

# MONO LAKE

## NEWSLETTER

Winter 2008 & Spring 2009

# mono lake

[Member Login](#)

## Headlines

from The Mono-logue

- **The new Mono Lake Committee website is here!**

Have you had a chance to visit [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org) recently? Greg, Geoff, Arya, Elin, Erika, Bartshe, Lisa, Duncan, Ellen, Santiago, Laura, and Brian have been working hard over the winter to bring you the new updated site.

Thirty years ago Mono Lake Committee founder David Gaines traveled tirelessly around California with a slideshow and a stack of "Save Mono Lake" bumper stickers to let people know what was happening at Mono Lake—talking to anyone who would listen. Today, the Internet offers a new way to do just that.

Take a look inside this *Newsletter* for information on your favorite web features as well as new photos, a new webcam, and a whole new set of cool stuff to check out ... and then take a visit!

- **2009 Field Seminar registration: Now open!**

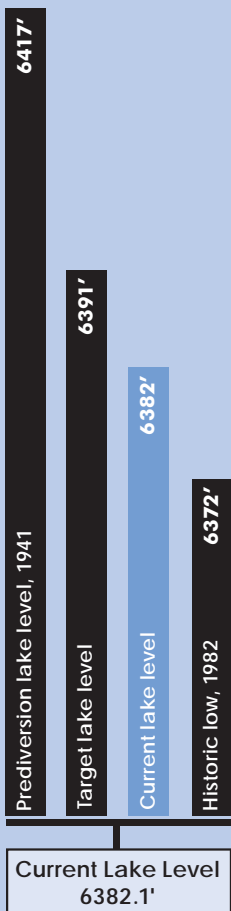
Register now for a Field Seminar at Mono Lake....

- **2009 Chautauqua begins to hatch**

Registration begins April 15 and this year's lineup is looking great. Check back as details roll in....



[Donate](#)



This morning I went out to snap the last photo for this issue of the *Newsletter*. Making my way east to the shoreline, I could hardly believe it was February—dry grass crunching underfoot, coyote tracks in exposed mud. It was cold, and beautiful ... but where is the snow?

We've all been crossing our fingers for snow, but it doesn't seem to be working just yet. It's almost as if you can see the water worry lodged in people's brows. Greg says in his *Lakewatch* article, "Do your rain dance!" I think it's neat that people get superstitious about it. In the meantime, we keep marching on.

In looking for the bright spots, one that sticks out for me is the new Website at [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org). We've had so much fun developing and launching it, and we're really excited to share it. You can read all about the new features here, and I hope it will inspire you to come take a look if you haven't already.

And there's another part of the new Website that feels good too.

We've seen a small increase in online donations. In these uncertain economic times, even small indications of support feel big. We depend on our amazing members every day, and stretch every dollar as far as we can. If there's one thing about Committee staff it's that we're frugal, and these days we're being extra vigilant with money at every turn. People everywhere are double checking priorities, and we hope that Mono Lake still rises to the top of your list. More than ever people need places like Mono Lake—where quiet solitude and wide open spaces dominate, where when you look out at the landscape you can see that people are doing the right thing.

We hope that this Newsletter brings you some of that good Mono Lake feeling. Don't forget to visit [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org) when you need a little bit more. And we sincerely hope that you'll keep Mono Lake in your thoughts—for you and for the lake too.

Think snow!

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



COVER PHOTO BY BARTSHE MILLER

ELIN LJUNG

*Tufa forming just below the water's surface on a cold winter evening.*

### Mono Lake Committee Mission

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



### Mono Lake Office Information Center & Bookstore

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

[info@monolake.org](mailto:info@monolake.org)  
[www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org)  
[www.monobasinresearch.org](http://www.monobasinresearch.org)

### Los Angeles Office

322 Culver Boulevard  
Playa Del Rey, California 90293

### Staff

Executive Director..... Geoffrey McQuilkin  
Eastern Sierra Policy Director..... Lisa Cutting  
Education Director..... Bartshé Miller  
Communications Director..... Arya Degenhardt  
Office Director..... Erika Obedzinski  
Membership Coordinator..... Ellen King  
Information Specialist..... Greg Reis  
Sacramento Policy Associate..... Betsy Reifsnider  
Outdoor Experiences Mgr..... Santiago Escruceria  
Los Angeles Education Coord..... Herley Jim Bowling  
Communications Coordinator..... Elin Ljung  
Information Center & Bookstore Mgr..... Duncan King  
Book & Map Buyer..... Laura Walker  
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Founded by David Gaines in 1978

**MONO LAKE**  
NEW SLETTER

Winter 2008 & Spring 2009  
Volume XXX, Numbers 2 & 3

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# Mono Lake Website 2.0

*Come take a look!*

*by Geoffrey McQuilkin*

Nothing rivals spending a quiet sunrise on the shores of Mono Lake as gulls pluck alkali flies from salty waters and the distant Sierra crest turns orange in the new day's light. Yet on most mornings most of us find ourselves many miles away from Mono Lake, often wishing to be a bit closer. For that reason we've updated, redesigned, and expanded the Mono Lake Website.

The new website is an online home base for people who care about Mono Lake, its streams, and surrounding lands. Live views of the lake, recent news postings from staff, and a forum for sharing Mono Lake photos make it a place to visit frequently to keep in touch with what's happening around the basin—and to share your own thoughts and experiences as well.

## Widening the Mono Lake family

Over the years we've noted that while the Mono Lake family of friends is anchored by the membership of the Mono Lake Committee, it spreads beyond our 16,000 active members. Many Mono Lake enthusiasts who are not currently members are still eager to stand up for the lake's protection and to speak on its behalf. But how do we reach these folks? You guessed it: the new website.

One of the core features of the new site is that anybody can create an account and log in. Once logged in, you're a "Mono Lake friend" and can access special website features. At the same time, having the ability to contact these Mono Lake friends means we're able to expand the Mono Lake network, strengthening the Committee's ability to advocate on the lake's behalf.

Rest assured, members remain at the heart of the Mono Lake effort. Log in as a member and you can access even more online features. Plus, members enjoy real world benefits such as bookstore and program discounts and the satisfaction of participating in a great environmental success story.

So, the next time you are talking to friends or family about Mono Lake, encourage them to visit the website and sign up for email updates. They can learn more about

Mono Lake and maybe even become members down the road.

## Improving on past versions

A dozen years ago we launched the first Mono Lake Website, tapping the then-emerging magic of the Internet. The website has been a great success but has shown its age in the past few years as new technologies have enabled blogs, networking, and user-friendly data management.

Now we've taken the old website to the next level—and we're really excited about it. Judging from the response so far, so are Mono Lake supporters. Since our November launch date we've served over 87,000 online visitors from 140 different countries. While we are disappointed that Mono Lake interest is not higher in Kazakhstan (no visits), we are reassured of worldwide interest by visits from Iraq, Japan, Germany, and India. In the spirit of national unity, we're proud to report that Mono Lake is popular with online visitors from every state in the Union. (Yes, California ranks first, but can you guess the next five highest-visiting states? Texas, New York, Nevada, Arizona, and Florida.)

If you haven't visited the Mono Lake Website in recent months, now's the time. To entice you further, here are top

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*Sunset from the new Mill Creek-Mono Lake webcam online at [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org).*

features of the new and improved site:

## **The Mono-logue**

For thirty years those of us fortunate enough to live near the lake have written about our experiences in the *Mono Lake Newsletter*, hoping to share a bit of the sights, sounds, and thoughts about the Mono Basin. That tradition continues, but with the website we are now bringing you these observations, combined with all manner of Mono Lake news, as they happen.

## **The Mōnō•logue**

*A refreshing collection of all things Mono Lake brought to you by the Mono Lake Committee staff*

The forum for this news? Our new blog titled *The Mono-logue*. Billed as “A refreshing collection of all things Mono Lake brought to you by the Mono Lake Committee staff,” *The Mono-logue* is updated every few days. We think it will quickly become the hot spot to catch up on the latest happenings. In addition, readers are welcome to comment on the posts.

Recent entries include photos of a rare winter visit of 562 Tundra Swans, announcement of the 2009 Field Seminars, a report on seasonal conditions and activities, an update on the current lake level and stream hydrology, and our top ten Mono Lake highlights of 2008.

## **Webcams**

Webcams are the most popular feature of the Mono Lake Website. Our cameras update throughout the day to share the view of what’s happening here at the lake to anyone interested around the world.

In recent years we’ve had two cameras running. One sits atop the Mono Lake Committee building, looking northeast to Mono Lake, Negit Island, Black Point, and the Bodie Hills. In response to dedicated viewer requests this Lee Vining cam view includes a view of the highway out front, the tree across the street, and the newly remodeled Shell station. It’s great for viewing sunsets and for checking winter driving conditions.

The second camera is located at the US Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center, as part of a partnership project. The location offers a fabulous panoramic view of Negit and Paoha Islands, Mono Lake, and the recovering streamside forest along lower Lee Vining Creek.

Now we’ve added a third

camera: the Mill Creek-Mono Lake cam! This camera, located north of the lake, looks across Mill Creek (and its unfortunately impaired flow of water) to Mono Lake and the Mono Craters. The beautiful view is perfect for watching winter storms roll into the Mono Basin.

A cadre of loyal enthusiasts keep Mono Lake close by every day through the webcam views. In the months ahead we’ll be adding additional features to make the cams even better. Ideas include extended image archives and time lapse movies of the day passing at the lake. Visit the webcams online to share your thoughts on the features you want to see most.

## **Share your photos!**

Did you catch a shot of an Osprey in flight over South Tufa? The sunset glow on the Mono Craters? Share it with Mono Lake lovers worldwide! Find a historical shot you’d like to share? Help build an online collection of photographs documenting this unique place. The Mono Basin offers infinite photographic opportunities, and we’d love to see *your* shots!

We’re featuring your photos on the website via partnership with the online service Flickr. Details are online, but suffice it to say that your Mono Lake photos can become features across the Mono Lake website and in our gallery of shared photos.

