

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Winter & Spring 2002



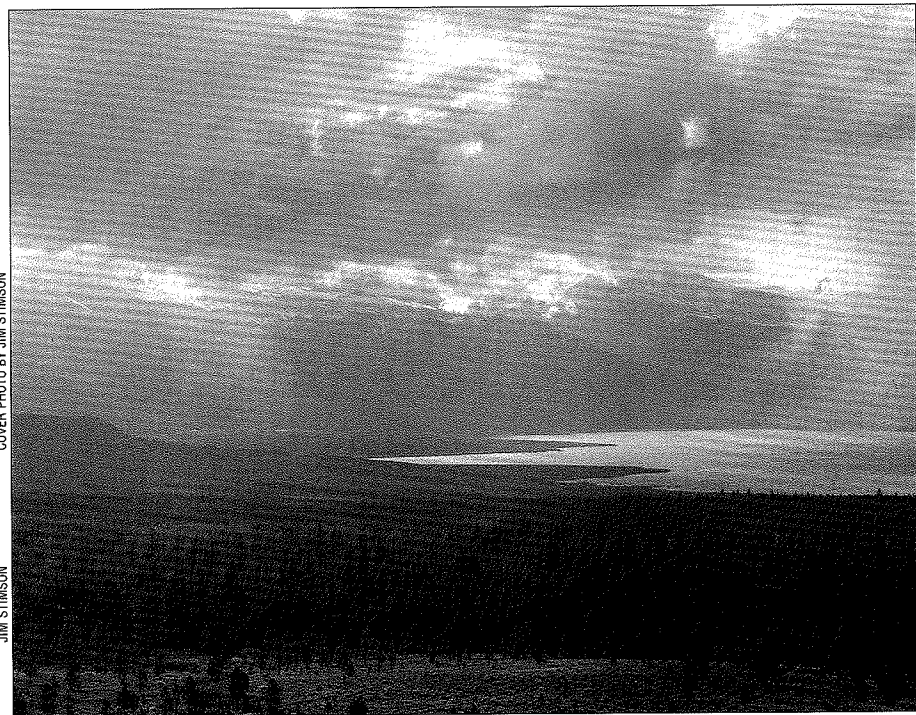
Mono Lake under the full moon in winter is nothing less than breathtaking. However, striking-out from a warm house too see it is nothing less than freezing. But as winter gives way to spring, we've had a stretch of particularly warm days, and the nights have not been too cold for bundled trips to the lakeshore. Frozen ground crunches underfoot—the only sound other than the even rhythm of water hitting the shore. The air is so crisp you feel like you can see further into space than ever before. You can see so much in the moonlight—Black Point, Negit and Paoha Islands, alkali flats on the east shore, the Mill Creek delta, the Mono Craters, and the wide-open expanse of water. It's like walking inside of a black and white photograph.

On this issue's cover we're lucky to have a Jim Stimson image, *Alkali Pond/Negit Island Land Bridge*. The staff voted on this photograph to represent both winter and spring—as this is a combination issue and part of the plan to stay on-budget. With ice along the shoreline, snow among the grasses, and a stormy sky sending spotlights on features like Paoha in the background, we figured this one was a perfect fit.

And inside, you'll find elements of winter and spring too. See pages 8–9 for a new perspective on birding. A spring selection of goodies from the store is on pages 12–13. Don't miss the 2002 Field Seminars on pages 20–25 to sign up soon. We've also got a policy update from Southern California on pages 4–5, and updates on the Mono Lake Highway Widening Project on page 7. And don't miss the heart-warming poetry by past Outdoor Experiences participants on page 16.

As always, thanks for reading!

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



COVER PHOTO BY JIM STIMSON

JIM STIMSON

Spring Snow Storm from local photographer Jim Stimson's book Mono Lake: Explorations and Reflections.

Mono Lake Committee Mission

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



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Founded by David Gaines in 1978

MONO LAKE NEWSLETTER

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Mono Basin Definitely An Important Bird Area

Official Designations Recognize Global Significance of Mono Lake

by Lisa Cutting

The American Bird Conservancy and the Audubon Society have recently confirmed what Mono Lake enthusiasts have known for quite a while—the Mono Basin is important to birds. Through separate programs, both organizations have officially designated the Mono Basin as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

Important Bird Areas are just what the name implies—areas that are important to birds. Habitat that provides nesting and feeding opportunities is increasingly difficult for birds to find. The IBA program is a way to systematically identify critical habitat areas and educate others as to their importance.

After sites are identified and officially designated, land managers are inclined to continue practices that promote healthy bird habitat. The program imposes no regulations, restrictions, or costs. In fact, with the increasing popularity of recreational birding, IBA

designation may help to boost the economies of local communities.

So why is the Mono Basin important for birds?

- Mono Lake is a critical stopover for birds traveling the Pacific Flyway. As many as 1.8 million Eared Grebes stop in the fall, doubling or even tripling their weight before continuing to the Salton Sea and the Gulf of California. Over a hundred thousand phalaropes (Wilson's and Red-necked) descend upon Mono Lake in the summer and then fly 3,000 miles (4828 km) non-stop to their South American wintering grounds.
- Islands within Mono Lake support 70–80% of California's nesting population of California Gulls (between 44,000–65,000 individuals). In fact, Mono Lake is the second-largest California Gull rookery in the world after Utah's Great Salt Lake.
- Mono Lake's dynamic shoreline, lagoons, and ponds attract numerous shorebirds including Caspian Terns, Snowy Plovers, Least and Western Sandpipers, and American Avocets.
- And Mono Lake's recovering tributary creeks provide riparian habitat for migratory and resident songbirds. This is especially important for some species—such as Yellow Warblers, Wilson's Warblers, Warbling Vireos, and Willow Flycatchers—as their numbers have significantly declined in other regions of California.

Mono Lake and birds—it's a wonderful combination. But don't take our word for it. Come see for yourself why Mono Lake is so special. ♦

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Acting Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She recently got an adorable Golden Retriever puppy named Abbey.



A Snowy Plover guarding its clutch at Mono Lake.

Pursuing Sound Water Policy in California

Mono Lake Committee Leadership Makes a Difference

by Frances Spivy-Weber

It takes real water running down the creeks into Mono Lake to raise the lake level and lower its salinity. It takes real water to meet the drinking water and household needs of the people of Los Angeles. It takes real water to run businesses and industries and to irrigate farms and landscapes. Throughout California environmental, human, and economic demands for water compete and conflict. One way the Mono Lake Committee meets these challenges is by working with many groups and individuals to create, enhance, or change water policy. The Committee's goal—and my main task—is to make using water efficiently a common practice.



HERLEY JIM BOWLING

The Millionth Toilet

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is the record-holder among all water agencies in California—and probably the world—for installing 1.6 gallon low-flow toilets in their jurisdiction. In 2001 Los Angeles and the many community organizations that did the work celebrated the millionth toilet—a very snazzy, brown and black, leopard design both inside and out. The millionth toilet will be on display at the Asian American Drug Abuse Program office in Crenshaw. If you want a tour, or more information, please contact Mono Lake Committee Co-Executive Director Frances Spivy-Weber (frances@monolake.org) at (310) 316-0041.

When the Mono Lake Committee was founded in 1978, David Gaines wrote clearly in the first newsletter that the Committee's approach to getting water for Mono Lake would be saving water in Los Angeles. Martha Davis and the Mono Lake Committee Board of Directors later expanded this charge to include meeting the real water needs of Los Angeles without transferring environmental problems to other areas. They did not want to transfer Mono Lake's water diversion problems to rivers and streams elsewhere.

Water Policy Successes

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, in cooperation with the Mono Lake Committee, Assemblymen Phil Isenberg and Richard Katz helped make water conservation policy real by sponsoring and shepherding through the State Legislature a law that gave Los Angeles access to \$60 million to develop new water supplies through conservation and water recycling to replace Mono Basin diversions. One result of that funding is more than a million toilets have been installed in Los Angeles by a city-wide network of community groups working with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

The Committee also worked successfully with Rich Atwater, then General Manager of the West and Central Basin Water Districts in Los Angeles County, to lobby Congress to create a new water policy. Congress ordered the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to spend some of its money to help local water agencies build facilities to treat and recycle water from sewage treatment plants and to use the "new water" to help the environment. Mono Lake's ecosystem was named in the legislation as a beneficiary of this new law.

Now, in 2002, the Mono Lake Committee continues to work for water conservation and reclamation policies. The Committee is finding that improving water quality, storing more water underground, even making better use of water from rainstorms are also water policies that will help achieve the goal of protecting Mono Lake forever. Additionally, the Committee is helping others apply the water policy formula that is saving Mono Lake to other "Mono Lakes."

As Executive Director of Policy for the Mono Lake Committee I travel around the state to help bring the lessons learned at Mono Lake to other difficult, and connected water policy situations. On the following page are brief descriptions of where and how I represent the Mono Lake Committee in working on water policies and the ways in which the Committee is taking a leadership role in Southern California and throughout the state.

Continued on page 5

Efficient Water Use Statewide: CalFed

The CalFed Bay-Delta Program is a plan that combines the efforts of federal and state agencies with regional water agencies, environmentalists, farmers, and business interests to develop and fund projects and programs to restore the San Francisco Bay and San Joaquin/Sacramento Delta, rebuild salmon and other fish and wildlife habitats, and improve water quality for the 22 million Californians that use water that flows through the Delta. This is an important program for Mono Lake, because its success will ensure that Southern California—including Los Angeles—will be able to meet the water needs of the people, the economy, and the environment. It is, in short, an insurance policy for Mono Lake, so I work in many partnerships on the Bay-Delta Program.

The Environmental Water Caucus is a group of 16 environmental organizations that have worked for over a decade to protect and restore the Bay-Delta. I serve on a steering committee for the Caucus, and help bring in the Committee's Southern California perspective—both what can be done in Southern California to help the Bay-Delta and how policy choices will affect the south.

Interior Secretary Norton and Governor Davis appointed me and Mono Lake Committee Board Member Martha Davis to serve on the Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee. I co-chair the Water Use Efficiency Subcommittee, which will be promoting policies that support water conservation and water reclamation. Martha Davis co-chairs the Watershed Subcommittee which focuses on strengthening watershed groups statewide.

Urban Water Conservation

The California Urban Water Conservation Council is a statewide organization of water agencies, environmental organizations, regulators, and other interests that have pledged to improve urban water conservation by implementing Best Management Practices in a timely and cost effective way. Early this year I was elected vice-chair of the Council, and in 2003, the Mono Lake Committee's 25th anniversary year, I will be the chair. The Mono Lake Committee's goal is to help water agencies and communities go beyond the best management practices to achieve maximum conservation. In 2002 I will work with the Urban Council and the legislature to develop new water conservation laws and will ask Mono Lake Committee members and friends to support the passage of these laws to promote low-flow toilets, water conserving landscapes, and water efficient washing machines.

Water Planning

The State Water Plan Update 2003 Advisory Committee advises the Department of Water Resources on ways to improve its assessment of the state's need for water over the next 20–50 years and identifies new and innovative ways to meet that need. Martha Davis and I both serve on the Advisory

Committee, emphasizing regional projects that provide water and protect the environment as the driving force for state funding priorities.

