

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2009



The Mono Lake Committee office walls are covered in historical pictures of the Mono Basin, the Mono Lake story, and the people at its core. I think they help keep the original spirit of the organization alive. Passing a bucket-walk on your way to the copy machine or reaching past a Bike-A-Thon to take a phone call, you can't help but think of the lively activism that put Mono Lake on the map.

The people in these images are our heroes. Some of the photos were taken before the current staff members were even alive, or much past the third grade. The bell bottoms and tight T-shirts are almost like old family photo album shots.

During the Chautauqua picnic on June 21 the Committee organized a show of support for our local state parks, Bodie, and of course, Mono Lake. We made an announcement and sure enough, people filed down the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve Boardwalk with handmade signs crafted by the interns.

The reality of the state park closures looms large, and the places and the people who are affected by it are close to our hearts. As I watched familiar faces walk by to take their places I suddenly realized that the crowd was so big I was going to need to get up high to catch the whole scene. I wrangled my friend Justin Hite to be a human tripod and he quickly hoisted me up on his shoulders for the shot.

Once situated I looked up to find the most amazing sight—100 people crammed on that little platform with Mono Lake behind. It was perfect—straight out of the history books. Not many, if any, had ever been in one of those historical photos on the walls of the Committee—a hydration ceremony, or a rally at the reflecting pool at DWP headquarters. Yet there we were, banding together with that same spirit as if it was written in our genes.

And that, my friends, is how we ended up with the cover of this issue of the *Mono Lake Newsletter*. I think it might make the wall someday too.

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



COVER PHOTO BY ARYA DEGENHARDT

ARYA DEGENHARDT

A rare glimpse of the buried Los Angeles Aqueduct in the Mono Basin. Unearthing a section that has been underground for 69 years, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power is upgrading the gate that releases water to Rush Creek. Once rebuilt, it could be generations before it's seen again.

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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Mono Lake, Bodie swept up in California budget drama

Future of parks still uncertain

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

California's budget woes have expanded to affect nearly every aspect of life in the state, and the operation of state parks at Mono Lake and Bodie is no exception.

Tremendous support for the state park system—including a massive showing of support for Mono Lake and Bodie—has held off shutdown of the park system for now, but the year ahead holds nothing but difficult, if not unthinkable, funding choices.

Chapter 1: Shutting down the park system

In late May, Governor Schwarzenegger released a plan to shut down over 80% of the state park system. As part of a budget package to close the state's \$26 billion shortfall he offered up a closure list that included the state park units at ecologically vital Mono Lake and the nearby history-rich gold mining ghost town of Bodie, not to mention many other parks around the state.

The state park at Mono Lake—the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve—protects the lake itself, shoreline lands, tufa, and the incredible ecological resources the lake supports. It is important for people too, as a place to hike, paddle, birdwatch, photograph, and seek solitude from the daily routines of life. The Tufa State Reserve is an extremely efficient operation, with a staff of just 1.5 rangers that leverage local support and dozens of volunteers to serve over 250,000 annual visitors.

Shutting down the valuable resource protection and public service functions of state parks made little sense from an environmental viewpoint, and there wasn't much to it economically either. The forecast savings from park closures was \$70 million. But the cost to local tourism-driven economies? Several times that, which would create a huge impact in tourism-dependent areas like Mono County. Parks are a revenue-raiser for the state, through taxes on park

related business, meaning closure would put the state deeper into red ink.

Chapter 2: Saying no!

The budget threat to state parks developed unusually fast. Mono Lake Committee members responded even faster! With the park shutdown list released on a Thursday in May, and legislative hearings scheduled on the matter just five days later, the Committee put out an over-the-weekend action alert and launched a local petition drive. Letters began to pour in support of keeping Mono Lake, Bodie, and all parks open for environmental and economic reasons.

On the day of the hearing I arrived in Sacramento with over 900 letters of support to present—gathered in just 48 hours! On the same day Mono County weighed in with an emergency letter supporting the local parks, which the Committee was happy to present on the

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BREAKING NEWS ... BREAKING NEWS ... BREAKING NEWS

Committee and Los Angeles unite to advance Mono Basin outdoor education

As this *Newsletter* issue goes to press there's great news: we now have a long term home for the Committee's outdoor education program, thanks to City of Los Angeles leadership in support of youth education at Mono Lake!

The education program site, which is a portion of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) operations compound near Rush Creek, has been home to the Committee's successful Outdoor Experiences youth program for 15 years. But until now

lease arrangements only extended for a year or two at a time, limiting our ability to improve the facility.

Now, after two years of negotiations, the Committee holds a 30-year lease for the same site. This makes investment in the program worthwhile, creates a firm operating base for the future, and moves toward our larger vision of establishing an outdoor education center in the Mono Basin.

After completing lease negotiations, a complex sequence of approvals for the lease was required from Los

Angeles, including signoffs from the Mayor, DWP Commission, and City Council. We thank the many individuals involved in moving the lease to completion, especially Mayor Villaraigosa, Councilmembers Perry and Cardenas, and DWP General Manager Nahai.

The Committee has long promoted the value of youth education about the environmental and water management lessons of Mono Lake, and we're glad to have the support of Los Angeles. More details will follow in the next *Newsletter*!

County's behalf. Mono County was the only California county or local government that responded to the threat so quickly.

Over the subsequent weeks we gathered many more letters and petition signatures and hand-delivered them to budget decision makers (see right). State parks benefitted from broad concern and vocal support across the state including critical coalition efforts led by the State Parks Foundation. Legislators showed sympathy for the parks' plight, but with no easy budget choices to be had, the fate of the park system remained in doubt.

A highlight of the weeks of effort was the statewide Save Our State Parks campaign day in June. In an inspirational show of support over 100 people gathered at the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve Boardwalk (see cover photo), fielding signs and packing the viewing platform to capacity as an Osprey flew overhead and phalaropes fed busily in the calm water of the lake.

Chapter 3: Budget deal cuts the cut, then adds to it

The negotiations over the budget became daily conversation across the state. We reported on developments daily on the Mono Lake Website (and continue to do so at www.monolake.org/savestateparks).

By the time legislators and the Governor made a budget deal on July 21, they'd heard a lot about protecting the parks. They included the originally proposed elimination of funding, but found ways to replace most of it from other sources.

That left an \$8 million shortfall, which then rose to \$14 million when the Governor made additional cuts as he signed the final budget bill. The Department of Parks & Recreation will also have to accommodate the required three furlough days per month for state employees, which reduces work hours by 15%.

The final result: 100 state parks are still expected to close, and the rest face major cutbacks. At press time no closure list has been released.

Chapter 4: No easy answers ahead

The Committee will continue to work hard to make sure that Mono Lake and Bodie are part of the final state park operating plan for 2009–2010. We expect that the popularity and high number of visitors to Mono Lake and Bodie, combined with existing legislative mandates, contractual agreements, and federal grant requirements, will keep both park units "open."

How much staffing is available to provide services and stewardship is another question entirely. The year ahead is likely to include significant operational cuts.

The Committee will continue to advocate for Mono Lake and Bodie. Front and center is the development of creative ideas that support park operations. In the months ahead we'll be brainstorming and working actively with the unique mix of agencies and interested public at Mono Lake to find solutions where possible. Mono Lake and Bodie will continue to need public support, so watch closely as this situation develops. ❖

Members' voices heard loud and clear

Big thanks go to Mono Lake's many friends for writing letters and signing petitions to stand up in support of Mono Lake, Bodie, and all state parks!

An outpouring of letters, petitions, and personal stories calling for the protection of state parks demonstrated huge public support for parks. Letters came from all parts of California, over 40 states across America, and from around the world—including Australia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic.

In a substantial feat of photocopying and hand delivery of packages in the capital, the Mono Lake Committee directly presented over 2,800 individual letters to the Governor, the State Senate and Assembly leadership in both parties, and our two local elected representatives in Sacramento. On top of that we also presented them with 7,000 petition signatures gathered by park supporters throughout Mono County.

There's no question: legislators received a very clear message that Mono Lake and Bodie are important and special places—plus a clear reminder that closing parks would damage the local economy and diminish future state revenue.

Personal stories and comments made these letters even more meaningful. The significance of state parks for people was highlighted with stories told from many perspectives, stretching from local students to retired state employees, from frequent visitors to tourists looking to return, and to 30-year Committee members.

Here at the Mono Lake Committee we've been impressed again and again by the sincerity and depth of people's commitment to Mono Lake and Bodie. Thank you for speaking up!



Summer staffer Morgan Lindsay with one of many towers of state parks support letters from Committee members and friends.

Back to the State Water Board (one way or another)

The Committee's approach to 2010

by the Policy Team

When recounting the Mono Lake story or any of the subsequent water policy issues the Mono Lake Committee has dealt with throughout the years, several themes and values are often used to describe the history: balanced approach, win-win, reasonable outcome, cooperative solutions. And while the Committee has at times engaged in intense battles and litigation, we have done so only when we had no other choice, such as back in 1979 and 1984 when the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) refused to release any water for the streams or the lake.

As our mission statement declares: The Mono Lake Committee is dedicated to ...“promoting *cooperative* solutions that protect Mono Lake.” Returning to the California State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) in 2010 *should* be no exception.

Regarding the pending stream flow recommendations expected to be released from the State Water Board-appointed scientists later this year, the Committee is clear on the need for a process that includes cooperation and collaboration, striving for a consensus-based outcome. What is less clear is if our anticipated journey back to the State Water Board in 2010 will follow this path or take a more contentious and conflicted one.

Background

As mandated by the 1994 Mono Lake water rights decision and 1998 restoration orders, stream scientists are in the process of completing final flow recommendations for the Mono Basin streams. These recommendations will revise the current flows that DWP is required to release under their water rights licenses. It's critical that the recommendations are the best they can be so the restoration process can continue to advance. It is also critical that DWP has the aqueduct infrastructure necessary to reliably deliver the recommended flows.

It's important to note that the restoration program has operated for over a decade with a collaborative approach that has included the State Water Board, DWP, the stream scientists, and a number of interested parties. As a group we have met regularly and have communicated frequently with each other about the restoration issues and actions that have needed our collective attention. Approaching the restoration requirements in this fashion has proven to be extremely successful. Much has been agreed upon and accomplished, and while there have been disputes, none has required State Water Board-level action.

Current process

The current process of arriving at streamflow recommendations appears to be deviating significantly from the above-mentioned inclusive and cooperative approach, which is of concern to the Committee. A recent proposal outlines a process that is not consistent with past collaborative efforts but instead is a more conventional regulator-licensee process. It offers the parties limited opportunity for participation with a formal comment period available only once the recommendations are filed with the State Water Board. For example, the proposal has DWP receiving draft recommendations directly from the stream scientists with the ability to provide comments (and presumably seek changes) to the scientists' recommendations before their final submission to the State Water Board.

