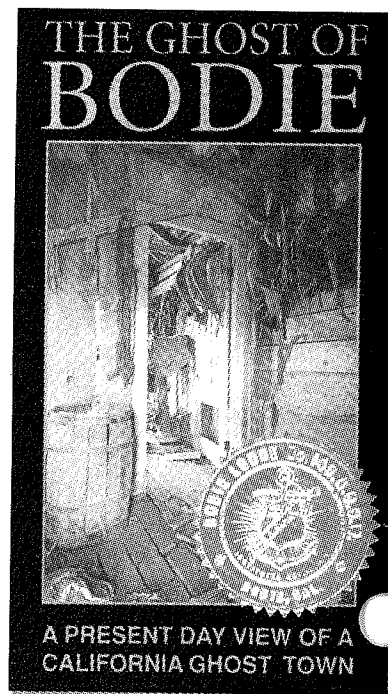
Softcover, Mountaineers Publishers, 463 pages: \$29.95 (#628)

THE GHOST OF BODIE VIDEO

This award-winning video captures the beauty and mystique of one of the treasures of the Eastern Sierra—the historic ghost town of Bodie. Bodie

boomed in the 1880s with the discovery of one of the richest gold strikes in the world. Today Bodie's legend lives on in its weathered wooden buildings. Tour places rarely seen by visitors in this fascinating and educational video.

The Ghost of Bodie video, VHS format, 30 minutes: \$19.95 (#578)



CALL (760) 647-6595 BETWEEN 9-5 DAILY TO ORDER.

MONO LAKE

2001 CALENDAR • MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

With 12 full-color monthly images as well as insets of birds, flowers, and tufa towers, the 2001 Mono Lake Calendar captures the seasons and the beauty of the Mono Basin. This year's calendar has an essay from a speech given in Lee Vining by Zulu leader Credo Mutwa, whose heartfelt words, sense of humor, and spiritual wisdom strike at the heart of what lake protection is all about—at Mono Lake and all around the world. Keep the Mono Basin's rushing creeks, spectacular sunsets, fall colors, snowfall on tufa towers, and the rising lake with you all year long. Featuring photographs by Kennan Ward, Larry Ulrich, Dennis Flaherty, William Neill, Jim Stimson, and more, this calendar will bring the Mono Basin to your home or office.

Volume discount: 2-4 calendars \$9.95 each

5-9 calendars \$8.95 each

10 or more calendars \$7.95 each

ORDER BY PHONE: (760) 647-6595, FAX: (760) 647-6377, OR EMAIL: BOOKSTORE@MONOLAKE.ORG

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☐ Check (to Mono Lake Committee)
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Signature _____

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California law requires us to charge sales tax on shipping

Mono Lake Committee P.O. Box 29 Lee Vining, CA 93541

Continued from page 3

deepen people's understanding of the Mono Basin, enhance the quality of the many educational programs conducted in the area, and lead to new and innovative scientific work. The clearinghouse is Internet-based for maximum accessibility and effectiveness.

Work to build the Clearinghouse continues daily, with the addition of new topic areas and content. So far, here are the highlights—currently available and ready for online review!

Historical Interviews

The first substantial information available in the Mono Basin Clearinghouse was historical interviews with Mono Basin residents. In these interviews the residents discuss what life was like here before water diversions and other human activities changed the landscape. Recollections of traditional Paiute ways, wildlife, irrigation, grazing, and terrain fill the interviews. For example, according to the interviews, deer and no-see-ums were rare in the early 1900s, ducks and fish were abundant, and a "bloodworm" was common in the mud of Mono Lake's bottom. These interviews were conducted in 1991 for use in establishing historical conditions in the Water Board proceedings, which

resulted in restrictions on water diversions and more water for Mono Lake and its tributaries.

Mono Basin Environmental Impact Report

The Mono Basin EIR, a comprehensive study of the Mono Basin conducted by Jones & Stokes Associates in 1993 for the Water Board proceedings, is also available online through the Clearinghouse. Jones & Stokes provided the files to us in Adobe PDF format that they recovered and converted from WordPerfect files on floppy disks. Including volume 1 and 2 and the appendices, the Draft EIR is 6 inches thick. Volume 1 and 2 of the Final EIR span another two inches. In total, the Mono Basin EIR is over 1500 pages long. Most of these files were recovered and are available in the Clearinghouse, with the exception of figures.

