

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2015



This fall, more than others, it feels as if the Mono Basin is full-speed hurling itself toward home base, and the promise of winter. On the surface, it looks a lot like another spectacular fall—trees ablaze in vibrant color along waterways, deliciously crisp morning air, and countless Eared Grebes dotting the glassy surface of Mono Lake. But we’ve been keeping a close eye on the lake, streams, and reservoirs—they’re shrinking, and there just isn’t a whole lot of buffer left.

It’s really tempting to think that El Niño is going to kick in with a doozy of a winter and everything will be fine. Our models tell us that there is about a 50/50 chance of El Niño turning out favorably enough in this watershed to keep Mono Lake above the point identified by the State Water Board when all water diversions must stop. We also know that just one big winter can’t undo over five feet of elevation loss from the past four years.

But that doesn’t mean we don’t have things to celebrate.

The progress the Mono Lake Committee has made for Mono Lake can’t solely be measured in lake levels. Years of diligent protection, restoration, education, and science have staved off a much, much worse fate, and have created the buffer that got us to what is hopefully the drought home stretch we’re in right now. The Committee’s 16,000 members have made sure that even in this record-setting drought we are able to cross home plate this year and hear the umpire yell “Safe!”

Every point the Mono Basin gains will eventually add up to a win for Mono Lake if we stay vigilant. So, I say, get out there and celebrate these victories in the beautiful, crunchy, golden, light of fall—and don’t forget to throw this issue of the *Mono Lake Newsletter* into the picnic basket.

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



Longtime Mono Lake Committee member and photographer Don Henderson found this wood rat testing a vacant Cliff Swallow nest under the eave at the Mono Basin Forest Service Visitor Center. Don also captured a beautiful shot of a Red Crossbill that we used as the May inset in the 2016 Mono Lake Calendar, which we mistakenly credited. We are very sorry for the need to make this correction, and we highly recommend checking out more of Don’s work at flickr.com/catchlightdon.

Mono Lake Committee Mission

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



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New twists as Mono Lake's level falls

Spotlight on lake level forecasting in 2016

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

California's four-year drought has lowered Mono Lake more than five feet. The decline has been disappointing to watch yet ecologically survivable thanks to the protections won by the Mono Lake Committee and Mono Lake advocates two decades ago. 2016, however, could change this story for the worse.

The winter of 2015–16 lies ahead, and a wet winter with ample Mono Basin precipitation is the hope of all Mono Lake friends (see page 5). But as we have learned over the years at the Committee, our work is most effective when we hope for the best and prepare for the worst. In this case, another dry winter that pushes the state into a fifth drought year would push new and potentially contentious Mono Lake management issues to the forefront.

The landbridge to the gulls

The fall in lake level to date has caused the landbridge near the lake's north shore to re-emerge and grow ever bigger, threatening to provide a pathway for coyotes to predate the California Gull rookery on Negit Island and surrounding islets. A modest protective moat of water remained in place this past summer, but it won't last through another dry year. This is a critical situation that raises many management concerns and even gained attention on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* over the summer under the headline "An ominous level: Mono Lake crisis threatens wildlife, L.A.'s water supply."

How might the nation's second-largest California Gull nesting ground be protected? Committee staff have been talking with biologists, land managers, and Mono Lake friends who witnessed the landbridge during its previous appearance in the 1970s. There are many ideas, and the task for the winter is to determine which is the best to deploy—if

needed. Assuming the full landbridge persists for a year or two until the lake rises, the most commonly discussed concept is a low-impact electric fence to create a temporary artificial barrier to coyote passage. Such a project would require state approval, possibly federal agency concurrence, funding, volunteers, and quick action.

Zero water export to Los Angeles?

Symbolizing how the protection of Mono Lake and the water supply of Los Angeles are intertwined, the water diversions the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) is authorized to make each year are set based on the level of the lake on April 1. This year the drought-induced fall in lake level triggered a substantial cutback in water exports to Los Angeles. Next year the rules could be trickier to determine.

The lake level is currently 6378 feet above sea level. The water export rules recognize the ecological jeopardy the lake is in when it approaches 6377, and they add a twist. As usual, we measure the lake level on April 1—if it is below 6377, no exports are allowed for the following 12 months. That part is easy.

The twist is where hydrologic modeling takes center stage. The State Water Board rules also halt water exports if "Mono Lake is projected to fall below 6377 feet at any time during the runoff year of April 1 through March 31." Making such a projection is routine—DWP and the Committee do it every year—but results can differ depending on the assumptions that are required to predict a year's worth of precipitation and snowmelt runoff.

The big questions for next year are: Is DWP willing

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ERVINCHOLS

Mono Lake's green mystery continues

by Bartshé Miller

For the second summer in a row, Mono Lake remained impenetrably green through the summer season. The lake typically transforms into a blue, Lake Tahoe-like clarity as abundant *Artemia monica* (brine shrimp) graze microscopic algae from the upper water column. Satellite images from this summer continued to show a shrinking, and unyieldingly-green Mono Lake.

Artemia were present, but their numbers seemed to decline as the summer progressed. During the summer of 2014, the mean *Artemia* abundance was the fourth-lowest ever recorded since 1979, and the greatest decline in abundance (79%) took place from July to August—much earlier than typically seen in Mono Lake. It's likely that a similar trend occurred in 2015; however data from this summer's monitoring will not be available until May 2016. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) abruptly took over monitoring from the University of California Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Lab in 2012. Since then, it has been difficult to get timely updates or scientific analysis on how or why the Mono Lake ecosystem might be changing.

In the fall of 2014, the Eared Grebe migration was affected by the low *Artemia* productivity. To stage at Mono Lake during their fall migration, Eared Grebes rely on a robust brine shrimp population, and fewer Eared Grebes remained on the lake through last fall. Their numbers typically build through mid-October, but the 2014 survey indicated that their numbers had dropped by over 50% by mid-October—down from approximately one million birds in mid-September. Numerous dead Eared Grebes were reported along the shoreline during fall 2014; anecdotally, a rare occurrence. The Eared Grebe survey is underway for 2015—another important year for data collection and analysis.

Pinning down the root cause of the change in *Artemia* population dynamics is tricky. Temperatures have been rising in the Mono Basin during winter and spring. During spring 2014, water temperatures in Mono Lake warmed between 1–2° Celsius compared to previous years. Concurrently, the lake has been dropping due to dramatically reduced freshwater input due to the drought. Less freshwater volume with increased salinity, temperatures, and a decline in wind events (fewer winter storms) may be altering lake stratification and influencing the ecosystem as well.

The Mono Lake Committee is, of course, concerned. We continue to support increased Eared Grebe monitoring, and we are working to make sure that the 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement is soon formalized by the State Water Board. Once that happens, Mono Lake limnological monitoring will be transferred from DWP back into the hands of independent researchers, and that will help in investigating the green lake mystery. ♦



ROBBIE DI PAOLO

Green Mono Lake, as seen from the September 18, 2015 Eared Grebe survey flight.

Lake level from page 3

to work collaboratively to deliver a consensus science-based projection? How do we resolve differing lake level projections, most notably if DWP's stays above 6377 feet and the Committee's does not? This is new ground because these particular State Water Board rules haven't yet been needed in the 21 years since they were issued. Being prepared is critical, and the time to do it is well before springtime. In fact, the Committee is already exploring ways to access more precise Mono Basin snowpack data to ensure the most honest snowmelt runoff and lake level forecasts possible.

And the magic runoff number is....

Most Californians are ready to embrace as wet a winter as nature will give us. So are those of us in the Mono Basin. But to be more specific, the Committee's hydrologic

modeling analysis shows that to keep the lake above the critical 6377-foot elevation, next year's runoff needs to be at least average. That's certainly in the range of possibility, with the odds being near 50/50 based on recent decades, and probably better given strong El Niño conditions already being observed. All we can do now is wait—and plan for contingencies. As we prepare to help Mono Lake through another potentially dry year you can be sure that we will be counting every snowflake here in Lee Vining in hopes of a wet winter. ♦

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He and his wife and three daughters, including 11-month-old Cassia, had a grand adventure hiking all 221 miles of the John Muir Trail this past summer.

Godzilla vs. Mono Lake

by Bartshé Miller

The word is that Godzilla has returned, and he might be coming to Mono Lake. A powerful El Niño has developed in the Pacific and at least one climatologist and a host of media sources are touting this event as a “Godzilla” El Niño.

Godzilla’s storyline works. This was a monster that originally emerged from the ocean, and kept coming back. Through Godzilla’s various incarnations and movie sequels he took on a complex, mysterious, and powerful aura. He was not necessarily evil, nor was he good, but there was no stopping him. He trampled cities, battled other monsters, and was indifferent to everything in his path. He was the waltzing, overgrown sea-lizard of mayhem.

Monster drought needs a monster remedy

California is in the grips of its worst drought in history, and it continues to intensify. Mono Lake continues to drop and the Mono Basin is reeling. Since April 2012, the lake has declined 5.8 vertical feet in elevation over the span of 42 months. Increasing salinity, a growing landbridge, a wildfire that threatened Lee Vining, drying creeks, springs, and seeps, dying conifers, and stressed aspen stands highlight the drought casualty list.

The two strongest El Niño events since 1950 have brought monster-like winters to California (see graph). If it turns out that Godzilla has returned, and he can subdue the drought, then let him come to Mono Lake!

Mythological expectations and modest data

If we want to anticipate what might happen this winter, it helps to look back at the strongest El Niño events with an Oceanic Niño Index (ONI) of over 1.5° Celsius, which is in line with the current projected strength of this year’s El Niño.

