

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2016

Fall Catalog

Inyo Forest Plan Comments

Free Drawing

Meet the Grant Outlet

One day last fall, all together, the Mono Lake Committee staff trudged out to the exposed landbridge area between Black Point and Negit Island. It really was a trudge. Not only is it a deceptively-long distance through undulating gravel berms from previously-higher lakeshores to even get out to the exposed lakebed, but once you get that far it turns into an obstacle course of thick, slick mud. It was a chilly and windy day, so we were all bundled up from head to toe, which made it difficult to walk and talk. So, we waddled, swished, and crunched our way out there somewhat meditatively.

It's an unfamiliar thing—going out to see something you're not excited to see in the Mono Basin. But we knew we needed to see it—plus, there were wildlife cameras to check and potential gull colony safety fence routes to be evaluated. So, with strength in numbers, some insanely tasty chocolate cake from Vern, and high hopes for a wet winter ahead, we marched ourselves out there to get the lay of the ... land.

And now a year later, here we are, another below-average-water-year later, looking down the barrel of building that fence in order to protect the once-safe nesting gull colony from clever coyotes before the gulls' arrival in spring. Darn it all. It's hard not to feel like it's a personal failure somehow.

But then I think about our little gear-swaddled gaggle, earnestly and carefully padding our way out there on that peninsula, and I have to smile. We have 16,000 amazing people, Mono Lake Committee members, who want us to be here day in, day out, trudging, reasoning, watching, speaking, canoeing, monitoring, and, yes, even installing a temporary fence when necessary, for Mono Lake. Our work can't be solely measured in terms of lake level. Flip through the next few pages of this *Newsletter*, and I'm fairly certain you'll see what I mean.

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



Last year the Mono Lake Committee staff trekked out toward Negit Island, where only a narrow stretch of water still separates it from the mainland. We discussed the fence that will be installed this winter to protect nesting California Gulls from coyote predation.

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
monolake.org
monobasinresearch.org

Los Angeles Office

1718 Wellesley Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90025-3634

Staff

Executive Director..... Geoffrey McQuilkin
Eastern Sierra Policy Director..... Lisa Cutting
Education Director..... Bartshé Miller
Communications Director..... Arya Degenhardt
Office Director Jessica Horn
Membership Coordinator Ellen King
Information & Restoration Specialist Greg Reis
Sacramento Policy Associate Betsy Reifsnider
Outdoor Education Center Manager
..... Santiago M. Escruceria
Lead Naturalist Guide Nora Livingston
LA Education Coordinator..... Herley Jim Bowling
Communications Coordinator..... Elin Ljung
Information Center & Bookstore Mgr..... Lily Pastel
Bookkeeper Donnette Huselton
Membership Assistants..... Maureen McGlinchy,
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California Gull protection plans advance

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Five years of drought have lowered Mono Lake over six feet, placing one of the nation's largest California Gull colonies, home to 50,000 nesting birds, in increasing danger.

The shrinking moat of water between the lake's north shore and Negit Island and adjacent nesting islets is no longer an adequate deterrent to predators like coyotes—in fact, signs of several coyote trips across approximately 500 feet of shallow water to a small nesting area were found this past summer.

Since spring Mono Lake has dropped almost a foot to an October level of 6377.3 feet above sea level, just as the lake level forecast model predicted. This provides renewed confidence that the spring 2017 forecast is reliable. Assuming average winter precipitation, the lake is expected to be a few inches below the 6378-foot threshold level at which action to protect the gull colony is needed. Thus, plans are advancing for implementing protection measures before nesting is underway in April.

A temporary electric fence has been the primary focus of discussion, and permitting is already complete. The design was developed by California State Parks and the Mono Lake Committee, in consultation with the California



A temporary fence is needed to prevent coyotes from reaching California Gull nesting grounds next spring.

Department of Fish & Wildlife and US Forest Service, and is essentially a multi-strand, solar powered electric fence, similar to those used with livestock on ranches. Fence strands will be lowered for the fall and winter to avoid obstructing wildlife outside the nesting season. The fence

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Breaking news: Illegal grading on Mono Lake's shore

As this *Newsletter* is going to press, heavy equipment has just illegally overrun and cleared three acres of highly protected State Park land on Mono Lake's west shore. Quick action by Mono Lake Committee staff and multiple agencies halted the activity before more willows and wetland were disturbed, but the damage is alarming. State Park staff repeatedly advised the equipment operators of the park

boundary—which was well marked—but Committee staff observed the grading continuing to push well onto Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve land.

In addition, equipment operators diverted a small creek into a newly excavated pond—drying, and then partially burying, the riparian corridor. The creek now exits the pond in a new ditch and then spreads across State Park land before it reaches Mono Lake.

There were no permits for any of the activity, which ballooned out from work the Tioga Lodge undertook earlier in the summer to manage trees burned in the Marina Fire.

The incident triggered a response from multiple agencies. State Parks is pursuing the resource damage to the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve. The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Department of Fish & Wildlife are pursuing the stream damage and erosion issues. Mono County issued a stop work notice due to unpermitted grading.

The excavator is now gone but restoration of damaged habitat will be needed. We will keep Committee members posted on the status of this surprising development, here in the *Newsletter* and online at monolake.org/today.



Illegal work happening on State Park land east of Highway 395.

Meet the Grant Outlet

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Modification of the 1930s-era Los Angeles Aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin is the critical next step to restoring the health of Mono Lake's tributary streams. This is especially true at Grant Lake Reservoir, where the dam is currently unable to release required flows into Rush Creek.

A modern-day aqueduct should be able to minimize its impacts and maximize restoration while delivering authorized water exports to Los Angeles. The good news is that the Mono Lake Committee worked for three years to reach an agreement with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) to modernize the aqueduct, and the California State Water Resources Control Board is expected to formally order the changes soon.

Engineering work and planning for the new Grant Outlet has progressed significantly since the settlement agreement was reached in late 2013. In fact, construction is slated to start in 2017.

The Grant Outlet concept

The existing overflow spillway at Grant Dam will be modified to allow



The site of the future Langemann gates that will make the Grant Outlet functional.

for the controlled release of water from the reservoir into Rush Creek. The resulting new outlet will operate in the springtime when high streamflows are required under the new State Water Board license. The existing limited-capacity facility will deliver lower flows year-round.

Building the outlet

To allow controlled release of water from the reservoir, the bottom of the existing spillway will be lowered and two 14-foot-tall gates will be installed.

When the reservoir is full or close to full, water will be against the gates, which can then be opened to release the flow amounts specified in the new water license. DWP plans to use Langemann gates similar to those that currently operate well at the Lee Vining Creek diversion structure.

The spillway is approximately 1,600 feet long, so excavation will be substantial. Lowering the bottom necessitates widening the channel overall to preserve the trapezoidal

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New DWP license close to completion

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

In July, Mono Lake Committee staff and attorneys met with State Water Board staff and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP), the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and California Trout in Sacramento. The meeting advanced the revision of DWP's official water license to incorporate the terms of the 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement to recover the health of

Rush, Lee Vining, Walker, and Parker creeks after the damage of decades of excessive water diversions.

Once the license is issued in the next few months, 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 commence immediately. Others—most notably the high flows slated for Rush Creek that require a new Grant Reservoir outlet (see above)—require the license to be issued in order for construction to begin.