This is a problem because the proposed process doesn't provide opportunities for the scientists to present their recommendations or seek peer review—to explain their process, explain how they worked through analyzing the data, and explain how they prioritized the competing needs of biotic and geomorphic factors. The process doesn't currently include timely opportunities for the Committee to ask focused questions, make suggestions, or express concerns.

The proposed process, as a result, would force the Committee to request a substantive evidentiary hearing before the State Water Board on the matter, something that the Committee and DWP have avoided for years—a proud achievement for both parties.

Request for action and leadership

The Committee wants to get this process back on a track so that all the parties can work together, share information, and resolve disagreements without resorting to a formal hearing process. The components of such a process are clear and familiar to us because we have used them for many years (along with all the other parties) when negotiating difficult issues.

As a first step the Committee has requested that the State Water Board provide direction and leadership that includes a collaborative process. Once the process is developed and agreed upon we can begin to move forward with the tasks at hand—reviewing reports, understanding the analysis, asking questions, and raising concerns.

In short, the Committee is currently seeking to ensure that the human processes, which enable the ecological processes of restoration, are maintained in order to provide the best restoration outcome for Mono Lake and its tributary streams. ❖

How to save Willow Flycatchers

An interview with the Mono Basin's Willow Flycatcher expert

by Lisa Cutting and Chris McCreedy

As this year's summer field season started to wind down, I sat down with Chris McCreedy to catch up on his work monitoring Willow Flycatchers in the Mono Basin. Chris is a staff biologist for PRBO Conservation Science and has been studying the Willow Flycatcher population on Rush Creek since he first discovered them to nest there in 2001.

Willow Flycatchers are small migratory songbirds that are in the Mono Basin only in summer. They are an endangered species in California with only 1,000–2,000 individuals left breeding in the state annually. During the 1990s when the Jones & Stokes consulting firm was compiling information for the Mono Basin Environmental Impact Report, they found the Willow Flycatchers to be completely extirpated from the Mono Basin. Since their return in 2001, Rush Creek is now the only place in the Inyo National Forest where they currently breed.

Lisa Cutting: So Chris, how did you discover the Willow Flycatcher on Rush Creek back in 2001?

Chris McCreedy: I was working for Sacha Heath of PRBO Conservation Science, who was conducting an Eastern Sierra riparian breeding bird study that went all the way from Sonora Pass to Owens Dry Lake. The Mono Basin was part of her study area and she was particularly interested in birds' response to restoration actions. We had nest plots on Rush, Lee

Vining, Mill, and Wilson Creeks. It was during the summer of 2001 that we discovered the Willow Flycatchers nesting on Rush Creek.

LC: What happened after that discovery?

CM: After seeing them in 2001 we found them again in 2002. I wrote a proposal to the Inyo National Forest to study the Willow Flycatcher exclusively on Rush Creek. That proposal was successful and the Inyo has funded my work ever since. Every year I go out, find Willow Flycatcher nests, and band the adults and the chicks. Essentially, I'm tracking the Mono Basin population and documenting trends.

LC: So what is the current status?

CM: Back in 2001 we had three territories with six adults total and by 2004 the population was up to 16 adults so it was increasing rapidly. But since 2004 it's gone down every season, mainly because of low productivity. They're not reproducing enough to keep the population going. The primary reason for that is both nest depredation from Brown-headed Cowbirds and cowbirds parasitizing nests.

Brown-headed Cowbirds are a kind of blackbird. They don't make their own nests, they only lay their eggs in other species' nests. When cowbirds lay their eggs in a host nest, their eggs hatch faster than the host eggs and their young develop faster and so the host young rarely succeed in the presence of a

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Biologist Chris McCreedy banding Rush Creek's only successful Willow Flycatcher fledglings of the 2009 season.

cowbird egg. So basically, if a cowbird finds a flycatcher nest, the flycatcher nest is almost certainly going to fail.

Cowbirds are not able to sustain themselves in desert habitats without humans feeding them at bird feeders or indirectly at pack stations, on farms, or via livestock. The Willow Flycatchers on Rush Creek are threatened by these cowbirds and the cowbirds are able to flourish because they are being fed by people in the Mono Basin.

LC: *Why do cowbirds rely on human assistance?*

CM: Well, cowbirds aren't really desert birds. Over the years they have adapted by congregating near areas where farming and grazing has occurred in order to feed. We don't really have that in the Mono Basin anymore but the cowbirds persist because they can get food from bird feeders. The cowbirds will eat in town in the afternoons and then go out to the creeks at night to roost. In the mornings they look for bird's nests to parasitize.

And it's not only the Willow Flycatchers that are affected. Yellow Warblers, Dusky Flycatchers, Song Sparrows—all of these are potential cowbird hosts. As long as people in town provide food for cowbirds there's really no ceiling as far as how many there can be.

My sense is that there are more cowbirds now. And last year, mostly because of cowbirds, Willow Flycatchers didn't breed at all. All of their nests failed so they had total breeding failure in 2008. That nearly happened again this year, but one nest fledged two chicks late in the season.

LC: *Now I'm thinking of the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua and all the outreach that we've done about birds in the Mono Basin. I think people have developed an affinity for birds and bird feeding. So is there a way to still let this happen without supporting the cowbirds?*

CM: I know it's hard to tell people to not feed birds so much. I love ecology so I think of it like this: for me I would never recommend feeding anything. When you do that you disrupt the natural balance which can effect the entire system. But if people are going to feed birds I would make the following recommendations: First—do not feed in the summer at all between April 1st and September 1st because it's the summer breeding season when cowbirds are the most active. Second—if people have to feed I suggest hummingbird feeders and goldfinch socks because cowbirds can't access those feeders. Third—since bird feeders have been found to spread avian diseases, the ideal way to bring birds to your yard is to plant lots of plants that birds like such as native berry trees and berry bushes instead of using feeders.

LC: *I'm really intrigued with the connection between the Willow Flycatcher recovery and all the restoration work that's*

happening on the creeks as ordered by the California State Water Resources Control Board. It will be interesting to track this as the restoration process continues into the future and we see even more recovery down at the creeks.

CM: Yes, the restoration is awesome! In the Great Basin these functioning lower elevation riparian habitats like Rush Creek are really rare. Lots of animals are benefiting from the water and the habitat that the water creates. On Rush Creek the Willow Flycatcher population is down to seven adults. That's it. There aren't really any other places in the region where Willow Flycatchers are known to breed, which could provide additional numbers to the Rush Creek population to get more. So if we lose these it might be a long time before Rush Creek has a population again. Every year I get maybe one or two new birds from somewhere else. Two of the last five years I haven't seen any new birds.

So we have this awesome restoration that's really successful, and it's brought back the Willow Flycatchers. But at the same time, the restoration is sort of being undermined by this really common, everyday occurrence of people who just love animals feeding an animal that has a really big negative impact on what's happening on Rush Creek. So it would be like if we restored Mono Lake but then let people dump motor oil in it.

LC: *It sounds totally ironic and definitely not consistent.*

CM: And a lot of people that feed the cowbirds love birds so it's doubly ironic. But it's not a hopeless situation. Fortunately, in the Mono Basin there really is no agriculture nor grazing, and my sense is that in Lee Vining there aren't a lot of people who are feeding cowbirds, there are a few. So, if we can show people what happens when you feed birds, perhaps they will stop. This isn't a case where there isn't anything that people can do, there *are* things that people can do to help the Willow Flycatcher. And because it is a small number of people we have a greater chance of overcoming this problem in the Mono Basin than in other places. People just need to have a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions and how they can feed birds responsibly or perhaps not at all. ❖

What you can do

For a great handout on safe bird feeding practices visit www.prbo.org/cms/docs/edu/SafeFeeders.pdf. For more information on safe bird feeding specifically in the Mono Basin please visit www.monolake.org/about/birdfeeding.pdf. For Chris McCreedy's Willow Flycatcher research reports visit www.monobasinresearch.org and <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jul/24/local/me-mono24> for an *Los Angeles Times* article on Chris' research on Rush Creek.

Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting

Inappropriate logging actions in the June Lake burn area

This past June, contractors working for the Inyo National Forest were observed felling dead trees that had burned during a lightning-caused wildfire in 2007, and mechanically piling the trees with a track skidder as part of the June Fire Restoration Project. The problem is that early summer is the nesting season for most birds, and the partially burned snags are prime nesting habitat for a variety of woodpeckers and other cavity-nesters. In numerous cases, the contractors were cutting and moving these exact prime nesting snags. Many birds in the area had active nests and/or fledglings that were displaced or killed as a result of the contractors' actions.

Ironically, and luckily, the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua was underway and the basin was flush with birders, some of whom had gone to the June Lake burn area to observe certain woodpecker species. Respected

ornithologists from several state and national organizations witnessed the irresponsible activities and expressed concern to the Inyo National Forest and local environmental organizations, including the Mono Lake Committee.

Disrupting or destroying active nests of migratory birds is a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and is a serious matter. The Committee has communicated these concerns to the Inyo and we are awaiting a response. We have also demonstrated our support for a proposal to formally adopt a policy for projects occurring on the Inyo National Forest that would specify timeframes during which projects could operate. For example, activities like salvage logging would be restricted to the time of year when birds aren't nesting. The proposed policy is based on scientific studies and expertise gathered over many years.

While the contractor was operating under the direction and authority of the Inyo National Forest, it doesn't seem likely that this unfortunate set of circumstances was intentional on the

part of the Inyo. However, it is a serious error and the Committee will work with the other organizations involved to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

Stimulus funding update

Great news—the Inyo National Forest has received over \$800,000 in federal American Recovery & Reinvestment Act funds for improvements to the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center! The approved projects include parking lot and entrance road improvements; replacing and upgrading the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system to be more energy efficient; fixing structural deficiencies; and replacing walkways and improving visitor accessibility. We're excited to see these highly visible green improvements to this important facility!

Regional Forest Supervisor

This summer Committee staff had the rare opportunity to meet with Randy Moore, the Regional Forester for Region 5 of the US Forest Service, and to provide him and his staff with an orientation to Mono Lake while he was visiting the Inyo National Forest. As Regional Forester, Randy's responsibilities include overseeing 18 national forests and 20 million acres of land in California. Even though his schedule was packed tight with touring the Inyo and meeting with employees, Randy and his staff took the time to meet with us at the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center and discuss the history of Mono Lake, restoration of the lake and streams, and the future of our education program that connects Los Angeles area youth to the source of their water in the Mono Basin. We appreciate the opportunity to meet Randy and look forward to working with him in the future. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. This summer she added making bamboo fly fishing rods to her growing list of passionate pursuits.



Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua participants on a field trip in the June Lake burn area.

Interning for Mono Lake

by Claire Skinner

It's 8:07 on a bright, cloud-dotted Saturday morning—Mono Lake calm and glassy, California Gulls intently dipping their yellow beaks into the water for an alkali fly breakfast. At the helm of a well-worn canoe, I'm paddling west towards South Tufa and chatting with three attentive passengers about the lake's unusual chemistry.

We take a moment to twirl our hands through the water. With a pH of about 10, Mono Lake is alkaline—slippery to the touch and bitter to taste. Not to mention salty and chock-full of miniscule, swimming brine shrimp. Watching a visitor's face light up with surprise and curiosity after touching, tasting, or peering deep into the lake is a favorite moment on any tour. This morning is no different; my bow paddler turns around, inquisitive: "Why is this lake so salty?"

One of my jobs as an intern for the Mono Lake Committee is giving canoe and walking tours of Mono Lake. In the course of a one-hour ramble through tufa towers, I do my best to bring alive the Mono Basin's ecosystem and precedent-setting water story. With Mono Lake as the classroom, interpreting this remarkable place isn't hard. Founder David Gaines noted that "the lake speaks for itself" and, over the course of the summer, we interns work with the staff to give it a louder voice.

Often college age, interns arrive in Lee Vining from all over the country, immediately knitted together by a burgeoning love of Mono Lake. And love's a good start, but in order to effectively champion Mono Lake, we have to know our stuff. The beginning of June is a heady blur of training: everything from the intricacies of Mono Basin water politics to how many legs a brine shrimp has (hint: it ain't two). On a practical level, interns provide the Committee with much needed manpower during the long, warm days of summer when visitation to the area soars. Interns staffing the front counter help the Information Center & Bookstore to run smoothly all day, every day.

If we're not giving tours or recruiting new advocates for Mono Lake, interns can be spotted in the back office helping out—stuffing envelopes, answering phones, working on personalized, season-long projects—and learning firsthand how a successful environmental non-profit runs. As a part of ongoing protection and restoration efforts in the Mono Basin, we also spend quality time in the field plucking invasive plant



Mono Lake Intern Claire Skinner shows visitors brine shrimp in a frisbee on a South Tufa tour.

species, monitoring streamflow and ground water levels, and planting and watering Jeffrey pine trees on Rush Creek.

Since its inception in 1978, interns have been crucial to the Committee's functioning. In the beginning, David and Sally Gaines, plus an odd intern or two, were the only staff. Over the years, the Committee's size and scope expanded, as did the number of interns. The Committee welcomes its annual infusion of youth and idealism—after all, it was started by a visionary group of recent college grads. What's more, many current permanent staff started out as interns, including Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin some twenty years ago!

We interns often share stories about the first time we set eyes on Mono Lake. For some, it was on a school field trip or an unplanned sojourn down from Yosemite. For me, it was one late May afternoon after a long drive. Armed with only a vague notion of what an inland sea in the desert could possibly look like, I was stunned as I crested Conway Summit, gazing down at the Eastern Sierra scarp edging a basin of deep and dazzling blue. This was where I was to spend my first summer in the Sierra! With all that glimmering water stretching out below me, I felt then what David Gaines knew best—that living and working here as an intern is surely an "invitation—to explore, befriend, and learn from Mono Lake." ♦

Claire Skinner is completing her second year as a Mono Lake Intern. She's excited to see the aspens turn color for the first time this fall.

Getting out the weeds

by Bartshé Miller

With the exception of water diversions, many people perceive the Mono Basin as a pristine, natural landscape that has been little-altered by humans. This may be true relative to the rest of California, but the Mono Basin has historically seen widespread grazing, ranching, and mining. Today the prominent industry is tourism. All of these activities have left their mark, and many of the invasive plants we see in the Mono Basin today were introduced by grazing and ranching over the last 150 years. Tourism also brings non-native species as campers and hikers spread non-native seeds stuck in tires, boot treads, or folded tents packed up from the last campsite. Invasive plants are subtly and relentlessly altering habitat and competing with native flora. Fortunately for the Mono Basin, work is continuing this year to slow or reverse the impacts of some of these plants.

Partnership takes on invasive plants

This past spring the Mono Lake Committee and Friends of the Inyo (FOI) were awarded a National Forest

Foundation (NFF) grant to work on the removal of invasive plants in the Mono Basin on Inyo National Forest lands. The grant is awarded from a Ski Conservation Fund that is supported by NFF, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, and the US Forest Service.

Called the Mono Basin Community Stewardship Invasive Removal Project, this grant is being accomplished with the help of the Committee's Outdoor Experiences program. The project documents sites with invasive plants, prioritizes and strategizes with Forest Service staff, and removes weeds through volunteer work days. The grant allows for the purchase of equipment and supplies like gloves and shovels which allow for muscle-powered work to accomplish its goals rather than the use of herbicides. More than eight work days were scheduled during the summer months and volunteers and OE program participants worked hard to pull non-native plants at critical sites in the Mono Basin. FOI and the Committee coordinated work days and documented sites before and after eradication.

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OE pitches in to throw out invasive plants

by Bartshé Miller

The Outdoor Experiences Program (OE) has been hosting Los Angeles youth at Mono Lake for 16 years. The OE program connects Los Angeles youth with the source of their water through multi-day programs at Mono Lake that focus on science and hands-on learning. With a combination of curriculum-based education, outdoor recreation, and stewardship projects, the OE program teaches participants about natural and urban watersheds and ways that human activities can negatively or positively impact each environment.

One of OE's program components is service project work. Over the course of 2009 approximately 20 groups of students and young adults from Los Angeles have participated in the program. In the past these students have planted and watered trees, contributing to the restoration of Rush and Lee Vining Creeks—with some of this restoration work occurring on Los Angeles-owned land in the Mono Basin. This year participants are also helping to control invasive plants on Inyo National Forest lands surrounding Mono Lake.



Outward Bound Los Angeles participants on their way to pull white clover along the new Mono Lake Trail in July 2009.

This summer the Los Angeles Infrastructure Academy, Emerson Middle School, Marina Chen Girl Scouts, and Communities for a Better Environment—all Southern California student groups—rolled up their sleeves to pull invasive plants in the Mono Basin.

Master plan for Committee storefront

by Elin Ljung

This summer we've heard many good ideas from members about how to improve the front of our Information Center & Bookstore. So many good ideas, in fact, that we'll start work this fall on a comprehensive master plan for the entire space: from the corner of Third Street and Highway 395, all the way to Bodie Mike's!

We had a contractor inspect our building's front wall, and the good news is that it will be fine to stand this winter without any improvements just yet. That bill of good health frees us up to plan for incorporating the new storefront design into the whole space. We asked our "artist in residence"

(and Outdoor Experiences Instructor) Logan Parsons to come up with some conceptual sketches for the storefront. She drew several mural-type ideas, which you can see online along with other concepts at www.monolake.org/storesurvey.

We still need your ideas for how to make the space more useful and appealing. We've been tossing ideas around here in the office, like replacing the existing asphalt with native plants and adding some retail space outside. Maybe we should

build a deck with seating for Internet users, friends having lunch, and group discussions. Perhaps we should incorporate a sound screen to block the highway noise. What would you like us to consider when we develop our master plan? Let us know what you think at www.monolake.org/storesurvey, or give us a call at (760) 647-6595.

The plan will take

shape as the snow flies this fall and winter, and we'll begin the first phase of work next spring. We're excited to have your ideas in the process! ❖



One of the conceptual sketches for the new storefront. See more online at www.monolake.org/storesurvey.

Invasives removal from page 10

Target invasive plant species include: *Saponaria officinalis* (bouncing bet), *Cardaria spp.* (whitetop), *Melilotus alba* (white clover), and *Salsola tragus* (Russian thistle). Restoration work sites in the Mono Basin include Aspen Campground, the new Mono Lake Trail, Lee Vining Creek, Mill Creek, DeChambeau Ponds, and South Tufa.

One of the most labor-intensive weeds to remove is *Melilotus alba* or white clover. This plant was either introduced by grazing in the Mono Basin or was formerly grown for livestock forage. It is widely dispersed along the west shore of Mono Lake and appears to be spreading toward Lee Vining Creek and the Rush Creek delta lowlands. This plant out-competes native wetland species around springs and lake-fringing meadows. With a strong taproot system, it is difficult to eliminate. Locally overrun sites require a big investment of labor to remove plants, and these sites usually require follow-up visits to pull plants that have re-sprouted from stubborn roots.

Halting invasives

Focused work days have the potential to significantly reduce or eradicate some non-native species in the Mono

Basin. For example, *Centaurea biebersteinii* (spotted knapweed) was recently discovered in Aspen Campground, and *Cardaria spp.* (whitetop) has persisted at DeChambeau Ponds. Now, these non-native species may have been entirely removed from known locations in the Mono Basin. Further follow up will determine if this is the case. Monitoring and evaluation is a component of the Stewardship Invasive Removal Project and allows for later site visits to document the results of volunteer efforts.

We can't hope to tackle all of the Mono Basin's invasive plant problems, but we can eradicate localized invasive outbreaks. We will also improve the quality of a few important habitats while establishing the groundwork for future, prioritized work. With ongoing stewardship and partnership opportunities combined with thoughtful prioritizing we can turn the tide against some of the invasive plants that pose the greatest ecological threat. ❖

Bartshé Miller is the Committee's Education Director. He's also our resident moth expert, which came in handy for the Pandora moth (Coloradia pandora) boom this summer.

Peak flows diverted; record cottonwood-seeding year

by Greg Reis

May was warm, resulting in a relatively quick start to the snowmelt runoff, but then a cool, rainy June produced multiple, lower-than-expected peaks spread over the month. Walker Creek peaked at 26 cubic feet per second (cfs) on May 21, Lee Vining Creek peaked at 250 cfs on June 1, Rush Creek peaked at 252 cfs on June 21, and Parker Creek peaked at 40 cfs on June 30. As has happened in five of the last 11 years, DWP failed to pass Lee Vining Creek's peak as required, passing instead a lower peak of 232 cfs on May 18. Mill Creek spilled over Lundy Dam in mid-June, peaking at over 40 cfs above the reservoir but only 12 cfs below the dam.

Rush Creek received no peak flow below Grant Lake Reservoir in 2009 even though this was considered a normal water year, which requires a stream restoration flow (SRF) of 380 cfs. This is only the second year since the State Water Board Decision 1631 (D1631) that no peak was delivered—2007, a dry year, was the first.