We may even get in touch with you if there’s a particularly good shot that we’d like to use on the website itself.



## **Mono Lake eCards**

Want to share Mono Lake with your aunt in New York who has never seen it? Send an email postcard! We have eight beautiful images to choose from, ranging from brine shrimp and tufa towers to scenic panoramas and even a view of Mono Lake from space. Add your personal subject and message and you’ve got a perfect way to send birthday greetings, to offer an invitation for a road trip to Lee Vining, or to just say hello. And it’s a nice way to introduce friends to Mono Lake too!



*“Clouds over Mono Lake” eCard available online to send a beautiful view of Mono Lake to your favorite Monophile.*

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## Manage your membership

Here at the Committee we are well aware that while Mono Lake is the reason *why* we're here, Mono Lake Committee members are *how* we're here, day after day, protecting Mono Lake. We want to make sure that everything about being a Mono Lake Committee member is enjoyable and works easily for you. And so, by popular request, we have a new special section of the website where you can manage your Mono Lake Committee membership. You can make address changes, check your renewal date, adjust email preferences, see a record of recent donations, and let us know your interest in volunteering, advocacy, and more. Guardians of the Lake and Defense Trust members can also manage information related to those programs. And of course, while you can do all this online, we're still happy to help with any questions by phone here at the office.

## Donating online is now easy

Members asked for improvements and the new website includes them! Previously, online donations were either too complicated to make, not processed in real time, or handled by a (trusted) outside service that charged fees, reducing the donation amount actually making it to the Committee.

Well, all those problems are now gone. Online donations—including paper-saving online membership renewal—are now

easy, straightforward, and processed immediately. So far it seems popular because members tripled their use of the online donation features in December compared to the previous year!

## Time to log in!

We encourage members and friends alike to visit [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org) and log in to our new system! If we know your email address we'll link you instantly with your Mono Lake Committee membership. If not, we'll ask a few questions and get you on your way quickly. And be sure to check back often as we've got lots more fun ideas coming soon.

We think you'll be excited to explore the new website. We welcome your feedback and feature requests, which you can do by recording it online, emailing [info@monolake.org](mailto:info@monolake.org), or giving us a call at (760) 647-6595.

And we hope that while you're looking at a webcam, checking the wildflower update, or seeing what Committee staff are up to, you'll make plans to come visit Mono Lake, the Mono Lake Committee, and get a chance to watch that sunrise down at the lakeshore in person. ♦

*Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He has been enjoying posting updates on The Mono-logue while working on the road at the southern end of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.*



## Education in the field via the web

by Bartshé Miller

If you have the choice, the best way to learn about Mono Lake is to visit it, live, in person, unplugged. You can't catch brine shrimp on our website, you can't hear a Wilson's Snipe winnowing on it, you can't smell the sagebrush, and you certainly can't catch a whiff of the lakeshore's *Ectothiorhodospira* organisms.

But if you're interested in learning what your educational options are once you get here, you might want to check out [www.monolake.org/mlc/education](http://www.monolake.org/mlc/education). You don't have to be a teacher or a student to participate in the variety of education programs that we offer. All of our programs are field-oriented, and many of them are free. For teachers, Mono Lake is an ideal outdoor classroom for studying a number of California Academic Content Standards. For students, it's interactive, fun, and you can even taste *kutsavi*, a traditional food of the Kutzadika<sup>a</sup> Paiute.

Mono Lake is one of the few success stories in the realm of water and the environment. Students can learn about the solutions that worked for Mono Lake and Los Angeles as easily as they can learn about the life cycle of a brine shrimp.

And we don't do it alone. The Mono Lake Committee works with our education partners, the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve and the US Forest Service, to offer something for anyone interested in field programs—individuals, families, students, and teachers. All of our programs are under special-use permit with the Inyo National Forest. We have canoe trips, hikes, field seminars, environmental education programs, interpretive programs, teacher packets, and the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua. "Chau-what," you say? Sha-ta'-qwa ... you'll have to visit the website to get more information on that one.

# Unlocking stream restoration at Mono Lake

*Stream flows, adaptive management, keys to success*

by Lisa Cutting

for every real lock  
there is only one real key  
and it's in some other dream  
now invisible  
  
it's the key to the one real door  
it opens the river and sky both at once  
it's already in the downward river  
with my hand on it  
my real hand  
  
and I am saying to the hand  
turn  
  
open the river

—W.S. Merwin

as quoted in *The River Why* by David James Duncan

Since the State Water Resources Control Board issued Decision 1631 in 1994 and subsequent restoration Orders 98-05 and 98-07 in 1998, many doors have been opened for Mono Lake's tributary streams (see the Spring 2006 and Spring 2007 *Newsletters* for background). We have witnessed vegetation returning to the creeks' floodplains, once dry side channels flowing with water, and wildlife returning to the Mono Basin's critical riparian habitat.

But the work is far from over. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) still has restoration action items to complete as ordered by the State Water Board. Additionally, monitoring of specific key indices continues on a regular basis, and scientists continue to collect information for important future recommendations to the State Water Board. All of these will have long-lasting effects on the future health and sustainability of the entire system.

## **What is restoration ecology?**

Restoration is the act of bringing something back into existence or use, or back to an original state. The Society for Ecological Restoration defines it as an "intentional activity that initiates or accelerates the recovery of an ecosystem with respect to its health, integrity and sustainability" (SER 2004). In the case of the Mono Basin's once-lush creeks that were decimated by 50 years of excessive water diversions, restoration focuses on re-establishing natural processes rather than re-creating the exact landscape that existed prior to diversions.

Restoration ecology is still a developing scientific discipline, in fact, it was only during the late 1980s that it was identified as its own discipline. To put the restoration

work at Mono Lake into that context, the creeks first received mandated water in 1984 after decades of being dry; court-ordered "interim" restoration activities began in 1990 and included actions that supplemented the flow of water down the creeks; and final State Water Board restoration actions were finalized in 1998. It is the final restoration orders of 1998 that guide us today.

## **Restoration in action**

Scientists are confident that stream flows are one of the most important pieces of restoring these recovering systems. In combination with time, flows provide the stability and the dynamic energy to return stream systems to health. Because of water exports, we don't have the same quantity of water, but we can mimic the natural hydrograph so the streams experience the seasonal variability essential for natural processes to occur.

The State Water Board-appointed stream scientists have been studying Mono's system for years—bed load movement studies, recruitment of riparian vegetation, groundwater levels, fish populations, and individual condition factor analysis—all in preparation for making final stream flow recommendations to the State Water Board. These flow recommendations will include base flows, winter flows, and the high spring runoff stream restoration flows (SRF). These final flow recommendations will be critical to ensuring the system's health and long-term sustainability.

With the stream scientists preparing to release final flow recommendations as early as spring of this year, the Mono Lake Committee is busy reviewing supporting documents, evaluating study results, and analyzing the hydrological models in consultation with our scientific experts. Of special concern are the existing water transport system and the reliability of delivering the recommended flows, especially the high SRFs.

The existing plumbing is very complex (see "Rush Creek plumbing for dummies" in the Spring 2007 *Newsletter*). At the time of the Mono Lake hearings, the Committee and other interested parties argued that the only reliable way to deliver the high SRFs into Rush Creek was a Grant Lake Reservoir outlet. Due to the cost of the outlet, the State Water Board agreed to let DWP experiment with alternative methods of delivering the high flows.

The primary method has been what's called Lee Vining Creek Augmentation, where water from Lee Vining Creek is brought over through the aqueduct conduit (after Lee Vining Creek's peak has passed) and put into the 5-Siphon Bypass, a spillway that connects the aqueduct with Rush Creek. If

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it sounds complicated that's because it is, and it requires extremely accurate coordination and timing.

### **Adaptive management: Another key to success**

Adaptive management is an approach used to address uncertainties in the restoration process by viewing management actions as experiments derived from hypotheses, conducting extensive monitoring, and evaluating the results. The management direction and underlying assumptions are then changed accordingly.

Adaptive management and monitoring have always been part of the restoration equation in the Mono Basin. In fact, the State Water Board specifically ordered that "stream monitoring shall evaluate and make recommendations, based upon the results of the monitoring program, regarding the magnitude, duration, and frequency of the SRFs necessary for the restoration of Rush Creek; and the need for a Grant Lake bypass to reliably achieve the flows needed for restoration of Rush Creek."

In a 1997 Mono Lake Committee interview with the State Water Board-appointed stream scientist Dr. Bill Trush (see Fall 1997 *Newsletter*), he was clear on the role of the adaptive management process and stream flow recommendations: "I think adaptive management is a good way of reducing the stress caused by uncertainty. Everyone will know what we're doing. We may not get results fast enough for some folks—I'm sure that will happen. But I see it working. Without adaptive management and monitoring, potential confrontation over flow recommendations will only be delayed to a future time."

### **Is adaptive management working?**

Everyone involved in the restoration process agrees that adaptive management is a good approach, and the State Water Board has required it, but is it working? Recently, there have

been problems with the adaptive management process. One example is the winter low flow variance requested by DWP in October 2007 (see Summer 2008 *Newsletter*). The Committee agreed to the variance as long as additional stream monitoring was conducted to collect the unique data associated with the low flow situation. Even though the State Water Board agreed, DWP could not adjust existing contracts with the scientists, secure additional funds, nor shift their own personnel work assignments to assist with the new work plan. Luckily, the Committee and California Trout, with the help of the US Forest Service, were able to conduct some of the work. Still, that chain of events highlighted a glaring problem in the process of implementing adaptive management.

Even though all the parties have agreed to an adaptive management approach to restoration, there are significant constraints that prevent us from making real-time adjustments to monitoring and data collection, even when they're agreed upon and justified. Resolving this conflicting management approach is critical to reaching consensus agreement on stream flow recommendations.