A public comment period will be part of the process and we will alert Committee members when it begins. Please be sure we have your correct email address by visiting monolake.org/action.

Inyo plan public comment period ends

Mono Lake Committee weighs in for Scenic Area, Mono Basin streams

by Lisa Cutting

Given that Inyo National Forest land makes up 65% of Mono County, that the Eastern Sierra has a primarily tourist-based economy, and that the vast majority of recreational activities take place within the Inyo National Forest, the recent comment period for the Inyo's draft forest management plan was an important, and busy, 90 days.

Stakeholder groups that care about the long-term health of lands managed by the Inyo National Forest—from business owners to concerned residents, visitors, and elected officials—have all taken part in the years-long process of meetings, discussions, collaboration, and fact-checking, which culminated with this past summer's comment period.

Over 30,000 letters were submitted, commenting on many aspects of the forest plan and giving the Inyo a lot to evaluate and consider as it updates the current 28-year-old plan (see 2013 Spring & Summer *Mono Lake Newsletter*). In particular, the Mono Lake Committee would like to acknowledge Mono County for their involvement in the process. The County held several workshops soliciting public input that was used to inform their letter, highlighting components important to the County and supporting the Committee's Wild and Scenic River comments.

Committee focuses on Scenic Area

The Mono Lake Committee's comments focus on the Mono Basin, specifically how the new plan will treat the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. The Scenic Area Management Plan was completed in 1989 and supersedes the broader Inyo management plan because of special protections

called out by the legislation that created the Scenic Area in 1984—the first ever of its kind in the nation.

The revised Inyo draft plan states that the Scenic Area Management Plan will remain in effect and continue to provide management direction specific to the Scenic Area in order to protect the scenic and natural values of the Mono Basin. The Committee's comments specifically highlight areas where the new Inyo plan should clearly state that the Scenic Area Management Plan continues to take priority over the new Inyo plan.

Mono's streams eligible for Wild and Scenic River status

The Committee's comments also call for Mono Basin creeks eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation, as guided by the Wilderness Act of 1964, to be included in the Inyo management plan for future consideration. The lower reaches of Mono Lake's tributaries were not included during the 1993 evaluation because they were degraded from water diversions and at times did not have water. However, due to restoration that has taken place over the last two decades, almost all reaches of Mono Lake's tributary streams are now eligible for wild, scenic, or recreational classification.

Declining federal budgets pose problems for plan implementation

While it's exciting to see that the plan revisions include a much more sophisticated management approach to the Inyo National Forest, the Committee is concerned that declining

Continued on page 6



NORA LIVINGSTON

One of the Mono Lake Committee's primary concerns in the Inyo National Forest management plan process is maintaining the protections already in place in the specially-designated Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area.

Rockfall Project construction wraps up

by Lisa Cutting

Despite challenges resulting from the Marina Fire (see page 7), the Caltrans Lee Vining Rockfall Safety Project adjacent to Mono Lake proceeded as planned this past summer and will likely be completed by winter. Since construction wasn't scheduled to begin until July to avoid nesting birds, the post-Marina Fire emergency work only slightly delayed the Rockfall Project work.

Once completed, the project will reduce rockfall occurrences along a narrow stretch of Highway 395 north of Lee Vining and adjacent to Old Marina, making the highway

safer for motorists. Through engineered construction work coupled with a five-year custom revegetation program, the project will rehabilitate historic road cuts, thereby improving the Mono Basin's scenic values.

Over the summer, crews worked on the last two of the original six slopes—Slope 3 and the problematic Slope 4, which required tree removal and scaling of loose rocks before native seed mix and pine needle mulch could be secured in place with anchored mesh (see Summer 2016 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

Since most of the project work was completed in 2015, we have observed the revegetation progress on the slopes. Initial informal reports from experts are positive, and while some areas will need to be treated again, overall the growth rates and the diversity of species are encouraging.

After the last piece of mesh is anchored, the focus turns to the five-year revegetation project. With funding and contractors already in place, this innovative part of the project ensures soil rehabilitation, slope stability, and reestablishment of native plants through annual monitoring and additional treatments if needed—essential components for long-term project success. The Committee pushed hard for this non-standard Caltrans approach and so far the results look promising. ♦

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She's learned that fly fishing Idaho's Silver Creek in the fall requires vigilance for moose unexpectedly emerging from the bushes.



The Marina Fire smolders above one of the Rockfall Project slopes.

Inyo plan from page 5

federal budgets will make many of the plan components challenging to implement and prioritizing activities may become contentious.

One solution for this challenge rests with all of us who use and enjoy Inyo land—especially local organizations, elected officials, and residents. The new plan includes specific ways that groups and individuals can get involved with forest activities such as monitoring, stewardship projects, restoration projects, and education programs—through the concept of partnerships. However, what the draft plan currently lacks is clarity in outlining how the process of partnering with the Inyo should work. The Committee recommends developing a discrete partnership program with dedicated staff to make this important plan component a functional reality.

The process continues

Inyo staff is reviewing the public input and revising the draft plan accordingly. Once the final plan is developed and released there is one more public comment period (called the objection process). This is an opportunity for commenters to “object” if previous comments were not incorporated into the final plan and an opportunity for the Inyo to either accommodate the request, compromise, or at a minimum communicate additional information supporting its decision. The main goal of the objection process is to avoid delays resulting from litigation.

The new Inyo National Forest management plan is likely to be completed and put into action in late 2017. For more information about the process going forward, visit bit.ly/inyoplan. ♦

Marina Fire burns above Mono Lake

New challenges for Caltrans Rockfall Project

by Lisa Cutting

At dawn on June 24th smoke and bright flames flared up north of Lee Vining just off the utility power line road and could be seen from almost every vantage point around Mono Lake. Local fire crews responded quickly, but the fire was pushed by changing winds—at times threatening Lee Vining and then shifting north toward Tioga Lodge and structures beyond, as well as closing Highway 395 intermittently. The Tioga Lodge, High Sierra Shrimp Plant, and two residences were evacuated. Full containment was reached on July 3rd after the fire had burned 654 acres and destroyed Tioga Lodge's historic barn east of Highway 395. Heroic efforts by the Lee Vining Volunteer Fire Department saved the Tioga Lodge—the fire ran all the way up to the buildings. Thankfully no one was hurt and no other structures were lost.

Cost of fire and its aftermath

Interagency hand crews and air support battled the fire for ten days, and the Inyo National Forest estimated the cost at \$3 million. As with other recent fires in the Eastern Sierra, the fire burned hot, running through very dry piñon pine and sagebrush habitats, in some places scorching the soil. In the upslope areas that hand crews couldn't easily access, air tankers dropped fire retardant, which can still be seen on the slopes.

Nine days after the fire was contained, Caltrans had secured \$2.2 million in funding, hired a contractor, and mobilized equipment and materials to start the Marina Fire Emergency Project. Crews installed temporary barricades and fencing along the entire length of the burn area to protect motorists from loose rocks shedding off the slope, replaced burned guardrail supports, and dug several catchment basins and spread pine needle mulch for erosion control.

Caltrans will keep a white concrete rail and chain-link fence in place until the slopes are stable and safe. At the request of the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) Caltrans reduced the speed limit through the burn area to 50 miles per hour, which will remain in effect until the concrete rail is removed.