Current Research

Currently profiled in the Clearinghouse is the Mono Lake Microbial Observatory, a project focused on learning more about microbes in Mono Lake. A list of other current research occurring in the Mono Basin is also available.

Since the Website launch at the end of

May, the Clearinghouse has had over 1,500 visitors from more than 13 countries viewing over 3000 pages. The historical interviews are the most popular section of the Website. It has prominent listings in 7 search engines for search terms ranging from "sage grouse" to "diatomaceous earth." Already we have a list of 17 people to whom we send periodic e-mail updates of new additions to the Website; if you would like to be added to the list please send an e-mail to updates@monobasinresearch.org.

Two Mono Basin meadows go without irrigation

This past summer the LA Department of Water and Power (DWP) closed all of its sheep grazing allotments in the Mono Basin. As a result, two familiar Mono Basin meadows did not receive summertime irrigation (shepherds historically managed the irrigation). The upper meadows of Cain Ranch adjacent to South Parker Creek were dry (DWP ceased irrigating the lower meadows of Cain Ranch

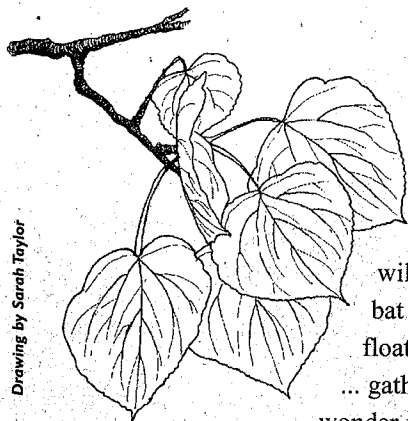
in 1996). In addition, Thompson Ranch, adjacent to County Park, was similarly dry.

The Department's action mirrored that taken earlier this year by the US Forest Service, which closed its sheep allotments upslope from DWP land (see Summer 2000 Newsletter). Driving the actions is the fact that domestic sheep can carry and transmit a pneumonia that is fatal to bighorn sheep.

With endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn populations dwindling, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has imposed stringent protection requirements and a "no take" policy with substantial penalties. DWP indicated its decision was based on liability concerns, should escaped sheep infect the bighorn population.

Naturalist notes

A Mono Basin chronicle



Drawing by Sarah Taylor

July: adult Bald Eagles over Lundy Canyon a Western Kingbird down on Lee Vining Creek ... an Osprey spotted on Mill Creek ... a Great Blue Heron down on Rush Creek ... Violet Green Swallows nesting on the Mono Lake Committee building ... high country wildflowers that take your breath away all the way up to the San Joaquin ridge ... a long-eared bat found on the bluff above Mill Creek ... trout fingerlings spotted on lower Rush Creek ... floating in Mono Lake is heavenly as thousands of phalaropes flock, bank, and stream overhead ... gathering at the mouth of Lee Vining Creek they occasionally lift-off in such large numbers you wonder if they're rising or if you're dropping ... Red-shouldered Hawk soaring over Reversed Peak ...

August: Sun cups (*Camissonia*) blooming along with Rubber Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*) in the pumice flats below Black Point ... a solitary sulfur butterfly on Paoha Island ... two Caspian Terns mixing in with California Gulls on Java Islet, and a lone Franklin's Gull as well ... a Northern Goshawk, a Golden Eagle, and a Peregrine Falcon all spotted by Outdoor Experiences groups ... Canada Geese, Black-necked Stilts, and American Avocets all on the north shore ... several dozen Black Terns

spotted darting amongst the tufa on the south shore ... three Brants spotted off the County Park boardwalk early one morning ... a Northern Pygmy Owl along Lee Vining Creek was quite a rare sight for the middle of the afternoon ... Black-necked Stilts behaving as if they've got a nest they're protecting down at County Park ... seemingly unafraid White-tailed Ptarmigan in the high country just south of North Peak ...

Aurora borealis seen over Mono Lake

This account came from Committee member Richard Beebe of Tracy. Thank you for letting us know about this unusual sighting!

On the calm, cool night of August 10-11, I had the wonderful pleasure of observing an unexpected aurora borealis over the shore of Mono Lake. This occurred during the expected annual Perseid meteor shower overhead—two very different and contrasting celestial shows—until 03:30AM, occurring under a nearly full moon!