Looking back through the El Niño record since 1950, there have been seven events that have sustained an ONI around +1.5°C or greater. This is a measure of the surface temperature anomaly in an area of the Pacific called the Niño 3.4 region, sustained over multiple months and seasons. No El Niño is exactly the same, and the ONI is just one way to measure the strength of an El Niño; however, it is the standard by which the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) defines El Niño and La Niña events.

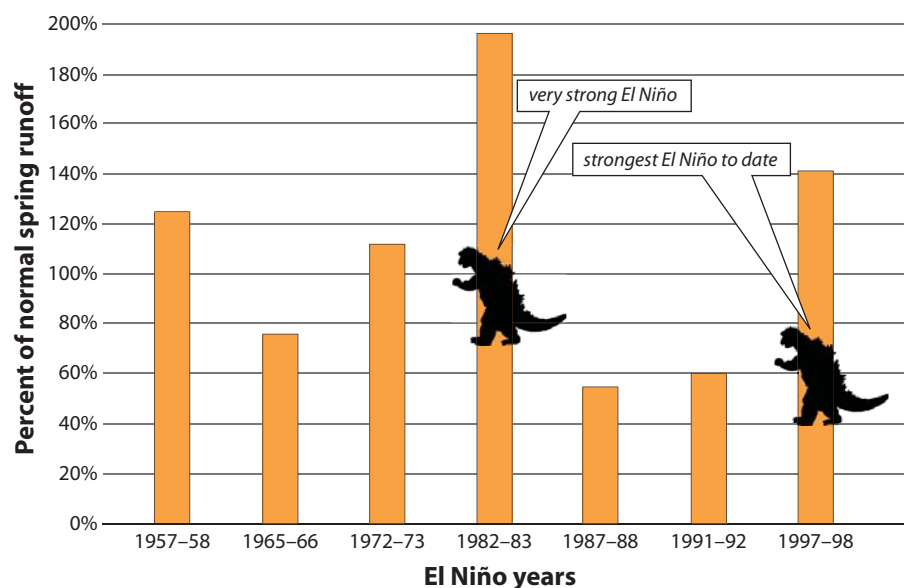
Based on model projections, the current El Niño may be among the strongest on record. It takes a very strong El Niño to get the nickname “Godzilla” (unofficially +2.0°C to qualify). He has appeared twice before, in 1982 and 1997, with an ONI of +2.2°C and +2.3°C respectively. Godzilla events were a great benefit to Mono Lake in both those years, but for the seven strongest El Niño events, the record in the Mono Basin is mixed.

Four of the seven have led to above-average spring runoff, while three have resulted in below-average runoff. In other words, the strength of an El Niño does not directly correlate to the amount of runoff the Mono Basin will get (see graph).

There is reason for cautious optimism as we go into this winter, but there are no guarantees, and a sample size of two very strong El Niños does not instill high confidence. The last time Godzilla appeared, the Pacific was cooler and there was less human-produced CO₂ in the earth’s atmosphere. Since then the science of climate change has advanced, along with our realization that human-caused greenhouse warming is influencing the climate in unforeseen ways. Will a strong El Niño result in the same atmospheric response that brought a parade of storms to California in the past? All eyes are on this mighty El Niño.

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Strong El Niño events since 1950 with percent of normal Mono Basin spring runoff



The strength of an El Niño does not always correlate to the amount of runoff the Mono Basin will get. (Past relative El Niño strength based on NOAA’s ONI Index with Extended Reconstructed Sea Surface Temperatures v4.)

Mono's streams fare better than expected

Record summer precipitation spared streams worst of the drought

by Lisa Cutting

A surprising thing happened this year in Lee Vining: record-breaking spring and summer precipitation which, thankfully, minimized drought-related stress on vegetation and trout in Mono Lake's tributary streams. Instead of the brown-gray colors of drought, we saw unusually green vegetation for most of the summer—even the wildflowers were surprisingly robust. The rain was mostly associated with thunderstorms, when twenty-degree drops in ambient air temperature weren't unusual. This cooling effect, in the form of rain and air temperature, helped keep the creeks cool enough for trout.

But as soon as the effects of the precipitation dropped off in August, vegetation immediately responded to the extremely dry conditions—an indication that the plants had been living off surface moisture and not a healthy groundwater system.

Committee expands monitoring program

In an effort to better understand the effects of the drought, the Mono Lake Committee added bi-monthly monitoring of Grant Lake Reservoir's water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels to the existing summer monitoring program. Committee staff collected dissolved oxygen and temperature readings at one-foot depth intervals in three separate locations—inlet, outlet, and the deepest part of the lake—throughout the summer, since conditions

in Grant directly influence Rush Creek.

Data collected shows that the reservoir warmed to over 18° Celsius (65° Fahrenheit) in early July near the outlet. Over the following two weeks, the surface temperature cooled as air temperatures dropped due to local thunderstorm activity. Outlet temperature readings remained steady at 18°C (65°F) through mid-August, meaning that peak daytime creek temperatures in lower Rush Creek were likely in the low 20's Celsius (low 70's Fahrenheit) for much of July and August. Temperatures in this range are too warm for trout. Dissolved oxygen readings near the outlet remained at 5–8 milligrams per liter during the monitoring time period—near the low end of what trout can tolerate.

We passed the data on to State Water Board-appointed fisheries scientist Ross Taylor for evaluation, and anticipate these results to factor into management decisions related to minimum operating levels for Grant in the future. We especially thank Doug Smith, operator of Grant Lake Marina, who took us out in his boat to the monitoring sites seven times over the summer.

Scientists track drought conditions

In late summer Dr. Bill Trush and Ross Taylor, State Water Board-appointed stream scientists, collected data and observed the effects of the four-year drought on the creeks. Trush was impressed by the health and vigor of streamside vegetation despite the drought. Taylor conducted annual trout monitoring on Rush, Lee Vining, and Walker creeks and didn't see unanticipated detrimental effects on the fish from the drought. Population numbers were low and the health of individual fish was poor, but that was to be expected.

Another thing that has become apparent this summer is that Rush and Lee Vining creeks have been insulated from the severe late-summer low flows that natural creeks are currently experiencing in the Eastern Sierra, suggesting that the State Water Board flow requirements have perhaps protected those creeks even more so under extreme dry conditions.

Still not out of the woods

Depending on fall weather patterns, Rush Creek could see lower flows by late November. When Grant Lake Reservoir hits the minimum storage amount of 11,500 acre-feet, current requirements call for a change in operations—reducing outflow to match inflow (see Streamwatch on page 12). The Committee projects that Grant could reach 11,500 acre-feet between mid-November and December. This of course will be heavily influenced by October precipitation and whether or not a Godzilla El Niño arrives. ♦



Trout monitoring on Lee Vining Creek happens annually to track the health of individual fish and population numbers.

More delays for Mill Creek

Administrative technicality delays return conveyance construction

by Lisa Cutting

Unfortunately, the saga continues for the lawful return of water to Mill Creek. After Mono County denied Southern California Edison (SCE) an easement necessary to rehabilitate the existing Mill Creek return conveyance, SCE was forced to file for an extension from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to explore other pipe routes. Over the summer, FERC denied the request on the grounds that it did not demonstrate that the submitted proposals were within the scope of the originally authorized construction. Fortunately, this technicality can easily be resolved by SCE submitting a more detailed description of the project and a specific timeline to FERC for approval.

Long wait for Mill Creek

Mill Creek suffers from water diversions that cannot be returned to the creek after flowing through SCE's Lundy hydropower plant due to inadequate infrastructure. Currently over 75% of the creek's flow is diverted (depending on snowpack) onto Mono County lands—almost twice the amount the County's water rights allow (see Summer 2014 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The issue should have been resolved with a settlement agreement in 2005 and the resulting FERC license amendment in 2011, which called for SCE to reconstruct the return conveyance to allow Mill Creek water to be returned to the creek. But the process continues to languish.

Mill Creek is the third largest-tributary to Mono Lake and offers the greatest riparian habitat restoration opportunity in the basin. It has suffered from insufficient water for decades, and it shows—especially in the lower stretches of the stream as it nears Mono Lake. Once-majestic cottonwoods are just barely surviving and the riparian



SARA MATTHEWS

The Mono Lake Committee has been monitoring Mill Creek water in the Mono Basin since 1999.

vegetation is constricted to narrow corridors directly adjacent to the creek. Once the return conveyance is constructed and more water returns to the lower stretches, we anticipate the recovery process to begin immediately.

Next steps

The Committee's legal analysis of FERC's response identifies a simple and clear path forward. In order for SCE to satisfy its FERC license requirements it needs to submit detailed plans describing its preferred return conveyance option and a corresponding comprehensive schedule to complete the project. Once this information is submitted and approved by FERC, SCE can schedule construction.

Meanwhile, monitoring continues

Mono Lake Committee staff continue to monitor Mill Creek water flowing in the north Mono Basin, and to compare the use of the water on the ground to water rights allocation and availability. The Committee began this monitoring

program back in 1999, modeled after monitoring done in the south part of the basin by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power. Since then, the Committee has continually made improvements to the program.

Over the summer the Committee worked with staff from Mono County and the Inyo National Forest to share monitoring protocols and data. With Mono County's recent Conway Ranch conservation easement and the Inyo National Forest's ongoing management of the DeChambeau Ranch and ponds, consistent and clear understanding of water distribution and use is essential for future water management decisions and prioritization, especially in years like this when water supply is scarce and yet must still satisfy multiple needs.

The Committee is confident that there is enough water—if managed correctly and efficiently—to fulfill existing water rights and return Mill Creek's water to Mill Creek to make it a fully functioning and vibrant stream system once again. ❖

Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting

Walker Fire

Sometime during the evening of August 14 a human-caused wildfire broke out in the Mono Basin just north of Walker Lake. By the next morning the fire had grown to 150 acres, causing the immediate evacuation of Walker Fish Camp, a small, private resort at Walker Lake.