The fire was determined to be human caused, and many local residents speculate that antiquated power lines are to blame. The RPAC, along with Mono County staff, has been investigating this section of power line that runs from Lundy Canyon to Lee Vining with Southern California Edison since 2014. Since 2011, power line equipment failures in this area have caused at least three fires with other potential fires averted by either quick fire crew response or sparks simply not igniting.

Rockfall Project and adjacent slopes

The Marina Fire burned on both sides of the Rockfall Project (see page 6) slopes, but only burned a small area

within the project area itself. Leftover emergency funds allowed Caltrans to use a hydro-seeding method on the right-of-way outside of the Rockfall Project area. This specific application is a combination of native seed and tackifier to hold it in place, and is used to jump-start the vegetation recovery process and stabilize the slopes quickly.

Opportunity to learn more

At first the Mono Lake Committee had concerns about the proximity of the fire to the Rockfall Project area, but investigation after the fire revealed some benefits. The Emergency Project started almost immediately after the fire—securing the slopes for safety and assessing erosion—which allowed the Rockfall Project to stay on schedule. In addition, now there are revegetation experts keeping their eyes on both areas for changes and progress toward plant reestablishment. The Committee is in close contact with Caltrans and plant and soil experts as this new situation offers unique opportunities to learn more about how Mono Basin vegetation responds to fire. ♦



The human-caused Marina Fire burned 654 acres just north of Lee Vining in late June 2016.

BRANTHE MILLER

Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting & Geoffrey McQuilkin

Mammoth Mountain Ski Area land exchange moves forward

Longtime Mono Lake advocates will recall that a decade ago a large subdivision and development proposal threatened to significantly alter the scenic west shore of Mono Lake. The Mono Lake Committee worked for years to find a solution, and in 2007 Mammoth Mountain Ski Area purchased the property with the intent to transfer it into public ownership via a land exchange with the US Forest Service (see Fall 2007 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

Now that land exchange is moving toward completion, with the Forest Service initiating a formal environmental analysis and comment phase this fall. The Committee views the exchange as an opportunity to provide a valuable public protection benefit to Mono Lake and the Mono Basin. The lands package includes the critical Mono Lake parcel—which is a top Inyo National Forest priority for acquisition—as well as 1,200 acres of other lands, including a mining claim in Lundy Canyon, land in Dexter Canyon, and other desirable Sierra parcels. In exchange, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area will take title to 30 acres of forest

land that lie beneath the existing main lodge and ski area base facilities. Once Mammoth takes ownership of these already developed and disturbed lands it intends to invest in reconfiguration and extensive renovation of the facilities. —GM

Yosemite updating wilderness plan

Yosemite National Park has begun a comprehensive planning effort to address the now decade-long trend of rising recreational wilderness use. Updating the 1989 Yosemite Wilderness Plan will allow the park to better align land management protection goals with the increase in visitors and changes in use patterns.

Since 2005, total overnight use of Yosemite wilderness has increased from approximately 40,000 to 64,000 people annually. Annual John Muir Trail and Pacific Crest Trail use has increased by approximately 5,000 and 4,600 people, respectively. The overwhelming majority of that increase has happened in the past three years, which may be the result of popular books and films such as *Wild*; similar to the rise in fly fishing popularity in the early 1990s resulting from the film *A River Runs Through It*.

The new plan—the Wilderness Stewardship Plan—will include strategies for addressing natural resource management, ecosystem restoration, and trail maintenance while still providing a quality wilderness experience for visitors. In particular, the Park is focusing on quotas for overnight wilderness hikers, and on stock use. Regarding quotas, four options are being evaluated—with elements ranging from reducing the number of permits issued for high-use areas to requiring hikers to select a designated campsite “zone” for each night in the backcountry. The new plan will also address stock use in the Park since the 1989 plan had minimal guidance and more specifics are now needed.

The Park has received general scoping comments from the public and is using that information to shape the draft plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement, which will be released this coming spring for public comment. After comments are incorporated into the plan, the documents will be finalized and are scheduled to be released at the end of 2017. The public comment period is the chance to give input on all aspects of the new plan—for more information visit parkplanning.nps.gov/yosewild. —LC ❖



The parcel west of Highway 395 along Mono Lake's shore, where this photo was taken, is part of the land exchange with Mammoth Mountain Ski Area and will become Inyo National Forest land.

When litigation comes alive

by Arya Degenhardt & Geoffrey McQuilkin

One can visit Mono Lake's shoreline and tributary streams to see the physical results of the Mono Lake litigation firsthand. But to really get a sense of how and why it happened, there's nothing like hearing about it from the people who made it happen—over dinner and a glass of wine with members of the Mono Lake family.

Every other year the Mono Lake Committee holds the Defender of the Trust Award Dinner at Mono Lake, honoring those who have done extraordinary work in defending the public trust and protecting the public's natural heritage at Mono Lake and its tributary streams. This year we presented the award to key members of the Committee's outstanding Mono Lake protection legal team—attorneys Patrick Flinn and Bryan Wilson together with the law firm Morrison & Foerster.

Pat Flinn, Bryan Wilson, Morrison & Foerster honored

The public trust is a sweeping legal concept establishing the state's duty to protect our common heritage of water resources for all Californians, including future generations. Translating that goal into specifics at Mono Lake was a daunting task that these three recipients, along with 1995 award winner Bruce Dodge, made happen as the Committee's legal team in court in the 1980s and at the State Water Board in the 1990s.

Morrison & Foerster took on the original Mono Lake Public Trust case, pro bono, in 1979, providing the attorneys, resources, and legal sophistication needed to turn a good idea into a California Supreme Court victory for the lake. Bryan Wilson continued the firm's work on the Mono Lake cases with a special focus on the streams—making the case for restoration with key witness Elden Vestal, a biologist who provided vast documentation of the rich abundance of the pre-diversion streams.

Patrick Flinn, also of Morrison & Foerster at the time, worked with great skill to make the argument that protecting the public trust at Mono Lake was feasible by developing the case that Los Angeles had available, reasonable alternative supplies of water, a task that involved many details of urban water use and conservation. He also took the lead on air quality arguments before the State Water Board, firmly establishing the health risks that result from dust that blows off the exposed lakebed.

Inspiring and heartwarming stories of hard work,



Defenders of the Trust Richard Roos-Collins (2009), Patrick Flinn (2016), Martha Davis (1997), and Bryan Wilson (2016) with Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin.

dedication, and perseverance came forth over the course of the evening. Former Committee Executive Director Martha Davis summed it up with a toast, "When I think about the role that Bryan, Pat, and Morrison & Foerster played, I think about the accomplishments, but I think we're known and valued and measured by our choices, and it was their choice, in how they worked the Mono Lake case together with us, and it's their choice to be here today. It has been over a quarter-century, and they are as fervent supporters of Mono Lake and the Mono Lake Committee today as they were over a quarter-century ago."

Barefoot steps up, again

Key to the magic of the evening's festivities was a wine tasting and silent auction fundraiser hosted by Barefoot Winery and the Gallo Winery. Randy Arnold, "The Barefoot Guy," and his team outdid themselves with a spirited wine tasting and lively silent auction featuring wine and bubbly from the Gallo portfolio. Randy and Barefoot's support of the Committee also goes back a quarter-century, and we are proud of and grateful for their ongoing support. The funds raised go to the Committee's protection, restoration, education, and science programs.