Regardless of the bumps in the road, we will press on. The Mono Lake Committee has been working on behalf of Mono Lake's streams for thirty years, with the formalized adaptive management approach really only occurring during the last ten years. During that time, much has been accomplished. Along the streams in the Mono Basin, scientists, regulators, and advocates continue to learn what a natural system looks like in this era of exports for municipal water supply. As we learn, we can make better decisions. And those decisions lead us on a path toward finding the keys the system needs to open and flow. ❖

*Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She checks the Mono Basin Real Time data at [www.monolake.org/today/water](http://www.monolake.org/today/water) to see what's flowing in the creeks for restoration and for fishing conditions too!*



A frozen pond on Rush Creek's Channel 8 in January 2009.

# A low year for nesting California Gulls

by Bartshé Miller

**Q**: What do the economy and California Gulls at Mono Lake have in common?

**A**: Both are in a recession.

Last summer brought the second lowest total for nesting California Gulls (*Larus californicus*) in 26 years of monitoring. In 2008 36,994 adult California Gulls nested at Mono Lake. This was down from a 26-year average of 47,653. There is no clear explanation for the low numbers in 2008 yet, but continuing this valuable long-term research will help us figure out this puzzle.

PRBO Conservation Science has continued long-term monitoring of the population size and reproductive success of California Gulls since 1983. In 2008, field researcher Kristie Nelson returned to lead the monitoring through its 26<sup>th</sup> year.

For years we've been saying that Mono Lake harbors the second largest breeding population of California Gulls in the world after Great Salt Lake. This second place title could potentially slip to third, due to a growing population of nesting California Gulls in the South San Francisco Bay. As recently as 2007, 30,000 gulls were nesting in the South Bay, up dramatically from the 2,000 or so that nested in the area in

1982. Could an increasing number of fledged Mono Lake gulls be ending up in the South Bay?

We know that gull populations do fluctuate at Mono Lake, and sometimes this is in response to variables in lake productivity and spring weather. California Gulls are highly opportunistic foragers and predators and if food is plentiful in the South Bay, from local landfills and locally breeding Avocet and Black-necked Stilt populations, might this be winning over our favorite picnic bird? Or is it more than a coincidence that the South Bay colony started when Mono's islands were landbridged?

Mono Lake is the site of the longest continuous California Gull breeding population monitoring program, and there is excellent data on population changes here. We don't know what this recent data is telling us just yet, making the research all the more important in coming years, for understanding Mono Lake's ecological health. For more information on California Gull research visit [www.monobasinresearch.org](http://www.monobasinresearch.org). ❖

*Bartshé Miller is the Committee's Education Director. In order to update the new website's education pages he stepped into DreamWeaver and hasn't found a way out yet.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSALE WINARD

Birds • Science • Art • Music • Field Trips

the Eighth Annual

## *Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua*

June 19–21, 2009 in Lee Vining, California

Registration begins April 15, 2009 at [www.birdchautauqua.org](http://www.birdchautauqua.org)

# Grace de Laet, a true friend of Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

**O**n a sunny autumn day with the waters of San Francisco Bay lapping brightly at the shore, the many friends and family of Grace de Laet gathered at the San Francisco Yacht Club to celebrate her life. Grace passed away on October 28, 2008 at the age of 75, attended by friends and family at her home in Sausalito.

Grace was well known and loved by many Mono Lake Committee members for her involvement in Mono Lake's protection from the beginning of the effort, her enthusiasm for life, and her love for birds and wildlife. She will be truly missed.

Grace met Committee founder David Gaines early on in the Mono Lake effort, back in 1978. She heard him give a presentation on Mono's plight and immediately became a Save Mono Lake champion. Grace quickly befriended Gaines and made the offer every non-profit organizer dreams of: "Do you need any help with fundraising?" A lover of fine food and wine, Grace was an energetic hostess who blended her many events with the causes she supported; top among them organizations dedicated to birds and the environment, and among the top of those, the Mono Lake Committee.

Grace quickly increased Mono Lake's visibility within the San Francisco community through events, fundraisers, and a network of contacts including noted newspaper writer Harold Gilliam.



Grace de Laet at the 1987 Mono Lake Fine Wine Cellar Drawing with reporter Gethar Herbert Cerwin.



David Gaines and Grace de Laet at the 1981 Angel Island fundraising event for Mono Lake.

Grace joined the Committee Board of Directors in 1980, serving until she stepped down in 1991; due to her great service she was named an Emeritus Director of the Committee.

"In those early days," remembers Committee co-founder Sally Gaines, "we had no idea how to hold a big social event. Grace appeared like magic and led the way." The 1981 *Mono Lake Newsletter* reported on Grace's first Mono Lake project: a picnic trip to Angel Island. But it wasn't just any picnic! The gala event involved 45 sailboats ferrying 400 people across San Francisco Bay, gourmet food, a selection of California wines, and attendees like David Brower.

Another one of Grace's projects was a deluxe bus trip from San Francisco to Mono Lake, complete with a stop for lunch at Yosemite's Ahwahnee Hotel and plenty of good cheer, meals, and beverages for the trip. Again, Mono Lake benefitted from increased visibility and new funds for the legal protection effort.

Grace also launched a series of fine wine cellar drawings in 1986, often held at the St. Francis Yacht Club. In addition to being great fun and raising funds, the drawings became a forum for

the presentation of the Committee's Defender of the Trust award to noteworthy Mono Lake advocates.

Born in Detroit in 1933, Grace made her way to California in the 1960s. She was a world traveler and a particular fan of sailing, always accompanied by her husband Rick until his passing in 2002. Ever the lover of animals, Grace's enthusiasm for the natural world reached from the wild corners of the Mono Basin to her carefully tended bird-friendly garden at home, to her living room and her faithful avian companion of many years, Mr. Gladstone the cockateel. Indeed, Grace was often proud to share the story of her success in compelling local cat owners to keep their pets out of her bird sanctuary.

As testament to her love for Mono Lake, Grace designated a portion of her estate to the Committee to assure that Mono Lake's health continues to recover and the lake remains an oasis for birds and wildlife for generations to come. We expect to have more details on how Grace will be remembered at the lake in a future *Newsletter*.

Grace and her family kindly requested that donations in her memory be made to the Mono Lake Committee. We extend our thanks to the many individuals who have done so. ❖

# Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting

## **Mono Lake Trail update**

Despite trail crews being called away during the summer to battle fires around the state, significant work was still completed on the new trail to Mono Lake. Work on the 1.3-mile-long trail that will connect the US Forest Service Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center with the Old Marina area will resume again this spring. The Mono Lake Trail should be completed in 2009.

Two segments of the trail are almost done and have already received enthusiastic praise. The David Gaines Memorial Boardwalk, which is a spur route off the main trail to the lake, has been upgraded and extended. The boardwalk plans incorporate areas for interpretive signs and larger viewing areas with benches.

The other completed segment starts at the Visitor Center just off the patio and aesthetically winds its way down the slope through the sagebrush toward Mono Lake. Work scheduled for this summer will connect the two sections and complete trail work at the Old Marina site.

The project also addresses the scenic integrity of the area and includes the restoration of previously disturbed areas and the narrowing of road and trail corridors.

All of the trail partners—California Department of Parks and Recreation,

the US Forest Service, California Conservation Corps, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, Friends of the Inyo, the Mono Basin Historical Society, and the Mono Lake Committee—are thrilled that visitors will be able to walk directly to Mono Lake from two key visitor locations, eliminating the need to drive to see Mono Lake up close. Once completed, the Mono Lake Trail will complement the existing Lee Vining Creek Trail, which leaves the pavement at the south end of town and follows the creek for about a mile downstream to the Visitor Center.

## **RPAC affordable workforce housing planning**

The Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) held a Workforce Housing Open House in mid-December. The RPAC is a local committee that meets monthly, primarily focusing on planning issues and providing feedback and recommendations to Mono County. The RPAC has been investigating what it would take to get more affordable housing built in Lee Vining and sought to check in with the community to see if it was moving in the right direction.

There is a shortage of affordable housing in Lee Vining and many people who work in this community

must live elsewhere. The combination of the housing shortage and high real estate prices have affected the vibrancy and sense of community in Lee Vining. The current phase of the RPAC's work has involved exploring sites that might be suitable for a modest housing development.

Since most of the land adjacent to Lee Vining is public, the RPAC has been exploring some creative options. At the workshop, RPAC and Mono County Planning staff had maps and information sheets for each potential site and open house participants submitted their opinions and ideas directly onto the posted materials.

Next, the RPAC will evaluate the community's site preferences and explore options for a specific development proposal with the appropriate landowners. The Mono County Housing Authority and Board of Supervisors have expressed support for the RPAC's work and currently have Lee Vining prioritized for the first Mono County affordable housing project.

## **Mono Mills interpretive site dedication**

Mono Basin residents and history buffs gathered on September 26, 2008 for the dedication of the new Mono Mills interpretive site. In the early 1880s, Mono Mills produced lumber and cords of firewood that were processed, loaded onto flatbed cars, and transported to Bodie via narrow gauge railroad.

The dedication ceremony celebrated the hard work of all who had worked on the interpretive site. In cooperation with the US Forest Service, Friends of Bodie Railroad and Lumber Company researched the fascinating history, constructed the kiosk, and raised money for the project. The Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association provided funding for the design and fabrication of interpretive panels. Public donations were used to construct an Americans



The old and new sections of the David Gaines Memorial Boardwalk leading to Mono Lake.

*Continued on page 11*

with Disabilities Act accessible trail and Friends of the Inyo assisted with restoration of the parking area and construction of site-protection barriers. The Mono Lake Committee, along with members of E Clampus Vitus and the Mono Basin Historical Society, contributed to the research, providing photographs and information from their rich historical collections.

The new kiosk at Mono Mills is located on the exact site of the old lumber mill. The orientation of the panels helps visitors get a sense of the history of the area—as you read the panels and look at the historic photos you can simultaneously glance out across the landscape, almost visualizing the old mill and the operation's hustle and bustle.