The Southern California Water Dialogue

The Dialogue is an informal gathering of individuals with experience in environment and water management that meets monthly to have open and frank discussions about statewide and regional water policies that affect Southern California. I serve as co-chair with Tim Worley from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. CalFed agencies, and others are beginning to see the Dialogue as an important place for exchanging water policy information. Here, the Mono Lake Committee goal is to strengthen the ability of diverse interests in Southern California to work together on water policies that protect people and the environment.

Los Angeles Water Conservation, Education, and Recycling

In 1996 the Mono Lake Committee helped bring together a group of community organizations to promote saving water in Los Angeles and to provide water education opportunities for urban youth.

Many of the groups have worked to distribute ultra low-flow toilets, and this year some of the groups will be working with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to add new water conservation programs for commercial, industrial and government customers. Each year hundreds of youth associated with Council organizations come to Mono Lake in the summer to participate in the Outdoor Experiences program. Even more learn about Mono Lake through classroom presentations and activities with Herley Jim Bowling, the Committee's educator in Los Angeles.

East Valley Water Recycling Project

Using the state and federal funds authorized in the late 1980s and 1990s Los Angeles was able to build the East Valley Water Recycling Project. Water from this project will replace the water that is now being used to restore Mono Lake and its tributary streams. The project is ready to go, but there have been several largely political roadblocks in the way. This is a high priority water policy challenge for the Committee in 2002.

The Mono Lake Committee is fortunate to have been founded with an understanding of how connected Mono Lake is to Southern California and the rest of the state. Working with others to save Mono Lake and help others save their own special environmental places is an essential component of the Committee's policy work today. For updates on water policy issues visit www.monolake.org. And email frances@monolake.org or call me at 310-316-0041 if you have any questions. ❖

Frances Spivy-Weber is the Committee's Executive Director of Policy. She and her husband Michael recently bought a house in Lee Vining.

"The Committee's goal is to make using water efficiently a common practice."

Mono Lake Highway Widening Project Update

by Craig Roecker

As reported in the fall issue of the *Mono Lake Newsletter*, Caltrans is planning road widening along 2.9 miles of Highway 395 along the west shoreline of Mono Lake. This project has the potential of impacting valuable near-shore wetland areas, the movement of deer and other wildlife, and will likely increase traffic speed through this highly scenic area. These concerns can be met by a modified, balanced project that addresses key safety issues and key environmental concerns. Any highway work must be consistent with the protection plans in place for Mono Lake and be in accordance with the state's clean water laws. Following are updates on the project.

Update: New Caltrans Policy

A new Caltrans policy put in place late last year significantly increases the odds that proposed highway widening next to Mono Lake can be achieved in a balanced manner that addresses safety concerns while protecting the environmental values that exist in the Mono Basin.

Called Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) this new policy states Caltrans' intent to approach transportation projects differently—to "integrate and balance community, aesthetic, historic, and environmental values with safety, maintenance, and performance goals." Caltrans State Director Jeff Morales issued the new policy last November.

Specifically, the policy states the need for Caltrans to work with all stakeholders to arrive at solutions that balance safety and mobility with the special constraints of the area in which the project is to be built. Particularly noteworthy is that application of the CSS policy to the Mono Lake Highway Widening Project could demonstrate to the rest of California the capacity of this new approach to balance transportation projects with local community and environmental needs.

In meetings, field tours, and project discussions over the past 18 months, the Mono Lake Committee has continually advocated for a balanced project that protects the visual and natural resources at Mono Lake while addressing safety concerns. The Mono Lake Widening Project is the ideal location to demonstrate the benefits of CSS.

We all want to see Mono Lake protected, and we all want safe highways. The Committee knows that both can be achieved, and the new CSS policy opens a door for Caltrans to produce a truly balanced project proposal.

Update: Draft EIR for the Mono Lake Highway Widening Project Delayed

As noted in the fall issue of the *Mono Lake Newsletter*, the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Mono Lake Highway Widening Project has been delayed by 14 months. Three reasons have been given for the delay: The scoping phase took longer than anticipated; EIR study areas were changed, requiring some analysis work to be redone; and a backlog exists for preliminary review of projects by the Federal Highway Administration.

The delay offers a chance for highway designers to develop a new alternative including context sensitive solutions that adapt the project to the unique natural environment at Mono Lake.

If you have questions about transportation projects in the Mono Basin contact Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) or Craig Roecker (craig@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. ♦

Context Sensitive Solutions

What is Caltrans' Context Sensitive Solutions Policy?

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is a new policy instituted by the State Director of Caltrans in November of 2001. CSS is an approach to "plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate [the California] transportation system." CSS makes it possible for Caltrans to "integrate and balance community, aesthetic, historic, and environmental values with safety, maintenance, and performance goals" in transportation projects.

The intent of CSS is to address the inconsistency between transportation projects and the environment in which they are built. As the policy notes, throughout the state there is a desire for roads to be "an economic, social, and cultural asset as well as provide for the safe movement of people and goods."

California's new CSS policy follows the groundwork done by the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) with Context Sensitive Design. It specifically allows Caltrans "flexibility in applying design standards and approving exceptions to design standards" in order to "seek transportation solutions that improve mobility and safety while complementing and enhancing community values and objectives."

What is the Context Sensitive Design Policy?

The Federal Highways Administration developed Context Sensitive Design (CSD) to address the connection between transportation projects and the communities and environments in which they are constructed. CSD is "a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and

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North Mono Basin Settlement Process Well Underway

by Lisa Cutting

Many people are familiar with Rush and Lee Vining creeks and even with Walker and Parker creeks. But few are aware of the streams of the North Mono Basin—Mill, Wilson, and DeChambeau—much less the complexity of issues associated with them (see map below). The Mono Lake Committee and several other groups have been formally working on these issues for over a year now.

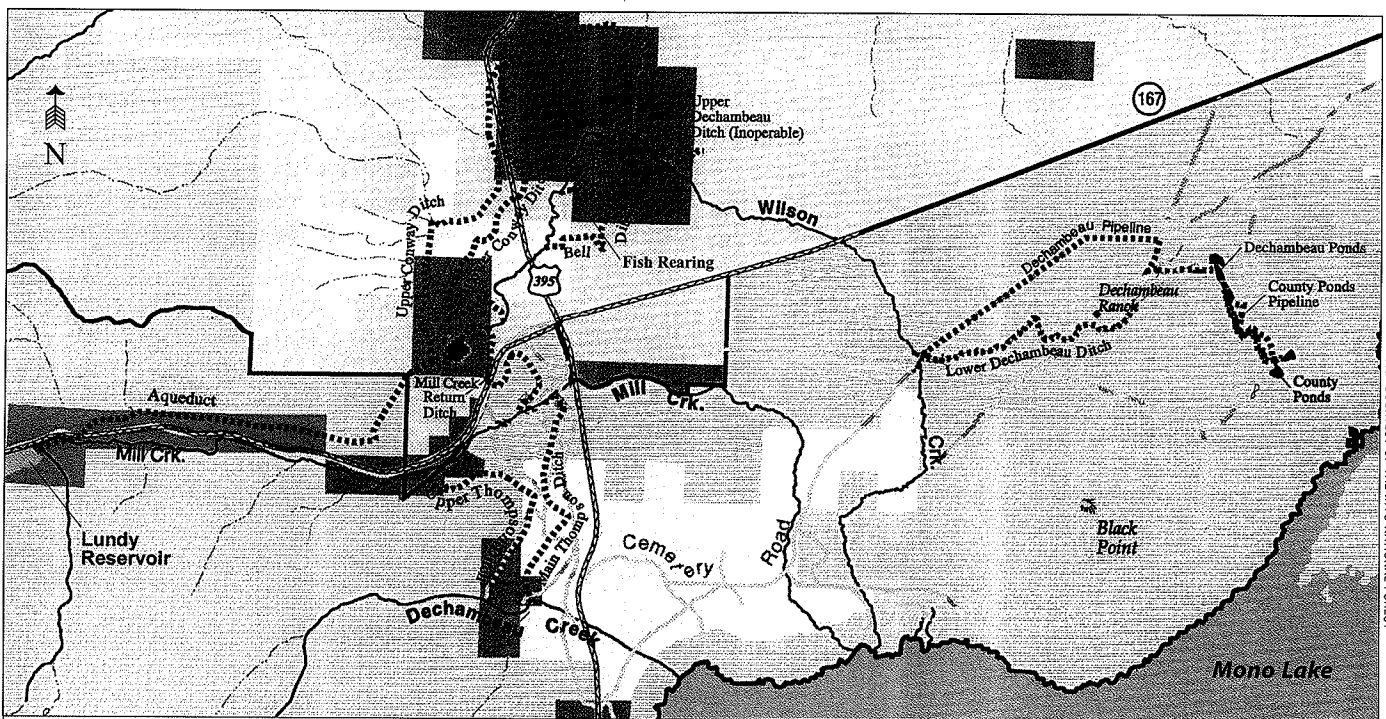
As is the case throughout the Great Basin, water is a scarce resource, and competing demands often preclude all water needs being met. In most cases societal values and legal mandates balance out the scales.

The North Mono Basin is no different. As illustrated in the map below, the landscape is etched with streams, ditches, and ponds. These natural and artificial waterways provide the setting for a negotiation settlement process currently underway.

Numerous interests are represented by the various parties—Mono County, Southern California Edison, US Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Land Management, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, CalTrout/American Rivers, People for Mono Basin Preservation, and the Mono Lake Committee. The interests

represented include restoring and maintaining natural streams, hydropower generation, irrigated meadows for grazing, restored ponds, and fish rearing.

The group has been grappling with value-driven questions for quite some time—natural systems vs. artificial? Water rights vs. public trust values? And although the interests are diverse, parties are still at the table and committed to achieving a workable solution. The Mono Lake Committee believes that implementing water transport efficiencies and seeking creative solutions can go a long way in satisfying most of the parties' needs. ♦



North Mono Basin Watershed from Top to Mono Lake

Lundy Reservoir—storage for hydropower operation; recreational reservoir
Mill Creek—third largest tributary to Mono Lake
Aqueduct—pipeline to transport water from reservoir directly to powerhouse
Upper Thompson Ditch—historic ditch formerly used to irrigate Upper Thompson Ranch
Main Thompson Ditch—ditch used to transport Mill Creek water to Thompson Ranch
DeChambeau Creek—natural creek; one section used to transport Mill Creek water to Thompson Ranch
Upper Conway Ditch—historically transported water to Conway Ranch east of Hwy 395; currently used to irrigate Conway Ranch west of Hwy 395

Lundy Powerhouse—Southern California Edison hydropower generation
Wilson Creek—historic irrigation ditch that has assumed characteristics of a stream; used to irrigate Conway Ranch
Mill Creek Return Ditch—ditch used to return water to Mill Creek
Lower Conway Ditch—historic ditch formerly used to irrigate Conway Ranch east of Hwy 395; currently used to irrigate Conway west of 395
Bell & Bowl Ditches—ditches used to transport water to fish-rearing operation
Fish Rearing raceways—location where trout are raised
DeChambeau Pipeline—pipe used to transport water to DeChambeau ponds
Lower DeChambeau Ditch—historic ditch used to transport water to DeChambeau Ranch

Birding Benefits Birds

The Mono Basin has long been recognized as an area that is important to birds. Now, with formal Important Bird Area designations by both the American Bird Conservancy and the National Audubon Society, others are beginning to realize it too, as evidenced by the dramatic increase in the number of participants attending interpretive bird walks and bird seminars in the Mono Basin.