The Defender of the Trust Award Dinner is part of the three-day Defense Trust Weekend for the Mono Lake Committee's high donors and monthly donors, the Guardians of the Lake. The weekend is full of field trips, stewardship opportunities, good food, and time spent with Mono Lake Committee Board, staff, and fellow Mono Lake enthusiasts.

If you are interested in attending a future Defense Trust Weekend, please contact Membership Coordinator Ellen King (ellen@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. ♦

Deja tufa, all over again

by Gary Nelson, Canoe Tour Supervisor

The 1995 canoe tour season will always hold a special place in my memories. Mono Lake continually rose throughout the summer as we watched our old tufa landmarks slowly vanish. Some slipped silently beneath the surface of the lake. Many of the taller towers were toppled by wave action. The solitary tower we called the Spire Tufa, which is still prominently featured in many Mono Lake photographs, lay in pieces on the lake bottom by season's end. I couldn't help but feel a little wistful as my calcite compadres vanished into the brine, but it didn't take long to see the upside.

It was an exciting time to be on the lake as freshwater inflows rejuvenated its ecosystem. New springs sent opaque plumes up from the bottom, shrouding nascent tufa formations being created right before our eyes. At the mouths of Mono's tributary streams, lighter fresh water floated upon the lake. Looking over the side of a canoe you could see the darker, saline lake water deep under the surface, as if the freshwater layer was a giant, foot-thick pane of glass in a strange, horizontal aquarium. If a movie was made beginning in 1994 with State Water Board Decision 1631, and ending in 1995, it would have to be titled **VICTORY AT MONO LAKE**, and would end with a giant crimson **THE END** superimposed upon an epic scene of us paddling into the sunset on a rising lake.

A recent walk through South Tufa could unfortunately serve as inspiration for a much different movie titled **RETURN OF THE ZOMBIE TUFU**. Broken towers rise like a pile of toppled headstones above squat tufa boulders, all of which are covered with powdery, salty alkaline deposits. I am struck by how these formerly angular formations have been rounded off by years of exposure to sloshing water.

Offshore tufa formations are already connected to the mainland. Tentacles of saltgrass probe towards the declining shoreline along their growing peninsulas. I walk on dry land out to the Owl Tufa, so named because we used to guide our canoes there to see nesting Great Horned Owls. It was easy to find because just above the owl nest is a perfect tufa statue of an owl, complete with upturned horns. The owls and their surrounding moat of lake water are now gone.

Near the end of our canoe tours I would always stop at the Fountain Tufa. It is about four feet high and during wet years was completely submerged. If the lake was calm I could find it because warm fresh water would flow out of a hole in the top, creating a circle of bright water that stood out in contrast with the subdued brine. Paddling up to the tufa I would begin my "inspirational closing speech." I related that not long ago this tufa was like other ones visible on land farther from the shoreline; i.e. high and dry. I explained how State Water Board Decision 1631 had allowed the lake to rise: submerging this tufa, recharging its spring, and allowing it to grow again. The moral of this story is that nature will heal itself if we give it a chance, and that it took a lot of time, money, and effort by the Mono Lake Committee and others to give this tufa its chance to grow again.

Of course, guess what? Thanks to California's five-year drought, the Fountain Tufa is high and dry once again. I suppose I'll have to come up with a new "inspirational closing speech." I hope it's not too long until I can use the old one again. ♦

Gary Nelson is the Committee's Canoe Tour Supervisor, which is his only remaining job, after retiring from his "real" one.



Summer 2013: Author Gary Nelson was able to paddle up to the Fountain Tufa when Mono Lake stood at 6381.7 feet above sea level.



October 2016: With Mono Lake 4.4 feet lower at 6377.3 feet above sea level, it's the return of the zombie tufa!



Breaking records

The Outdoor Education Center (OEC) has two “seasons” each year. The field season runs from April through November when groups come to the Mono Basin for life-changing five-day watershed education programs. The outreach season runs from December through March when OEC staff visit groups in Los Angeles in preparation for the field season ahead.

Generous donations to the OEC Access Fund and the Trail Chic fashion show fundraiser made it possible to reduce travel expenses that are often cost barriers for groups, so this year we had a record 24 groups visit the OEC in the field season. With every single group participating in a service project—helping with restoration by pulling invasive plants and cleaning up trash around lakes and streams—it was a truly amazing season.



Going solar

This fall the OEC got a much-needed upgrade in the form of solar panels. Sixteen panels will not only offset total electricity use for the building, but will also serve to demonstrate the connection between conserving power and water. Since saving power saves water, and vice versa, now groups staying at the OEC will be able to see, and conserve, their power use, and learn about how the solar panels work. Special thanks to the Ward Family Trust, Sierra Solar, and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power for making the solar panels possible.



Thank you, OEC supporters!

Our shoestring-budget program depends on Mono Lake Committee member support, and this year we received generous donations from some of the OEC’s biggest fans. Thank you to Grace Anderson and John Lum for jump-starting the upcoming carpet replacement campaign. Thank you to Linda & David Dore, Illia Orion Harp, and Jennifer Winn for donating and planting trees that will someday provide shady outdoor spaces on the OEC grounds, and to Bob Finch for the super-efficient irrigation system. Thank you to Bob Finch for supporting the OEC Access Fund too. Thank you to Nancy States for the much-needed refrigerator.

We also want to thank the Sierra Club for awarding the OEC program a grant for much-needed water bottles and backpacks so kids can get outside safely and comfortably.



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

Custom Mono Basin guided trips

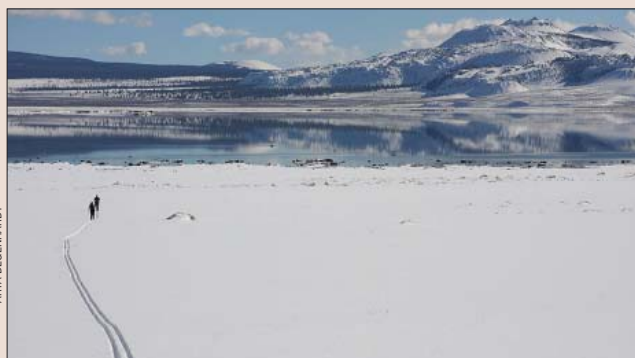
Winter in the Mono Basin offers solitude, majesty, and quiet. The snow-capped peaks, white meadows, and icy lakes invite exploration. Our custom guided trips make hard-to-plan winter adventures more convenient and accessible. Whether you are searching for a guided cross-country ski or snowshoe tour, a snowy exploration of the Mono Craters, or a winter birding trip, we have the knowledge and local insight to set up a great outing just for you. Learn more at monolake.org/trips and make your plans today by contacting Lead Naturalist Guide Nora Livingston (nora@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

Cross-country ski and snowshoe adventures

How about gliding through a frost-sparkling Jeffrey pine forest on skis, snowshoeing along a quiet winter trail, or visiting a snow-covered volcano? We can customize a ski or snowshoe adventure for you and your family.

Winter birding

Many bird species stay in the region all winter long, and some Eastern Sierra specialties can only be seen in winter. We'll make sure you have a rewarding day of winter birding.



ARYA DEGENHARDT



ARYA DEGENHARDT

Ice & fire

Winter is a great time to experience the geology of the Mono Basin. Explore glacial remnants, dormant volcanoes, and be transported thousands of years into past landscapes and climates.