The Mono Mills Historic Site is located on Highway 120 east, nine miles off Highway 395 in the Jeffrey pine forest south of Mono Lake. Highway 120 east is subject to winter closures so please check the road status before planning a trip.

### **Eared Grebe census returns**

After a three year gap in collecting Eared Grebe census information, the Committee successfully coordinated the 2008 aerial photography survey necessary to estimate migratory grebe numbers stopping at Mono Lake in the fall. In 1996 Sean Boyd, researcher with the Canadian Wildlife Service, began using aerial photographs to estimate the total number of grebes on Mono Lake in mid-October. Through the years, the number of birds has varied between 1.8 million (1997 and 2000) and 800,000 in 2004.

After the string of annual counts from 1996 to 2001, surveys were only completed in 2004 and 2008. The Committee recognizes the importance of collecting this information since approximately 30% of the entire North American population of Eared Grebes visits Mono Lake each year.

Thanks to Geoff Pope, a pilot out of Bishop, LightHawk, a volunteer-

based aviation organization, and local photographer Rick Kattelmann, Boyd now has the data necessary to calculate grebe numbers at Mono Lake during their fall migration from British Columbia to the Salton Sea and the Gulf of California last year. ❖



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK KATTELMANN

X marks the spot for the Eared Grebe flight survey photo calibration.

## A surprise visit from Outdoor Experiences students

Last fall the Outdoor Experiences (OE) program got a pleasant surprise: a visit and a gift from three veteran OE students from Los Angeles.

Jose, Cathy, and Lillian have participated in the OE program for the last nine years—during their four years at Dorsey High School and for five years after graduating. On a Saturday in November they left Los Angeles to make the familiar drive to Mono Lake. An early-season snow storm stopped their travels just south of Mammoth Lakes, so they turned back to Bishop and spent the night to wait out the storm. The next morning they made it to Lee Vining and knocked on OE Program Manager Santiago Escruceria's door—surprise!

The OE program connects inner-city youth to the source of their water through outdoor learning activities that build understanding, appreciation, and



SANTIAGO ESCRUCERIA

Cathy, Lillian, and Jose show off their gift to the OE program, the new range blower, complete with a compact fluorescent light bulb.

stewardship of their extended watershed. These students wanted to help support the program's operation, so Santiago took them to Cain Ranch to fulfill the purpose of their visit: to install the brand-new range blower they bought for the stove.

Hundreds of students visit the Mono Basin with the OE program each year.

It's always meaningful to keep in touch with past students as they grow up and continue to remember their time at Mono Lake.

The new range blower will keep the OE kitchen well ventilated for years and groups to come, thanks to Cathy, Lillian, and Jose!

# Mono Lake bird and wildlife sightings online

by Bartshé Miller

We learned in kindergarten that it's nice to share. Wildlife and bird sightings are always a topic of conversation in the Mono Basin and beyond, and if you see something interesting, we want to know about it! You can post your bird and wildlife sightings at [www.monolake.org/birds](http://www.monolake.org/birds). This is a great way to share your sightings and musings with other people who are also interested in birds and wildlife. And in our rapidly changing world, these sightings may be more meaningful than ever.

Your observations today could be the data points of tomorrow (unless you start posting about penguins on Paoha Island, then we'll get a little skeptical). Posts from years ago, once thought to be anecdotal, may become increasingly important, especially if the sighting is accompanied with a digital image. With climate change, habitat loss, and many common birds already declining



Tundra Swans over Mono Lake.

in North America, there are sure to be wrinkles in the ecological fabric of the Eastern Sierra.

Citizen science aside, the best reason to read or post on the bird and wildlife sighting page is that it's a place to catch up on other happenings at Mono Lake as well—the quiet wonders that occur daily but are noticed only occasionally: a spectacular bloom of arrowleaf balsamroot below Copper Mountain,

a migratory pulse of warblers at County Park, the magical appearance of a Short-eared Owl over the alkali flats, an American mink slinking over the rocks in Lee Vining Creek, a Parasitic Jaeger chasing down a gull, or 562 Tundra Swans on a cold December morning after a snow storm. The Mono Basin is alive, and at [www.monolake.org/birds](http://www.monolake.org/birds) you can see what's going on and share your sightings as well. ❖

PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT BANITA

## Walking the water line: Across California on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel

by David & Janet Carle

John Cain beamed approvingly at a dripping handful of black muck where peat soil was being restored by decomposing tules and cattails. The native vegetation had replaced farm crops on Twitchell Island in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It was our thirteenth day on a trip across California that closely followed the 38-degree latitude line from Mono Lake to the Pacific Ocean.

From September 13–30<sup>th</sup> we backpacked across Yosemite National Park, bicycled to Sonora and then across the Central Valley to Stockton (with the help of our son Ryan as support driver), and where the line passed through the Delta to San Francisco Bay, we kayaked and sailed on a friend's boat.

An intriguing number of water stories intersect this path. In California, 38°N is a “water line” where battles have been fought over dams, aqueducts, and wetlands reclamation, and where critical water issues are still being played out. The list includes Mono Lake, Hetch Hetchy and the Tuolumne River, New Melones Reservoir on the Stanislaus River, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, San Francisco Bay, and Point Reyes National Seashore.

At each of those sites we were able to meet with experts involved with resource protection and restoration. The Mono Lake Committee hosted a send-off for us at the lake. The US Forest Service, Restore Hetch Hetchy, the Environmental



David & Janet Carle with their bikes and the sendoff crew for the start of their water line trek—Mono Lake!

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CARLES

Defense Fund, Friends of the River, the Natural Heritage Institute's John Cain (a former Committee staff member), the Bay Institute, California State Parks, and the Point Reyes National Seashore all shared things that we could never have appreciated without their help.

All together we traveled 350 miles—75 of them on foot, 168 on bicycles, and 107 on boats. Crossing the state slowly, with time to look closely and experience things directly, taught us lessons we hope to share in a book someday.

David & Janet Carle are retired Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve Rangers and longtime Mono Basin residents. David is also an author with his most recent book, *Mono Lake Basin* (see page 18), released in the fall of 2008.

# Living Lakes Network celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

by Elin Ljung

Last September, Committee staff Geoff McQuilkin, Arya Degenhardt, and I paid our own way to attend the 12<sup>th</sup> International Living Lakes Conference at Lake Trasimeno in the Umbria region of Italy. The Living Lakes Network reached an impressive milestone in 2008: ten years of working for the protection of water in lake areas around the world. In that decade, the Network has grown from four founding lakes (one of which was Mono Lake) to include 55 member lakes in 37 countries.

Our hosts at Lake Trasimeno welcomed over 100 delegates from 30 different lakes, who gathered to discuss the intersection of cultural heritage with the protection of lakes. Lake Trasimeno was a fitting setting for such a topic, having supported human cultures back to the Etruscans. Each day, as we traveled to our conference venue, we passed the site where, in 217 BC, the Carthaginian general Hannibal ambushed and defeated Roman legions with his army. Cultural history, indeed!

Like Mono, Lake Trasimeno is a terminal lake, and its level has been dropping due to a combination of factors, including intensified agricultural activity and decreased rainfall in the region. The lake's temperature has risen as the sun heats its shallow depths (20 feet at the deepest), which has led to an increase in the harmless, but bothersome insects *chironomidae*. The Network delegates learned about chironomid abatement programs, which help to



Geoff and Elin at the frescoed Living Lakes conference venue in Italy.

make the lake more appealing to visitors.

At this, my first Living Lakes conference, I quickly noticed the Network's energetic family feeling. It was extremely powerful to meet a global community of non-profit lake protectors, and to know that none of us work alone. Talking with Kenyans Ann Obai and James Opiyo broadened my perspective as well—any protection of Lake Victoria must involve neighboring countries Uganda and Tanzania, which also share the lake's shores. Despite our struggles here, at least Mono Lake lies within a single county!

Perhaps the most valuable opportunity Living Lakes Conferences provide is that of connecting with other delegates. Arya and I discussed

a possible children's photography collaboration with Gundi Shachal from the Dead Sea. And since returning from Italy, Geoff has been in contact with folks at Lake Uromiyeh in Iran, with hopes that our experiences can aid in the management of that similarly salty lake. When we have all dispersed back to our home countries around the world, collaborations like these reflect the vitality of the Living Lakes Network. ❖

*Elin Ljung is the Committee's Communications Coordinator. She has been flipping through the archived Newsletters on the website and admiring them in color!*

## Mono Lake Volunteer training starts in May



Lend a hand at Mono Lake! Meet visitors from all over the world and share your knowledge of the Eastern Sierra in the beautiful Mono Basin through the volunteer program.

**The Mono Lake Volunteer training class begins in late May and continues two afternoons per week for three weeks.**

Volunteers are asked to contribute eight hours per month in the summer roving at South Tufa or Panum Crater, staffing a bird watching station at the State Reserve Boardwalk or answering questions at the Scenic Area Visitor Center patio.

If you are interested please contact Erika Obedzinski ([erika@monolake.org](mailto:erika@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595.

## Streamwatch

# Grant Lake Reservoir drops to lowest level since 1977

by Greg Reis

**O**n January 15, Grant Lake Reservoir on Rush Creek dropped below 7082.3 feet above sea level—7,000 acre-feet of storage—and was emptying at a rate of 85 acre-feet per day. The last time it was that low was in March 1977, and the only time it was lower (since its construction in 1940) was when it dropped to 1,600 acre-feet in January 1960, in the middle of the driest three-year period on record.

Contributing to this situation, at the end of last December the upstream Gem Lake Reservoir was holding 5,000 acre-feet more water than it has ever held at that time of year (since the mid-1950s). But even with this large volume of water being held back, 35% more water has reached the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power's (DWP) diversions

this Runoff Year (since April 1, 2008) than during the same period the previous year (the second-driest year on record). The failure of DWP to adjust an overestimated runoff forecast is also responsible for the low reservoir.