Recreational Birding Provides Benefits To Local Economies

Locations recognized for their important bird habitat, like the Mono Basin, also provide significant economic value to their local communities.

In 1996 nearly 63 million adults watched wildlife—that's 12% of the entire U.S. adult population! Of those, 86% were

bird watchers, representing one of the fastest growing forms of recreation in the United States. California ranks highest in total wildlife watchers of any state.

The economic picture related to birding is also impressive. Wildlife watchers spent a total of \$30.9 billion in 1996. Of that, \$9.4 billion was spent on trip related expenses—including \$5.4 billion on food and lodging. *

Many of California's quality birding sites are located near small, rural communities. Recreational birding expenditures benefit these communities and the money generated results in a significant positive effect on local economies. Money spent by tourists is multiplied in the community, as it becomes profits, then wages, then consumer income again.

Texas—A Big State Sets A Big Example

Texas has capitalized on these nationwide birding trends and offers a great example of what's possible.

The Texas coast has long been a location of unparalleled birding opportunity—with over 600 resident and migrant bird species. Interest in nature tourism—hunting, fishing, photography, and birdwatching—began to gain momentum as economically depressed coastal communities struggled. Because 94% of the state is privately owned, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was constantly challenged with how to manage wildlife populations while still providing opportunities for individual economic gain.

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail (GTCBT) proved to be the perfect answer. Sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Department of Transporta-



JEFF DARLINGTON

A flock of birders at County Park near Mono Lake.

Continued on page 9

Eastern Sierra Bird Trail Map Underway

New to birding? First time birding in the Eastern Sierra? Not sure where to go? The Eastern Sierra Bird Trail map is sure to help you.

Imagine a map that covers the Eastern Sierra from Owens Lake to Bridgeport Reservoir and highlights all the best birding places. It will tell you how to get there, what birds you can expect to see, the best time of year to view birds in that location, and the facilities that are available at the site. By looking at the map, you'll know how far you are from the nearest town in case you get hungry or need a place to stay.

The Mono Lake Committee, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, and Owens Valley Committee are currently finalizing the production of such a map.

Specific sites in the Mono Basin include County Park, South Tufa, and Lee Vining Canyon. Those familiar with birding at Mono Lake know that these areas are diverse in terms of habitat, and therefore in the birds that you can expect to see. This map will help people discover these wonderful birding locations.

The Eastern Sierra Bird Trail map will be available up and down Highway 395 early this summer at Chamber of Commerce offices, visitor centers, and select businesses. So, plan on picking up your copy and we'll see you out on the Eastern Sierra Bird Trail. Happy birding!

... and People Too!

by Lisa Cutting

tion, the GTCBT has successfully blended the two previously perceived competing goals of preserving the diversity of natural resources while simultaneously creating healthy local economies.

Currently, there are three Texas birding maps (upper, lower, and central) with plans to develop more. Over 300 birding locations are identified, and the maps include birds of interest by site and visitor information. (See Eastern Sierra Bird Trail Map inset for an update on our soon-to-be-released map!)

Bird Festival Popularity Growing as Fast as Birding

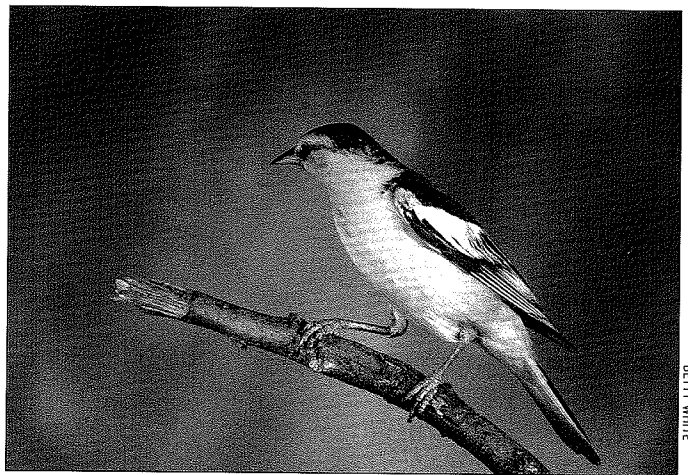
In 1985 there were just five birding festivals across the country. In 1997 there were more than 60, and in 2001 there were close to 200!

Bird festivals are a wonderful way to spend an extended weekend. If you're a serious birder, traveling to a new location exposes you to different species that you may have never seen before. If you're just getting into birding, it's a great way to learn from experts. In either case, it's always a lot of fun. (See Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua inset below announcing the first bird festival at Mono Lake!)

The typical festival consists of presentations by experts; identifying different bird species out in the field; cultural and historical workshops; activities for children; and special events such as art receptions, book signings, and vendor exhibits.

Birding at Mono Lake—Linking People and Birds

The birds of the Mono Basin attract birders from all over and there is no shortage of birding locations to explore. During the early morning hours of summer, the boardwalk at County Park offers an elevated platform ideal for shoreline bird watching. The canyons—Lee Vining and Lundy—provide a



BETTY WHITE

Bullock's Oriole, visitor to Mono Basin riparian habitats.

cool refuge on hot summer days for birds and birders alike. And although the surrounding sagebrush steppe habitat appears devoid of bird life, upon closer inspection many species can be found.

Communities of people, communities of birds—both are part of the Mono Basin. And as studies indicate, both can coexist and flourish. The natural beauty and diversity of bird life of the Mono Basin provides the ideal backdrop for connecting people with birds. ♦

* U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census. 1996 National Survey on Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua June 21–23

Mark your calendars now and plan on joining us in the Mono Basin for our first annual bird festival—the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua—June 21–23, 2002.

So, what exactly is a Chautauqua? The word itself is Iroquois, meaning “two moccasins tied together” or “jumping fish.” The more common use of Chautauqua was that of an institution that flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—providing education through the combination of lectures, concerts, and other social events. These gatherings were often held outside in large tents and served to educate and connect the people of a particular community. Chautauquas were most popular in rural areas but pretty much died out by the mid-1930s as a result of the Great Depression and the rise of car culture, radio, and movies.

The Mono Lake Committee, U. S. Forest Service, California State Parks, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, and Point Reyes Bird Observatory are partnering to revive the Chautauqua in the Mono Basin. The bird festival will include educational components such as bird identification walks, field trip demonstrations, and presentations by various bird experts. And there will be plenty of other fun activities too. On Sunday afternoon we plan to conclude the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua by holding a picnic at County Park with food, music, and fun for all.

As this newsletter goes to press the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua program is still being developed, but it's shaping up to be a great first event. For current information check out www.monolake.org on the web or call Lisa Cutting or Bartshé Miller at (760) 647-6595.

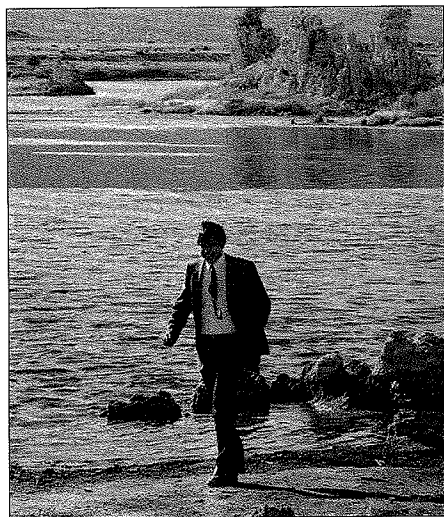
The 2002 Defender of the Trust Award

March Event Honors Phillip Isenberg and Richard Lehman

by Shelly Backlar

On Wednesday, March 6, 2002, the Mono Lake Committee recognized Phillip Isenberg and Richard Lehman with its annual Defender of the Trust Award for their extraordinary personal efforts to protect Mono Lake.

As U.S. Congressman in the 80s and early 90s, Rick Lehman pushed legislation to create the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, the first Federal designation that identified Mono Lake as



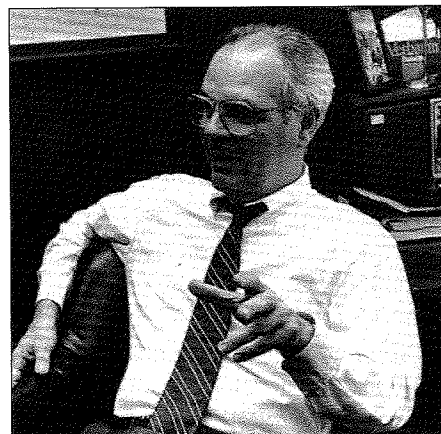
Rick Lehman pushed legislation to create the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area and made sure that federal air pollution laws covered dust storms at Mono Lake.

a special place for millions of people to visit. He also made sure that federal air pollution laws covered dust storms at Mono Lake.

As a California Assemblyman in the 80s and 90s, Phil Isenberg co-authored the Environmental Water Act of 1989 (AB 444), offering \$60 million in funding to help Los Angeles develop new water supplies to replace Mono Basin diversions.

These two pivotal events turned the momentum in favor of Mono Lake's preservation. Through the Scenic Area, millions of people learned about the importance of Mono Lake to the nation and the world. And by providing funding for the development of replacement water supplies, the State initiated a problem-solving approach that not only ensured Los Angeles would have reliable, adequate water supplies, but also assured that Mono Lake's protection would not harm the San Francisco Bay-Delta or any other place.

These strides also helped shape the Committee's Outdoor Experiences program, a program that continues to have an impact on both Mono Lake's and California's water future by connecting urban groups that promote water conservation with an environmental



Phil Isenberg co-authored the Environmental Water Act of 1989 (AB 444) which secured \$60 million in funding to help Los Angeles develop new water supplies to replace Mono Basin diversions.

education program at Mono Lake. Youth participating in Outdoor Experiences strengthen their understanding of the source of their water while forming a tremendous connection to the place their conservation programs are helping to protect.

In addition to paying tribute to Isenberg and Lehman, the March 6th event provided an excellent opportunity for guests to learn more about the Outdoor Experiences program. ❖

Defender of the Trust Award Ceremony Sponsors

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Marjorie Swartz
Guillermo Rodriguez, Jr.

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Hello from the Information Center & Bookstore!

by Jeff Darlington

When visitors to Mono Lake think of the Mono Lake Committee, it is often the Mono Lake Information Center & Bookstore that comes to mind. The building is a cultural and historical icon located in the middle of Lee Vining on Highway 395. It is easily identified by the colorful lake mural on the street façade, the inviting steps and picnic tables, and the big blue "Tourist Information" sign out front.

For almost 25 years, the Information Center & Bookstore has been a hub for Committee members and a rest stop for tourists and visitors. Through the quiet cold and serenity of winter and the busy excitement of summer, the doors are open an average of 360 days a year.

Each year the Information Center &



The Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore, located on the corner of Highway 395 and 3rd Street in Lee Vining.

Bookstore contributes more to our mission and operations. The Bookstore is recognized as one of the best in the Eastern Sierra and generates income to help support the Committee's projects, and the Information Center spreads the message of Mono Lake and environmental responsibility.