The water was held back this year due to concerns about low reservoir storage resulting in high water temperatures and turbidity (Summer 2009 *Newsletter*). The Committee believes that D1631 still required a small channel maintenance flow (CMF) that should have been delivered to Rush Creek this year. It would have used much less water than the canceled larger SRF, but legal disagreements over this provision delayed it, the CMF was not delivered, and commencement of construction on the the reservoir outlet gate soon precluded this possibility.

Without the SRF or CMF, the reservoir rose quickly in the spring and early summer and peaked at 37,700 acre-feet (af) of storage on August 4—less than 10,000 af from spilling and about 30,000 af higher than its lowest point in February. It is projected to drop to near 25,000 af of storage by the end of March 2010—15,000 af higher than it was this year, but still lower than the 30,000 af target set by the State Water Board. This means Grant won't be as

low next spring and that should prevent the temperature and turbidity problems that occurred in the recent past.

Stream vegetation monitoring plots are revisited every five years and 2009 was one. John Bair, the riparian botanist in charge of the monitoring, spent some time with Committee staff and told us some fascinating things. First, he isn't concerned anymore about the male/female cottonwood ratio on Rush Creek as we reported in the Fall 2002 *Newsletter*. Concern about a lack of female cottonwoods was based on a small sample that turned out not to represent the rest of the creek.

Second, four patch types dominate Rush Creek, while eight dominate Lee Vining Creek. Patch types are a way to categorize plant associations. Greater patch type diversity on Lee Vining Creek is a sign of more dynamic vegetation recovery there. Third, there are 14 species of willow along lower Lee Vining Creek! And last, because there wasn't a cold snap in the late spring that usually kills catkins, 2009 was a record cottonwood seeding year! ♦

Lakewatch

Earlier shrimp hatch changes patterns for gulls, grebes

by Greg Reis

As of mid-August, Mono Lake had dropped half a foot from its early-July peak and stood at approximately 6382.0 feet above sea level. It has now dropped lower than the lake level gauge and DWP is coming up with a plan for installing a new, lower gauge.

Eared Grebes gather in vast numbers on Mono Lake in the fall—often close to one million birds. Last fall the Committee found a volunteer airplane pilot and photographer to photograph the lake, and sent the photos to

Sean Boyd with the Canadian Wildlife Service, who counts the grebes in the pictures. Preliminary count results from Boyd indicate that during last fall's count only about 250,000 birds were on Mono Lake, or 10–15% of the maximum counts in the mid-to-late 1990s. This is becoming a familiar pattern—over the last few years the grebes have been leaving noticeably earlier than they did in the past.

The count usually happens around October 15—the usual peak of the grebe migration at Mono Lake. But Mono Lake's limnology is changing and so are the grebes. The grebes are leaving earlier because they run out of adequate food—brine shrimp—earlier. Scientists Dr. Robert Jellison and Dr. Joseph Jehl have found that below 6,000 shrimp per

square meter, the grebes lose weight and begin to leave. In 2008 this occurred in mid-September.

Jellison discovered that the brine shrimp population centroid, or center of mass over time, has been moving on average 1.5 days per year earlier over the last 30 years of limnological monitoring—resulting in a 45-day shift. Higher salinity used to delay brine shrimp hatching. The reduced salinity of Mono Lake in recent years has allowed the shrimp to hatch earlier, which results in an earlier die-off of shrimp in the fall. This appears to be good for the gulls, which look for early-spring food at the beginning of their nesting season. What does this mean for the grebes? That's a question you can be sure the Committee is looking into. ♦

6417'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

6391'

Target lake level

6382.0'

Current lake level

6372'

Historic low, 1982

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



PHOTO COURTESY OF JON BAKER

Protecting Mono Lake can take one well away from the quiet lap of salty waves along the sandy shoreline, and I've recently found myself among the tall office towers of downtown Los Angeles many a day. The drive home—up and over the San Gabriels, out through Mojave, and along the towering Sierra escarpment—is long, with plenty of time to glimpse something unusual.

In August, the highway surprises that caught my attention on one trip were meteors, though I didn't know that at first. Still in the urban glow of the city, I saw a fast moving light in the sky, bright enough to outshine the star-obscuring urban glow but gone by the time I focused on it. Hmmm. A helicopter? Certainly a puzzle.

The second one came an hour up the road, in a somewhat

darker part of the drive; it arced low across the horizon with momentary but real tail of bluish light. Hmmm. Surely a meteor, but unusual in size; and those desert military testing facilities aren't far away—maybe a rocket test of some kind?

As the road carried me into the Mono Basin, more and more meteors shot across the horizon. Now, with dark skies and the Milky Way shining bright the truth became clear: the Perseid meteor shower was on display in full form. An impressive show and a reminder that, as with so many things, the Mono Basin can offer a clear view of what's really true in the world. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He went to LA every weekend in August—on one trip he left the office at 2PM, made the City Council meeting for a last minute agenda item at 10AM and made it home for dinner!

Benchmarks



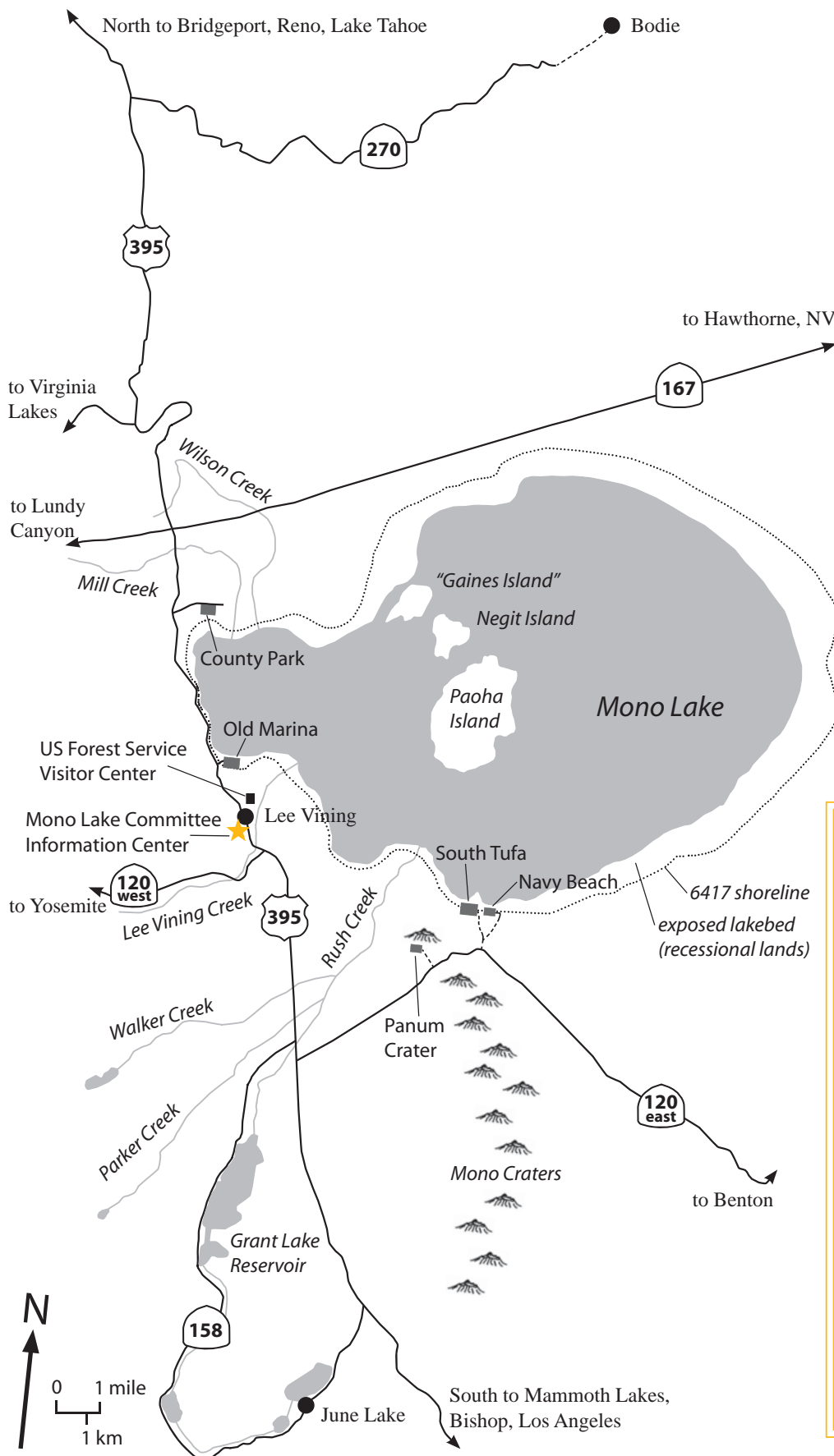
During summer 2006 launching canoes at Navy Beach was easy thanks to Mono Lake's elevation of 6384.5 feet above sea level.



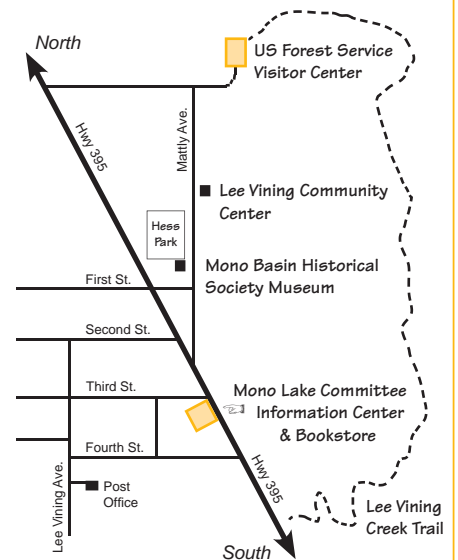
Summer 2009 at 6382.0 feet: what a difference 2.5 feet makes ... cross your fingers for a snowy winter to raise the lake!

PHOTOS BY EUN LUNG

Mono Lake and vicinity map



Lee Vining town map For walking around town



How far is it?

Remember to check for road closures before you travel!

1-800-GAS-ROAD

Distance from Lee Vining to:

South Tufa	11mi	18km
Yosemite Park entrance	13	21
Tuolumne Meadows	21	34
Mammoth Lakes	27	44
Bodie	32	52
Bishop.....	66	106
Yosemite Valley.....	77	124
Lake Tahoe.....	110	177
Reno.....	140	225
Death Valley.....	177	285
San Francisco (via 120)	250	402
Los Angeles	303	488
Las Vegas	326	525

About Mono Lake

Nestled at the edge of the arid Great Basin and the snowy Sierra Nevada mountains, Mono Lake is an ancient saline lake that covers over 70 square miles and supports a unique and productive ecosystem. The lake has no fish; instead it is home to trillions of brine shrimp and alkali flies. Freshwater streams feed Mono Lake, supporting lush riparian forests of cottonwood and willow along their banks. Along the lakeshore, scenic limestone formations known as tufa towers rise from the water's surface. Millions of migratory birds visit the lake each year.