The effect of this low reservoir level is that only inflow (which is less than the dry year minimum flow) has to be released to lower Rush Creek until the reservoir gets back above 11,500 acre-feet. Recently, this has meant flows below 15 cubic feet per second have been released, which have less of an impact during winter than in summer—when low flows and resulting high temperatures could result in fish kills.



Grant Lake Reservoir on Rush Creek looking very low at 7,000 acre-feet of storage.

It has always been desirable, yet challenging, to get DWP and Southern California Edison to coordinate their reservoir operations. This year it will be more important than ever, because if 2009 is another dry year, inflow to Grant Lake Reservoir will likely determine outflow to Rush Creek—and also determine whether fish will survive the low flow conditions. ❖

## Lakewatch

# Dismally dry winter prevents Mono Lake from rising

by Greg Reis

**T**here is a certain point during a dry winter when you give up hope for an average year. It happens earlier or later for each person. But as a dry January stretches on, sunny day after sunny day, the historical probabilities of catching up to average become more and more difficult to overcome. Even those most optimistic in December become skeptical in January and pessimistic in February.

As of January 29, Mono Lake is at the same elevation it was in late October, and during that time it hasn't fluctuated more than a tenth of a foot above or below 6382.1 feet above sea level.

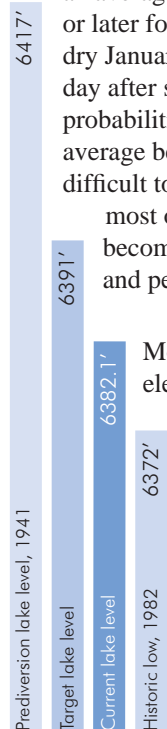
This is actually a very common pattern—almost 50% of the years since

1994 had no net rise in November and December: 1994, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, and 2008. While most of these winters ended up drier than average, 1994–1995 is worth noting as having turned into one of the wettest years on record. But that year, like last year, the weather changed—and changed big time—in early January. January 2009 was dismally dry, with less than 50% of the precipitation of

two-thirds of the Januaries on record. The good news is that in all but one of these winters during the last 15 years the lake rose in February, and in all but one it rose in March. But chances are, a brief winter rise will be little consolation for an otherwise dry year with a dropping lake level. It has dropped about a foot since a year ago.

While dry years are natural events and have many beneficial effects, when superimposed on already stressed ecosystems they pose significant challenges. With ten vertical feet of rise to go until Mono Lake reaches its long-term management level, and only six feet of water covering the land bridge to Negit Island, a string of dry years can make us a bit nervous. 2009 is starting to look like the third dry year in a row. Do your rain dance! ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. He has been posting hydrologic updates on The Mono-logue ([www.monolake.org/today](http://www.monolake.org/today)).



How do you read a liquid-water gauge that is surrounded by frozen water? You break the ice to see the water level on the gauge. The water in this photo has re-frozen one day after a DWP hydrographer read the gauge.

# Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



GEORGE MCQUILKIN

*T*his winter, so far, has been light on storms, leaving us in January with just the occasional tufa-shaded drift of snow at the lakeshore. Still, the cold temperatures and windy weather patterns have produced their share of notable natural events. The other morning, for example, the air was thick with glittering crystals of ice as the night's poconip ice fog lifted and cleared away. Out over the lake, the rising sun lit the broad curtains of crystals from behind; then for a few minutes the angle of the sun was just so, creating an arc of color that infused the icy air. I'd call it a rainbow, but there was no rain; perhaps it was an icebow of colors that flew briefly that morning like a flag above the lake's blue green waters.

The winds have been playing their own games across

the lake's salty waters as storm fronts, wet and dry, pass through. Around the New Year it seemed that a master wind chef was at work: the lakeshore was thick with briny whipped cream-like foam. Ideal for topping a holiday pie? No. But the wind-frothed water of the lake produced a meringue that piled up in folds among the tufas like some sort of exotic dessert. I've never seen foam so thick and creamy—or been so tempted to taste a handful or two. It rose and fell in the afternoon waves like a floating shoreline blanket. Occasionally currents pulled out duck-sized fluffs, setting them free. The foamy islands then drifted from shore to join a few lone grebes bobbing across the lake's surface, floating off to journeys unknown. ❖

## Benchmarks



EMILY PRUD'HOMME

January 7, 2008 lake level: Nearly 6383 feet above sea level. South Tufa's towers reflect in the lake along the snowy shoreline.



EAN LUNG

January 27, 2009: Just one vertical foot less of water reveals much more ground at 6382 feet. This dry winter the shore is bare of snow.

# Spotlight: Inyo National Forest's Jim Upchurch

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

**T**he Inyo National Forest, which includes 75,000 acres of Congressionally-designated Scenic Area lands surrounding Mono Lake, has been under the new leadership of Jim Upchurch for the past year. His career with the Forest Service began in 1976 and includes extensive experience with recreation management, wilderness, ski areas, and national policy. I recently had a chance to sit down with Jim to interview him on topics of interest to Mono Lake supporters.

**Geoff McQuilkin:** *Among the skills and experiences you bring to the Inyo, what are most helpful for managing the issues the Mono Basin Scenic Area faces?*

**Jim Upchurch:** I think the legislative experience that I had working with Congress is beneficial to the Inyo, which directly affects what happens in the Mono Basin as well. It has helped with connections in Washington and helped with working with Congressional staff here. Also the experience that I've had working in communities has helped me gain a perspective of how important it is to work with partners and other organizations to get things done. It's the philosophy I've been trying to infuse with our employees. The old ways of us doing everything is gone. We're in the mode of facilitators instead of

doers—that's how our organization is going to be shifting.

**GM:** *What do you see in the years ahead for the Scenic Area?*

**JU:** The national scenic designation is important and something we need to keep in the forefront—we don't have many national scenic designations across the country. We have a great Visitor Center and there aren't that many



*Jim Upchurch, Inyo National Forest Supervisor, at his office in Bishop.*

in the region—it gives us an opportunity to tell a story that we can't tell in other places. That's where I see the opportunity with Mono Lake, to focus on the Visitor Center because that's our biggest investment. I'm glad we have a full-time Visitor Center Manager—that's a real benefit. I guess we used to have quite the operation at one time at the center ... I don't think we'll get back to that point of having a full staffing contingent. It's just the sign of the times and it's going to be working with you guys and all of our partners to help make things happen.

**GM:** *If we're not likely to get back to past funding levels, what lies ahead from a funding and staffing perspective?*

**JU:** I think there could be a bit of change. The focus for

the last decade or so has been fire restoration, hazardous fuel reduction—and that's important, but there might be a change in how we focus on recreation. We're certainly looking at this economic stimulus package, which is going to make a difference in facilities. I think it's going to be more of an administration, as we look to the future here, that looks at the bigger picture of climate change and how that might affect the resources that we have. We're going to be doing a broader look at how that affects vegetation, how it affects recreation, how it affects the lake, water, drought, all that stuff that goes with it.

**GM:** *One of the successful visitor center innovations in recent years has been bringing the National Park Service and Yosemite in as a partner staffing-wise. What do you see as the long-term prospect for that partnership?*

**JU:** I think it's going to grow. I think there's a lot of connections that we have, with Yosemite, with Devils Postpile ... we call it a "service first" type of arrangement where we try to blur the boundaries between government agencies in a way that's more efficient and achieves what's best for the land versus having all these different jurisdictions that don't ever cross their boundaries.

**GM:** *In prior positions you were involved closely with creating programs to get kids outside—out of urban environments and into nature. Why is that so important?*

**JU:** When I was in Washington the Chief of the Forest Service had said "I want to form a group in the national office to decide on what kind of a project or program that you can do that will build a legacy in recreation before I retire." So we tried to come up with ideas. I had just read this article in a magazine about nature attention deficit disorder and so we talked about that, thinking maybe this is something we could take on. That was the genesis of creating this Forest Service grant program called More Kids in the Woods.

The reason that it was so engaging to all of us was that nature is very important to the youth and to our future. If we don't have youth that are connected then we don't have the advocacy or the constituency who think that National Forests, National Parks are important. More importantly, if we lose that connection to nature I think we've lost a lot as a society.

**GM:** *The Inyo National Forest plan is up for review. How do you expect that process to affect management of resources around Mono Lake, the Mono Basin, and the Scenic Area?*

**JU:** The forest plan revision would be under the new planning rule, which is significantly different than the way we used to do forest planning. We used to spend anywhere from five to ten years doing planning and finally come out with a plan that, by the time people see it, they have grown old and tired of.

The new planning rule is something you can actually accomplish in a couple years. So there's much better

*Continued on page 17*

# Mono Lake represented at climate change conference

by Lisa Cutting

Early last November, the University of California White Mountain Research Station and the Consortium for Integrated Climate Research in Western Mountains hosted “Climate, Ecosystems, and Resources in Eastern California,” a four-day scientific symposium in Bishop focusing on climate change and its effects on the Eastern Sierra.

The overwhelming turnout of over 200 participants, coupled with the diversity of presenters and participants, made for an informational and highly interactive exchange of current research and potential management strategies. Attendees included independent and university scientists; state, local, and national resource agency staff; and local and regional environmental non-profit organizations.

Mono Lake was well represented. Many of the scientists whose research substantiated the expert testimony that resulted in the 1994 State Water Resources Control Board Decision 1631 were in attendance sharing their current research.

Additionally, the Mono Lake Committee hosted a session on the final day of the conference. “Mono Basin Restoration: Climate Effects and Implications” included perspectives from Frances Spivy-Weber of the State Water Board, Dave Martin of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP), Peter Vorster and Greg Reis from the Mono Lake Committee, Justin Hite of Cornell University, and Stella Moss of PRBO Conservation Science. The panel explored the ways climate change will affect the various components of ongoing



Greg Reis, Committee Information Specialist, speaking on the “Climate Effects and Implications” panel about Mono Lake.

restoration of Mono Lake and its tributary streams—items such as peak flow snow runoff patterns (timing, duration, and magnitude), groundwater recharge and meadow water storage capacities, and bird species responses.