Recently the staff took a closer look at the role of the Information Center & Bookstore, which is summarized below.

We strive to provide a fun and informative experience at the Information Center & Bookstore, whether visitors are simply inquiring about road conditions, purchasing a map, or talking to staff about Committee programs. Whether you're a new member or a long-time supporter, consider dropping by to pay us a

visit to see the new merchandise, find out what's new at Mono Lake, and talk to Committee staff.

We'd love to see you! ❖

Jeff Darlington is the Committee's Office Director. He's been cleaning up on the Doppelkopf circuit so far in 2002.

The goals of the Mono Lake Committee Information Center

1. To educate the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use. We strive to make friends of all visitors, and hope that when they leave they take with them a new appreciation for Mono Lake and the Mono Lake Committee.
2. To provide accurate, up-to-date and year-round tourist information about Lee Vining, the Mono Basin and the Eastern Sierra. This is our goal as personal representatives of the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce.
3. To promote the Committee's education, membership, and policy programs through personally interacting with visitors.

The goals of the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore

1. To produce sales revenue to fund the Committee's programs. All profits made in our bookstore fund our efforts to protect and restore Mono Lake and fund our environmental education programs.
2. To carry a wide range of products that emphasize the Mono Basin and the Eastern Sierra, and promote sustainable outdoor recreation and visitor enjoyment. (See highlighted products on pages 12-13.)
3. To emphasize environmentally sound products in our purchasing, and promote them in our store. For example, we carry clothing made of organic cotton with soy-based inks, water conservation products, and products made of recycled materials.

A SPRING SELECTION

from the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore



WILDFLOWER NOTECARD SET

A collection of eight notecards and envelopes by Sally Owens. Each set

contains four different images: California poppy, shooting star, wild iris, and Indian paintbrush. Each card is a reproduction of an original watercolor. The card sets are beautifully wrapped in raffia and handmade paper, with an inspiring quote on the reverse.

Set of 8 flower notes with envelopes, 100% recycled paper with soy-based inks, 7" x 5": \$15.95 (#3996)

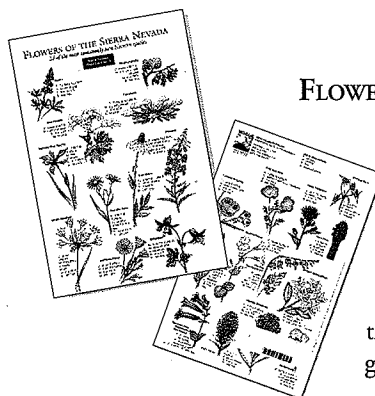


WILDFLOWERS OF CALIFORNIA: PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY ULRICH

WRITTEN BY SUSAN LAMB

This book is sure to grace any coffee table with its back-to-back full-color wildflower photographs. Bring the glory of the Sierra to your living room with breathtaking close-up and landscape photos of every flower you always wanted to photograph yourself.

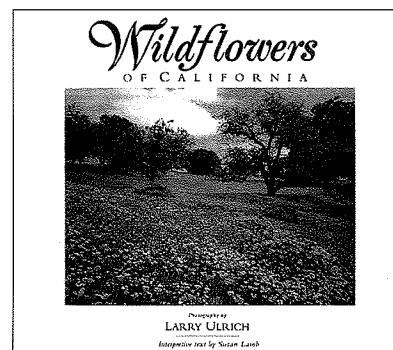
Wildflowers of California, Companion Press, 135 pages, soft cover, 10" x 9 1/2": \$18.95 (#1417)



FLOWERS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA: 24 OF THE MOST COMMONLY SEEN SIERRAN SPECIES

This flexible front-and-back identification card is made to get wet, dirty, and last for ages. Tuck it in your backpack and save yourself the weight of carrying around a field guide, or keep it in your car visor for quick roadside identification!

Flowers of the Sierra Nevada, two-sided plastic card, 9" x 6": \$2.95 (#1420)

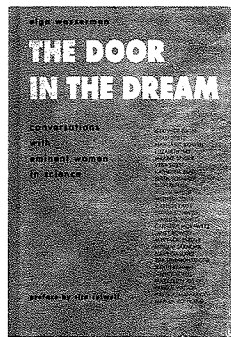
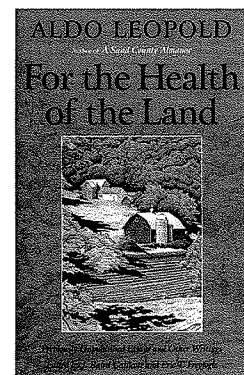


SAGEBRUSH COUNTRY: A WILDFLOWER SANCTUARY

Through color photographs and non-technical descriptions, Ronald Taylor introduces visitors and residents alike to the abundant plant life in the land of bitterbrush and coyotes. *Sagebrush Country*, Mountain Press Publishing, soft cover, 209 pages, 5" x 8": \$14.00 (#1046)

ALDO LEOPOLD: FOR THE HEALTH OF THE LAND; PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED ESSAYS AND OTHER WRITINGS

This previously unpublished collection of essays and other writings is a stunning new addition to the literary legacy of Aldo Leopold. *For the Health of the Land*, Island Press, 243 pages, hard cover, 6" x 8": \$22.95 (#1853)



THE DOOR IN THE DREAM: CONVERSATIONS WITH EMINENT WOMEN IN SCIENCE

In this remarkable book, Elga Wasserman has gathered the personal stories of the select few women scientists who have achieved the honor of election to the National Academy of Sciences. *The Door in the Dream*, Joseph Henry Press, hard cover, 254 pages, 6" x 9": \$24.95 (#5072)

❁ Spring Selection ❁

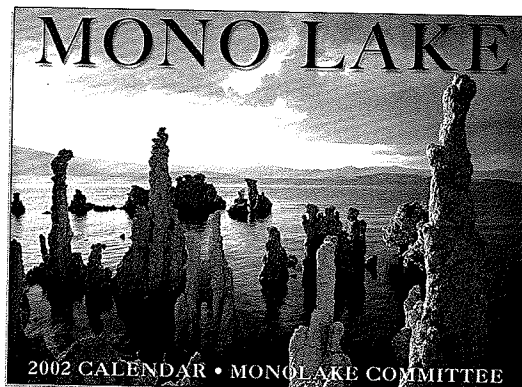
2002 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

Still don't have your 2002 Mono Lake Calendar? Get one today at a reduced price. The Mono Lake Calendar is full of striking color images of Mono Lake and the Mono Basin.

Printed in the USA on recycled paper.

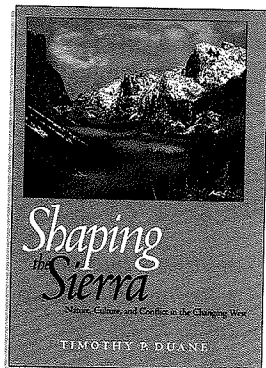
2002 Mono Lake Calendar, 13" x 9": \$6.95 each (#2146)

Two or more \$5.95 each



**2003 CALENDAR
COMING SOON!**

Available this May.
\$10.95 each (#3800)



SHAPING THE SIERRA: NATURE, CULTURE, AND CONFLICT IN THE CHANGING WEST, BY TIMOTHY DUANE

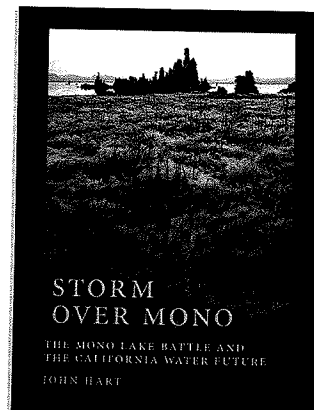
This is an inspiring and instructive book with a wealth of historical, natural, and regional political information. Rich in personal anecdotes and hands-on experience, the reach of Duane's study is applicable far beyond the Sierra Nevada. This book is perfect for those who wrestle with the dilemmas of economy and ecology everywhere.

Shaping the Sierra, University of California Press, hardcover, 593 pages, 10" x 7": \$50.00 (#1511)

STORM OVER MONO: THE MONO LAKE BATTLE AND THE CALIFORNIA WATER FUTURE, BY JOHN HART

A dramatic environmental saga unfolds in John Hart's compelling story of the fight to save Mono Lake. This is the most definitive and comprehensive account of the Mono Lake story, chronicling the complex twists and turns of the decades-long protection efforts. Hart weaves the behind-the-scenes events and personalities of one of the great environmental sagas of our times into a compelling narrative.

Storm Over Mono, University of California Press, soft cover, 211 pages, 8" x 11": \$29.95 (#1169)
Also available in hardcover: \$49.95 (#1168)



Order by phone: (760) 647-6595, fax: (760) 647-6377, or email: bookstore@monolake.org

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE MAIL ORDER FORM

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Streamwatch

Tribute to a Tree

by Greg Reis

On a walk along the Lee Vining Creek Trail last fall I came upon a quaking aspen that had fallen during a windstorm. It was about 35 feet tall and forked at its base. I recognized it immediately as it was the one I used to use as a landmark when pointing out the Red-tailed Hawk's nest in a nearby Jeffrey pine on creek tours.

"See the top of the aspen tree?" I used to say. "The nest is halfway between the top of it and the top of the Jeffrey pine behind it. It looks like a bundle of sticks against the trunk of the pine."

I had noticed that the aspen was growing quickly. Last year I gave a Creek Tour, and the top of the aspen had grown to be in the line of sight with the

nest. It was disorienting at first, but it made it just as easy to point out the nest. The highlight of the stop on that tour wasn't the nest, though; it was how fast aspens grow.

But now my landmark tree is gone. Not gone completely, but gone from its former position and function. One more change in a constantly changing riparian corridor along the creek. Instead of sifting the breeze, growing toward the sky, and providing a landmark for pointing out a hawk's nest, now it will slowly become part of the forest floor.

First the smallest branches will break off and decompose, nourishing the sandy soil, and then as the years go by and as the trunk settles more and more into

contact with the ground, the underside will become moist and inhabited by wood- and bark-eating organisms.

Leaves and pine needles will drift down, year after year, building up the mulch around it in nature's giant compost pile.

Meanwhile, numerous seedlings and saplings are reaching for the sky to take the place of the fallen giant. ♦

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. He is finding Inyo-Mono Transit to be a wonderful thing.



Lakewatch

Lake Level Model Prediction High for Third Year in a Row

by Greg Reis

In the last Lakewatch, we promised to update you this spring on the supplemental lake level forecasting and model checking that we did this winter. Concerns have been raised for two years in a row because the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) lake level model predicted the lake level to remain constant, but in both years the lake level dropped. DWP relies on the runoff model to determine how high the stream restoration flows should be, and the lake level model is what predictions of future lake levels (and water exports) are based upon. If

either model were not working properly, the water management implications would be serious.