A story of hope

In 1941, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) began excessive water diversions from Mono Basin streams. Mono Lake dropped 45 vertical feet, lost half its volume, and doubled in salinity.

The Mono Lake Committee was founded by David and Sally Gaines in 1978 in response to the threat of inevitable collapse of the Mono Basin ecosystem. The early Committee bought an old dance hall in Lee Vining to use as headquarters (which still houses the Information Center today), and went to work spreading the word about Mono Lake. The Committee took the City of Los Angeles to court in 1979, arguing that DWP had violated the Public Trust Doctrine, which states: "The public trust ... is an affirmation of the duty of the state to protect the people's common heritage of streams, lakes, marshlands and tidelands...." —Supreme Court of California, 1983

During the winter of 1988, David Gaines was killed in a car accident in a snowstorm. He never got to see the lake he

loved begin to rise, but his energy and inspiration still carry on through the work of Committee staff.

Mono Lake's recovery depends upon water conservation in Los Angeles, and the Committee has created solutions to the demand for water by implementing conservation programs in LA that have saved more than enough water to share with Mono Lake. Over the last 15 years, LA has become one of the most water-conscious cities in the United States, and the Committee works statewide to promote wise water use for people and the environment.

In 1994, after over a decade of litigation, the California Water Resources Control Board ordered DWP to let Mono Lake rise to a healthy level of 6392 feet above sea level—twenty feet above its historic low. DWP has reduced its Mono Basin water exports by over 80%, and Mono Lake is on the rise! This is truly an environmental victory. See below for more on what the Committee is doing today.

16,000 members

Mono Lake has a great success story, and you can be a part of it. Add your voice to the 16,000 members who are committed to the protection and restoration of Mono Lake. Your support as a Committee member will be put to hard work for Mono Lake!

Check out Mono Lake on the web at www.monolake.org for action alerts, letter-writing campaigns, WebCam images of the area, and fun activities happening year-round. By staying connected to Mono Lake, you ensure its protection for generations to come. ❖

Regional travel resources

- Mono Lake Committee Information Center
(760) 647-6595 www.monolake.org
- Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce
(760) 647-6629 www.leevining.com
- US Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center
(760) 647-3044 www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/about
- Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve
(760) 647-6331 www.parks.ca.gov
- Bodie State Historic Park
(760) 647-6445 www.parks.ca.gov
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center
(760) 924-5500 www.visitmammoth.com
- June Lake Chamber of Commerce
(760) 648-7584 www.junelakechamber.org
- Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce
(760) 932-7500 www.bridgeportcalifornia.com
- Inyo National Forest 24-hour Wilderness Permits/Info
(760) 873-2408 www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo
- Yosemite National Park www.nps.gov/yose
Information by phone (209) 372-0200
Campground Reservations (800) 436-7275
Hotel and Motel Reservations (801) 559-5000
Wilderness Permit Reservations (209) 372-0740
- White Mountain Ranger District–Bishop (760) 873-2500
- Lone Pine Interagency Visitor Center (760) 876-6222
- Manzanar National Historic Site and Interpretive Center
(760) 878-2932 www.nps.gov/manz
- Death Valley Reservations (760) 786-2345
- Bridgeport Ranger Station–Toiyabe National Forest
(760) 932-7070
- California Road Conditions (800) 427-7623
www.dot.ca.gov

Free Drawing to restore Mono Lake

Send in your tickets by November 28th!

A huge thank you to the generous folks who donate the wonderful prizes for the Free Drawing, the Mono Lake Committee's annual fundraiser! Send in your tickets today (find them in the center of this *Newsletter*) for a chance to win!

Three books by local authors: *Tracks of Passion* by Robin Morning, *A Practice of Mountains* by the late Andrea Lawrence, and *Mono Lake Basin* by David Carle and Don Banta.

An incredible camping package from Wilson's Eastside Sports of Bishop that includes the latest items from Vasque, MSR, Mountain Hardware, and Cascade Designs.



**Wilson's
Eastside
Sports**

Dinner and lodging at Yosemite's Wawona Hotel.

Online comedy traffic school courses.

REI Trail and Traverse daypacks.



Lake Tahoe escape at Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley.

Wave Rave Snowboard Shop's signature Steepwater 164 snowboard.

Two dozen hand-tied fishing flies made by Mono Lake Committee Board member Doug Virtue.



A fleece jacket and membership to California Trout.



Original Mono Lake paintings by Pat Crowther, Reif Erickson, and Nicola Voorhees.

A vineyard tour, wine tasting, and appetizers with the winemakers at Muir Legacy Vineyards, including a stay at the Golden Gate Hotel.



Yosemite Association field seminar and one-year membership, with lodging at the Sunset Inn and dinner at Hotel Charlotte in Groveland.

Mono Lake Committee logo T-shirt, sun hat, water bottle, *Storm Over Mono*, and 2010 Calendar.



A \$250 gift certificate to the Mono Lake Committee bookstore.

patagonia

Patagonia clothing: men's and women's lightweight R4 jackets.

A framed print by Dave McCoy, founder of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, from the Mammoth Ski Museum.

INSPIRED MOUNTAIN LIVING
Eastside

One-year subscription and T-shirt from Eastside Magazine.

Mammoth vacations!

Gift certificates for InTouch MicroSpa, movies at Minaret Cinemas, and a stay at Rainbow Tarns Bed & Breakfast.



A stay at the Mammoth Mountain Inn, rental packages for skiing, snowboarding, or biking gear, dinner at Giovanni's Pizza, and movies at Minaret Cinemas.



RAINBOW TARNs BED & BREAKFAST
At Crowley Lake



Giovanni's
INTOUCH
MASSAGE • MICRO SPA • BOUTIQUE



A stay at the Edelweiss Lodge, dinner at Base Camp Café, movies at Minaret Cinemas, and a one-hour photo shoot with Roving Photo.

The Forgotten Season

Winter Photography in the Mono Basin



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD KNEPP

January 15–17, 2010

\$220 per person / \$200 for Mono Lake Committee members

Winter at Mono Lake: a lifting morning poconip fog, tufa towers jacketed in snow and reflected in the mirror of the lake's surface, ice sculpting crystalline filigree along creek and lake banks. These elements combine to provide a very different photographic opportunity.

This photography seminar will be based in Lee Vining and will explore locations along the lake to photograph the serenity and beauty that is the Mono Basin in winter.

There will also be discussions covering composition and methods of proper exposure under the diverse variety of lighting conditions encountered during winter in the Eastern Sierra, the Zone System for color and black-and-white, visualization, filtration, and developing a personal vision. This field seminar is for the enthusiastic color and/or black-and-white photographer with a working knowledge of his or her camera.

Instructor Rick Knepp is a former Mono Lake Committee staff member whose autumn workshops have sold out for years running. He teaches photography and darkroom techniques, and directs and assists at workshops around

the Southwest. Rick is a veteran of Mono winters and his experience will allow participants to take advantage of many winter photographic opportunities.

Since winter dining options in Lee Vining are limited, dinner Saturday night will be a special meal catered by Linda Dore, former chef at the Mono Inn and Nevado's in Mammoth Lakes, who now owns Linda Dore Food Service.

Come prepared for cold winter weather. This seminar will take place regardless of weather or road conditions. Be prepared for the possibility of driving in snow, or the additional drive time that may be required when Sierra passes are either closed for the winter or closed temporarily due to snow.

Cost is for tuition only. Participants must arrange their own accommodation. There will be no refunds due to weather. This seminar is limited to 15 participants.

For registration or more information on the sixth annual winter photography seminar, contact Elin Ljung (elin@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

*Selections from the
Mono Lake Committee
Information Center
& Bookstore*

The 2009 Fall Catalog



*See all products
in color online at
MONOLAKE.ORG/
STORE*



SNOWY PLOVER HATCHING T-SHIRT

Interns Claire and Nora model our new hatching T-shirt with “Migrate through Mono Lake” on the sleeve. This light blue 100% organic cotton shirt shows a Snowy Plover hatching with the words “explore, marvel, love nature and defend it” below.

Hatching T-shirt, Unisex, S-XL: \$20.00, XXL: \$22.00

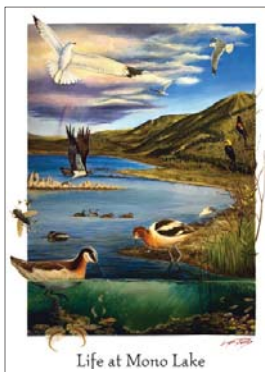


SHRIMP FOR MONO T-SHIRT

This perennial favorite is a perfect gift for those with infants and small children in their lives. This cute white shirt is modeled by Sammy, grandson of Information Center & Bookstore Manager Duncan. Three brine shrimp circle in a multi-colored display.

Shrimp for Mono T-shirt, 6mo, 12mo, 18mo: \$8.00

Shrimp for Mono T-shirt, Youth XS-L: \$10.95



LIFE AT MONO LAKE T-SHIRT

This brand new T-shirt was created from the Bookstore's beautiful mural. Scientific illustrator Logan Parsons created a classic mélange of wildlife including gulls, phalaropes, grebes, osprey, coyote, brine shrimp, alkali flies, fish fry, and a view of the lake above and below the water! This 100% organic cotton shirt is modeled by the artist herself who spent the summer as an Outdoor Education Instructor for the Committee.

Life at Mono Lake T-shirt, Unisex, S-XL: \$22.00, XXL: \$25.00

Call (760) 647-6595 to order

COMMITTEE LOGO ECH₂O FILTER WATER BOTTLE

This bottle is actually water filtration plant within a stainless steel bottle! Using an ionic-adsorption micro-filtration system the Ech₂o water bottle removes harmful contaminants as you drink. It filters up to 100 gallons of water before requiring a replacement filter, removing pathogens such as giardia and cryptosporidium, toxic chemicals, detergents, pesticides, agricultural wastes, and dissolved solids. But it's not a portable desalination unit, so don't use it for filtering Mono Lake water! Available in blue, red, or lavender.

Ech₂o Filter Water Bottle, specify blue, red, or lavender, 25oz: \$45.00

Ech₂o Replacement Filter: \$24.99



STAINLESS MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO DRINKWARE

Sip your favorite drink from one of these mugs with our logo on one side and "Long Live Mono Lake" on the other. Our new travel mug with a spill-proof sip top is also stainless and comes with a blue band.