I was first aware of something above some of the tufa around 01:30AM: soft, faint (in the bright moonlight) vertical lines above some of the tufa formations. All I knew was that they weren't meteor trails, which were common that night, and have a very different appearance.

At around 03:45AM I became aware of the aurora lights "dancing" above the lake in the dark sky, and realized what had been seen two hours earlier! They extended from the northwest (to above Conway Summit) all the way to the eastern Anchorite Hills horizon. To the northeast, towards magnetic north, the lights reached about 20 degrees off the horizon, upward to just beyond halfway to the elevation of the "North Star," Polaris.

I didn't perceive any strong visual colorations, mainly very soft pastels, but I was aware of the vertical curtain appearance, as they drifted seemingly ever-so-slowly in an eastward moving arc. The lights faded only with the approaching dawn light, growing from the east.

During the light show the meteors were still blazing across the skies, radiating from the constellation Perseus, in nearly all compass directions. Many left brilliant trails in their wake, fast and long; dazzling lines.

September: Birds birds and more birds ... Forster's Terns in winter plumage between South Tufa and Navy Beach ... two Soras and one Virginia Rail seen amongst the tufa ... and close to 100 American White Pelicans circling overhead ... three White-faced Ibis seen flying low over the lake ... a bobcat bounding across the highway late one night ... mountain lion spotted down at the County Park ... and two Great Blue Herons perched atop two tufa towers look like they're wondering where the fish are, luckily some friendly Committee canoe tour guides gave them directions to Walker Lake in Nevada!

Staff migrations

Staff meetings aren't quite so crowded these days as many of our seasonal staff have migrated back to school, winter jobs, and winter residences. We're left wondering—how will we ever make it without them?

So with fond memories we bid farewell to our summer interns. Both the Committee and the Lee Vining Healthy Start program will miss **Camden Richards'** tireless energy and we wish her the best back at school. **Megan Simmons** has taken her enthusiasm, sense of humor, and her Canada superhero costume back to school in San Francisco with her. After a summer of bumping up and down the road to the Claremont cabin, **Daniel Klauss** has cruised back to Claremont College for the year. Living Lakes intern **Martin Lenk** is off traveling in the warmer parts of the Americas before returning to Germany where we're sure he'll share fun stories from this summer. And thank you to **Anna Scofield** for working her second summer on the front lines in the Information Center and Bookstore. She's now back at school in Oregon. We thank each of you for your hard work, enthusiasm, and willingness to help out. Come back to visit soon!

Yet again we bid farewell to Outdoor Experiences Coordinator **Kristen Drake** as we send her off to her fiancée and her future in Madison, Wisconsin.

Thank you to **Jason Roecker** who volunteered his time and dog-walking experience at the Committee this summer—we wish you and **Zach** the best of luck at school this year!

Thankfully we have interns **Paul McFarland** and **Sang Kim** as well as Retail Assistant **Heather Cleary**, Canoe Coordinator **Kirsten Brady**, and Outdoor Experiences Coordinator **Santiago Escruceria** around to help out for the fall. You are now officially



Summer staff left to right starting at the top: Paul McFarland, Geoff McQuilkin, Martin Lenk, Bartshe Miller, Matt Moule, Greg Reis, Ramona Robbins Clark, Brett Pyle, Sang Kim, Jeff Darlington, Daniel Klaus, Lisa Cutting, Justin Hite, Shannon Nelson, Anna Scofield, the Roeckers: Zach, Craig, Ritter, and Jason, Megan Simmons, Heidi Hopkins, Kirsten Brady. Missing in action: Laura Walker, Heather Cleary, Gary Nelson, and Arya Degenhardt.

indoctrinated into the clan of folks who know that the "it will slow down in the fall" myth is just that. And thank you to veteran staffer **Matt Moule** who slid right in to helping out with our education programs during this busy environmental education season.

Welcome **Mona Kremer**—our second German intern! After learning about Mono Lake through the Living Lakes exhibit at Expo 2000 in Hanover Mona decided to come volunteer for a closer look at Mono Lake this fall.

On the topic of Germany we thank former staff member **Rebecca Dobert** for volunteering to represent the Committee at Expo 2000 in Hanover. Rebecca did a wonderful job sharing Mono Lake with

people from around the world, and we know she found a new appreciation for the frog king too!