Over the next two weeks the fire grew to over 3,500 acres. It caused numerous Forest Service roads, and at times Highway 120 west into Yosemite National Park, to be closed, and caused the evacuation of campgrounds in Lee Vining Canyon. The town of Lee Vining was on alert for a potential evacuation notice in the event that shifting winds might have pushed the fire closer to town. Thankfully, fire crews achieved 100% containment of the fire on August 31, 2015.

The fire burned roughly north from Walker Lake to the southern Lee Vining Canyon moraine and from the eastern flank of Mount Gibbs to Williams Butte. The Horse Meadow area burned, as did Bohler Canyon. Our thanks to all the firefighters from numerous agencies, including the air tanker and helicopter support personnel.

In conjunction with other agencies,

the Mono Lake Committee will be watching the burn area for signs of erosion and other issues. The burn area appears to be somewhat patchy, which may bode well for vegetation recovery.

Old Marina Trail

Work continues on the trail that connects the Old Marina parking area to the David Gaines Memorial Boardwalk and the Mono Lake Trail to the Mono Basin Visitor Center. California Conservation Corps crews contracted by California State Parks have been replacing old trail material with new material that is firmer, easier to walk on, and Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant. The new material is also expected to hold up better and longer than the old material.

A small work crew started in May and will continue working until weather pushes them off the project. The hardy group has made good progress despite thunderstorms, extreme heat, and no-see-ums (pesky biting midges). It is likely they will return to complete the trail work next spring.

Drones at Mono Lake

This summer has seen a marked increase in drone use around Mono Lake, in particular at the key visitor

areas of South Tufa and Navy Beach. Drones, or unmanned aircraft systems, are remotely-piloted aircraft usually controlled by a person on the ground within sight of the drone. Many drones are outfitted with cameras, as photos and video footage from drone flights can be quite spectacular.

Drone use at Mono Lake is problematic, especially for wildlife and visitor experiences. Wildlife, in particular migratory and nesting birds, are very much affected by drones, which can flush birds into flight, causing them to disrupt their normal behavior patterns. Disturbing and harassing wildlife at Mono Lake in any way is illegal under California Fish & Wildlife code. In addition, people seeking solitude at Mono Lake have expressed their displeasure about motorized intrusions from drones overhead.

The Committee is compiling all relevant agency restrictions and applicable regulations and engaging enforcement personnel when appropriate. While drones certainly have the potential to be powerful research and monitoring tools in the appropriate situation, the proliferation of recreational drone flights is already having negative consequences at Mono Lake. Expect to hear more about this ongoing issue and the evolving management responses in future issues of the *Mono Lake Newsletter*.

Jon Kazmierski departs from the Inyo National Forest

After 15 years of working on the Inyo National Forest, Jon Kazmierski is now serving as the District Ranger for the Cumberland Ranger District of the Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky. Jon started on the Inyo in 2000 as a wilderness ranger and was eventually promoted to the position of Recreation Officer for the Mammoth and Mono Lake Districts. He was

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The Walker Fire on August 15 in a view from the slopes above the town of June Lake.



Jon Kazmierski giving a presentation to Mono Lake Volunteers.

instrumental in supporting a forum for all Mono Basin agencies and non-profit organizations to communicate and collaborate.

Mono Lake has always been a special place for Jon: “Anyone who spends time at Mono Lake will quickly be convinced that it is a resource that must be protected. I have departed the Inyo intent on sharing what I have learned at Mono Lake, how working together to conserve resources begins with a mutual understanding of and appreciation for the landscape.”

Thank you, Jon, for your years of

dedicated service to Mono Lake, and we wish you all the best.

California bans bobcat trapping

After two years of discussion, evaluation, and heated public meetings, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission voted 3–2 at its August meeting to end bobcat trapping throughout the state. The Bobcat Protection Act of 2013 directed the Commission to consider two alternatives to the trapping regulations: Option 1 would designate “no-trapping zones,” primarily around protected natural areas; and Option 2 would make it unlawful to trap bobcats anywhere in California. The Commission responded to the overwhelming majority of public sentiment and, somewhat surprisingly, supported Option 2.

The Committee’s focus in comment letters and at the Commission meeting in Mammoth Lakes in June was to make sure the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area and the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve were both included in the Option 1 “no-trapping zones” to protect the natural integrity of the Mono Basin ecosystem. The

designated no-trapping zones are moot now that there is a statewide ban on bobcat trapping—a result the Committee supports.

Less than 100 permits are issued annually to Californians for live-trapping bobcats and almost all the pelts are exported to China and Russia to supply the high-end fur fashion market. This decision sends a clear message that Californians prefer to have bobcats alive and functioning as top-level predators. ❖

The Committee extends a special thank-you to Lynn Boulton, Mono Basin resident bobcat advocate, and Mono Lake Committee member. Lynn worked tirelessly on this issue, traveling to numerous meetings to advocate for greater bobcat protections and making sure that Mono County residents and decision-makers were tracking the latest developments on the issue. She was at the Commissioners meeting in Fortuna when the final decision to implement a statewide ban was made. Great job, Lynn!

Godzilla snowpack or no pack?

The world is getting warmer, and the Pacific Ocean, in particular, is logging record warm temperatures in 2015. The last 30 years highlight the warmest temperatures on record for the Tropical Pacific. Warmer background ocean and atmospheric temperatures can create warmer storms, and warmer storms carry more moisture, but that also increases the probability of rain instead of snow at higher elevations. Currently, the record ocean temperatures in the Pacific and the NOAA temperature seasonal outlook do not build confidence in a Godzilla-sized snowpack.

In the case of Mono Lake, above-

normal precipitation in any form will ultimately help the lake level. However, the larger Mono Basin ecosystem relies on an annual snowpack—a natural frozen reservoir that slowly melts, runs off, and replenishes lakes, reservoirs, streams, and groundwater. The entire Mono Basin ecosystem is well adapted to this long-term regime. Climate modeling consistently shows that increasing temperatures due to increasing levels of carbon dioxide will diminish Sierra snowpack as we move into the middle of this century, even if precipitation remains steady or increases.

The current, strong El Niño arrives on the heels of the most extreme drought on record, and winter precipitation would have to exceed the

biggest winter on record in order to offset the current drought. It will take multiple wet years in order to reverse the state’s precipitation deficit. Even a Godzilla winter in the Eastern Sierra will not bring back the 5.8 feet of lake elevation lost since the drought began.

Last winter brought us the lowest snowpack in at least 500 years. Expectations for a healthy winter in California have never been higher. With a little bit of data, and a lot of hope, we scan the horizon, softly singing, “....go go Godzilla!” ❖

Bartshé Miller is the Committee’s Education Director. He is one of three staff members who have been to a Blue Öyster Cult concert.

SoCal water notes

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The fourth year of drought has ushered in intensive urban water conservation efforts across the state. In Southern California there are many ways residents can save water (see monolake.org/waterconservation for a lot of great and simple ideas). One highly popular option is replacing water-hungry lawn turf with drought-resistant native plants. So popular, in fact, that all \$350 million in rebate incentives authorized by the Metropolitan Water District in June was spent by July.

In Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power continues to fund turf-removal rebates as one of many water conservation strategies. The intense effort has had success, notably in the hot summer month of July when Los

Angeles achieved a 21% water use reduction, surpassing the City's mandatory conservation requirement set by the state.

Across the state, urban water conservation efforts have been similarly successful, with State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus commenting in August that "we're very happy to see that Californians are showing they have what it takes to meet our water-savings goals." Here at Mono Lake we are a part of the extended Los Angeles watershed. It is impressive to see the commitment of Angelinos in cutting their water use, especially because such efforts are a key ingredient for the protection of Mono Lake. Keep up the great work, citizens of Los Angeles! ♦



ERV NICHOLS

Progress toward a new license for streams in 2016

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement is a major milestone in the long-running effort to recover the health of Rush, Lee Vining, Parker, and Walker creeks after the damage caused by decades of excessive water diversions. The current priority is for the terms of the Agreement to be incorporated into the official water license issued by the California State Water Resources Control Board to the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power.

While progress has been slow, completion and formal approval of the newly revised license draws ever closer. Once the license is issued, the many benefits of the Stream Restoration Agreement will commence. Some, like winter flow schedules beneficial to trout, spring peak flows

beneficial to Lee Vining Creek habitat, and a new approach to management of scientific monitoring, will begin immediately. Others—most notably the high flows slated for Rush Creek that require a new Grant Lake Reservoir outlet—require the license in order to begin the construction that will ultimately enable their delivery.

In all cases, the issuance of the new license will be the next major milestone in Mono Basin stream restoration. Here's hoping the new license is soon in place and the winter is wet so that in 2016 the fish, birds, meandering channels, and streamside forests of the Mono Basin streams will experience the promised restorative flows of water.

Rockfall project buttoned up for winter

by Lisa Cutting

In mid-summer it looked like the Lee Vining Rockfall Safety Project would be completed in one construction season, but as the contractor was wrapping up work on Stage 1 (slopes 1, 2, 5, and 6) it was decided that it was too risky to start Stage 2 (slopes 3 and 4). Since any delay, unforeseen problem, or early winter weather could jeopardize the long-term success of the project, the contractor stopped work and removed all equipment for the winter.

The newly stabilized slopes are being irrigated through a highly water-efficient system of temporary pipes that run across each slope. Keeping the native seed and compost mixture wet is critical to the revegetation process, especially in the transition between summer and fall. Small plants can already be seen sprouting in the completed project areas.