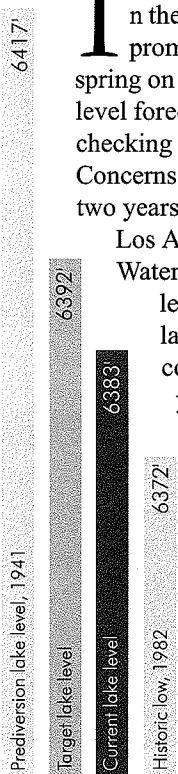
Overall, hydrologist Peter Vorster and I found that the runoff and lake level models are both working as expected. Runoff can be predicted fairly accurately because snowpack can be measured. Translating runoff into lake level, on the other hand, requires making assumptions about future precipitation and evaporation—and since your local weatherman often can't predict the weather next week, it is also too much to expect the lake level model to predict the weather over an entire year. Errors in recent lake level forecasts are the result of assuming that precipitation and evaporation will be average, when in reality it was warmer, drier, and windier than average.

Concerns that this weather could be part of long-term climate change remain. Should we continue to assume that future climate will be similar to the climate we

observed in the past? How will decision makers adapt to climate change? These questions remain unanswered.

In January it appeared that this year's lake level prediction would be right on target. As of January 25, 2002, Mono Lake stood at 6382.8, and needed to rise 0.4 feet by April 1 to match DWP's forecast. Every year since 1989, when the lake level injunction began reducing diversions, Mono Lake has risen 0.4 feet or more between January and April.

There is one problem in reaching this goal. This winter is turning out to be a reverse of the last three. From 1999–2001, the October–December period was dry while the January–March period was wet. This year, the October–December period was wet while the outlook for January–March was drier than average. As of February 25, it is starting to look like the lake level prediction will be too high for a third year in a row. ♦



Mono Basin Journal

A Roundup of Quiet Happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



GEOFF MCQUILKIN

When winter takes hold of the Mono Basin a curious weather reversal sets in. Sure, there are plenty of days of clear skies, where the modest heat of winter sun chases snow into the shadows of boulders and sagebrush. And sure, there are the snowstorm days when the air is still and snow stacks up on the thin branches of the aspens. But, the rest of the time, the lake abides beneath skies that are often the reverse of anything else in the region.

Take this morning for example. Mono Lake went from faint gray to deep blue to flaming orange to shimmering silver as the sun rose bright and clear. Southward a wall of cloud and snow had obscured the Jeffrey pine forest. Above Mt. Warren thick gray clouds looked to be dropping snow; across the western sky, clouds made valiant attempts to infiltrate the cheery day. But as each tendril of vapor crossed over the Sierra crest, the Mono Basin skies absorbed them. It's mesmerizing to watch the minute-long process in which a cloud becomes, well, nothing. And the sun shines on.

Earlier this winter we were living under the opposite situation. Fair weather prevailed throughout the state, happy cross-country skiers enjoyed sunny days at Obsidian Dome, and everyone in snow country had a chance to thaw out their front porches. Everyone, that is, but Mono Basin folks. First there was poconip, the cold weather ice fog that rises off the lake and fills the basin with frosty mist, letting only diffuse, muted daylight hint at possible existence of the sun. Then, even after the poconip wore off at ground level, it fed a consistently gloomy layer of clouds overhead, which edged up against the mountain slopes and spread far to the east, dropping occasional flakes of snow to remind us that, ultimately, it's always the weather that is in charge.

The lesson? Mono Lake goes its own way. Things happen here that just don't happen anywhere else. The weather is just one item on a long list; keep a watch and you'll find them by the dozen. And what better reason than uniqueness to protect a lake—or a landscape? ❖

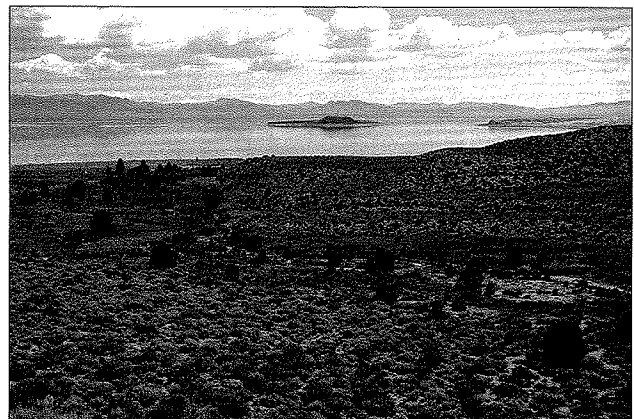


Benchmarks



DAVID GAINES

Lower Lee Vining Creek and delta, winter 1979. Keep your eye on the vegetation—both evergreen and deciduous.



HEIDI HOPKINS

Lower Lee Vining Creek and delta, summer 2001. Note the increase in vegetation along the creek! Even with the difference in seasons, it is quite remarkable.

Lines From Summer's Past

Poems Inspired by the Outdoor Experiences Program

The voices of last summer's Outdoor Experiences students have long since drifted over the sagebrush steppe and disappeared amid the rushing water of Lee Vining Creek. Young minds, energized by Mono Lake, the mountains, and the experience of watering young trees on a recovering creek kept vivid record of their experience through poetry. Like miniature time capsules of summers' past, this poetry gives us a brief glimpse of what it was like for some of these kids during their trip to Mono Lake. We thought it time to share some of this poetry with you as we turn our attention toward this summer's activities and the hopes of an exciting year of outdoor education at Mono Lake.

Fresh

Friends helping each other.
Remembering this beautiful place forever.
Enjoying the peace and quiet near the stream.
Seeing all this beauty around me brings me happiness
to my heart.
Hearing my friends around me and not feeling lonely.

—Auroa, Los Angeles Conservation Corps
Clean and Green (LACC)



Free

Feeding the plants with water
makes me feel
Relaxed and free just like
water is to me.
Everyone contributed and that
was a relief
Every plant is finished and now we
could go enjoy the rest of the scenery.

—Connie, LACC Clean and Green



Water

What a special place this is
All these people working to protect it
Trying new ideas has become a
way of life
Everyone pitches in what they can
Respecting all things is the highest goal

—Mitch, TreePeople



Lake

Laughing while we sink up to our knees in the cool, wet sand
And learning about Mono's past, present and future
Keeping memories with us always
Every day of our lives

—Carly, TreePeople

Spirit

Streaming water is like a spirit.
People are chattering, meet the creek.
Interact with nature.
Really alive for us to see.
Interesting place to be.
Taken over by nature and the sound and praise of the rivers spirit.

—Cindy Chuna, LACC Clean and Green



River

Restoring the trees
Imagining where the water comes from
Viewing the rushing creek
Everyday I drink a lot of water
Remembering the last time I came here

—Victor, Multnomah School



Manantial

Mientras me encontraba en este lugar
Admiraba las bellezas de este mundo
Nada es mejor que la naturaleza
Al oír el agua caer desde arriba
No puedo describir lo que sentía
Todo es tan maravilloso
Incluso hasta mi corazón latía
Al considerar este bello paisaje
Le juro a Dios que no lo olvidaría.

Spring, translated

While I was in this place
Admiring the beauty of this world
Nothing is better than nature
When I heard the water falling
I cannot describe what I felt
Everything was wonderful
Even my heart beat hard
While considering the beautiful view
I swore to God I would never forget it.

—Elizabeth, Iglesia Poder de Dios





Only in Lee Vining

... where there's an angle on just about everything

Of Ice and Fire

Volcanoes rumble, then explode! *Of Ice and Fire: A Portrait of the Mono Basin* returns to the giant screen at the US Forest Service Visitor Center. With newly enhanced Dolby surround-sound and high definition digital video, the show is just erupting with excitement. It's fun for the whole family, a tourist's delight, and frankly, it's the only place to see a movie on the big screen within a 30-mile radius. So if you've missed a showing in the past, stop on by the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center—it shows every half hour, and it's free!



Yoga's Got This Town Turned Upside Down

In our little town we go for having the essentials first—like a market, gas stations, restaurants, lodging, and now ... yoga! Local resident and yoga instructor Delinda Briggs teaches Hatha Yoga twice a week to a gathering of shop owners, teachers, park rangers, fire fighters, parents, and ski bums. With an angle for everyone it is tree pose for the snowboarders, plow pose for the gardeners, eagle pose for bird enthusiasts, and child's pose for the teachers. You may be asking yourself ... "where do they do it?" The class gathers in the kindergarten classroom to do yoga in the dramatic play corner, or under the watchful eye of a Dr. Martin Luther King poster, occasionally hitting the construction paper sun dangling from room-sized solar system model while doing a sun salutation. And while the accommodations are cozy and comfortable, the yoga class is now another great reason to look forward to the opening of the new community center!

WebCam Watch

Who could have imagined that a Lee Vining WebCam could become popular? Angled down towards the lake from the Mono Lake Committee Information Center attic, the camera captures a unique view every five minutes. And while it went up with much excitement, it isn't exactly what you'd call a stunning view. The image captures part of Hwy 395, which is handy for travelers and weather watchers. It also captures a dumpster, parked cars, and a tree that leafs out and covers half the view in the spring.

However, it does have some advantages that we didn't foresee that have solidly secured its place on the Mono Lake website. Those clever enough to figure out where to stand can get themselves into the WebCam photo—if they time it right. On more than one occasion we've witnessed these people, and had some good laughs.

You can tell what is going on almost immediately when you see it happening. Groups of people gather and pose in an otherwise uneventful location, looking straight at the building, while periodically checking their watches for five whole minutes of "Cheese!"

It's the "Look Ma, no hands!" of the cyber world. So the question is—is there really someone at home looking online at that very moment and saving the photo? We haven't yet caught any of the WebCam bandits, but we do have a fun archive of some interesting things that have passed by the lens. Check out both WebCams at www.monolake.org/live/monocam.htm.

The Answer is Blowing in the Wind

You don't always have to have an anemometer to know how fast the wind is blowing in Lee Vining. With wind at around 55 miles per hour every single strand but one of the carefully positioned colored lights on the town Christmas tree gets blown off. At about 60 miles per hour the stop sign behind Nicely's starts to bend ... and it doesn't pop back up. And, as we found out this winter, at 69 mph the Committee's canoe trailer, complete with six 17-foot canoes (which spends the windy seasons next to Information Specialist Greg Reis' driveway in Lee Vining) rotates 90 degrees on its axis—a full right angle!

Lee Vining residents know that spring and fall winds are often strong, and that battening down the hatches is just part of living on the East Side. None the less, many a garbage can, lawn chair, and tree branch has taken flight, not stopping next door, but more often heading off for the other end of town. And the morning after a good night of howling winds is often characterized by sleepy neighbors pulling once-airborne objects from their fences and returning them to their rightful owners down the street.



The wind-blown stop sign angles to the right at the corner of 4th and Lee Vining.

Olympic Champion Andrea Mead Lawrence Honored at 2002 Winter Games

Three-time Olympian and Mono Lake Committee Board Member Andrea Mead Lawrence was honored in many ways at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. She won the 2001 Havoline Star Award in recognition of her many contributions to the environment and the Eastern Sierra community. She was also honored as the Greatest Winter Olympian of all time by sports filmmaker Bud Greenspan in partnership with General Motors.

The Havoline Star Award recognizes U.S. Ski and Snowboard Team alumni who have given back to their communities in meaningful ways by employing the same passion and energy they used to become a national team member. Bud Greenspan and the General Motors A

ward recognize her athletic and post-Games contributions.