A take-home message from the conference is that it’s going to take all of us working together, sharing the latest scientific research and local place-specific knowledge to quickly and effectively plan for the impacts of climate change. Collectively, Mono Lake advocates and scientists have a wealth of expertise to draw from and the

Committee is positioned to be the catalyst to bring it all together. ❖

## David Nahai shares DWP conservation strategies

Introduced by Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin, David Nahai, CEO and General Manager of DWP, delivered his public lecture “Looking to the Future: A Climate Strategy for DWP” at the conference. Before a near-capacity audience, Nahai confirmed DWP’s commitment to using renewable energy sources (LA’s near-term goal is 10% by 2010) and conserving and recycling water in preparation for the uncertainty that lies ahead. Nahai clearly sees the task of running the continent’s largest municipal utility as a balance between environmental and economic values, which is a good thing for Mono Lake.

Upchurch from page 16

connection with participating and actually seeing the end result. The only difference—the big difference—is that we’re not making any on-the-ground decisions with the revision of the forest plan under the new planning rule. We’re just setting some vision and trying to establish a framework that subsequent actions can be taken from. The Mono Basin is going to be a part of that but it’s a management area that won’t change because we have a Congressional designation, and that’s a given.

**GM: In the past, the Inyo has identified purchase of lands in the Scenic Area from a willing seller as a top lands acquisition priority on the forest. What’s your view on that policy?**

JU: It still continues to be one of the highest priorities. My goal is that we maintain the scenic attributes of Mono Lake. If we have the opportunity and we have a willing seller I’m all for adding that to the list and trying to protect as seamless a resource as we can.

**GM: Is there anything else you’d like Mono Lake Committee members to know?**

JU: Mono Lake has got to be one of the most scenic spots in the country, and I’m not saying that because it’s just on the Inyo.... I think it’s incredible and I don’t know that it’s truly appreciated as much as it could be or should be. We just need to figure out how to work together to make it stay that way. ❖



### 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, plus an introduction from Huell. The DVD shows 15 years of changes quite dramatically: Huell paddles by canoe through tufa towers he once walked among! New developments at South Tufa, the US Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center, and the County Park boardwalk are also featured along with locals 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*

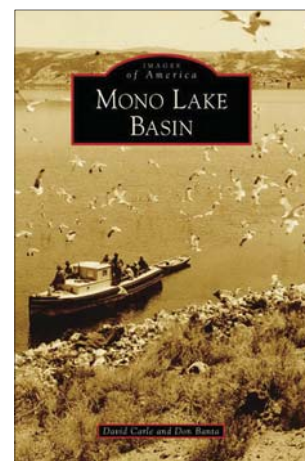
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### MONO LAKE BASIN

BY DAVID CARLE AND DON BANTA

This new book explores the human history of the Mono Basin through photographs scoured from local families and organizations, including the Mono Lake Committee. Authors David Carle, former State Park Ranger, and Don Banta, Lee Vining resident and historian, present images and accompanying text to explore 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. Flipping through this book brings the Mono Basin's history to life!

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



### 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: \$8.50*

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

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Call (760) 647-6595 to order

# 2009 Field Seminars



ELIN LUNG

## Visions of the Past: First Discoveries

June 6–7

Terri Geissinger

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

The Mono Basin is filled with curious monuments to a bustling past—take a journey back in time and discover the fascinating history behind the Mono Lake area and the rich Bodie Hills. The past will come to life as you hear stories of the discoverers, the prospectors, and the families who settled here and made the Mono Basin their home. Visit Dogtown, Monoville, Bodie (with a special visit to the Bodie Bluff!), Mono Mills, stagecoach routes, railroads, and gold mines. This seminar will focus on the people, the sites, and the stories that persisted long after the gold was gone. Terri Geissinger is a Bodie State Historic Park interpreter and guide. She is active in the Mono Basin Historical Society, and has a talent for making history come alive.

## South Shore Kayak

June 7

Stuart Wilkinson & Mono Lake Committee Staff

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

limited to 12 participants

Late spring reveals snow-capped mountains towering over a glassy Mono Lake—a great time to kayak! Join Stuart Wilkinson and a Mono Lake Committee staff member for a guided naturalist expedition along Mono's south shore. This natural history kayak tour will cover a wide variety of topics relating to this unusual Great Basin lake, such as geology, ecology, history, and politics. Expect to see underwater tufa towers, birds, brine shrimp, and lake-bottom springs. Some kayak experience is helpful, but not necessary; kayaks and safety equipment are provided. This seminar is being offered for the 13<sup>th</sup> year in a row, and is highly rated by past participants. Space is limited in this popular seminar, so register early!

**Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars fill quickly every year—  
call (760) 647-6595 or register online at [www.monolake.org/seminars](http://www.monolake.org/seminars).**



ELIN Ljung

Amateur botanists examine the floral display at Lee Vining Creek.

## Great Basin Wildflowers, Plants, & Habitats

June 12–14

Mark Bagley

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

Most of the Mono Basin lies in the Great Basin desert, and this field seminar will focus on plants in the sagebrush scrub, pumice flats, piñon-juniper woodland, Jeffrey pine forest, and wetland habitats in the lower elevations of the basin. During short walks in the different desert habitats, we will identify wildflowers, trees, and shrubs; observe plant communities; and discuss plants' relationships with their environment. This seminar is for beginners as well as for dedicated wildflower enthusiasts. Mark Bagley is an independent botanical consultant in the Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert and has taught plant and natural history seminars for the Mono Lake Committee since 1988.

## Birding the East Side

June 13–14

David Lukas

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

This field seminar will concentrate on the identification and ecology of birds in the Mono Basin and local Eastern Sierra. The class will visit a wide variety of habitats including desert scrub, marsh, riparian forest, and mountain slopes in search of breeding birds and migrants. With over 300 species having been observed in the Mono Basin, this course will be of great interest to both beginning and more advanced birdwatchers. David Lukas has led over two hundred birdwatching and natural history programs for the Nature Conservancy,

Yosemite Association, Audubon Society, Elderhostel, and other groups. He is the author of *Watchable Birds of the Great Basin*, *Wild Birds of California*, and the recently revised *Sierra Nevada Natural History*.

## The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

June 26–28

David Gubernick

\$250 per person / \$225 for members  
limited to 8 participants

Learn to take creative and beautiful close-up images, further develop your artistic vision, and enhance your photographic skills in the warm and supportive learning environment of this workshop for beginning to advanced amateur photographers. The weekend will emphasize the artistry of macrophotography and the technical means to render such images; this is not a course in botanical identification. David J. Gubernick, Ph.D., is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning nature photographer and workshop leader. His first photography book, *Wildflowers of Monterey County*, has been a best-seller, garnering rave reviews.

## Summer Birds of the Mono Basin

July 17–19

David Wimpfheimer

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This birding class for beginners and advanced birders alike will explore a number of sites, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and natural history discussion.



ELIN Ljung

In summer, Osprey build nests, lay eggs, and raise chicks at Mono Lake.

[www.monolake.org/seminars](http://www.monolake.org/seminars) or (760) 647-6595 to register

Woodpeckers, corvids, flycatchers, warblers, and other passerines display varied behaviors, but a major focus will be Mono Lake and other special wetlands. David Wimpfheimer has been educating and interpreting about birds and the natural history of California for over 20 years, and has a strong connection to Mono Lake. His seasoned focus and knowledge always make for an enjoyable, educational outing!

## The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

July 17–19

David Gubernick

\$250 per person / \$225 for members  
limited to 8 participants

Learn to take creative and beautiful close-up images, further develop your artistic vision, and enhance your photographic skills in the warm and supportive learning environment of this workshop for beginning to advanced amateur photographers.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID GUBERNICK

The weekend will emphasize the artistry of macrophotography and the technical means to render such images; this is not a course in botanical identification. David J. Gubernick, Ph.D., is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning nature photographer and workshop leader. His first photography book, *Wildflowers of Monterey County*, has been a best-seller, garnering rave reviews.

*Close-up with an alpine lily.*

## Capturing the Sageland in Pastel

July 24–26

Ane Carla Rovetta

\$160 per person / \$145 for members  
\$15 materials fee  
limited to 12 participants

The sparkling light and radiant skies of the Mono Basin are pure inspiration. Add a set of brilliant pastel chalks and your own unique imagination, and you have an incredible weekend of color exploration and art. Landscape painter Ane Carla Rovetta will guide students through a value system she modeled after Ansel Adams' work that will help organize the



COURTESY OF ANE CARLA ROVETTA

*An original pastel painting: "Mono Basin from Lundy Canyon."*

overwhelming hues of the summer terrain. Using materials she has carefully selected, the group will paint on location to create impressions of this majestic basin. Each participant will go home with at least one small finished painting and several sketches, color studies, and value experiments that will fuel future artistic endeavors!

## Mono Basin Watercolor Painting

July 31–August 2

John Hewitt

\$160 per person / \$145 for members

The wide skies, lush grasses, and shining-white tufa towers that characterize summer at Mono Lake provide many opportunities for artists to capture the season with a paintbrush. This weekend seminar will explore some of the most scenic locations around Mono Lake, and is designed for beginning through advanced painters who work with watercolors, oils, pastels, or acrylics. Instructor John Hewitt is a nationally-acclaimed watercolorist and former Lee Vining resident who has taught classes and workshops for over 20 years in locations as far afield as the Italian Alps.

## Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

August 1

Greg Reis

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began exporting water 350 miles south to the City of LA in 1941. Visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin and learn about the aqueduct's effects on Mono Lake, its tributary streams, the Upper Owens River, and land management in the area. The group will also discuss the history of water diversions, the effort to save Mono Lake, and the future of habitat restoration. Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist and the perfect guide for unraveling the Mono Basin's complex and fascinating plumbing—he has

over a dozen years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration and he keeps close track of Mono Basin water management.



Julia Parker weaving a burden basket.

## Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 7–9

Lucy Parker & Julia Parker

\$185 per person / \$170 for members

\$80 materials fee

primitive group campsite included (no pets, please)

During this seminar, participants will prepare materials and create a Miwok-Paiute burden basket, which was used for gathering pinenuts, acorns, and berries. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels. You are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. Lucy Parker is a descendant of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika<sup>a</sup>, and Kayasha Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother Julia, a master basket weaver. Julia Parker has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry and is the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women who wove in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Introduction to High Country Plants & Habitats

August 14–16

Ann Howald

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This class will explore the mosaic of habitats found in the Eastern Sierra high country—flower-filled meadows fed by meandering streams, sagebrush-covered slopes, lodgepole pine forests, subalpine lakes bordered by willows, and flowery rock gardens. Sight identification of common trees, shrubs, and wildflowers will be emphasized, as well as the many ways that plants, birds, insects, and other wildlife interact in high country habitats. Ann Howald is a consulting botanist and volunteer for the California Native Plant Society. She has taught popular Committee field seminars for over ten years.

## Mono Lake Summer Photography

August 21–23

Richard Knepp

\$220 per person / \$200 for members

There is a certain magic at Mono Lake in the summer: long sultry days, magnificent vistas across the basin, tufa towers showing the bones of the lake's submerged springs, cumulus clouds drifting across the sky, hinting at the promise of a late afternoon thunderstorm. And—as always—the potential of the singular sunrise/sunset cycles that draw photographers from around the world. Join veteran photographer and Monophile Richard Knepp as we wander some of the lesser-known Mono Basin locales. Discussion topics will range from the basics of Ansel Adams' Zone System to printing options in a digital world. A fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested.



A high-country plant catches the interest of Ann Howald's group.

## Fly Fishing in the Mono Basin

August 21–23

Peter Pumphrey & Roberta Lagomarsini

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

This introductory fly fishing seminar will begin by covering the equipment involved, the varieties of flies and their uses, and basic casting technique. The class will then move to one of the Basin's many streams to consider trout habitat and habits, characteristics of a healthy stream environment, reading the water, fly presentation, and catch and release. A limited amount of equipment is available for those who are not already engaged in the sport. Peter Pumphrey and Roberta Lagomarsini are guides licensed by the State of California and have been teaching fly fishing for over ten years.

## Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 28–30

Lucy Parker & Julia Parker

\$185 per person / \$170 for members

\$80 materials fee

primitive group campsite included (no pets, please)

Over the seminar weekend, participants will complete a Miwok-Paiute tule basket, which was used for holding trinkets, basket tools, glass beads, abalone shells, and other trade items. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels. You are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. Lucy Parker is a descendant of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika<sup>a</sup>, and Kayasha Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother Julia, a master basket weaver. Julia Parker has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry and is the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women who wove in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Fall Bird Migration

August 29–30

Dave Shuford

\$140 per person / \$125 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 Lake Reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at PRBO Conservation Science for 30 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!



John Wehausen listens for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep near Mt. Gibbs.

## Living on the Edge: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep in the Mono Basin

September 12–13

John Wehausen

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

The US Fish & Wildlife Service listed the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep as Federally Endangered in 2000. This field seminar will involve discussions of the fascinating biology of bighorn sheep, their relationship with other mammals (including mountain lions and humans), and their conservation in the field. Past participants saw bighorn nine out of the last ten years—while there is a very good chance of seeing bighorn sheep in the wild during this seminar, there is no guarantee. John Wehausen is a research scientist at the White Mountain Research Station in Bishop who has been studying the Sierra Nevada bighorn and working for their conservation since 1974. *Please be aware that this seminar involves very strenuous hiking at the 10,000-foot elevation and above.*

## Visions of the Past:

### Bodie, Masonic, Aurora

September 19–20

Terri Geissinger

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

In the Bodie Hills, all within 20 miles, lie three ghost towns—their stories are filled with pioneer families, prospectors, muleskinners, heroes, and gunslingers. This guided tour will visit the town and the cemetery of Bodie, once the second-largest city in California. Next, visit the rock cabins and foundations of Masonic, where 500 people resided in a beautiful canyon, mining gold with great hope and eventually producing considerable wealth. The last stop is Aurora, once a bustling

town of 8,000 souls in the 1860s. Your guide Terri Geissinger is a Bodie State Historic Park interpreter and guide. She is active in the Mono Basin Historical Society, and has a talent for making history come alive.

## Reading the Aspen Groves: Arborglyphs & Aspen Natural History

October 3–4

Richard Potashin & Nancy Hadlock

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

A century of sheep grazing brought Basque shepherders into the Mono Basin's aspen-bordered meadows, and they left numerous carvings—or arborglyphs—on the aspens. Join the instructors for an enchanting journey into the aspen groves to explore this historic art form and to learn about the numerous wildlife, insects, and birds that are drawn to the groves. During leisurely walks the instructors will discuss the history of sheep grazing in the Mono Basin, Basque culture, the cultural significance of the carvings, and efforts to document them. Richard Potashin is a longtime Eastern Sierra resident who has been discovering and documenting aspen carvings for many years. He is currently a Park Ranger at Manzanar National Historic Site with his wife, Nancy Hadlock, who has been a passionate student of Basque culture for over 20 years.



BARTSIE MILLER

*Arborglyph seekers venture into an aspen grove.*

## Mono-Bodie Fall Photography

October 9–11

Richard Knepp

\$300 per person / \$285 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. And, for the sixth year, the class will spend Saturday at Bodie, inside some of the buildings—a very special treat! Join accomplished photographer Richard Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, fall color in nearby canyons, and the ghost town of Bodie. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested. This is the 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row of this popular seminar!

## Field Seminar Registration Information

To register for a field seminar, please call the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595 and ask for the seminar desk, or register online at [www.monolake.org/seminars](http://www.monolake.org/seminars).

More extensive seminar descriptions are available online at [www.monolake.org/seminars](http://www.monolake.org/seminars).

We accept VISA, MasterCard, and Discover only. We cannot accept personal checks or registration by mail or email. Seminars are limited to fifteen participants except where noted. If a seminar receives less than six participants (with some exceptions) the seminar will be cancelled two weeks in advance, and full refunds will be issued. If you cancel three weeks prior to the seminar start date, we will refund your payment (less a \$15 processing fee). No refunds can be issued for any reason if cancellation is within three weeks of the field seminar date, but tuition can be applied to another seminar in 2009.

Participants must sign a liability release form. All seminars operate under permits from the Inyo National Forest and California State Park system.

The Mono Lake Committee works with instructors and field leaders who have received high ratings from past seminar participants. We emphasize a spirit of learning and camaraderie in this magnificent outdoor setting for a reasonable cost. Proceeds from Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars benefit research and education in the Mono Basin.

Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars are open to everyone, but Mono Lake Committee members get advance notice and class discounts. If you are not a current member of the Mono Lake Committee, you may receive the discount by joining when you register.

# Committee awards local scholarships

As the graduation season approaches, the Mono Lake Committee is gearing up for its second year of supporting local college-bound students through a new scholarship program initiated in 2008.

The Committee supports students pursuing higher education who display a personal connection with Mono Lake and the Mono Lake story with two \$1,000 scholarships to the applicants with the best essays. Mono County resident high school seniors who have firm plans to attend a two- or four-year college within a year of graduation qualify for the Mono Lake Committee Scholarship.

In 2008 scholarships were awarded to Lee Vining High School seniors Hannah Gehrman and Mariah McCullough. Both winning applicants wrote an essay on the question: How has Mono Lake or the Mono Basin influenced your life and your choice to go to college? Both applicants' thoughtful answers secured them the scholarship.

From Hannah Gehrman's essay: "Living in the Mono Basin and around Mono Lake has influenced my life and choice to go to college. I have benefitted from its natural wonders and the peace that comes with them. I have an appreciation for the world and have been able to see firsthand

what destruction humankind can do to it." Hannah is currently attending the University of Nevada in Reno and wants to become a teacher.

Mariah McCullough wrote, "Mono Lake Committee members helped me become the young woman I am today. Being able to watch nature evolve over the seasons and years has made me believe that anything can happen, no matter how impossible it may seem. This area has taught me so much about life and I am proud to have grown up here." Mariah is attending the University of Idaho and aspires to become a lawyer.

The Committee hopes that this will be an ongoing program for the local community, and Committee members have already been very supportive of the program, sending in donations for the scholarships. If you would like to read the complete

essays, or are interested in the local scholarship program please visit [www.monolake.org/mlc/scholarship](http://www.monolake.org/mlc/scholarship) or contact Arya Degenhardt ([arya@monolake.org](mailto:arya@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595. ❖



Geoff McQuilkin presents scholarships to local Lee Vining High School students Mariah McCullough, top, and Hannah Gehrman.

## 2008 Free Drawing winners

Congratulations to all these lucky folks who won prizes in the 2008 Free Drawing! And thank you to everyone who entered the drawing as well—your contributions support Mono Lake.

Grand prize winner of two round-trip tickets on Southwest Airlines: **Lawrence Leach** of Carson City, NV.

Wilson's Eastside Sports camping package: **John & Virginia Kimball** of Pasadena. Mammoth Mountain rental package: **Albert & Lilli Miller** of Sherman Oaks. San Francisco Bay sailing tour: **Jean Richmond** of Alamo. Wawona Hotel stay: **Karen Ostergard** of Grass Valley. Double Eagle Spa & Resort weekend: **Julia White** of Lee Vining. Sorensen's Resort weekend: **Rebecca Young** of Berkeley. Mammoth Lakes spa weekend: **Cheryl Wood** of Reno, NV.

Yosemite Association membership: **Kathy Down & Greg Kelly** of Orinda. Alexander Valley tour and wine tasting: **Richard Weaver** of Apple Valley. High Sierra bed and breakfast stay: **Kathy Reichgerdt & Frank Harris** of Seattle, WA.