And with a sigh of relief, and a hefty to-do list, we welcome new bookkeeper **Donnette Huselton** to the staff. Donnette is a long time Eastern Sierra resident with lots of bookkeeping skills, a deep interest in the region, and a sense of humor strong enough to survive the Committee's occasionally chaotic paperwork.

All in all it's been a great summer season with a great group of people on staff. As we move into winter, it is time to enjoy a few quiet days in the basin, and the season to start planning for all the activities and programs of 2001! 🐸

Member Corner: News from the membership desk

by Brett Pyle

Matched Gifts

Bank of America Foundation matched a gift from **James Goggin** of Twain Harte. **The Times Mirror Foundation** matched a donation from **Jeanne Karpenko** of Glendale. **Safeco Insurance Company** matched a gift from **Patricia Orris** of San Diego. **Sun Microsystems Foundation** matched a gift from **Zona Walcott** of Campbell. **PG&E Corporation** matched a donation from **David Gassman** of Oakland. **The Aid Association for Lutherans** matched a gift from **Robert Kickbusch** of Brookfield, Wisconsin. **Enron Foundation** matched a donation by **Donald VanDerweit**. **Computer Associates** matched two-to-one a donation from **Kurt Zobel** of Moreno Valley and **The Charles Schwab Foundation** matched two-to-one a donation by **Steven White** of Moss Beach.

Bequests

When you make a gift to the Mono Lake Committee as a part of your estate planning you are helping to ensure the long-term protection and restoration of Mono Lake and the Mono Basin ecosystem. What a wonderful way to be remembered!

If you would like to include the Mono Lake Committee in your will, designate the Mono Lake Committee as a beneficiary at the following address: Highway 395 at 3rd Street, Lee Vining, CA 93541 (mailing address: P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541). For more information contact Membership Coordinator Brett Pyle (brett@monolake.org) at the above address or at (760) 647-6595.

Celebrations

Theresa Alden made a donation in celebration of the marriage of **Loretta Dunlavy and David French**. Our best wishes to you for a long and happy union. **Judy Blumle** sent a gift in honor of **Master Samuel Eric Finch** on the occasion of his first birthday, June 23rd, 2000. Happy Belated Birthday Samuel!

Thanks

A big thank you to **Bob Evanhoe** for the donation of a 1950 USGS map of the Mono Basin and vicinity that shows features that existed in the early 1900s.

Also, a special thank you to **Marlo Johnasen** and her **Gavilan College Ecology I Class** from this summer. After visiting the Mono Basin on a field trip, the class members took up a collection to make a donation which was then matched by Marlo. It is heartening to see young people willing to give from their limited resources to preserve natural places for future generations.

We also thank avid fisherman and long-time member **Paul H. McClure** of San Diego for donating his complete set of *California Explorer* magazines for our library.

Congratulations to **Deanna Dulen** on her appointment as Supervisor of nearby Devil's Postpile National Monument. Under Deanna's guidance as the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center Director many education and interpretive programs and projects have flourished at Mono Lake. We wish her all the best!

In Memory

Elizabeth Bingham of Bishop donated in memory of **Pat Peigné** who loved Mono Lake and lived here for many, many years. **William Clayton, Jr.** made a donation in the name of **William Simpson**, a long-time member of the Walker Lake community and a devotee of the Eastern Sierra.

Numerous donations were received in memory of **Robert Mathews**, a longstanding Committee member who loved Mono Lake and would often visit on his camping trips. Donations were made by **Carol Mathews, Keith and Barbara Berry, Jim and Madeline Cooper, Bob and Sandy Himel and family, Scotty Hovey, Allen and Lu Lange, Clara Rosenberg, Pete and Jane Streich, June and Jan Veenstra, Allen Wade, and the Alameda County Public Health Lab.**

While travelling here with the Committee Luxury Bus Tour **Patricia Elward** of Santa Cruz made a generous donation in memory of her husband **Kenneth Elward** for the wonderful times they spent together at Mono Lake.

We would also like to acknowledge the passing of **Mark Reisner**. Reisner, popularizer of western water folly and author of *Cadillac Desert*, died of cancer at his home in San Rafael on July 21, 2000. Reisner's cutting but honest account of water use and misuse changed the public consciousness and has always been popular with Mono Lake supporters; he will be missed.

Brett Pyle is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. Mono Lake, it is suspected, provides a large portion of his syrup of wahoo.

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