At the Oslo Games in 1952, Andrea became the first U.S. Alpine skier and first woman in the world to win two Gold medals in one Winter Games. The 2002 Winter Games marked the 50th anniversary of her amazing accomplishment.

Since the end of her racing career, Andrea has focused on protecting the environment, primarily in the Eastern Sierra, where she has lived since 1968. Lawrence has been an active member of the Eastern Sierra community—helping to found the Friends of Mammoth, and serving on the Mono County Board of Supervisors for 16 years. Just recently Andrea was also the recipient of the Sierra Business Council's Vision 20/20 Lifetime Achievement Award for her extraordinary efforts to secure the economic and environmental health of the Sierra Nevada for this and future generations. Andrea has been a long-time advocate for Mono Lake's protection, and we are lucky to have her on the Mono Lake Committee Board of Directors. ❖

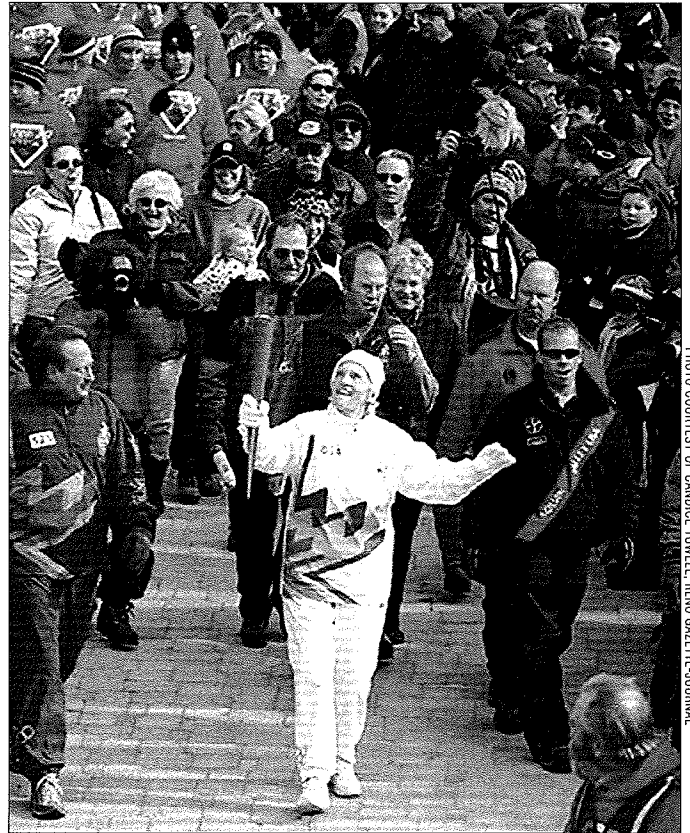


PHOTO COURTESY OF CANDICE TOWELL, RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Andrea Mead Lawrence carrying the Olympic torch on its journey to the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. "Your life doesn't stop by winning medals. It's only the beginning. And if you have the true Olympic spirit, you have to put it back into the world in meaningful ways."

Context Sensitive Solutions—from page 6

environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility." The federal policy has laid the foundation for similar programs in states across the nation, including California.

History

The process of developing CSD began in the late 1980s as communities, government officials and agencies, and public interest groups became increasingly aware of the need for transportation projects to reflect community needs. The groundwork for CSD was laid in federal transportation policy between 1988–1998.

Application of CSS and CSD

Peter Swift, of Swift and Associates, a private planning and engineering agency had the following perspective about CSD: "CSD is relatively unknown to most engineers because it incorporates architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, economics, and environmental issues. The under-

standing of the subject includes all these disciplines in a holistic approach. We must become generalists (familiar with all these fields) to conduct appropriate CSD."

The challenge in applying the CSS policy in California is the nature of large bureaucracies. It is difficult for such agencies, including Caltrans, to make broad changes in their approach quickly. For Caltrans' CSS program to be effective it will be important for Caltrans personnel to work closely with experts familiar with the CSS approach.

With CSD and CSS placing new emphasis on engineers, leaders, and resource managers working together, Swift noted that, "community leaders [like the Mono Lake Committee] are absolutely essential in this process. Without their help, nothing will get done. They must have vision, tenacity and good technical familiarity with CSD to back up their vision."

From the Archives

Mono Lakewatch

From the Summer 1987 Mono Lake Newsletter

by David Gaines

Editor's note: The Mono Lake Newsletter archive provides a chronological documentation of how science, legal action, and grassroots efforts came together in the story of the fight to save Mono Lake. The archive is also filled with insightful essays and ruminations on Mono Lake. Periodically we dig up an old favorite to reprint—both for nostalgia's sake as well as for historical perspective.

The summer solstice marks the height of Mono Lake's spring: flowers in colorful bloom, islands covered with gull eggs, sagebrush brimming with bird song....

The swell of life is contagious, and we, too, delight in the land and the lake's rebirth. It works in our blood. It tears us away from desks, papers, and telephones, and propels us into the real world of sprouts, buds, and singing birds. The office can't contain us. We move our weekly staff meeting down to the lake, where we can include desert peach blossoms, spadefoot toads, yellow-headed blackbirds, and brine shrimp.

Outside my window, house wrens are singing incessantly. They can't sit still, and neither can I. Yesterday I bicycled to lower Rush Creek, where one of the tufa-nesting ospreys was fishing for trout. The day before I jointed avocets, phalaropes, and winnowing snipe on Mono's north shore. Piles of papers wait impatiently while I count the clouds, take Mono's pulse, and align myself with the changing seasons.

I'm a newsletter refugee. Today, instead of writing about lawsuits, I ambled to the summit of the ridge behind Lee Vining. From a small patch of tundra where horned larks nest, the world drops into water and space. Mono Lake sprawls across the landscape like a giant amoeba.

These ramblings connect my work to the land. They bring me face-to-face with what the poet Wallace Stevens called "point-blank reality." Sometimes I'm led to epiphanies, but more often to questions and insights which are not always simple or comfortable.

But, after all, that's why I'm trying to save this place: because it can teach us and put us in our place.

Looking down on Mono's cerulean waters, I think of burgeoning cities at the other end of the aqueduct. I think of a civilization estranged from the earth that sustains it. I think of the waste and pollution that, as Harold Gilliam warns in this newsletter, threaten us all. I think of the fate of birds, flowers, and children when the ozone layer is gone, the rains stop falling, and the bombs do.

I think of my life. I have not lived lightly on this earth, I have consumed, directly or indirectly more than my share or need of water, topsoil, oil, and other resources. I have fathered two children who also will burden this overcrowded planet.

But as long as the birds return and the flowers bloom, I will dream of a time when we value blue skies more than new automobiles, count our wealth in joy rather than possessions, and dwell in peace and balance with the earth. I am not without hope.

The growing support for saving Mono Lake inspires that hope. While I can't entirely explain that support, a random survey of Californians suggests it has less to do with personal recreation than with altruistic values like protecting wildlife habitat and "knowing future generations will have Mono Lake as it exists today." That survey, conducted by Dr. John Loomis of the University of California, Davis, also found that California households are willing to pay an average of \$7.90 more per month on their water bills to keep Mono Lake higher than it is today—36 times the cost of replacing the water and hydro-power. While I do not think the lake should or can be valued in dollars and cents, I find this willingness to pay a hopeful reflection of growing, broad-based concern for the health of our land.

The growth of the Mono Lake Committee is also a heartening sign. In 1978, I sent the first Mono Lake Newsletter to approximately 300 people. Now, nine years later, we number more than 10,000. I wish I could walk Mono's shores with each of you, sharing visions and dreams of a less troubled future.

I hope you will visit the lake this summer. Insurance permitting, we will be offering short, free canoe trips at South Tufa. Please stop at our Information Center and Bookstore to say hello and discuss our strategy and progress with myself or the Lee Vining crew. In particular, we encourage you to join our ninth annual bucket walk, meeting, and picnic.

And wherever you live, don't neglect to listen to the voices and rhythms of the earth. Let's deepen our roots as we grow. For by planting ourselves, we renew our senses, our direction, our motivation, our resourcefulness—in sum, the spiritual tools we need in the courtroom, the legislature, and before the public. ♦

—David Gaines

from the Summer 1987 Newsletter



Field Seminars 2002

California Gull Research: Gull Response to a Rising Lake

May 24-28

Justin Hite/ Point Reyes Bird Observatory

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

Join a research team directed by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory and Cornell University in collecting data on the gull colony. Gain hands-on experience in field survey techniques while investigating whether the lake's changing chemistry—due to Mono's recent lake level increase—is affecting gull reproductive success. Your help is needed in continuing this important research. The rare adventure of visiting Mono Lake's spectacular Negit Islets and observing at close quarters the second largest California gull rookery in North America is for the stout of body and heart. Please contact the Field Seminar Desk for more information on this unique Mono adventure.

Birds of the Eastern Sierra

June 1-2

David Lukas

\$95 per person/ \$80 for members

This field seminar will focus on the identification and ecology of birds in the Mono Basin. We will visit a wide variety of habitats, including desert scrub, marshes, riparian forests, and mountain slopes, in search of breeding and migrating birds. With nearly 300 species having been observed in the Mono Basin, this course will interest both beginning and more advanced birdwatchers. We will intensively explore a number of sites, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and discussion, taking time to learn about birds by watching them closely. Walks will be chosen for their accessibility, but participants should be prepared for and capable of wandering off-trail in pursuit of special sightings. David Lukas has led over one hundred birdwatching and natural history programs for the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, Elderhostel, and other groups. He is the author of two books, *Watchable Birds of the Great Basin*, and *Wild Birds of California*, and he is currently hard at work on two more!

Call (760) 647-6595 to Register

Mono Lake, Molecules, and Mostly Plants

June 29-30

Margareta Sequin

\$100 per person/ \$85 for members



This workshop is a gentle, easy-going introduction to plant, water, and soil chemistry. During our morning walks to different habitats around Mono Lake we will smell the sweet and pungent odors of plants, admire the many colors, and learn about amazing plant defenses. We will explore how water and soil composition affect plant growth and selection, and how plants use available nutrients to miraculously construct the many substances that are vital to plant life—and to life in general. In the hot afternoons we will go inside and review the field trip topics and gently learn about the wondrous world of plant chemistry (no previous chemistry knowledge required!). This will be illustrated by many pictures and by hands-on (harmless!) experiments. Margareta Sequin is an organic chemist, with emphasis on natural products, and teaches at San Francisco State University. She is also a docent and board member at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Berkeley, as she has a great interest in California native plants.

California Gull Research: Chick Banding

July 1-4

Justin Hite/Point Reyes Bird Observatory

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

This seminar will focus on the actual banding of gull chicks at the Mono Lake rookery. Join a research team directed by the Point Reyes Bird Observatory and Cornell University in collecting data on the gull colony. Gain hands-on experience in field survey techniques while investigating whether the lake's changing chemistry—due to Mono's recent lake level increase—is affecting gull reproductive success. Your help is needed in continuing this important research. The rare adventure of visiting Mono Lake's spectacular Negit Islets and observing at close quarters the second largest California gull rookery in North America is for the stout of body and heart. Please contact the Field Seminar Desk for more information on this unique Mono adventure.