Winter photography

Winter at Mono Lake offers snow-laden peaks, mysterious poconip fog, and serene tufa towers. We'll take you to locations with great conditions, lighting, and combinations of time and place you might not discover on your own.

"We spent two wonderful mornings birdwatching with Nora. She is very knowledgeable and an excellent observer of birds and other wildlife. Besides, she's a lot of fun to be with. We recommend her highly." —Marty Maskall & Subhash Chand

Call
(760) 647-6595
or email nora@monolake.org
for a custom trip!

Meet Lead Naturalist Guide Nora Livingston

Nora first worked for the Mono Lake Committee as an intern in 2008. Since then she has worked as a field biologist studying birds in the Eastern Sierra, coastal California, and on Santa Cruz Island. While earning her degree in Environmental Studies, she led many birding outings for her college's Biology program.

Many may recognize Nora from leading popular field trips at the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua. Nora's love for birds, flowers, geology, and hydrology is contagious. Her knowledge of the natural and cultural history of the Mono Basin paired with her guiding skills make any outing with her a blast!



ELIN LIVING



Mono Lake supports one of the nation's largest California Gull populations, with 50,000 birds nesting here each summer.

will be temporary and fully removable when the lake rises above the threshold of concern.

Summer discussion among the Committee, State Parks, and gull researchers focused on how to maximize success in protecting the nesting grounds, including asking some hard questions about fence effectiveness.

One area of concern is where the ends of the fence meet the lake. The electric fence is planned to transition to a non-electric design that can extend out into shallow shoreline water. Still, the ends would be the easiest parts of the fence for a coyote to get around via a short swim. With input from key agency staff involved in a similar fencing project 25 years ago, the idea is to extend the path of the fence ends so that they curve away from the islets and meet the lake far from Negit Island, thus steering coyotes far away from

points of access and reducing the incentive to go around the fence ends.

Discussions with coyote experts have also suggested that additional deterrents would be valuable. Small solar powered, motion-activated lights (believe it or not, such products exist specifically designed with coyotes in mind), and other techniques may play an important role in creating an effective barrier.

In the end, the goal to limit coyote access is clear. The drought has lowered Mono Lake in recent years, but the current low lake level exists, in the big picture, due to historic excessive water diversions to Los Angeles. There is no substitute for a much higher lake level in providing adequate protection for the gulls, but until Mono Lake rises, temporary measures to get the gull colony through the drought years remain appropriate and important. ❖

Help build the fence

Given the significance of this issue, the Mono Lake Committee has committed to funding the materials needed for a fence and additional deterrents. Donations to the materials fund will go toward the purchase of metal posts, wire, solar chargers, additional deterrents, other necessary components, and possibly professional installation assistance. Volunteers will also have an important role to play, and details will be posted on the Mono Lake website as plans develop over the winter. If you can donate to the materials fund, please visit monolake.org/gullfence.

shape and sloping sides. Excavated material will be used where needed in the project and will otherwise be placed into an excavation pit that still remains from the original dam construction project, and all bare soil will be revegetated.

Maintenance roads will be improved and a control building and concrete maintenance pad will be built adjacent to the gates. In addition, the existing access road will be upgraded with a bridge or large culvert to allow use when the outlet is operating.

Construction impacts

The outcome of the project will be positive, but what about impacts during construction? DWP released environmental documents in August, and the Committee worked carefully with DWP to ensure that local impacts are well managed. Access to the dam area will be limited during construction, and there will be some noise from the project. The reservoir will be managed so it does not rise too high and impinge

on the construction site, but it will stay above the very low levels seen in recent years. Wildlife and cultural surveys were conducted in the project area and plans have been made to avoid significant impacts. An estimated 30 construction personnel will be required for the project, and equipment and materials staging will take place on site and at DWP's nearby Cain Ranch maintenance facility.

Completion

The Grant Lake Outlet project could take three years to construct, though it will likely be faster. Because the reservoir must be full for the outlet to work, careful reservoir management planning is critical. Existing simulations will be turned into a full-fledged operations plan over the next year with Committee involvement. In the end, the biggest of the Los Angeles Aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin will have truly entered the 21st century and restorative high flows can once again benefit Rush Creek and its fish and wildlife. ❖

First Rush Creek peak flow since 2013

by Greg Reis

April–September 2016 Mono Basin stream runoff was 78% of average, ranging from 75% on Parker Creek to 87% on Walker Creek. 2016 was a Dry-Normal I runoff year-type, which means that 200 cubic feet per second (cfs) was the minimum peak flow required on Rush Creek. Below the confluence with Parker and Walker creeks the peak in the Rush Creek bottomlands was 257 cfs. Fortunately, that flow was high enough to mobilize some of the fine sediment covering the gravels and vegetation. Providing higher peak flows in the snowmelt season is the key element of the Mono Basin stream restoration program.

On Lee Vining Creek, the peak flow was also 257 cfs. In some years it is

more difficult to determine when the peak is coming, but this turned out to be a fairly straightforward year for predicting when the peak flow would occur, and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) successfully shut off diversions during the peak flow.

Grant Lake Reservoir stayed above 20,000 acre-feet of storage June through September, and over 25,000 acre-feet mid-July to mid-September, consistent with likely future management under DWP's new license, which is pending approval before the State Water Board (see page 4). This means the Mono Lake Committee's 2016 Grant Lake Reservoir temperature monitoring results will likely be

relevant to future management.

This was the second year of the Committee's Grant Lake Reservoir temperature monitoring program. After 12 days in a row with Lee Vining air temperatures in the 90s ended (a new record), Grant cooled about 2 degrees Fahrenheit at the surface and warmed over 2 degrees near the 40-foot deep outlet. Water released to Rush Creek warmed even as the weather cooled, maintaining higher water temperatures as far downstream as Parker and Walker creeks, where 10-degree-colder water from Parker Creek and 5-degree-colder water from Walker Creek cooled Rush Creek in the bottomlands, especially at night. ❖

Lakewatch

Mono Lake level nears 6377 feet

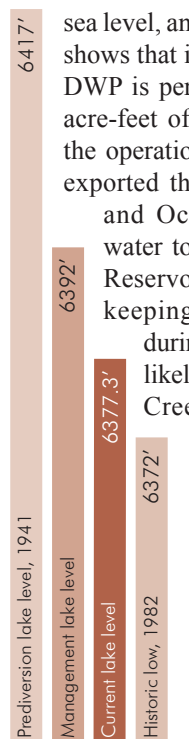
by Greg Reis

In a year like this, when Mono Lake is between 6377 and 6380 feet above sea level, and the lake level forecast shows that it will stay above 6377', DWP is permitted to export 4,500 acre-feet of water. DWP followed the operations plan guidelines and exported this water in September and October, allowing more water to remain in Grant Lake Reservoir during the summer, keeping the reservoir higher during recreation season and likely keeping summer Rush Creek water temperatures slightly cooler for fish. This water, if released to Rush Creek, would have raised Mono Lake about a tenth of a foot.