Klean Kanteen Water Bottle, 27oz: \$19.95

Travel Mug, 14oz: \$12.95

Carabiner Mug, 12oz: \$12.95



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE BISTRO MUG

Perfect to wrap your hands around, this new matte green 15-ounce ceramic bistro mug has the classic Mono Lake Committee logo in white.

Bistro Mug, 15oz: \$8.00



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE REPETE CHICOBAG

This ChicoBag is made from 99% recycled content! Bags say, "This bag is made from seven plastic bottles" with a list of the recycled materials printed on the inside. These reusable shopping bags fit easily in your pocket when they are stuffed into their attached stuff pouch. The bag is blue with green handles and measures 18" x 14½", its pouch 3" x 4", and it carries approximately 25 pounds (one gallon of milk is approximately 7 pounds) of goodies.

Mono Lake Committee rePETe ChicoBag: \$10.00



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE 9-LED FLASHLIGHT

This royal blue 3¾" lightweight and sturdy 9-LED flashlight fits in your palm and has an instantly strong beam. Perfect for Committee enthusiasts, and useful for camping or around the house or car!

Mono Lake Committee 9-LED Flashlight: \$11.00

LONG LIVE MONO LAKE SOAPS

This popular soap is handcrafted from rainwater, vegetable oils, and essential and fragrance oils in the traditional cold process soap making method. The folks at The Soap Makery emboss each bar with "Long Live Mono Lake." Available in five delicious scents: bug defense, cucumber/melon, mint julep, tea tree oil, or wildflowers. Also available in a soap-filled luffa bar that gently exfoliates as it cleans and as a soap sampler of assorted scents.

Long Live Mono Lake Bar Soap, please specify scent: \$4.50

Soap Filled Luffa Bar, please specify scent: \$6.00

Six Soap Sampler: \$6.00





BRINE SHRIMP ORNAMENT

Wild Bryde Jewelers designed a brine shrimp holiday ornament just for us! Measuring three inches long, it is available in plated gold or rhodium silver. The tail of each shrimp bears the words "Mono Lake Committee" and "Mono Lake Brine Shrimp."

Brine Shrimp Ornament, please specify gold or silver: \$10.00

HAND PAINTED HOLIDAY ORNAMENTS

Artist Wendy Rismeyer hand paints unique Mono Lake scenes on glass holiday ornaments. This year's are a Western Tanager, a Steller's Jay, and a Mountain Chickadee. Add these to your family keepsakes for generations to come.

Hand Painted Ornament, please specify bird: \$15.95



WESTERN
TANAGER



STELLER'S
JAY



MOUNTAIN
CHICKADEE



ASPEN



COTTONWOOD

LEAF ORNAMENTS

These beautiful ornaments are handcrafted from real leaves! Electroplated with 18-karat gold or rhodium silver, each is a one-of-a-kind keepsake. Leaf ornaments are approximately three inches tall and because they are made with real leaves, sizes and shapes will vary slightly.

Leaf Ornament, please specify aspen or cottonwood and gold or silver: \$16.00

HAND TURNED VASES

Eastern Sierra resident Ron Overholtz has been supplying the Committee Bookstore with his exquisite vases and bowls since 2003. Each piece of downed aspen is hand turned on a lathe to about 3/4" thickness, waxed, and set aside for four months to dry. After the final turning, Ron adds his distinctive trademark turquoise to any nooks and crannies in the wood. These vases are about four inches tall and the grain, the color of the wood, and the visible amount of turquoise vary with each piece.

Hand Turned Vase: \$65.00



PINE NEEDLE BASKETS

Since 1987 Karyl Jo Hartsog has been creating these delightful baskets from pine needles that fall right at her front door in the Sierra. She quotes the legend, "If you breathe into a basket your soul will be kept there." No two three-inch-tall baskets are exactly alike, but all are made of coiled pine needles with raffia stitching, feathers, and a light wax finish.

Pine Needle Basket: \$45.00



HARDWOOD CUTTING BOARDS

Brothers John and Mark Bakula have been making useful works of art for over 25 years. Their round and oblong cutting boards are made using up to thirteen different hardwoods joined with waterproof glue and sealed with a clear food-safe finish. The designs are as shown but the woods used vary slightly.

Hardwood Cutting Board, 8" round: \$25.00

Hardwood Cutting Board, 8"x 13" oblong: \$35.00



Call (760) 647-6595 to order

SEA-MONKEY MAGIQUARIUM

Hatch and grow live instant brine shrimp in your very own home. This kit includes everything you'll need to grow your own little pets ... just add water! The kit also includes a special mystery light that lets you see your sea-monkeys in the dark! For ages 6 and up.

Sea-Monkey MagiQuarium: \$15.95

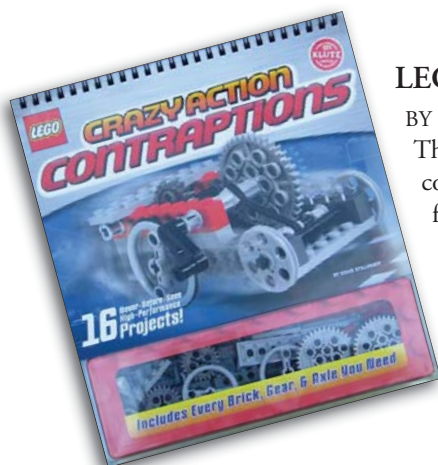


LEGO CRAZY ACTION CONTRAPTIONS

BY DOUG STILLINGER

This brand-new book of high-performance projects contains the components for building a range of models from a supercharged speedster to the squeezeclaw grabber to the wall rocket racer. All of the 16 projects can be constructed using just the custom selection of LEGO bricks that come with the book and they are totally buildable thanks to the clear instructions and diagrams. For ages 7 and up.

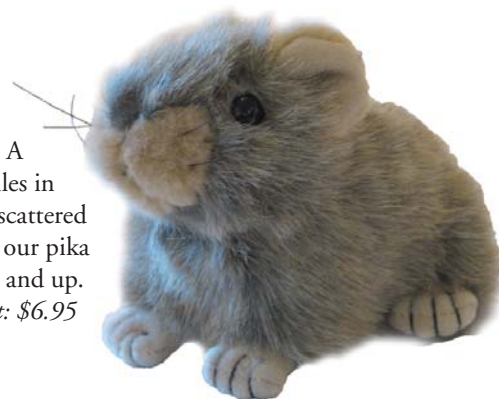
LEGO Crazy Action Contraptions, hardcover plus kit, Klutz, 50 pages, 9"x10": \$21.95



PIKA FINGER PUPPET

We searched high and low to find these five-inch life-sized puppets for all the pika lovers out there. A cute rabbit relative, the pika is found in rock piles in alpine tundra above tree line. Real pikas live in scattered populations high in the Mono Basin, but our pika puppet can live with you! Age 3 years and up.

Pika Finger Puppet: \$6.95



SACRED SAGE OIL, LOTION, AND MIST

These aromatic offerings are a blend of traditional purifying herbs made with hand picked, wild, and organically grown white sage, put together in a soothing massage oil, convenient mist, and a moisturizing lotion.

Sacred Sage Oil: \$18.00

Sacred Sage Mist: \$22.00

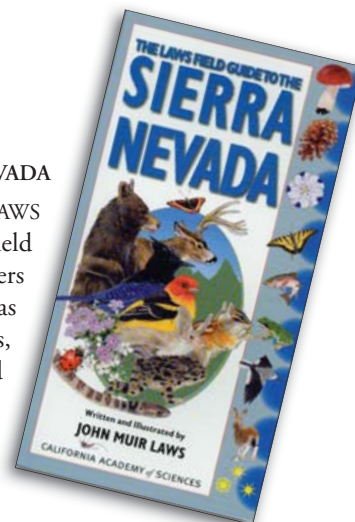
Sacred Sage Lotion: \$18.00

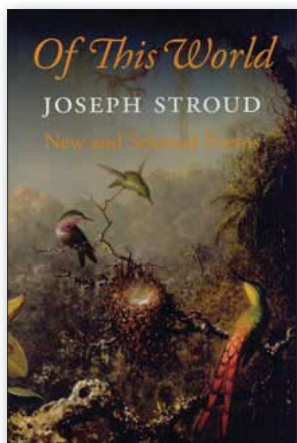
THE LAWS FIELD GUIDE TO THE SIERRA NEVADA

BY JOHN MUIR LAWS

The rich variety of Sierra life jumps right off the pages of this meticulously field tested guide. The book contains over 2,700 full color illustrations and covers trees, wildflowers, fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, and insects as well as topics not found in most guides such as spiders and webs, plant galls, animal tracks and evidence, seasonal star charts, weather patterns, and cloud formations. Both beautiful and comprehensive, it is the one guide to take with you when exploring the Sierra Nevada.

The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada, softcover, Heyday Books, 366 pages, 8½"x 5": \$24.95





OF THIS WORLD

BY JOSEPH STROUD

During his forty-year writing career Stroud has published four books—each making a profound impact, earning critical praise, and generating admiration among poets and readers. *Of This World* includes the best from Stroud's previous volumes as well as a selection of new poems and translations. We can barely keep this beautiful book on the shelves; take one look—you won't be able to put this collection down.

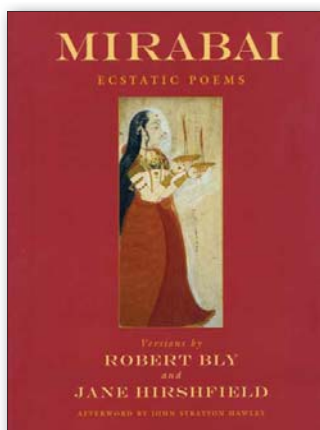
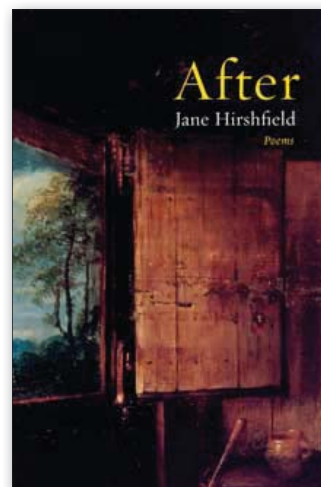
Of This World, softcover, Copper Canyon Press, 359 pages, 6"x 9": \$18.00

AFTER

BY JANE HIRSHFIELD

An investigation into incarnation, transience, and our intimate connection with all existence, by one of the preeminent poets of her generation. Hirshfield's reading from this poetry collection at the Tuolumne Meadows Poetry Festival had us all running for the book table.