Paiute Coiled Miniature Basketry

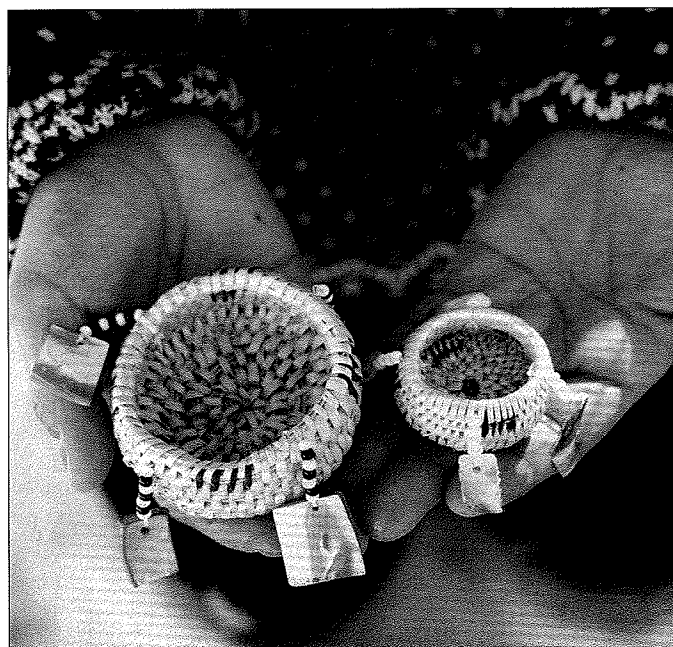
August 2-4

Lucy Parker

\$135 per person/ \$115 for members (primitive group campsite included)
\$60 materials fee

Crafting miniature baskets became common after Native American contact with European-Americans. These baskets were traditionally made for selling and giving as gifts. The Paiute utilized only a few materials, and willow was the only foundation used. Students will use split willow shoots with the bark removed for sewing strands with willow rod for the foundation—the start will consist of a clock spring coil. California Red Bud, historically traded from the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, will be used for a design. Most Paiute groups to the south and east used only non-interlocking stitching with their basketry technology because of the influence of the Washo and Miwok Peoples.

Lucy Parker is a descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika'a, and Kayasha 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/two-night camping seminar. You do not have to camp to participate, but the evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. This seminar is designed for those who either wish to learn a new basket material technique or are beginning basketweavers.



ARVA DEGENHARDT

Call (760) 647-6595 to Register

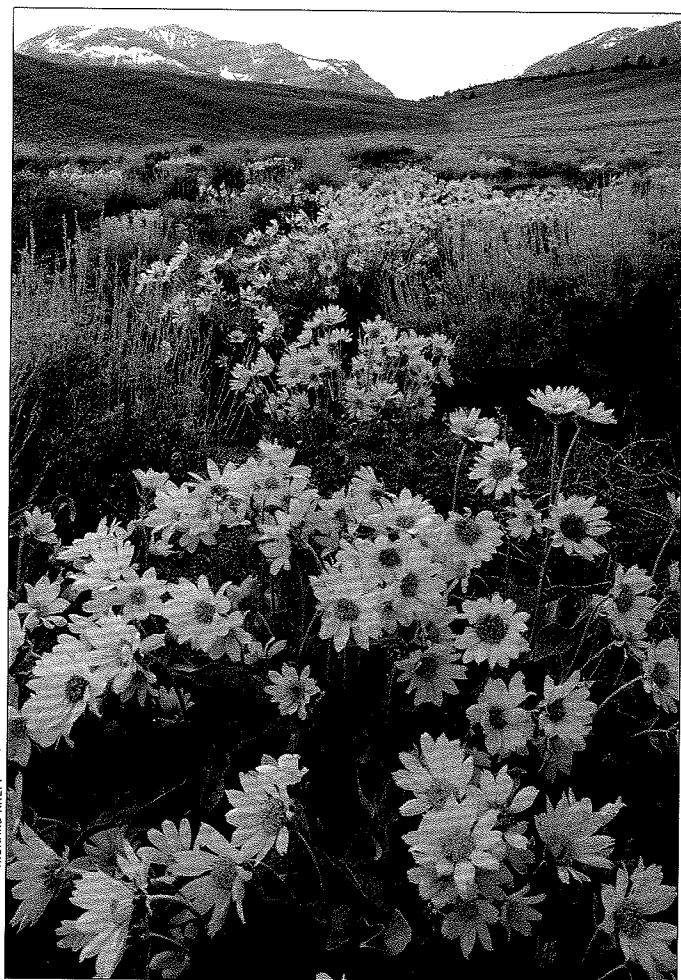
Introduction to High Country Plants and Habitats

August 3-4

Ann Howald

\$105 per person/ \$90 for members

This class will explore the mosaic of habitats that make up the Eastern Sierra high country—lush flower-filled meadows fed by meandering streams, sagebrush-covered slopes, forests of hemlock, lodgepole and whitebark pines, subalpine lakes bordered by willows, and flowery rock gardens. We'll focus on sight identification of common trees, shrubs and wildflowers, but won't neglect any birds, bugs or critters that come to check us out. With any luck, we'll be zoomed by hummingbirds defending their patches of paintbrush and columbine, and we'll see noisy Clark's Nutcrackers collecting and storing whitebark pine seed. Our walks will be around the 10,000-foot elevation level with a modest pace over moderate terrain. Ann is a biology teacher at Santa Rosa Junior College who has taught plant classes in the eastern Sierra for many years.



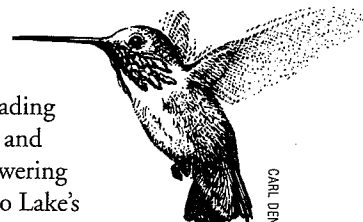
Identifying High Country Wildflowers

August 16-18

Mark Bagley

\$105 per person/ \$90 for members

At the headwaters of Lee Vining Creek there's a rich summer display of wildflowers, shrubs and trees along cascading creeks, jewel-like lakes, green meadows, and rocky granite slopes. There, amid the towering peaks of the Sierra at the source of Mono Lake's water, learn how to identify this great diversity of plants using Norman Weeden's *A Sierra Nevada Flora*. This is the most complete field guide to Sierra plants and provides identification keys and plant descriptions that minimize the use of special terminology. This weekend's seminar will begin Friday evening with an optional, brief introductory lecture on the basics of plant identification. We will spend Saturday and Sunday in the field on easily paced 1-2 mile walks at high elevations (generally above 10,000 feet). Mark is a consulting botanist in the Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert who has been leading field seminars in the Mono Basin since 1988. He is well known among past seminar participants for his easy-going pace and engaging teaching style in the field.



CARL DENNIS BUELL

Winging into Fall

August 22-23

David Lukas

\$95 per person/ \$80 for members

This field seminar will focus on the identification and ecology of both resident and fall migratory birds. We will visit a wide variety of habitats, including marshes, riparian forests, and mountain slopes, in search of migrating birds. This course is appropriate for beginning and more advanced birdwatchers. During the class we will intensively explore a number of sites, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and discussion, taking time to learn about birds by watching them closely. The natural history and ecology of the bird's habitat will also be discussed. Generally walks will be chosen for their accessibility, but participants should be prepared and capable of wandering off-trail in pursuit of special sightings. David Lukas has led over one hundred birdwatching and natural history programs for the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, Elderhostel, and other groups. He is the author of two books, *Watchable Birds of the Great Basin*, and *Wild Birds of California*. He is hard at work on an upcoming field guide on birds of the Sierra Nevada.

Call (760) 647-6595 to Register



BETTY WHITE

Fall Bird Migration

August 24-25

Dave Shuford

\$95 per person/ \$80 for members

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

South Shore Kayak

September 7

Stuart Wilkinson and Mono Lake Committee Staff

\$75 per person/ \$65 for members

Early fall is an ideal time to kayak Mono Lake! Join Stuart Wilkinson and a Mono Lake Committee staff member for a guided naturalist expedition along Mono's south shore. Your leaders are well versed in Mono Lake geology, ecology, history, and politics. This natural history kayak tour will cover a wide variety of topics relating to this unusual Great Basin lake. Plan

on four to five hours for the tour. Expect to see underwater tufa towers, birds, and lake bottom springs. Some kayak experience is helpful, but not necessary. Kayaks and safety equipment are provided. This seminar is offered for the 7th year in a row, and is highly rated by past participants.

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

September 7-8

John Wehausen and Karl Chang

\$150 per person/ \$130 for members

Controversy surrounds the fate of the Sierra bighorn, one of the most endangered mammals in North America. (The US Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Sierra Bighorn Sheep as Federally Endangered in 1999.) This field seminar will involve discussions of the biology and conservation of these animals with attempts to view them. John Wehausen is a research scientist at White Mountain Research Station in Bishop. He has been investigating various aspects of the Sierra bighorn and working for their conservation since 1974. In the late 1970s he initiated the restoration program that brought bighorn back to the Mono



Basin. This seminar involves strenuous hiking at the 10,000-foot elevation and above. There is a good chance of seeing Sierra bighorn sheep in the wild during this seminar, but no guarantee. This field seminar is being offered in cooperation with the Yosemite Association.



JOHN WEHAUSEN

Call (760) 647-6595 to Register

Drawing Mono at Equinox

September 21-22

Moira Donohoe

\$105 per person/ \$90 for members

Deepen and preserve your Mono Lake experience in a unique portfolio of your own drawings in this new weekend workshop. There will be instructor demonstrations, material discussion, and non-threatening and constructive group/individual critiques. Using the simple materials of charcoal, ink, brush, pencil, and pastel on paper, record your impressions of strange and mysterious Mono. We will spend most of each day in the field drawing. Moira will cover basic drawing techniques while encouraging individual style. Moira is a professional artist, art instructor, and long-time resident-artist of the Yosemite area. She holds a degree in Fine Art from Northern Arizona University and a Masters Degree in Painting & Drawing from CSU Fresno. She has shown her work professionally since 1983. This seminar is appropriate for the beginner, intermediate, or advanced artists who want to further their skill with an experienced area artist.

The Story Behind the Land: Geology of the Mono Basin

September 28-29

Tim Tierney

\$95 per person/ \$80 for members

The Mono Basin is a geological showcase, featuring young volcanoes, glaciated landscapes, stark mountains, and weird mineral towers, all set about ancient and saline Mono Lake. Explore this land with geologist Tim Tierney (UC Santa Barbara instructor and author of the Committee's field guide *Geology of the Mono Basin*) and learn how to recognize the geology, know the reasons behind why things have happened, and what the future may hold. The first day of the seminar will be spent gaining an overview of the area via car and short walks. The second day will focus on thoroughly exploring a few select areas with extended hikes. Cool fall weather and brilliant colors will highlight the geologic wonders of this popular field seminar. Tim is an excellent teacher and interpreter of the "hard" languages.



JEFF DARLINGTON

Call (760) 647-6595 to Register

Mono Basin Fall Photography

October 4-6

Richard Knepp

\$195 per person/ \$175 for members

Autumn in the Mono Basin 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. Beyond his photographic expertise, Rick is intimately familiar with the Eastern Sierra and Mono Lake locale. 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. This photographic seminar is offered for the 7th year in a row, and is highly rated by past participants.