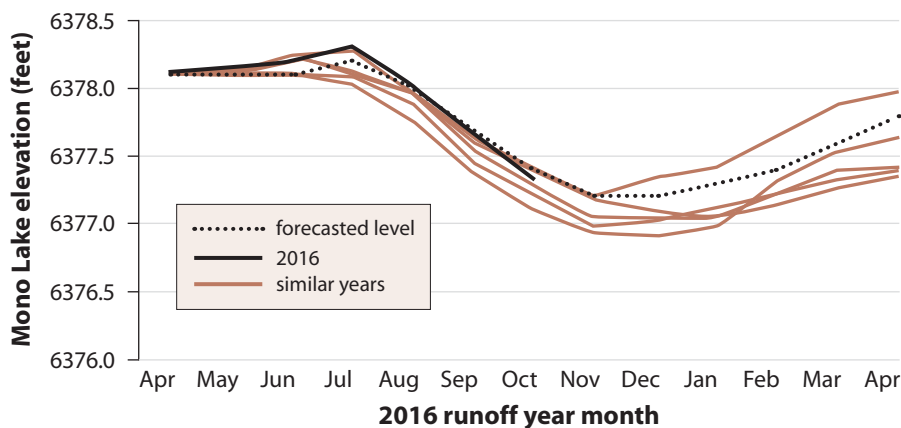
Mono Lake was 6377.33' on October 1. It will take a wetter than average winter to keep Mono

Lake's elevation above 6377 feet in 2017, which will determine if DWP can export any water next year. One more dry year would make this the third time in the last 30 years that there

have been six below-average years in a row—before that the longest string of below-average years was the five years from 1947 to 1951. ❖



Mono Lake level
2016 lake level, forecasted, and five similar years modeled with 73%–82% runoff

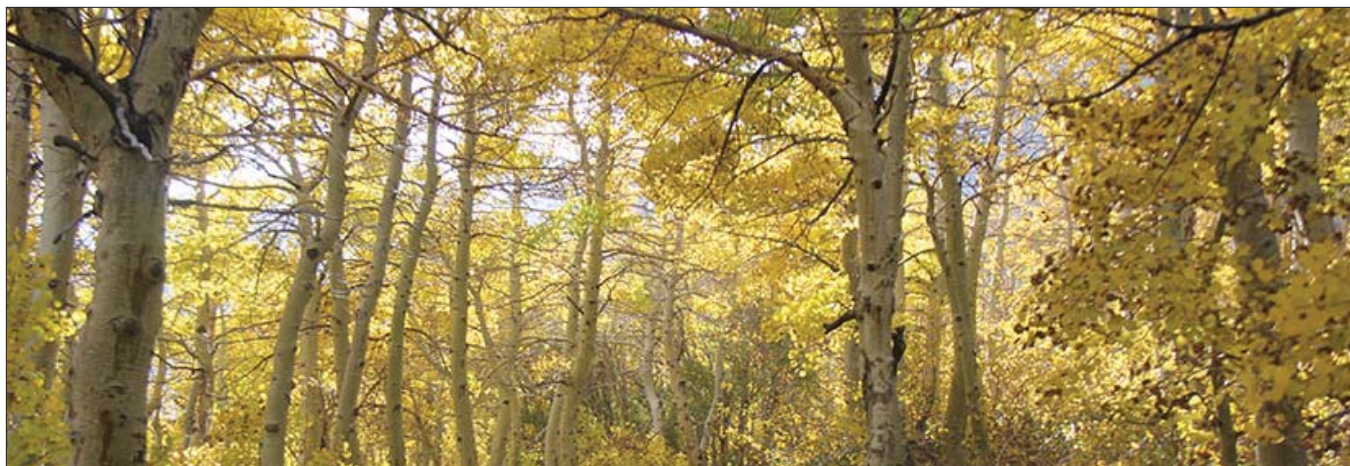


Mono Lake's forecasted level was based on a conservative runoff forecast; however, even with greater April–September runoff, the actual level dropped more rapidly than the forecast. Years with similar runoff show the likely range of lake levels for the remainder of the runoff year.

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



Geoff McQuilkin

Were the golden yellow, bright orange, and deep red leaves of autumn more glorious than usual in the Mono Basin this year? It's hard to say, but after five years mired in California's drought I can say they were more wonderful than I expected. With the dry years stacking up we've been learning to dampen our expectations for everything from backcountry skiing to streamflow to lake level to fall colors.

That drought history, however, was irrelevant this year as rivers of color slowly descended from higher elevations and spread across the canyon floors in wide rustling panoramas of aspen grove colors. And then, with a hint of the wetter years back before 2012, an October storm blew in bringing several

days of rain to town and more than a dusting of brilliant white snow to the peaks overlooking Mono Lake.

Is a robust fall with a good swirl of snowflakes a sign that we can expect a wetter winter ahead? Well, questions like that engage our low drought-adjusted expectations, so who knows. But ask again in a few months; it sure would make for a good story. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He visited the rapidly-shrinking Lyell and Maclure glaciers in Yosemite this fall, which inspired him to investigate the status of our four remaining Mono Basin glaciers.

Benchmarks



Sandra Noll

August 2014: Gaines Island is isolated by a narrow band of water. Lake level: 6379.6 feet above sea level.



Andrew Youssef

October 2016: After a 2.3-foot drop in the water level, Gaines Island is now a peninsula, forming a landbridge towards Negit Island. Lake level: 6377.3 feet above sea level.



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION CENTER & BOOKSTORE

Fall Catalog



USE WATER LIKE YOU'RE CAMPING T-SHIRT

Communications Director Arya and her fiancé Gabe model this super soft T-shirt, which offers a friendly reminder to stay water conscious with its fun message. This *Mono Lake Committee exclusive* is now available in women's and unisex styles. The forest-green heather women's shirt is 50% polyester, 25% cotton, and 25% rayon and the heather blue unisex shirt is 52% cotton and 48% polyester.

Use water like you're camping T-shirt, please specify women's green or unisex blue, S-XL: \$16.00, XXL in unisex blue only: \$19.00

WATER CYCLE ONESIE

This onesie is both adorable and educational, making it great for newborn hydrologists-to-be, like baby Illia, above. Made of 100% organic cotton, it's not just clever, it is wonderfully soft too.
Water cycle baby onesie, please specify 3-6 month or 6-12 month size: \$26.00



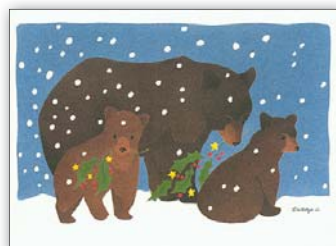
BRINE SHRIMP T-SHIRT

Bookstore Assistant John and Interns Grace, Matt, and Gabby show off their love for Mono Lake with these shirts featuring three shrimp and the words "Artemia monica, Mono Lake brine shrimp." Available in light turquoise with a women's cut and moss green with a unisex cut, these comfortable 100% cotton shirts look great on everyone. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*
Brine shrimp T-shirt, please specify women's light turquoise or unisex moss green, S-XL: \$25.00, XXL in unisex moss green only: \$27.00



HOLIDAY CARD SETS

Wendy Morgan's original designs of black bears, White-crowned Sparrows, and pikas are perfect for delivering winter season's greetings. Each set includes 10 cards of the same design with the message "May you have a happy holiday and joyous New Year" printed in red ink inside.