The project has already improved motorist safety, and in the long-term the specialized revegetation process will also remove the visual scars of previously cut slopes (see Summer 2015 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). ❖



ARVA DEGENHARDT

Slope 2 of the rockfall project with a temporary irrigation system to keep the native seed and compost mixture wet until the snow falls. Work on slopes 3 and 4 will take place next summer.

Trail Chic Fashion Show



PHOTOS BY ERIN NICHOLS AND SANTIAGO M. ESCOBAR

The Trail Chic Fashion Show, held at the Lee Vining Community Center in July, raised the bar for fun and raised \$4,500 for the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center Access Fund. Birders and backpackers, fishermen and fish, royalty and galaxies, and even an Outdoor Education Center group, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, walked the astroturf runway in costume for the cause. The OEC Access Fund is used to help underserved communities break down the financial barriers to making the trek from Los Angeles to Mono Lake for five days of watershed education experiences. Thank you to all of the models for the extreme creativity, to Patagonia for gear for the silent auction, and to the Mono Market for delicious trail snacks. Special thanks to Randy Arnold and Barefoot Wine & Bubbly for providing the amazing array of wine that helps make the event a success.

Grant Lake Reservoir insulates Rush Creek from very low flows

by Greg Reis

Record-breaking spring and early summer precipitation caused Mono Basin unimpaired runoff to be almost double the dismal forecast. But April–September runoff was still the lowest on record due to the lowest snowpack and earliest snowmelt on record.

This unusual year was made even more unusual by Southern California Edison (SCE) “peaking” its upstream Mono Basin power plants. Peaking is a practice of running higher flows through power plants when electricity demand is high, and low flows at other times. Operating hydropower plants this way can cause dramatic fluctuations in flow downstream, but is currently allowed within the limitations of SCE’s Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licenses. Specific impacts on Mono Basin streams are as yet unknown.

SCE confirmed that it plans to operate this way in the future, with the largest fluctuations expected in dry years. The most dramatic example of SCE’s peaking practice happened on September 9, when a record low inflow to Grant Lake Reservoir of 4 cubic feet per second occurred.

A concern about the low and fluctuating inflows into Grant is that when the reservoir is below its minimum level, the minimum-required release equals the inflow. Without the record May–July precipitation, Grant would have fallen below the minimum level before September 9, and only 4 cubic feet per second inflow would have been required in the stream below Grant Dam. The Mono Lake Committee is exploring options to make sure that such low flows—not seen since 1982 when Rush Creek was dry below the

Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) diversion—are avoided, given that Grant is likely to reach its minimum level this fall and the drought could continue.

Grant may never get this low in the future because of provisions in the 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement, which almost always limit the effects of peaking to upstream of the reservoir. But during this winter and if next year is dry, there is a need to anticipate ways to avoid passing downstream the dramatic fluctuations and unprecedented low flows we saw this summer. As required by the Agreement, DWP will develop a new Mono Basin operations plan, which must include guidelines that address the impacts of SCE’s upstream operations on Grant Lake Reservoir levels and releases to Rush Creek. ♦

Lakewatch

Wettest May–July on record rescues Mono Lake from steeper decline

by Greg Reis

This has been an unusual water year (October 1, 2014–September 30, 2015). We have observed the reverse of the Mono Basin’s typical dry and wet seasons. The October–March portion of the 2015 water year was the driest seen since 1977 and was followed by a record wet May and June and the second-wettest July on record. It has only happened twice (1977 and 2015) since 1932 that spring and summer precipitation measured at the Cain Ranch weather

station more than doubles that of fall and winter.

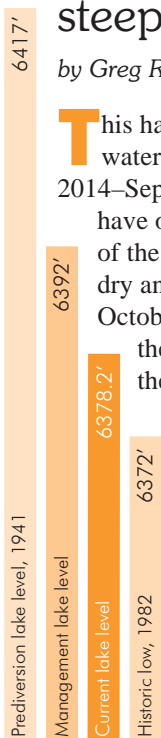
2015 now holds the record for the wettest April–September, with over 6 inches of precipitation. Despite the incredibly dry winter, the wet April–September brings the total 2015 water year precipitation to over 8.5 inches, wetter than all but four of the prior 16 years.

Mono Lake is currently at 6378.2 feet above sea level. Thanks to the wet spring and early summer, Mono Lake remained at a relatively steady level through mid-July, and since then has stayed over half a foot higher than projections based on the spring snowmelt runoff forecast.

Mono Lake is likely to remain above

6377 feet this winter and on April 1, 2016. However, any time the lake is projected to drop below 6377 feet in the coming runoff year, DWP cannot export any surface water from the Mono Basin. To keep the lake above 6377 feet in 2016, it needs to snow enough this winter to have at least average runoff next year. There is about a 50% chance the lake will stay above 6377 feet, and a 50% chance of DWP getting no export next year. ♦

Greg Reis is the Committee’s Information & Restoration Specialist. After a day exploring Rush Creek with his family, his four-year-old son, Charlie, said “you give the best Mono Lake tours.”



Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELLERY MCQUILKIN

The thin Sierra snowpack of the driest year on record disappeared quickly this summer as the state sank into a fourth year of drought. The sun dug deep, paring back the permanent snowfields and glaciers of the high country, exposing grey granite that had not felt the touch of sunlight for many a decade.

And yet hiking through the high Sierra on the John Muir Trail, as my adventuring family was fortunate to do in July, was a surprisingly lush experience. Meadows were green, new willow shoots were long, and flowers bloomed with wet-year vigor. Why? The substantial spring rains that

lingered into summer. They didn't bust the drought, but they masked the effects, creating landscape dissonance across the range of light.

We didn't step foot on a single patch of snow on the 221-mile trail, but the wildflower displays were excellent. We would stop to take photos of a vibrant field of flowers, and then gaze up past yellowing drought-stressed conifers to snowless and bare granite slopes. The rains were the saving grace of the 2015 season; hopefully deep winter snows will truly rejuvenate the Sierra in 2016. ❖

Benchmarks



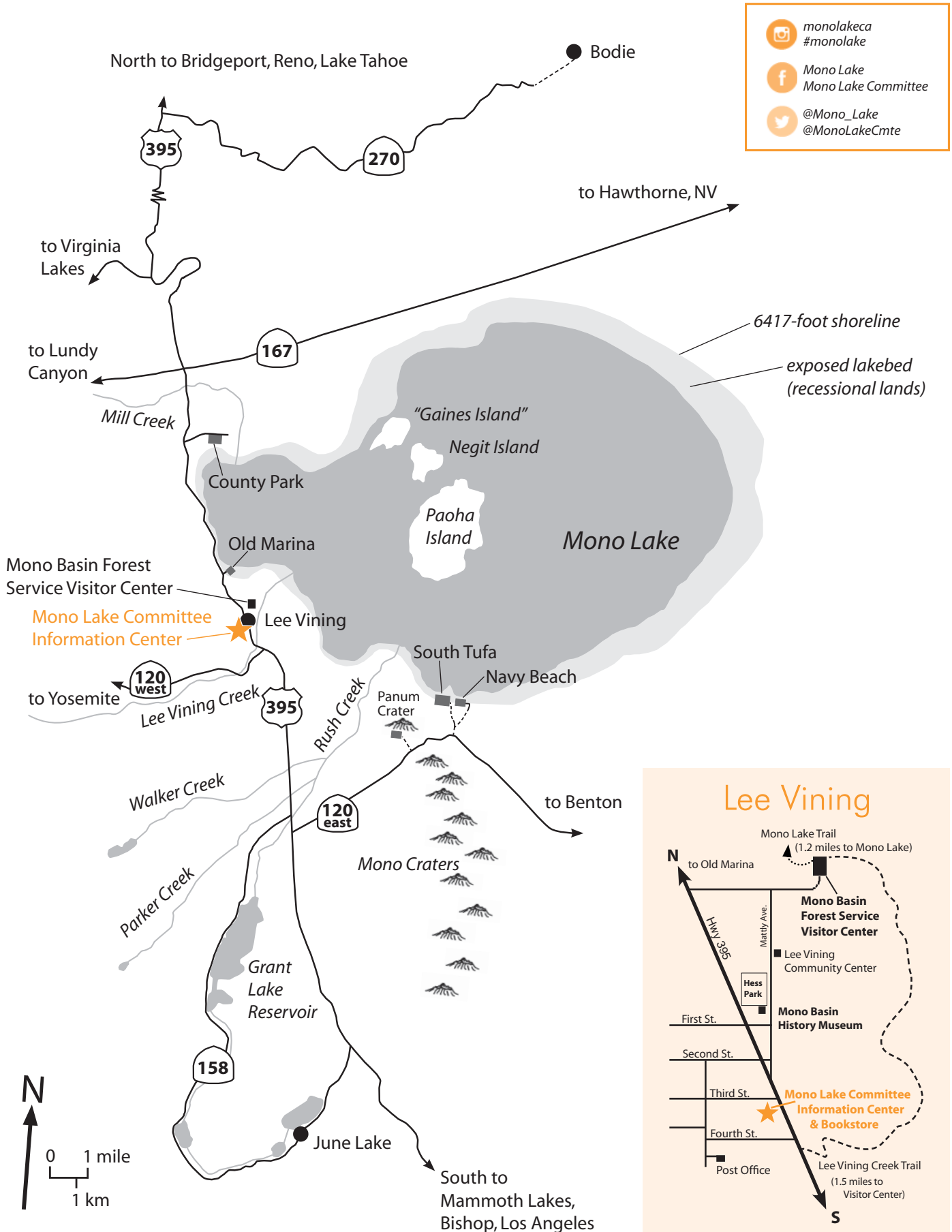
May 2012: The view from Old Marina early in the drought at lake elevation 6384 feet above sea level.