Reading the Aspen Groves: Arborglyphs and Aspen Natural History

October 12-13

Richard Potashin

\$95 per person/ \$80 for members

Known for their breathtaking fall color displays and distinctive quaking, aspens border the high meadows of the Glass Mountains and the Mono Basin. A century of sheep grazing brought many Basque shepherders into these meadows. With their leisure time they left numerous carvings—or arborglyphs—on the aspens. Join us for an enchanting journey into the aspen groves to explore this historic, organic art form and the natural history of the trees themselves. We'll learn about the numerous wildlife, insects and birds that are drawn to the groves. During our leisurely walks we'll discuss the history of the sheep grazing in the Mono Basin, the Basque culture, the cultural significance of the carvings and efforts to document them. Richard Potashin, aka Alkali Aspenowza, is a long-time Eastern Sierra resident and past Mono Lake Committee intern and canoe guide who has been discovering and documenting aspen carvings for the past five years. He's involved with numerous interpretive activities throughout the Eastern Sierra.

Registration Information

Call the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595 and ask for the seminar desk to register. More extensive seminar descriptions are available upon request or online at www.monolake.org. Sorry, we cannot accept registration by mail or email.

• Registration •

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 2001. 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.

• Yosemite Association partnership •

For more information on Yosemite Field Seminars contact the Yosemite Association at: PO Box 230, El Portal, CA 95318
Phone: (209) 379-2321 Fax: (209) 379-2486

Summer Employment at the Mono Lake Committee!

Take the job of a lifetime and come work for the Mono Lake Committee in the Summer of 2002!

We have openings for one Membership Associate and five Naturalist Interns.

The **Membership Associate** recruits new members for the Committee. This person will be in the field about 90% of the time in and around the Mono Basin, talking to visitors and making friends for the Committee. The Membership Associate will work closely with the Membership Coordinator, and will also work with education and outreach staff to coordinate membership solicitation in conjunction with interpretive tours and special events. This person must be outgoing, self-motivated, and an excellent communicator. 40 hours/week from May through September, \$7.50/hour plus bonus incentives, car required.

The **Naturalist Interns** guide interpretive canoe tours on Mono Lake, lead interpretive walks in the Mono Basin, participate in environmental education programs, assist with communications and policy projects, and staff the busy Information Center and Bookstore. Interns also assist with a range of special projects that help the Committee fulfill its mission. We're looking for enthusiastic individuals dedicated to solving environmental problems and able to communicate the Committee's mission to the public. Five internships are available this summer. 40 hours/week from June through September, \$6.75/hour, car required.

Seasonal employment at the Mono Lake Committee is a

wonderful opportunity to learn career skills while working in one of the world's best environments ... both in and out of the office! The Committee guarantees housing at \$125/month in Lee Vining for the Membership Associate and Naturalist Interns, and all employees receive a discount at the Committee Bookstore.

For full job details, check out our job listings at www.monolake.org/committee/jobs.htm or call (760) 647-6595. To apply, send a cover letter and resume by March 30th to Office Director Jeff Darlington (jeff@monolake.org), P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541. ❖



Naturalist Interns will guide weekend canoe tours and daily interpretive walks at Mono Lake.

Mono Lake Committee Endowment

The Mono Lake Committee Board of Directors voted in 2001 to establish an endowment as a new, additional way for Members to give their bequests or special gifts to support the Committee's programs forever. We encourage members to remember the Mono Lake Committee in their wills or in other planned giving options, and the new endowment option tells the Committee how you want your gift spent.

When you contribute to the endowment you are telling the Committee that you want much of your principal to stay invested, and only a percentage of that investment be used for current budgeted Committee programs or projects. The endowment, over time, will grow to provide dependable

funds for Mono Lake Committee priorities.

The Board offers the endowment to members as a formal acknowledgment that the Mono Lake Committee plans to be an active, vibrant, long-lasting voice for protection and restoration of Mono Lake and the Mono Basin and for education of youth and the public about water conservation and the environment.

If you are interested in discussing the endowment or other ways you may wish to make long-term gifts to the Committee, please contact Co-Executive Director Frances Spivy-Weber (frances@monolake.org) at (310) 316-0041 or Membership Coordinator Brett Pyle (brett@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

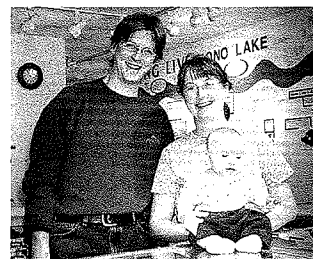


From the Mailbag

News from Members and Friends

by Brett Pyle

There is nothing like a new baby to change your outlook on life. The coming of my daughter Sabine has reemphasized how important it is to leave this world a better place than we found it. As I drive to work each morning along the west shore of Mono Lake, I look out at the sunrise and realize how lucky I am to live and work here. I also realize what a tremendous responsibility it is for all of us to work together to restore and preserve this wondrous place. The last few months, which began with the fear and uncertainty of September 11, have left me humbled and thankful for the response of our country and our members to these events. We had no idea what the impact would be on our organization, which relies so heavily on member donations to keep our work going. Our members have continued to support us while also helping those more directly affected by the terrorist attacks. We are deeply grateful for every donation. It is the spirit of the donations, regardless of size, which makes us realize the importance of the work we do. I leave you with a favorite and fitting quote: "The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit." —Nelson Henderson



Sabine Brielle Pyle helped pick the Free Drawing winners!

Congratulations

The annual Free Drawing was held in November—congratulations to all the winners! Here are the lucky top prizewinners for 2001: Phyllis Ponte won the Ansel Adams Lithograph. Kim Kronenberger won the Wilson's Eastside Sports Camping Package. Connie Layne won the Southwest Airline Tickets. Roy and Lewann Belletto won the Lufthansa Airline Tickets!

Special Thanks

A special thanks to Celina Hunt who ran the Alpine Village in Lee Vining. She donated much merchandise after she closed her store. We will miss the great massages and the eclectic world goods that she brought to our small town.

In Memory

Mildred Harris of Santa Rosa made a donation in memory of Frances Lockett. Frances and her husband Gordon have been longtime members of the Committee. Catherine Trejo of Mountain View sent a gift in memory of Edward L. Collins. Helen Tronaas sent a donation in loving memory of her son, Alan Tronaas, a longtime resident of Mono County. Irma Story of Lancaster sent a gift in memory of Karen Symmes of Benton. Martha Johnson of San Jose made a donation in memory of Tom Jordan, a dear friend who loved Mono Lake. Ted Schroeder of Reno made a

donation in memory of Ken Aigner whose spirit and joy for life remains in the Owens Valley and its waters.

We received a great number of donations from the family and many dear friends of Paul Green. Memorial gifts were received from Joyce Bartlett, Irene Beardsley and Dan Bloomberg, Mildred Bennett, Edith Black, Dolly Chew, Nancy T. Conzett, Maryann Danielson, Marianne P. Darrow, Rick and Grace de Laet, Anne Dewart, Galen and Jaleh Etemad, Mike and Jackie Etemad, Patricia M. Gannon, Helen Green, Kenneth Green, Reyla Graber, Janet Hanlon, Carol and George Hewitt, Jane and Jay Jennings, Emily Kenyon, Kenneth R. Kingsbury, Peter and Joan Klatt, Julie Klingman, Miles and Mary McKey, Robert and Jeanie Minor, Dan and Joan Murphy, Lavinia Oppenheim, Harry A. Peshon, Richard and Mary Alice Peterson, David Rice, Krehe and Katherine Ritter, Carol Rodgers, Alice Rosenfeld, David Shuford, Florence Slater, Jean-Marie Spoelman, Marilyn Stanley, Mary Lee and Bill Trampleasure, and Janet Alter Wessel. We sincerely thank all of you for your generosity in his memory.

Brett "Pops" Pyle is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. His days are a mix of the calm certitude of growing older and the wonder of seeing the world through brand new eyes.

2002 High Sierra Fall Century Ride Dedicated to the Memory of Paul Green

Paul Green became interested in Mono Lake in the late 1960s when he and his wife Helen began to take backpacking trips in the Eastern Sierra. Paul and Helen were supporters of the Mono Lake Committee from early on—joining as members in 1979!

When he retired in 1988 Paul began riding in the Committee's Bike-A-Thon—bringing a vial of water from Los Angeles to Mono Lake as a symbol of putting water back into the Lake. Not only was he among the top fund-raisers every year, but he embodied the spirit of the ride. He had no problem talking to people he just met about Mono Lake and asking them to sponsor him.

Mono Lake held a special place in Paul's heart, and he will always be remembered for his dedication to this place that he loved so dearly.

The 2002 High Sierra Fall Century on September 14 will be dedicated to the memory of Paul Green.

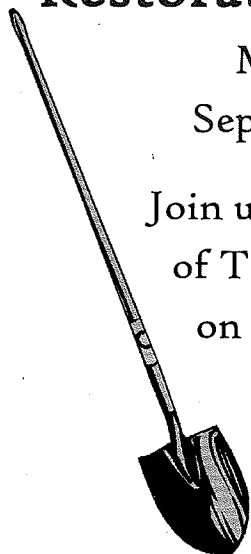
Restoration Workdays

May 18, 2002

September 1, 2002

Join us for a morning
of Tamarisk Removal
on Rush Creek.

Come lend a hand!



a weekend festival of birding,
learning, and music at Mono Lake

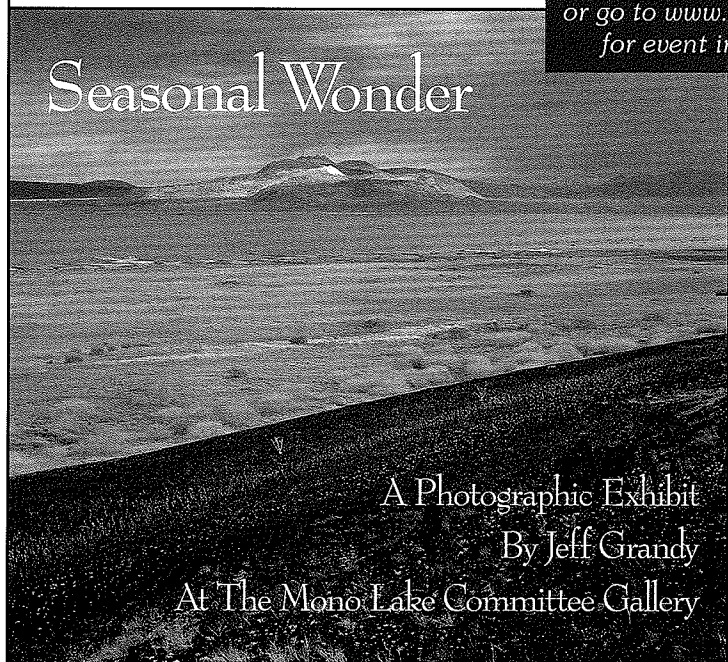
First Annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua

June 21-23, 2002

Lee Vining, California

Call (760) 647-6595
or go to www.monolake.org
for event information

Seasonal Wonder



A Photographic Exhibit

By Jeff Grandy

At The Mono Lake Committee Gallery

High Sierra

A Ride With
A Purpose



In memory of
Paul Green

Fall Century

September 14, 2002



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COMMITTEE

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