After, softcover, Harper Perennial, 100 pages, 6"x 9": \$14.95



MIRABAI: ECSTATIC POEMS

BY ROBERT BLY AND JANE HIRSHFIELD

Poets Bly and Hirshfield joined forces to create English versions of the impassioned poems by Mirabai, the hallowed Indian poet-saint. Mirabai, born a princess in Rajasthan in 1498, eschewed her arranged marriage, celebrating instead her devotion to Krishna in both life and poetry. History, culture, and expression combine in this poetic treasure.

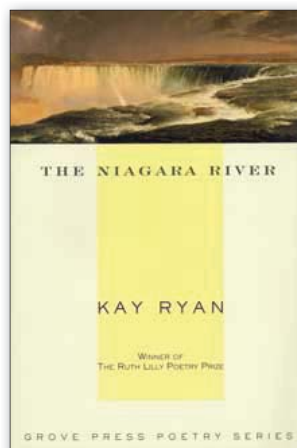
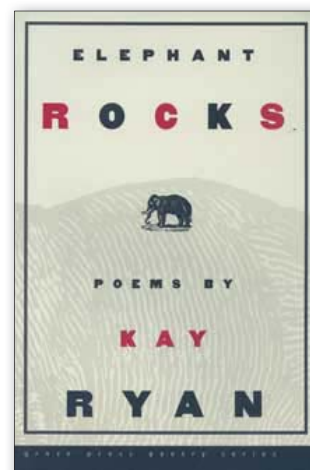
Mirabai, softcover, Beacon Press, 103 pages, 5½"x 7¼": \$12.00

ELEPHANT ROCKS

BY KAY RYAN

Engaging and secretive, provocative and profound, Ryan's poems are sometimes gaudily ornamental, sometimes Shaker-plain, and while compact on the page they are always expansive in the mind. Give her poetry a try, we think you'll find it contagious ... we sure did! After her workshop at Parsons Memorial Lodge this book became a staff favorite.

Elephant Rocks, softcover, Grove Press, 84 pages, 5½" x 8¼": \$14.00



THE NIAGARA RIVER

BY KAY RYAN

This collection of poetry from the current Poet Laureate of the United States can be intense and relaxed, buoyant and rueful. Her poems, products of an immaculately off-kilter mind, have appeared everywhere from the Sunday funnies to New York subways to the pages of *The New Yorker* to plaques at the zoo. Read one aloud and we think you'll see that Ryan's poetry comes to life.

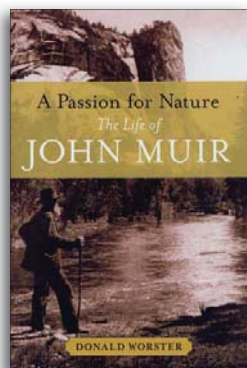
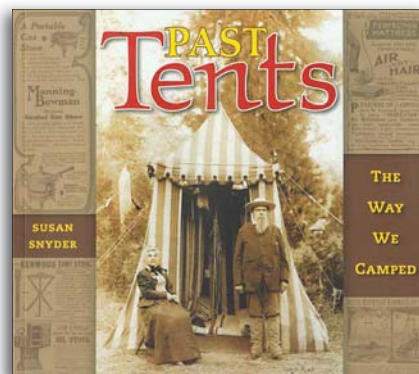
The Niagara River, softcover, Grove Press, 72 pages, 5½" x 8¼": \$14.00

Call (760) 647-6595 to order

PAST TENTS: THE WAY WE CAMPED
BY SUSAN SNYDER

This is a light-hearted and affectionate look at America's love of camping and the great outdoors from its early years. It's packed with anecdotes and rare photographs of family adventures in the wilderness from the first years of automobiles and campgrounds. Easy to pick up, hard to put down, this is the perfect gift for anyone who's ever been a fan of campfires, toasted marshmallows, and adventures in the great outdoors.

Past Tents, softcover, Heyday Books, 145 pages, 8"x 9": \$17.95



A PASSION FOR NATURE:
THE LIFE OF JOHN MUIR

BY DONALD WORSTER

In this magisterial biography, Worster explores John Muir's extraordinary ability, then, and now, to get others to see the sacred beauty of the natural world. The book is the most complete written account of the great conservationist and founder of the Sierra Club. Full of rich details and personal anecdotes from his private correspondence, it is sure to please anyone who has been inspired by Muir.

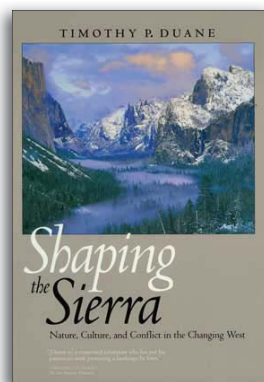
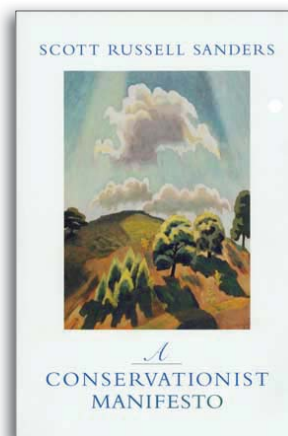
A Passion for Nature, hardcover, Oxford University Press, 534 pages, 6½"x 9½": \$34.95

A CONSERVATIONIST MANIFESTO

BY SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS

In this series of essays, Sanders calls for a culture of conservation that allows us to savor and preserve the world rather than devour it. To that end, he presents a 40-point manifesto calling for ecological health, underpinned by generosity of spirit and love of life. This powerful book offers a way to respond to growing environmental havoc.

A Conservationist Manifesto, softcover, Indiana University Press, 256 pages, 5¼" x 8½": \$19.95



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

BY TIMOTHY P. DUANE

Author, poet, and luminary Gary Snyder writes, "Tim Duane has written an inspiring and instructive text. It's a massive accomplishment, with a wealth of historical, natural, and regional political information refracted through cutting edge analysis and theory ... It will be of use to those who wrestle with the dilemmas of economy and ecology everywhere." For the serious Sierra lover.

Shaping the Sierra, softcover, University of California Press, 595 pages, 7"x 10": \$31.95

Parsons Memorial Lodge Summer Series

If you haven't yet been introduced to the magic of the Parsons Memorial Lodge Summer Series, you are in for a wonderful surprise. Each year an amazing lineup of writers, scientists, poets, musicians, and thinkers of our time hold talks at the historic Parsons Memorial Lodge tucked away at the edge of Tuolumne Meadows.

Just up the hill in the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore's backyard, and organized by our friend and Yosemite National Park Ranger Margaret Eissler, this series generates a lot of excitement, and each year brings luminaries and their wonderful books to the area.

The selections in this catalog are inspired by this year's Parsons Series as well as the annual Tuolumne Meadows Poetry Festival. Visit www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/programs.htm for more information.



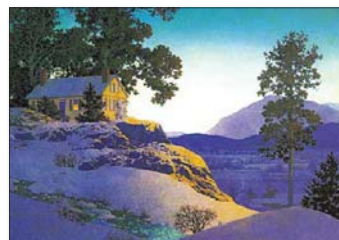
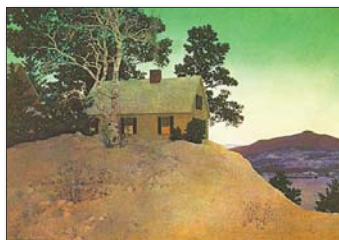
"Vernal Gold" by Virginia Sharkey.

VIRGINIASHARKEY.COM



RICK KNEPP HOLIDAY CARD SET

Our good friend Rick Knepp, former Committee staffer turned professional photographer, has created this eight-card holiday set for us featuring two each of "Winter Solitude," "The Mono Craters," "Winter at South Tufa," and "Poconip in the Mono Basin." All cards are blank inside. *Rick Knepp Holiday Card Set, 8 cards with envelopes: \$13.95*

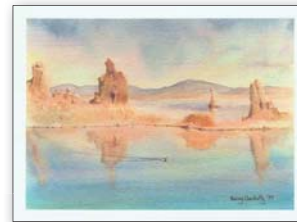
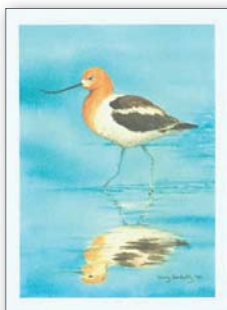


MAXFIELD PARRISH HOLIDAY CARD SET

A popular artist of the 1920s, Maxfield Parrish painted romantic images in rich, luminous colors with incredible detail. These four lovely winter landscapes vividly capture the feeling of being in the mountains with a fresh blanket of snow all around. The set includes five cards each of four designs; the cards read "Season's Greetings" inside. Printed with soy-based inks on recycled paper. *Maxfield Parrish Holiday Card Set, 20 cards with envelopes: \$15.00*

MONO CRATERS HOLIDAY CARD SET

Stephen Ingram's lovely photo of the snow-covered Mono Craters reflected in Mono Lake graces the front of this holiday card. Enjoy the holidays and wish for a big snowpack! Message inside reads "Best wishes for a joyous holiday season." *Mono Craters Holiday Card Set, 8 cards with envelopes: \$11.95*



NANCY OVERHOLTZ CARD SET

Local watercolorist Nancy Overholtz has created this beautiful series of notecards of the Mono Basin. Cards are printed on watercolor paper with deckle edges. The set of eight cards has six scenic Mono Lake land and waterscapes and two bird watercolor prints.

Nancy Overholtz Card Set, 8 cards with envelopes: \$20.00

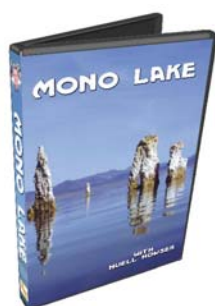
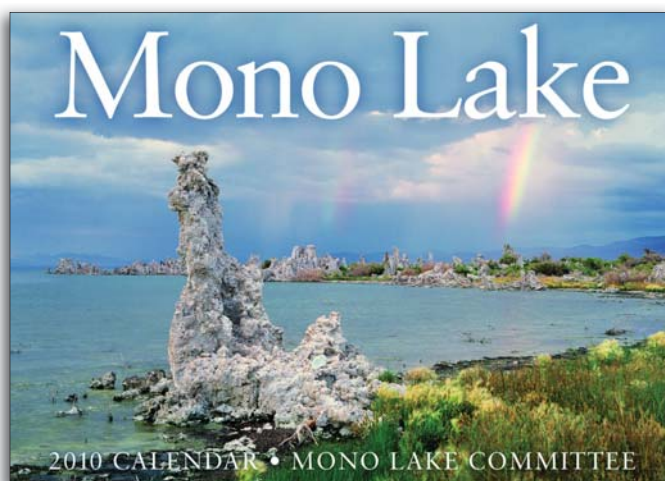
Call (760) 647-6595 to order

2010 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

The 2010 Calendar is full of unique and beautiful views from around the Mono Basin. Each perspective is a reminder of the beauty Mono Lake Committee members and friends are collectively protecting and restoring. From tufa towers to Osprey, sweeping landscapes to aspens, and views of all the seasons—our calendar will remind you of this special place all year!