PHOTOS BY ARIA DEGENHARDT

October 2015: This is what a 5.8-foot drop in lake level looks like with Mono Lake now at 6378.2 feet above sea level.

Mono Lake map



Free Drawing to protect Mono Lake

Tickets due by December 10

Thank you to the generous businesses and organizations who donate the wonderful prizes for the Mono Lake Committee's annual Free Drawing, which is one of our largest fundraisers each year. Send in your tickets today (find them in the center of this *Newsletter*) for a chance to win. Thank you, and good luck!

Win...

- a Cali4nia ski pass for Mammoth Mountain, June Mountain, Bear Mountain, and Snow Summit
- a sailing trip on San Francisco Bay with Captain Kirk's Sailing Adventures, passes to the Aquarium of the Bay, and lodging at the Golden Gate Hotel
- a Mono Basin retreat with lodging at the "Ouzel's Nest" private vacation rental overlooking Mono Lake, a tour with local researcher Kristie Nelson, a kayak trip on Mono Lake, lunch at the famous Whoa Nellie Deli, and a Mono Lake Committee cap and water bottle
- a mountain escape at Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley
- a stay at Rainbow Tarns Bed & Breakfast with dinner at Giovanni's Pizzeria and a movie at Minaret Cinemas
- a Death Valley vacation with lodging at the Furnace Creek Resort and a copy of Dan Suzio's *Death Valley Photographer's Guide*
- passes to the California Academy of Sciences and the Conservatory of Flowers with lodging at the Golden Gate Hotel
- a stay at beautiful Convict Lake Resort with movie passes to Minaret Cinemas, dinner at Giovanni's Pizzeria, and a T-shirt from Wave Rave Snowboard Shop
- a Yosemite Conservancy field seminar and a selection of natural history books
- a season pass to Mammoth's Tamarack Cross Country Ski Resort
- a private Bodie Foundation Heritage Tour at Bodie State Historic Park
- a boat rental on Silver Lake and meal at Silver Lake Café
- a Bishop adventure with lunch at the Great Basin Bakery, gear from Sage to Summit, and wilderness perfume from Juniper Ridge
- Patagonia clothing: men's and women's Torrentshell jackets
- passes to the Aquarium of the Pacific
- Page Museum passes at the La Brea Tar Pits
- a membership and T-shirt from Friends of the Inyo
- Mono Lake Committee gift pack: Klean Kanteen, Mono Lake T-shirt, baseball cap, 2016 Mono Lake Calendar, and *The Mono Lake Story* DVD
- a Mono Lake Committee field seminar
- a guided canoe tour on Mono Lake
- a Trail 25 backpack from REI
- an iPad Mini • a GoPro camera



RAINBOW TARNs BED & BREAKFAST
At Crowley Lake



Researching the snack snatchers

by Robert Di Paolo

It was 8:30 one late-May morning when I found myself along with four other volunteers knee-deep in Mono-muck. We were “hiking” from Black Point to the far shore of Gaines Island where we were to meet biologist and Mono Lake California Gull Project Manager Kristie Nelson, who would transport us by boat to Krakatoa Islet. During the next four days we would be helping with the 2015 Mono Lake California Gull nest count.

I will never forget the cacophony of gull calls as we drew closer to Krakatoa—a continuous pitch that grew with our approach and diminished only when we returned home. And as soon as I took my first steps up the tufa-encrusted boulder “walkway” to base camp (a mostly skeletal wooden structure in the shape of a volcano), I knew I had embarked upon something entirely alien and tremendously adventurous.

Everything about the project reeked of adventure ... and gull poop. The prospect of participating in one of the longest ongoing avian research projects in North America (33 years and counting) was absolutely thrilling, but in all honesty I did not yet fully understand the study’s significance and value.

I knew that our job was to count the number of nests in order to calculate the number of gulls breeding at Mono Lake and I knew that two other research excursions to the islands would track reproductive success and mortality rates, but I didn’t understand the bigger purpose. Having grown up in San Francisco I had always perceived gulls as those pests that would steal your hot dog at the zoo, so I could not understand exactly what was so important about studying these snack snatchers.



Biologist Kristie Nelson marks gull nests with non-toxic paint.

During the nest count I learned that one of the core reasons to study these birds is that they are a good indicator of Mono Lake’s ecosystem health—they are prolific in number, easily observed, and they play a significant role in the Mono Lake ecosystem.

Historically, the islands in Mono Lake supported the largest breeding population of California Gulls in the state, surpassed only in recent years by populations in the San Francisco Bay (2008–2014, excluding 2009). In tracking the population and reproductive success of California Gulls at Mono Lake, correlations can be drawn to other variables in the lake ecosystem, like lake level, seasonal temperatures, and shrimp abundance. While drawing correlations can prove challenging, tracking and analyzing gull activity has become one of the key elements used to assess Mono Lake’s ecosystem health.

Once I understood how critical this research is, I felt very grateful to and inspired by the people who dedicate their time and effort to the study. The Mono Lake Committee, recognizing the research as fundamental to understanding Mono Lake’s ecosystem, has supported the research in many different ways since the very beginning. Kristie Nelson, who has been passionate about birds her whole life, has overseen the research since 2005 for Point Blue Conservation Science. And lastly, the volunteers I met, some of whom participate in the research every year, worked tirelessly and meticulously with unceasing dedication to the birds and the science.

Then I realized something else: the California Gull is now one of my favorite birds. ♦

Robbie Di Paolo is a Committee Project Specialist. He hopes there will be so much snow this winter that he will be sick of seeing it.



PHOTOS BY ROBBIE DI PAOLO

The research crew heads toward Negit Island for a day of counting.

Watershed moments

news from the
Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center



Ice-age tufa for the OEC

At the Caltrans Rockfall Project site, large pieces of ice-age tufa rock needed to be removed from the slopes high above Highway 395 for motorist safety. Before sending it to the crusher or the dump, Caltrans offered the tufa to local agencies and organizations that could use the rock for public interpretive benefit.

The OEC now has a beautiful ice-age tufa specimen, complete with visible crystal structures that indicate it formed in Mono Lake over 10,000 years ago. It's a great addition to the OEC programs—sparking questions right where the groups camp out under the stars.

Thank you, Caltrans!

Sing your heart out, and other advice

Outdoor Education Center groups usually arrive in the Mono Basin after a five-plus hour drive and find themselves in a completely foreign land. OEC staff greet the students, get them oriented, discuss the rules of the program, get them drinking water, and take them on a night hike deep in the forest where they do a solo walk and howl for coyotes. It's a whirlwind of new things.



To help welcome the students, the previous OEC group writes the upcoming group messages of welcome and encouragement and tips for having a good time. The messages range from heartfelt to funny, and they always seem to do the trick—it's helpful to see that the people before you have not only survived, but had "a super fun time like no other!"



New picnic tables for the OEC

Thank you to Mono Lake Committee members **Art Carey, Dawn Cope, Linda Edwards, and Rick Garzoli & Holly Reid** who replied to our Newsletter wish list request for new tables, and to the **William C. Bannerman Foundation** for covering the shipping costs. This past summer groups shared meals while sitting comfortably outside in the spectacular beauty of the Mono Basin.



Our mission is to build understanding and appreciation for the Mono Basin/Los Angeles watershed through education programs and muscle-powered recreational activity; to demonstrate that balanced solutions are possible for meeting the water needs of people and the environment; and to kindle stewardship through service projects that restore and improve the quality of the Mono Basin watershed.

monolake.org/education

PHOTOS BY SANTIAGO M. ESCRUCERIA



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION CENTER & BOOKSTORE

Fall Catalog

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

NEW!



USE WATER LIKE YOU'RE CAMPING T-SHIRT

A Mono Lake Committee original! Project Specialist Andrew and Information Center & Bookstore Assistants Grace and Gabby model this super soft and comfortable T-shirt that offers a friendly reminder to stay water conscious. The shirt says "Use water like you're camping," and "Long Live Mono Lake" in white. This T-shirt is 52% cotton and 48% polyester and is a deep heather blue color that is universally flattering. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Use Water Like You're Camping T-shirt, heather blue, S-XL: \$16.00, XXL: \$19.00

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE BASEBALL CAP

Baseball season may be over, but these classic baseball caps never go out of style, as Office Director Jess, Information Center & Bookstore Manager Lily, and Project Specialist Robbie show. The 100% cotton caps feature the Mono Lake Committee logo embroidered on the front, and an adjustable strap at the back.

Available in three rich colors: chocolate brown, navy blue, and rust orange. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Mono Lake Committee baseball cap, one size, please specify brown, navy, or orange: \$18.00



HOLIDAY CARD SETS

BY WENDY MORGAN

Wendy Morgan's holiday card sets are perfect for season's greetings. Choose from Red-breasted Nuthatches, Great Horned Owls, or Hairy Woodpeckers ... or get them all. The sets come with 10 cards of the same image with the message "May you have a happy holiday and a joyous New Year" printed in red, inside.

Holiday card set, 10 cards with envelopes, 4 1/2" x 6 1/4", please specify nuthatch, owl, or woodpecker set: \$13.95



RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES



GREAT HORNED OWLS



HAIRY WOODPECKERS

order at monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

HANDCRAFTED CUTTING BOARD

These beautiful, one-of-a-kind cutting boards are handcrafted in California by woodworker Win Tatro. Each board features a combination of reclaimed wood, such as red oak, walnut, and white oak, making them a great gift for the eco-conscious cook.