Nicola Voorhees original watercolor: **Carolyn Harris** of

Los Angeles. Wave Rave snowboard: **Mary Lytle** of San Diego. Patagonia clothing: **Connie Barnes** of Glendora, **David Latimer** of Fremont, and **Marci Wright** of Orange. REI backpacks: **Debbie Jones** of Lake Forest and **Tim Lauridsen** of Anza. Mono Lake Committee gift packs: **Dean & Audrey Bok** of Los Angeles, **Richard Darby** of Atwater, and **Robert Wall** of Sacramento.

Many thanks to the generous Free Drawing sponsors for donating such wonderful prizes. We are extremely grateful for your support! Watch for this year's Free Drawing tickets in your Fall 2009 *Mono Lake Newsletter*....

## Donate to the Free Drawing!

We're always looking for original artwork, lodging, gourmet meals, vacation packages, non-profit memberships, and other goodies to give away in our annual Free Drawing fundraiser. If you or someone you know would like to donate a prize item to the 2009 Free Drawing, please contact Elin Ljung ([elin@monolake.org](mailto:elin@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595.

# Staff migrations

by Erika Obedzinski

Overall, it's been a dry winter so far—hopefully by the time you're reading this *Newsletter*, Mono Lake will have had some significant storms come through to bring much needed snowfall. Either way, there's never a shortage of things to do at the Mono Lake Committee office or out in the field, so we're always glad for the extra hands of our seasonal staff!

In November we said goodbye to Outdoor Education Instructors **Becky Clough** and **Caron Kotalik**, who spent six months helping Los Angeles youth and young adults learn about Mono Lake and how they are connected to it by water. Becky is now back in Santa Cruz working as a counselor at a group home for troubled youth. Caron has stayed in the area and is now substitute teaching in Lee Vining and Bridgeport where she has been getting rave reviews from local students.

We're happy to announce that **Nora Livingston**, Mono

Lake Intern from last summer, is returning early this spring to be this year's Birding Intern. Nora is excited to come back to Mono Lake and to share the expertise she's gained this winter in her role as a bird banding intern with PRBO Conservation Science in Bolinas.

You may have noticed that we hired a Temporary Information Center & Bookstore Manager to fill in for **Duncan King** while he is away on leave. Recently established local resident **Brian Scavone** has been exploring the area for the last decade, loves books, and previously managed a café in Prescott, AZ—we're glad he could join our team this winter and spring! ❖

*Erika Obedzinski is the Committee's Office Director. She recently posted the Mono Lake Committee seasonal job offerings on the new website at [www.monolake.org/mlc/jobs](http://www.monolake.org/mlc/jobs).*

## Committee honored by the Andrea Mead Lawrence Award for Passionate Engagement in Community and the Land

by Erika Obedzinski

Last fall on a snowy November evening, seven Mono Lake Committee staff members, along with Committee co-founder and current Board Chair Sally Gaines, carpooled to Mammoth Lakes to attend an awards dinner hosted by the Andrea Lawrence Institute for Mountains and Rivers (ALIMAR). ALIMAR is a non-profit organization that seeks to preserve healthy communities and healthy ecosystems in the Eastern Sierra, recognizing the inextricable connection that binds both ([www.alimar.org](http://www.alimar.org)). The Mono Lake Committee was presented with the Andrea Mead Lawrence Award for Passionate Engagement in Community and the Land, in honor of the Committee's ongoing work and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. ALIMAR founder Andrea Lawrence calls the award "...a chance to recognize good work being done on the ground here in the Eastern Sierra." Being recognized by Lawrence—such a dedicated and longtime environmental leader in the community, and a constant inspiration to all staff—was truly an honor.

Committee co-founder and Board Chair Sally Gaines persuaded all Committee staff in attendance to go up with her to accept the award and introduce themselves to the audience. We decided it would be fun to introduce each other and so each told a bit about the job of the coworker standing to their left. It was fun to describe someone else's job rather than our own—and was a reminder of how much we work as a team.

Other highlights of the evening included inspiring speeches by Jim Branham, Executive Officer of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and Tom Jacobson, Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Studies and Planning at Sonoma State University. Both speakers emphasized the need to increase environmental education opportunities for youth in an effort to counter the growing disconnect between kids and the outdoors. Hope lies in programs like the Committee's own Outdoor Experiences program, and in partnerships with like-minded organizations working to protect the Sierra and educate youth and adults about the challenges it faces and how they can both enjoy and protect it.



Andrea Lawrence with Committee staff at the ALIMAR award ceremony. Back row left to right: Duncan King, Greg Reis, Arya Degenhardt, Elin Ljung, Ellen King. Front row: Lisa Cutting, Andrea Lawrence, Sally Gaines, Erika Obedzinski.

ROGER DE FRIEDS



# From the mailbag

*News from members and friends*

*by Ellen King*

**T**hank you to all who have sent contributions in memory or in honor of your friends and loved ones. We appreciate these gifts that help us carry on the work that will keep Mono Lake a special place for many generations.

## *In honor*

**Ray Welch & Kathleen Gaines** of San Rafael sent a contribution in honor of **Jean Gleason's** 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. **June Gill** of Santa Barbara made a donation as a gift for **Edwina White**. **Sallie Robenolt** of Beaufort, NC gave a gift in honor of **James Robenolt**.

## *In memory*

**Barbara Bazan** of Calpine made a donation in memory of **Larry Kuticka**, "who loved Mono Lake and introduced me to it 30 years ago." **Reverend Marvin J. Caldwell** of Groton, MA gave a gift "in memory of my dear husband **D. W. Caldwell**." **John Callen** of Santa Margarita sent contributions in memory of **Thomas N. Callen**.

**Edith Gaines** of Los Angeles made a donation in memory of her son **David Gaines'** birthday. **Mark & Judith Cohen** of Moraga sent a gift in memory of **Dorothy Green**. **Helen Green** of Berkeley and **Paul & Judith McConnell** of Chino sent contributions in memory of **Bill Mendoza**.

**Mr. & Mrs. Ivar Highberg** of Fremont made a donation in memory of **James Appleton**. **Janet Keller** of Reno, NV and **Georgianne Keller** of Minneapolis, MN gave gifts in memory of their parents, **Vern & Norma Keller**.

**Marcus Mack** made a contribution in memory of **Ian Mack**. **Carol Mathews** of Walnut Creek sent donations in loving memory of **Robert Mathews**. **Patricia Oliver** of Mariposa made a donation in memory of **H. W. "Turk" Turkey**, retired from the Air Force. **Steve Potts**

of Modesto gave a gift "in loving memory of my dear friend **Donna Durham**, who loved Mono Lake during her lifetime, and took me there several years ago for my first visit and exposure to this wonderful place."

## *Wishes granted*

The Fall 2008 *Newsletter* included a wish list for several items, and yet again our wonderful members have responded. Pilot **Geoff Pope** of Bishop with **LightHawk** and photographer **Rick Kattelmann** of Sunny Slopes granted our request for completing the much-needed Eared Grebe survey—thank you! See page 11 for more.

**Robert Durkee** of Belmont answered our call with just the right compost tumbler for the Committee's compostables. Thank you!

## *Solar fund*

In considering options for offsetting the Committee's carbon emissions, we decided to put the money we would have used to purchase carbon offset credits into our own solar power fund. Started in

2007, some solar-minded members have already contributed to the effort. Thank you! If you are interested in helping the Committee go solar, contact Ellen King ([ellen@monolake.org](mailto:ellen@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595.

## *Grace de Laet*

Many friends of **Grace de Laet** sent donations in honor of this place she loved so much and worked so hard to protect. **Margaret Lee Blunt** of Larkspur, **Neil & Mimi Burton** of Kentfield, **Nancy Davidson & Frank Aaldana** of San Diego, **Edith Gaines** of Los Angeles made a donation "in honor of all her years of commitment," **Helen Green** of Berkeley, **Joan Lundstrom** of Larkspur, **Lucille Marinko** of Sonoma, **Maye McEliece** of Bellevue, WA, **Dick Miller** of San Francisco, **Helen Schilbe** of Santa Rosa, **Peter Vorster** of Oakland, and **Delphine Zeuli** of San Francisco. See page 9 for an article celebrating Grace's life. ❖

*Ellen King is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. She loves how easy it is for members to donate on the new website.*

## The Tioga Pass Run

**L**ast fall's 28<sup>th</sup> annual Tioga Pass Run was a success with 59 enthusiastic participants on a clear and calm September morning. As has been the tradition, the proceeds from this fun and scenic run benefit the Mono Lake Committee. The best time went to Dan Yarborough, who completed the 12.4-mile run in just over an hour and a half—1:35.53 to be exact!

Thanks go especially to **Kathie Kortering** and **Ken & Elizabeth Corathers** for volunteering their time to organize the run, post-run lunch, and raffle at the Whoa Nellie Deli. Another big thank you to all of the volunteers

who helped on the day of the run (photo above): **Stan & Sharon Bluhm**, **Penny Bourne**, **Dorothy Burdette**, **Janet Carle**, **Laurie Gehrman**, **Connie Henderson**, **Kyla** and **Natalie Kortering**, **Bill Taylor**, and **Laura Walker**, as well as to the Mono Market, High Sierra Fall Century, Lee Vining Fire Department, and Linda Dore Food Service.

This year the Tioga Pass Run will take place on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009. To find out more about participating in the Tioga Pass Run as either a runner or volunteer contact Erika Obedzinski ([erika@monolake.org](mailto:erika@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595 or visit [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org).



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# mono lake

## What will you do on the Mono Lake Website today?

**Say "hi" from Mono Lake**



**... send an eCard!**

- manage your membership
- read The Mono-logue
- check the weather
- read up on brine shrimp
- shop online
- see Newsletter back issues
- join, donate, or renew
- enjoy the photo galleries
- "visit" Mono Lake!



**Share your Mono Lake photos on the web!**



**2009 Field Seminars:  
register now!**



**What's going on  
at Mill Creek?**

**Visit the webcam to find out!**