BLACK BEARS



WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS



PIKA

Holiday card set, 10 cards with envelopes, 4 1/2" x 6 1/4", please specify bear, sparrow, or pika set: \$13.95

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

Fall Catalog

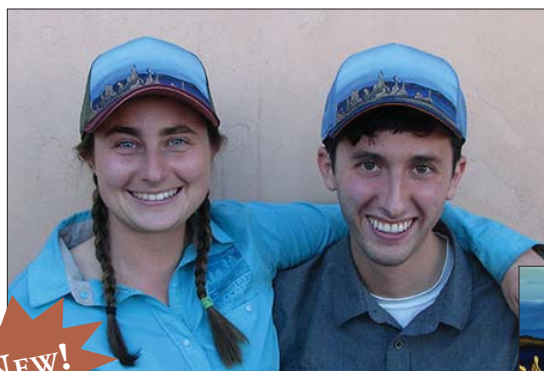
NEW!

MONO LAKE SWEATSHIRT

Stay warm and show some love for Mono Lake in this cozy crewneck sweatshirt, modeled by Bookstore Manager Lily and Project Specialist Robbie. Shirts are made of a 50/50 cotton/polyester fabric for warmth and breathability and are screen-printed with a fun Mono Lake design. Choose from two festive colors—maroon or forest green.

Mono Lake Committee exclusive.

Mono Lake sweatshirt, please specify maroon or forest green, S–XL: \$35.20



TUFA TRUCKER CAP

Lead Naturalist Guide Nora and Project Specialist Andrew model these fun and colorful trucker-style caps, which feature a painting of South Tufa created by local artist and scientist Ann Piersall. They are perfect for romping around the Mono Basin, or anywhere, really, in style.

Tufa trucker cap, one size, please specify green/maroon or blue/light blue: \$28.00



NEW!

CLEAR GLASS MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO MUG

This elegant mug has a hefty base, a large handle for easy sipping, and the beautiful Mono Lake Committee logo on one side. 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: \$10.00



BIRDER SOCKS

If you love birding, these are the perfect socks for you! Made of 75% cotton, 20% nylon, and 5% spandex, these playful birder socks are both cute and comfortable.

Birder socks, please specify gray or cream and adult sock size 9–11 or 10–13: \$10.50

NEW!

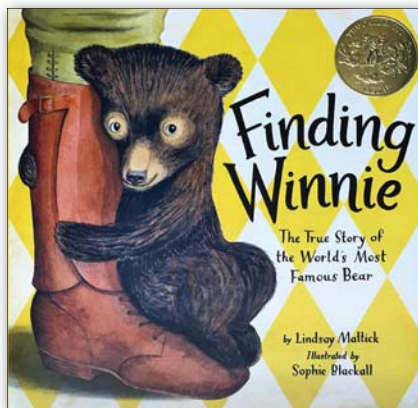
MONO LAKE TEA TOWEL

Bring the vibrant ecosystem of Mono Lake into your home with this 100% Egyptian cotton tea towel featuring the artwork of California naturalist John Muir Laws. This easy-to-ship floursack towel makes a beautiful and useful gift any time of year. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Mono Lake tea towel, 28" x 30": \$12.00



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



FINDING WINNIE

WRITTEN BY LINDSAY MATTICK, ILLUSTRATED BY SOPHIE BLACKALL

This is the true story of Winnie-the-Pooh—following Winnie from her early days as a bear cub in Canada, all the way to London during World War I where she meets her human friend Christopher Robin. This is a fun and historical book that is great for children.

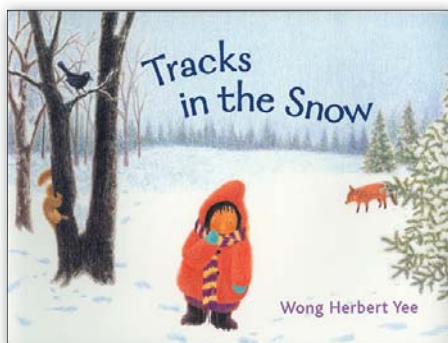
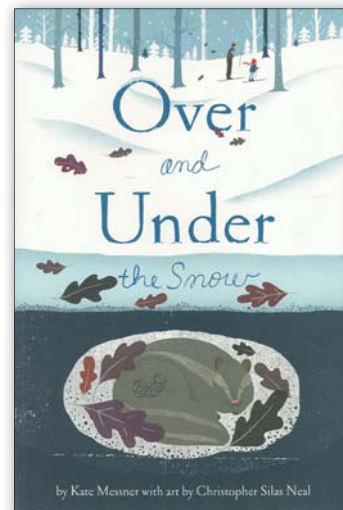
Finding Winnie, hardcover, Little, Brown and Company, 54 pages, 10"x 10": \$18.00

OVER AND UNDER THE SNOW

WRITTEN BY KATE MESSNER, ILLUSTRATED BY CHRISTOPHER SILAS NEAL

This educational children's book explores the winter world over and under the snow. Learn all about the way animals live in winter—from hibernating bears to busy squirrels and foraging foxes. The mixed-media illustrations bring this charming non-fiction story to life, making it the perfect winter read for young naturalists.

Over and Under the Snow, paperback, Chronicle Books, 44 pages, 8"x 12": \$7.99



TRACKS IN THE SNOW

BY WONG HERBERT YEE

This seasonal book for beginning readers follows a young girl as she tries to figure out who or what left the tracks in the snow outside her window. It explores the beautiful winter landscape and wildlife with lovely colored pencil illustrations.

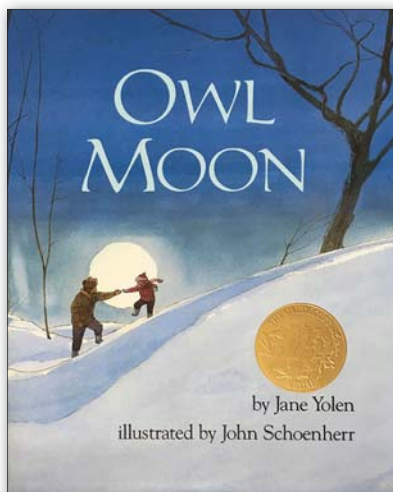
Tracks in the Snow, paperback, Square Fish, 32 pages, 4½"x 6": \$6.99

YOU BELONG HERE

WRITTEN BY M.H. CLARK, ILLUSTRATED BY ISABELLE ARSENAULT

Poet and author M.H. Clark weaves whimsical rhymes describing how all organisms belong—including each of us. That valuable message combined with beautiful illustrations makes this book a pleasure for kids and adults alike.

You Belong Here, hardcover, Compendium Inc., 32 pages, 8"x 11": \$18.95



OWL MOON

WRITTEN BY JANE YOLEN, ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN SCHOENHERR

A gentle and poetic story of a father and daughter going owling on a winter night, this book is complete with stunning watercolor illustrations and makes a great gift for budding birders. The winter setting captures the magic of this quiet season and the allure and mystery of wildlife.

Owl Moon, hardcover, Philomel Books, 32 pages, 9"x 11": \$17.99

Color photos of all products at MONOLAKE.ORG/STORE

KIDS' NATURE SOCKS

These socks are perfect for young adventurers who love bears or birds. They fit children's shoe sizes 1–6 and are made of 75% cotton, 20% nylon, and 5% spandex so they are super soft and stretchy.

Kids' nature socks, please specify bear or bird design: \$9.50



FINGER PUPPETS

These plush, lovable, and high-quality finger puppets by Folkmanis are great for interactive play. Choose from three Mono Basin species: fawn, bobcat, and Western Tanager.

Finger puppets, approx. 3½" tall, please specify fawn, bobcat, or tanager: \$9.00



FAWN



BOBCAT



WESTERN TANAGER

MONO BASIN PLUSH ANIMALS

Cuddle up with your favorite Mono Basin locals. It doesn't matter how old you are, these plush black bears and bighorn sheep are cute, soft, and make excellent cuddle buddies.