Handcrafted cutting board, 11"x 8½": \$28.00



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LENS CLOTH

Keep your binoculars and eyewear clean with these packable lens cloths! Each five-inch-square microfiber cloth features the Mono Lake Committee logo in white and folds into its attached stuff sack complete with a clip for easy travel. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Mono Lake Committee lens cloth, approx. 2"x 1½"x 1½" when packed, please specify neon green or neon orange: \$5.00



CLEAR GLASS MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO MUG

This elegant clear glass mug has a white Mono Lake Committee logo on one side, a hefty base, and a large handle for easy sipping. Pair with a favorite tin of tea or some cocoa to create the perfect holiday gift. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Clear glass Mono Lake Committee logo mug, 13-oz: \$8.50



NEW!

BIRD SOCKS

Calling all bird-lovers! If you love birds, these are the perfect socks for your feet. These crew socks are 75% cotton, 20% nylon, and 5% spandex. Choose from woodpeckers, American Goldfinches, owls, Great Blue Herons, quail, or chickadees, or get them all! *Bird socks, please specify bird design and adult sock size 9-11 or 10-13: \$10.50*



See all
products
in color
at
MONOLAKE.
ORG/STORE



BRINE SHRIMP ORNAMENT

These brine shrimp ornaments by Wild Bryde serve as a festive tribute to the *Artemia monica* of Mono Lake. The ornaments are just over 3 inches long and come in a custom blue envelope, making them a fun and easy-to-mail holiday gift. Choose between silver and gold ornaments, or get one of each. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*
Brine shrimp ornament, please specify silver or gold: \$10.00



WOODEN MONO LAKE EARRINGS

BY FREEFORM WOODWORKING

Show your love for your favorite lake with these beautiful, lightweight wooden earrings inspired by Mono Lake's tufa towers. Created by the husband and wife team of John & Gina Webber, each earring is unique, handmade and features a scene of Mono Lake burned into the wood. Every pair varies slightly and hangs approximately 1 1/4 inches on sterling silver ear wires. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*
Wooden Mono Lake earrings: \$45.00

SHIPWRECK EBONY EARRINGS

BY T. BREEZE VERDANT

These stunning earrings feature reclaimed wood sourced from an 1854 shipwreck! The ebony is accented with pieces of abalone shell and reclaimed wire. These unique handmade earrings will add a splash of nautical beauty to your jewelry collection. Every pair varies slightly and hangs approximately 1 inch on sterling silver ear wires.
Shipwreck Ebony earrings: \$54.00



BEESWAX CANDLES

These beeswax candles from Big Dipper Wax Works are a wonderful way to illuminate and freshen up a room during the holiday season. Choose from a variety of aromatherapy candles in travel tins—they make excellent stocking stuffers. Or, add a touch of avian charm to your home with natural beeswax sculpted bird candles.

Aromatherapy beeswax candle tin, 1.7-oz, please specify meditation (cedarwood and balsam), balance (lavender and peppermint), or rejuvenation (sweet orange and clove bud): \$5.50

Songbird beeswax candle, 3"x 4", please specify upright or pecking: \$10.00



order at monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

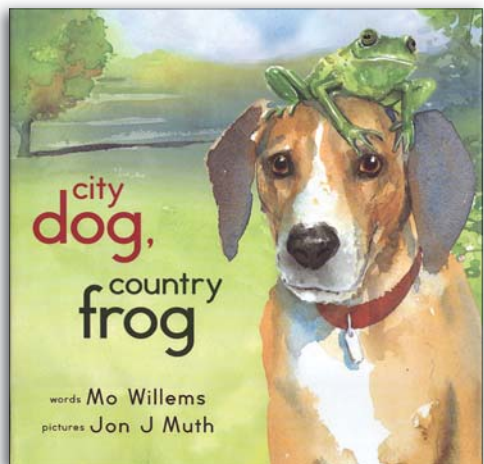
Color photos of all products at MONOLAKE.ORG/STORE

FINGER PUPPETS

Bring your wild friends from the Mono Basin home with you to play!

These plush, loveable, and high-quality Folkmanis finger puppets make for great interactive play. Choose from three Mono Basin species: black bear, Steller's Jay, and jackrabbit.

Finger puppets, approx. 3½"x 3½"x 6", please specify black bear, Steller's Jay, or jackrabbit: \$9.00



CITY DOG, COUNTRY FROG

WRITTEN BY MO WILLEMS, ILLUSTRATED BY JON J. MUTH

This is a heartwarming children's tale of an unlikely bond between a dog from the city and a frog from the country. As the unusual pair spend a year together, a unique friendship forms as they explore each other's lives.

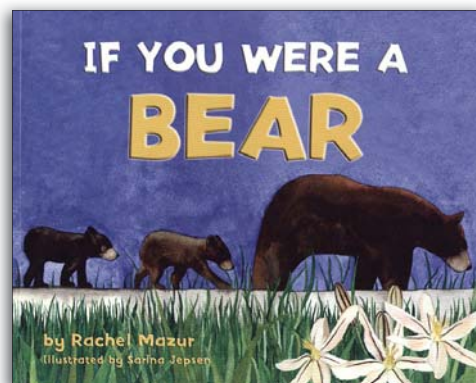
City Dog, Country Frog, hardcover, Hyperion Books for Children, 64 pages, 10½"x 10¼": \$17.99

IF YOU WERE A BEAR

WRITTEN BY RACHEL MAZUR, ILLUSTRATED BY SARINA JEPSEN

This recently-released, easy-to-read children's book describes bear behavior and good bear safety practices in a kid-friendly manner.

If You Were a Bear, paperback, Sequoia Natural History Association, 40 pages, 10"x 8": \$7.99



ZOOTIES BABY BOOTIES

These sweet 100% wool felt booties are a whimsical way to keep little feet cozy this winter. These warm and soft booties are one size fits all and are designed for children age 0–12 months. They even have tails on the back!

Zooties baby booties, one size fits age 0–12 months, please specify chipmunk, ladybug, raccoon, or fox: \$22.00



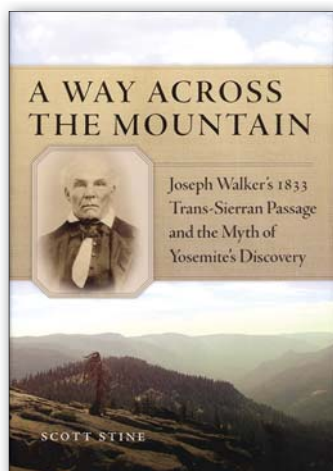
CHIPMUNK

LADYBUG

RACCOON

FOX

order at monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595



A WAY ACROSS THE MOUNTAIN

BY SCOTT STINE

In *A Way Across the Mountain*, Stine reconstructs the original 1833 route taken across the Sierra by Joseph Walker's famous expedition through his knowledge of and research on the geomorphology, hydrography, biogeography, and climate of the Sierra Nevada and Great Basin. Stine highlights Walker's greatest discovery—that the huge swath of continent between the Wasatch Front and the Sierra crest is hydrographically closed, draining not to an ocean, but to salty lakes and desert sands.

A Way Across the Mountain, hardcover, Arthur H. Clark, 320 pages, 7¼"x 10½": \$34.95

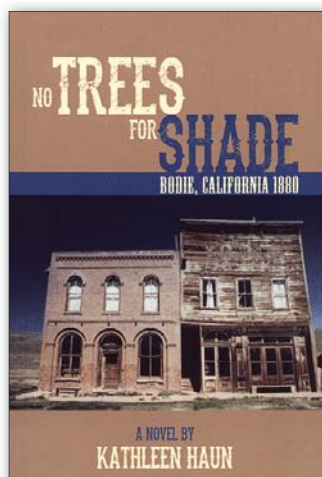
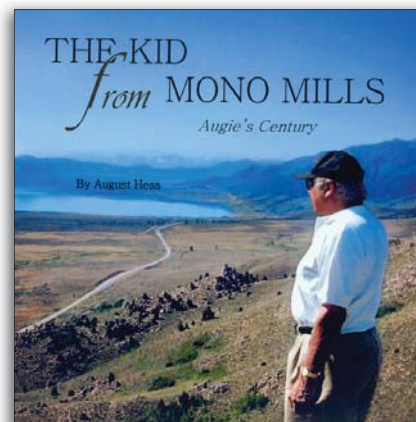
THE KID FROM MONO MILLS:

AUGIE'S CENTURY

BY AUGUST HESS

Born in 1914 at Mono Mills just southeast of Mono Lake, Augie Hess' hundred-plus years are told in his own colorful words. He shares his Paiute mother's culture, stories from his Swiss miner father, and tales of growing up along Rush Creek and in the fledgling town of Lee Vining.

The Kid from Mono Mills, paperback, self-published, 147 pages, 8½"x 8½": \$19.95



NO TREES FOR SHADE: BODIE, CALIFORNIA 1880

BY KATHLEEN HAUN

Local author Kathleen Haun brings Bodie to life in this novel set in 1880. Bodie is a bustling and prosperous town of 7,000 people when 19-year-old Amanda Blake moves there to live with her father, a miner. Amanda settles in somewhat reluctantly, but soon finds that her preconceptions about the town are not entirely true.