Printed in the US on recycled paper.

2010 Mono Lake Calendar, 9½" x 13": \$11.95



CALIFORNIA'S GOLD MONO LAKE DVD

BY HUELL HOWSER

Huell Howser first visited Mono Lake 15 years ago in one of the most popular episodes of his long-running PBS television show *California's Gold*. He returned to Mono Lake last summer to film a follow-up show, and this one-hour DVD includes both episodes. The DVD shows 15 years of changes dramatically: Huell paddles by canoe through tufa towers he once walked among! Changes at South Tufa, the US Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center, and the County Park boardwalk are also featured along with Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin, retired State Park Rangers David & Janet Carle, current State Park Ranger

Jim Pence, and Forest Service Ranger Jon Kazmierski.

California's Gold Mono Lake DVD, 1 hour: \$21.95

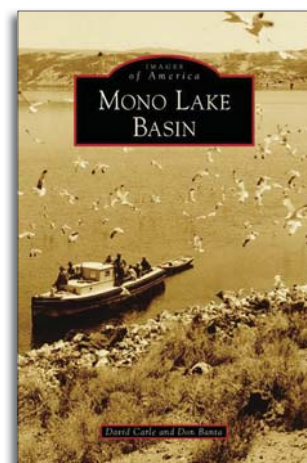
MONO LAKE BASIN

BY DAVID CARLE AND DON BANTA

Authors David Carle, former State Park Ranger, and Don Banta, Lee Vining resident and historian, explore the human history of the Mono Basin through images and accompanying text to show the history of the watershed, its places, people, and challenges. The final chapter portrays the struggle to save Mono Lake, with photos ranging from the town of West Portal with its own rope tow ski area, to the formation of the Committee and the successful State Water Board hearings.

A great gift for any Mono Basin enthusiast.

Mono Lake Basin, softcover, Arcadia Publishing, 128 pages, 9¼" x 6½": \$21.99



Order by phone: (760) 647-6595, fax: (760) 647-6377, or online: www.monolake.org/store

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Staff migrations

by Erika Obedzinski

Thank you to our wonderful seasonal staff who made the 2009 summer season of South Tufa walking tours, canoe tours, extended Information Center & Bookstore hours, and outreach to visitors a success. We wish them all well in their next adventures and hope to see them back at Mono Lake before too long!

In addition to weekly monitoring on Mill Creek, watering trees, and taking groundwater measurements on Lee Vining and Rush Creeks, intern **Rosa Brey** always made time to give the gardens around the offices a boost by watering, pulling up invasive grasses, and planting native plants.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Martha Claassen**'s love and expert knowledge of books and backcountry trails helped visitors enjoy their stop at the front counter even more. We're glad she'll be close by working at June Mountain this winter.

Mammoth local and intern **Melanie Frincke-Craig** heads back to the University of Nevada, Reno in pursuit of a degree in Education. She got hands-on experience this summer leading a new restoration talk and tree-watering activity as well as crafts projects for kids. Melanie read groundwater measurements along the creeks and was a big help with bulk mailings and many other office projects.

This fall Lee Vining native and intern **Hannah Gehrman** also returns to the University of Nevada, Reno where she is studying to be an elementary school teacher. Hannah created fun and engaging nature-related craft projects for kids to do in front of the bookstore, supported the membership desk, and was always ready to lend a hand at essential office projects.

Intern **Katherine Getts** re-organized the streams subject area in the research library, making valuable documents easier to locate. She also coordinated our upcoming fall Environmental Roundtable meetings and laid the groundwork for a CEQA workshop in Lee Vining this winter. Katherine is headed home to the Sonoran desert before figuring out her next move.

Dedicated Canoe Coordinator **Morgan Lindsay** made canoe tours for the public run smoothly all summer long. She made extra efforts to get Outdoor Experiences students out in canoes and accommodated many special request tours. Morgan was also instrumental in making sure the many petitions and letters we received in support of state parks were sent to decision makers in Sacramento. We are fortunate that Morgan has agreed to stay on for the next year as a Project Specialist with a focus on policy projects!



2009 Mono Lake Committee staff; from left to right. Top row: Ellery McQuilkin, Geoff McQuilkin, Bartshé Miller, Ellen King, Lisa Cutting, Elin Ljung. Second row: Arya Degenhardt, Hillary Behr, Logan Parsons, Melanie Frincke-Craig, Duncan King. Third row: Caelen McQuilkin, Erika Obedzinski, Claire Skinner, Katherine Getts, Rosa Brey. Bottom row: Greg Reis, Morgan Lindsay, Nora Livingston, Martha Claassen, Rose Wilson. Not pictured: Santiago Escruceria, Hannah Gehrman, and Laura Walker.

Birding Intern **Nora Livingston** arrived early in the spring and was the patient and cheerful point person for Chautauqua registration. She led many bird walks, helped with California Gull research out on the islands, and collected key data for a future turbidity report on Rush Creek. She's off to Warren Wilson College for the coming year, and hopes to return to study birds near Mono Lake in the future.

Intern **Claire Skinner** put together our fun and informative staff door of bios and photos, and collaborated with Mono Basin Resource Steward Justin Hite on a bi-monthly Mono Basin Natural History Bulletin. Be sure to read Claire's article on the intern experience on page 9. Claire is moving to Arizona and will be continuing to work with books and words as an Editorial Intern with the University of Arizona Press. ❖

Erika Obedzinski is the Committee's Office Director. She and Greg Reis are celebrating their recent marriage!



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

The Mono Basin is green and gold in the late summer. Splashes of rabbitbrush flowers line the roads and brighten stretches of green sagebrush. A few leaves on the willows and aspens have changed color, hinting at the brilliant display to come. The school bus passed through town this morning, a spot of gold among the white campers and motor homes, a sign that the new school year has started. The sky is losing the softness of summer and taking on the sharp clarity of fall. Mono Lake watches over it all, bluer and brighter. Long may it live!

In memory

Marjorie Bush of Morgantown, PA made a donation in memory of **William Busch**. **Alfred Covaia** of Brentwood gave a gift in memory of **Liz Covaia**. **Ron Fredrickson** of Roseville sent a contribution in memory of his wife **Pauline Fredrickson** as did the **Photographic Society of America**.

Herschel & Patricia Leffler of Pilot Hill made a donation in the name of **Nathan Leffler**—"He brought our attention to Mono Lake 15 years ago."

Harry Quinn of Mountain Center gave a gift in memory of **Terry Quinn**.

Marilyn Hayden of Bishop, **Tony Rossmann** of San Francisco, and **Victoria Touchstone** of San Diego sent contributions in memory of **Andrea Mead Lawrence**.

The Mono Lake Committee extends its thanks to **Jean Bennett** of Ridgecrest and her family and friends. Jean passed away last year and made a kind and generous gift to Mono Lake's protection in her estate.

Secure Mono Lake's future

Remember the Mono Lake Committee in your will or living trust, or name the Committee as a beneficiary of your IRA, qualified retirement plan, or life insurance policy. Your thoughtful gift will help us protect and restore Mono Lake, educate youth and young adults about water and the environment, and move the state toward a strong ethic of conservation and water use efficiency. For more information, contact Geoff McQuilkin (geoff@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. ♦

The Mono Lake Volunteers of 2009

by Erika Obedzinski

Thank you to our Mono Lake Volunteers for your many hours spent reaching out to thousands of visitors on or near the shores of Mono Lake! Thank you also to our Volunteer Coordinator **Janet Carle** for making this program a success for the sixth year in a row. This year's new Mono Lake Volunteers are **Carolyn Balliet** of Mammoth Lakes, **Kathy Duvall** of Bishop, **Chyna Lepley** of Mammoth Lakes, **Vicky Phelps** of Mammoth Lakes, and **Donna Roff** of June Lake. The Mono Lake Volunteer program is sponsored in partnership by the Mono Lake Committee, California State Parks, the US Forest Service, and the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association.

This year's dedicated Mono Lake Volunteers are: Mary Ahnger, George Appel, Jo Bacon, Phyllis Benham, Maxine Binn, Sharon Bluhm, Stan Bluhm, Dorothy Burdette, Elizabeth

Corathers, Ken Corathers, Pat De Sota, Nancy Devon, Jean Dillingham, Kathy Duvall, Judy Erb, Hank Garretson, Edyth Irvine, Duncan King, Linda LaPierre, Chyna Lepley, Anna Mills, Helen Mockel, Karen Murphy-Schlaepfer, Kay Nelson, Ron Nelson, Mel Pereira, Vicky Phelps, Mary K. Prentice, Bonnie Reinhold, Donna Roff, Rhonda Starr, Nancy States, Sherryl Taylor, Igor Vorobyoff, Lee Vorobyoff, Mary Jo Whritner, and Jim Williams.

Special thanks to the volunteers who have helped with specific projects this spring and summer including tree and garden watering, invasive plant pulling, internet server troubleshooting,



Staff and volunteers celebrate at the Scenic Area Visitor Center at the 6th annual Mono Lake Volunteer graduation ceremony.

membership desk support, and Chautauqua help (to name a few!): Nancy Appel, Russell Bell, Lynn Boulton and her Lee Vining Elementary School students, Dave Carle, Dick Erb, Sally Gaines, Connie Henderson, Rosanne Higley, Mariska Obedzinski, Rick Russell, Linda Viall, and Steff Zurek.



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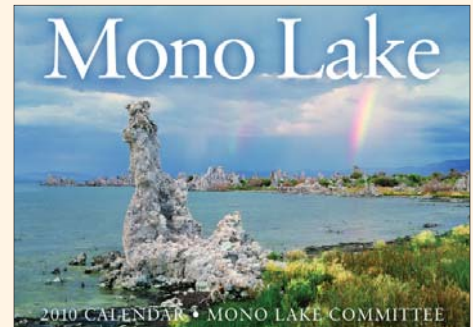
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2010 Field Seminars

- **January 15:** complete seminar information online
- **February 1:** registration opens for Mono Lake Committee members *only*
- **March 1:** registration opens for non-members



to register, call (760) 647-6595 or visit www.monolake.org/seminars

CARL DENNIS BUELL