No Trees for Shade, paperback, Aventine Press, 366 pages, 6"x 9": \$19.95

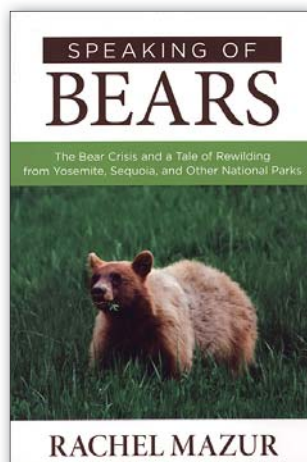
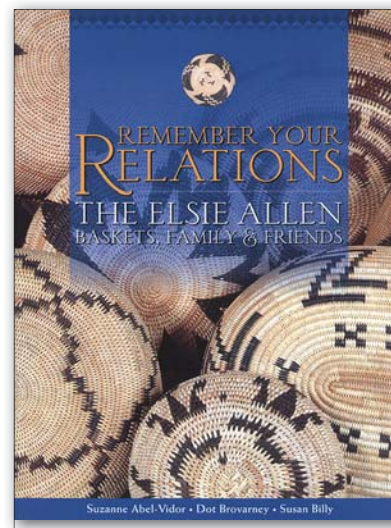
REMEMBER YOUR RELATIONS

BY SUZANNE ABEL-VIDOR, DOT BROVARNEY, AND SUSAN BILLY

Remember Your Relations depicts the rich history of basketry and the people who have woven baskets for generations. This book weaves

California history and the native culture into a compelling tale featuring many full-color photographs.

Remember Your Relations, paperback, Heyday Books, 128 pages, 8½"x 11": \$20.00



SPEAKING OF BEARS

BY RACHEL MAZUR

Bears are fascinating and complex creatures, and this book explains how much we still have to learn about them. Compiled from over 100 interviews with park rangers and bear specialists, this book discusses how the National Parks in the Sierra Nevada have created a human-bear problem, and the steps that have been and continue to be taken to rectify these issues.

Speaking of Bears, paperback, FalconGuides, 281 pages, 9"x 6": \$18.95

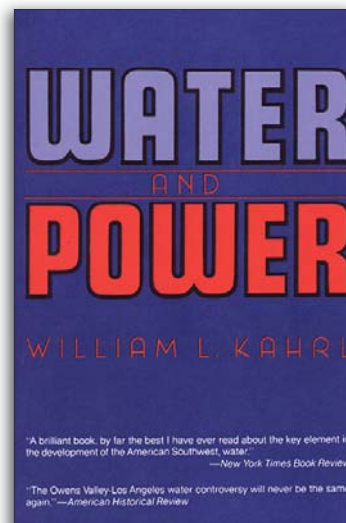
order at monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

WATER AND POWER

BY WILLIAM L. KAHRL

The classic book *Water and Power* is a concise documentation of the legendary struggle for water between Los Angeles and the Owens Valley. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of water policy and the American West.

Water and Power, paperback, University of California Press, 584 pages, 6"x 9": \$39.95

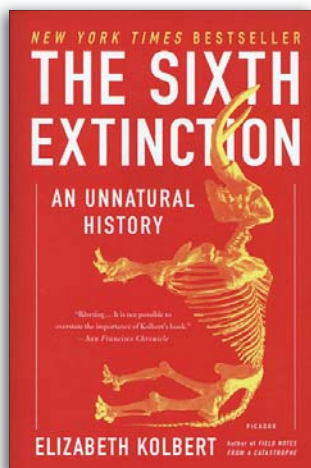


THE SIXTH EXTINCTION

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

In prose that is at once frank, entertaining, and deeply informed, Pulitzer Prize winning writer Kolbert tells us why and how human beings have altered life on the planet in a way no species has before. From the dawn of life to the recent Anthropocene epoch, Kolbert takes you on an adventure through time that leaves you wanting more.

The Sixth Extinction, paperback, Picador Publishing, 336 pages, 5½"x 8¼": \$16.00

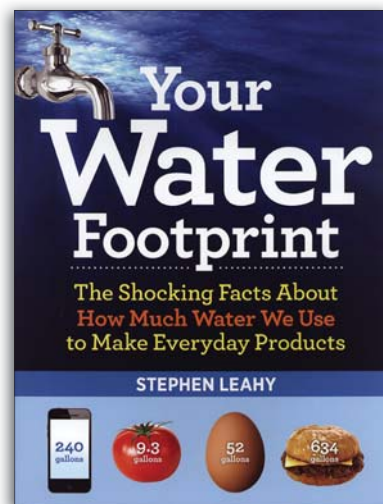


YOUR WATER FOOTPRINT

BY STEPHEN LEAHY

This fascinating book illustrates how much water it takes to make the everyday items we use and consume. From a cotton T-shirt to a cup of coffee, it all takes water! Find the facts through this book's clear and compelling graphics and visuals.

Your Water Footprint, paperback, Firefly Books, 144 pages, 8½"x 11": \$19.95

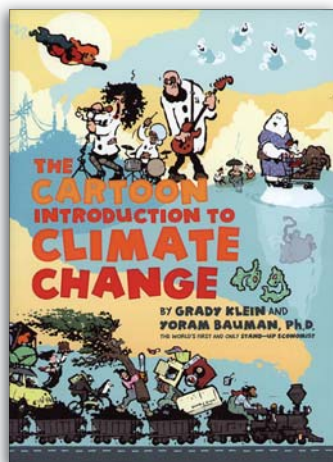


THE CARTOON INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

BY GRADY KLEIN AND YORAM BAUMAN

How fun can a "hot" topic be? Klein and Bauman present a funny, entertaining read that's sure to be a favorite for anyone interested in better understanding climate change.

The Cartoon Introduction to Climate Change, paperback, Island Press, 224 pages, 7"x 10": \$19.95

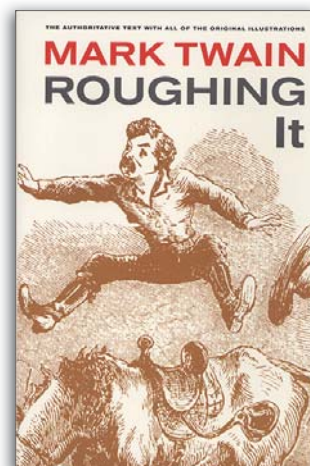


ROUGHING IT

BY MARK TWAIN

Twain's humorous account of his six years in Nevada, San Francisco, and the Sandwich Islands is a patchwork of personal anecdotes and tall tales. Meticulously restored from a variety of original sources, this edition is the first to adhere to the author's wishes in thousands of details of wording, spelling, and punctuation, and includes all of the 304 first-edition illustrations.

Roughing It, paperback, University of California Press, 888 pages, 5½"x 8": \$26.95



SILK FLOWER SOAP

This handmade soap has a light floral scent and is wrapped in wool-silk felt that is crafted into a fun and decorative flower. Simply wet and use like a loofah. The result is smooth skin, and soap that adds a creative accent to your bathroom. A fun idea for a stocking stuffer! All soaps have the same scent; choose from orange lily, pink rose, or blue hydrangea.

Silk flower soap, approx. 3"x 2", please specify lily, rose, or hydrangea design: \$12.00



LILY

ROSE

HYDRANGEA

NAKED BEE HAND CREAM

If you suffer from dry winter skin, we recommend giving Naked Bee hand cream a try. This paraben- and phalate-free lotion is designed to moisturize and balance the skin with only natural ingredients. It comes in three wonderful fragrances: coconut honey, pomegranate honey, and orange blossom honey.

Naked Bee hand cream, 3.25-oz, please specify coconut honey, orange blossom honey, or pomegranate honey: \$10.00



SIERRA GRANITE CABIN SPRAY

The ingredients for this sprayable room fragrance were wild-harvested from the Sierra Nevada—right here in Mono Lake's backyard! Use a light mist of this cabin spray made by Juniper Ridge to be immediately transported to an early autumn day in the high country with notes of incense cedar, mountain manzanita blossom, and ponderosa pine.

Sierra Granite Cabin Spray, 2-oz: \$40.00

AFRICAN BLACK SOAP

African black soap is made from the ash of African plants, specifically for sensitive and problem skin. This gentle liquid soap has a lovely lavender scent—giving it a soothing fragrance to boot!

African black soap, 4-oz: \$8.00

African black soap, 12-oz: \$20.00

NEW!

SHEA BUTTER LOTION

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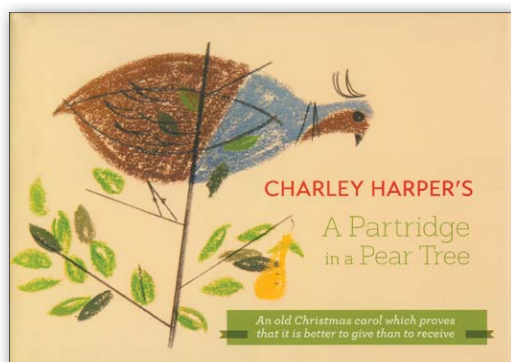
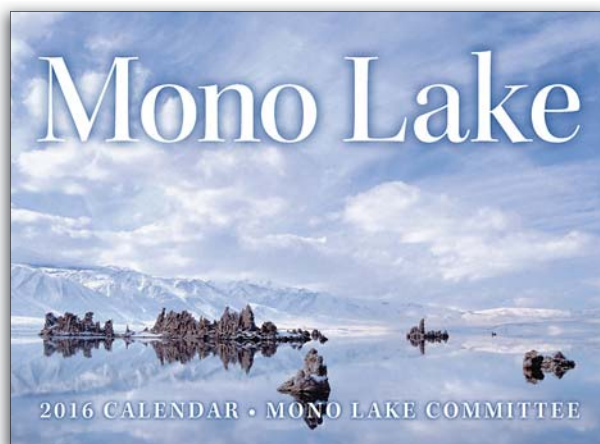
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2016 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

The 2016 *Mono Lake Calendar* features stunning images of this wild and wonderful watershed. See the Mono Basin's birds, tufa towers, sunsets, fall colors, winter landscape, and starry skies as captured by skilled photographers. Bring Mono Lake into your home 366 days of the leap year, and call us for bulk discounts and holiday shipping options for gifts this season. Printed in the USA on recycled paper.

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2016 *Mono Lake Calendar*, 13"x 9½": \$14.95



A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE

BY CHARLEY HARPER

This book was originally created for artist Charley Harper's family, with the message that it is better to give than to receive. A playful riff on the traditional Yuletide carol, "The Twelve Days of Christmas," it is full of whimsy with its pastel sketches and humorous text.

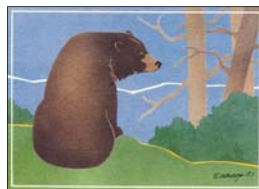
A Partridge in a Pear Tree, hardcover, Pomogranate, 28 pages, 7"x 5": \$9.95

MOUNTAIN ANIMALS CARD SET

BY WENDY MORGAN

From popular artist Wendy Morgan, this collection features 12 different mountain animals. The cards are blank inside so they can be used for any occasion. A favorite of Mono Lake Committee staff, and a bestseller in our store, we think they'll become your favorites too.

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Staff migrations

by Jessica Horn

After the smoke cleared from the summer's wildfires, the morning air turned crisp and clear with the arrival of autumn. We said goodbye once again to our seasonal staff as they migrated to their next adventures, and welcomed new people to the Mono Lake family.

On July 11, Committee Board member **Vireo** and her husband **Jeff Schiller** welcomed their second son, **Owen David Schiller**. Congratulations to the whole family, including grandmother and Board Chair **Sally Gaines** and big brother **Everett**.



SANTIAGO M. ESCRUICERIA

Everett, Vireo, and new addition to the family, Owen David Schiller.

Terry McLaughlin filled in as the Information Center & Bookstore Manager this summer, and can now be found under a pile of mail as she takes on the new position of Membership Assistant. She will help Membership Coordinator Ellen King process incoming mail, enter membership data, and aid in the numerous mailing projects through fall and winter.

Returning this year as an Outdoor Education Instructor, **Melissa Boyd** shared her love for Mono Lake and the Eastern Sierra with Outdoor Education Center groups. She left us in August to pursue a Master's degree in Biology at Northern Arizona University.

With great energy and passion for the Outdoor Education Center and the students who visit, **Edie Harris** stayed into November as an Outdoor Education Instructor. We know she will take on her next adventure with the same enthusiasm that we've always seen from her.

In September, Canoe Coordinator and previous Mono Lake Intern and Project Specialist **Lily Pastel** stepped into the Information Center & Bookstore Manager position. She has already picked it up with thoughtful ease and we are excited to see her fresh ideas for both the physical bookstore and the online store.

Both Information Center & Bookstore Assistants went off to school after a summer spent helping visitors in the bookstore. Los Angeles transplant **Grace Aleman** shared the story of Mono Lake with the public from behind the counter, while romping around the Sierra on almost every day off that she had. She is studying in Argentina for the semester.

We miss **Gabby Renteria**'s "five hugs a day for everyone" in addition to her endless energy and careful work in the bookstore. She headed south to attend Pasadena City College while living in Mt. Baldy this fall.

It's hard to ignore the obvious migration reference when talking about our Birding Interns **Sandra Noll** and **Erv Nichols**. They returned for a second summer to share their invaluable interpretive wisdom and birding expertise with the Mono Basin. They have once again headed south for the winter season to volunteer for nature, and hope to return again next spring.

Mono Lake Intern **Sarah Angulo** coordinated the Mono Lake Committee's "Refreshments with Refreshing 'Ologists'" lecture series and was an avid contributor to the Mono-logue blog. She can now be found in Nevada City, where she is the new Education Coordinator for the Sierra Streams Institute.

Mono Lake Intern **Sara Matthews** spent the summer leading interpretive tours at South Tufa, guiding canoe tours, and helping in the Lee Vining community garden. This fall she returned to her position as a lecturer in the Geography Department at Humboldt State University.

Mono Lake Intern **Matt Rice** took on every project (and then some) with an exceptional attitude. He did everything from leading canoe tours to refinishing wood benches. He has moved on to work as a Scientific Aid for the California Department of Fish & Wildlife in La Grange.

Mono Lake Intern **Tina Weedman** headed back to Humboldt State University to finish her degree in Conservation Biology and Applied Vertebrate Ecology. She spent the summer cataloging displays from State Water Board hearings and counting California Gull nests on Mono Lake's islands.

Mono Lake Intern **Andrew Youssef**'s impressive interpretive skills were a great asset to the Committee this summer, as was his ability to take on a variety of projects. We are happy to have him stay through the winter as a Project Specialist—he will work on events, help with office projects, cover bookstore shifts, and experience his first Lee Vining winter, complete with poconip fog and, hopefully, snow! ❖

Jess Horn is the Committee's Office Director. After a really warm summer, she can't wait to ski some Godzilla-induced Sierra snow.



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

Thank you to all of you who sent in contributions in honor or in memory 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

We received a donation in honor of the wedding of Mono Lake Committee Communications Coordinator **Elin Ljung** and **Nathan Taylor** from **Martha Chivens** of San Luis Obispo, and a donation in honor of “**Nathan & Elin’s Royal Wedding**” from **Bartshé & Kelly Miller** of Lee Vining.

A donor who wishes to remain anonymous sent a contribution in honor of Mono Lake Committee Birding Interns **Sandra Noll & Erv Nichols**. **Georgene Gmahling** of Greenbrae made a donation in honor of **George Gmahling**. **Camilla Saviz** of Stockton gave a gift in honor of “the upcoming marriage of **Dr. Abel Fernandez** and **Ms. Louise Carniglia**.” **Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schieferstein** of Walnut Creek sent a contribution in honor of the birthday of **Craig Schieferstein**. **Diane Tilstra** of Tacoma, WA made a donation in honor of **Sahara Chaldean** and **Deborah Greene-Jacobi** on the occasion of the Elderquest Reunion 2015.

In memory

Vickie Dandridge of Encinitas made a donation in memory of **Roger Burt**. **Victoria Davis** of Austin, TX sent a contribution in memory of **Ann Kimzey**. **Charles Enoch** of Van Nuys gave a gift in loving memory of his wife **Gloria**. **Bill & Nina Graham** of San Marino gave a gift in memory of **Andrea Lawrence**. **Helen Green** of Berkeley and **James Snyder** of Davis sent contributions in memory of **Don Banta**. **Carol Mathews** of Walnut Creek sent a contribution “in loving memory of **Robert Mathews**.” **Marian Maurer** of Fort Jones made a donation “in memory of my husband **Ken** and my son, **Jeffrey**

Maurer.” **Greta & Terry Rees** of Dallas, TX gave a gift in memory of **Robert Harris**: “He and his wife **Sherry** spent many happy vacations in the area around Mono Lake.” **Camilla Saviz** of Stockton sent a contribution in memory of **Mrs. Frances Litton**. **Susan Sherk** of Berkeley, on behalf of the Clinical Microbiology Lab at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, made a donation in memory of **Ron Hochede**. **Karen Simon** of Palo Cedro gave a gift in memory of **Kathy Rhymes**. **Larry Williams** of San Francisco sent a contribution in memory of **William Roy Williams**.

James Wilson remembered

Longtime beloved local and dedicated Mono Lake Committee member **James Wilson** died unexpectedly on July 15 from a stroke. He was 67 years old.

James’ accomplishments were numerous. He was the founder of Wilson’s Eastside Sports in Bishop, co-founder of Friends of the Inyo, an active member of Eastern Sierra Audubon, the California Wilderness Coalition, and the Bishop Rotary Club, to name a few. James was involved in almost every environmental issue that emerged in the region for over 30 years, bringing his calm, principled, and collaborative approach to every table. He was driven by his passionate

love for the Eastern Sierra and his strong desire to protect its wild places, encouraging others to get out and experience it firsthand.

He is survived by his wife **Kay**, daughter **Rosanne** (former Mono Lake Committee staff member), son-in-law **Bayard**, and grandson **Ansel**. As a dedicated and steadfast conservation leader in the Eastern Sierra, an avid birder and naturalist, and a friend to many, James is deeply missed.

We received donations in memory of **James Wilson** from **Jora & Mark Fogg** of June Lake, **Sherryll & Tony Taylor** of Mammoth Lakes, **Jeanne Walter** of Swall Meadows, **K.C. Wylie** of Lone Pine, and from **Diana Cunningham**, **Rosie & Chris Howard**, **Fran Hunt**, **Robert Klieforth**, and **Gretchen Schumacher**, all of Bishop. ♦



The 2015 Mono Lake Committee staff.

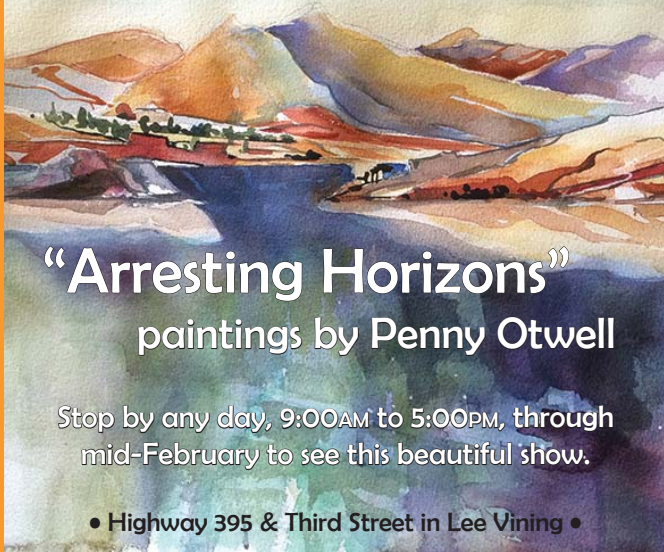


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