Mono Basin plush animals, approx. 12" tall, please specify black bear or bighorn sheep: \$15.00



IT'S NICE TO BE A PIKA

WRITTEN BY MOLLY WOODWARD,
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM AND PAT LEESON
This sweet board book tells all about the lives of the cutest mountain critters—pikas! Find out why it's nice to be a pika as you flip through cute photographs and fun facts.
It's Nice to Be a Pika, board book, Heyday Books, 20 pages, 6"x 6": \$8.99

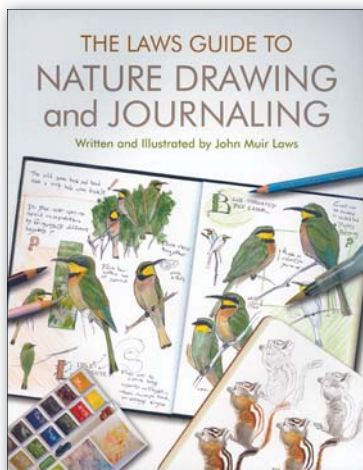
CHARLEY HARPER BLOCK PUZZLE

Build and discover the geometric world of Charley Harper. This block puzzle is composed of twelve 2" square blocks which may be flipped and turned to form six different images—each a beautiful fusion of art and nature.

Charley Harper block puzzle, 6"x 8": \$17.95



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



THE LAWS GUIDE TO NATURE DRAWING AND JOURNALING

BY JOHN MUIR LAWS

This beautiful new book from John Muir Laws bursts with enthusiasm for art and science, and is a great guide to becoming both a better artist and a more observant naturalist. It is an instructional guide full of color illustrations and step-by-step instructions for honing and developing nature journaling skills at any level. *The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling*, paperback, Heyday Books, 312 pages, 8½"x 11": \$35.00

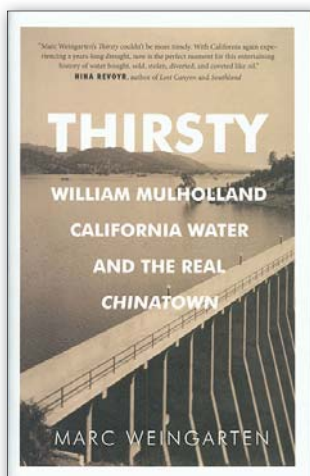
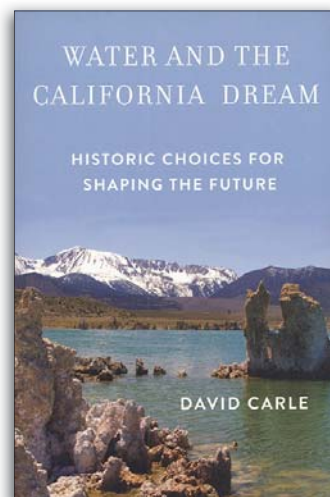
WATER AND THE CALIFORNIA DREAM: HISTORIC CHOICES FOR SHAPING THE FUTURE

BY DAVID CARLE

Local author and retired Mono Lake State Park ranger David Carle has revised and expanded his popular book

on water in California. This second edition includes updated information on the California drought and climate change as well as additional maps and photographs. Carle tells the story of how water diversions have shaped California with extensive use of oral histories and historic autobiographies as well as contemporary sources. This is an important read for anyone interested in California water issues.

Water and the California Dream, paperback, Counterpoint, 240 pages, 6"x 9": \$16.95



THIRSTY: WILLIAM MULHOLLAND, CALIFORNIA WATER, AND THE REAL CHINATOWN

BY MARC WEINGARTEN

This is a historic account of Los Angeles' notoriously fraught relationship with water. The writing is very accessible, which makes for an enjoyable, entertaining, and informative read as you follow the LA Aqueduct to completion and encounter the larger-than-life characters of the Owens Valley and Los Angeles alike.

Thirsty, hardcover, Rare Bird Books, 280 pages, 6"x 8½": \$23.95

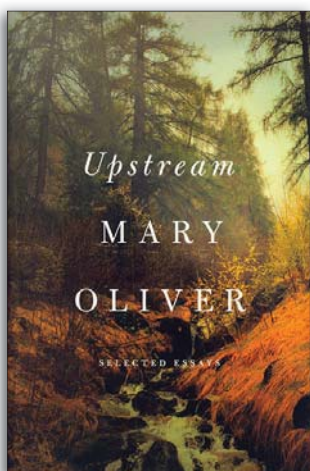
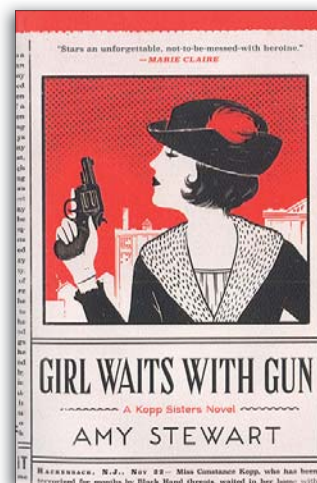
GIRL WAITS WITH GUN

BY AMY STEWART

This charming and rigorously researched historical fiction book follows the true story of Constance Kopp and her sisters—Brooklyn women who in 1914 made headlines by forcibly defending their homestead against a bullying businessman. Written

by award-winning California author Amy Stewart, this book demonstrates all of the research and skill of her previous books *The Drunken Botanist* and *Wicked Plants*, but with more creative license.

Girl Waits with Gun, paperback, Mariner Books, 448 pages, 5"x 8": \$14.95



UPSTREAM

BY MARY OLIVER

This brand new book by beloved poet Mary Oliver contains a series of essays exploring her relationship with both the natural world and the world of creative writing. She contemplates how her willingness to immerse herself in nature and writing has helped her live a life of artistic labor, and she shares her immense curiosity for nature and sense of responsibility to live intelligently and observantly.

Upstream, hardcover, Penguin Press, 192 pages, 6"x 8½": \$26.00

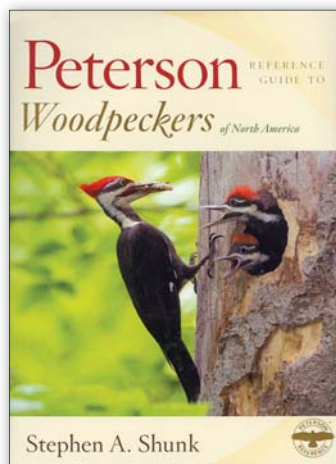
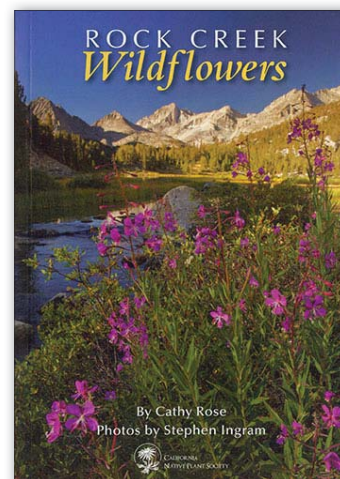
order at monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

ROCK CREEK WILDFLOWERS

WRITTEN BY CATHY ROSE, PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHEN INGRAM

If you can't get enough spring wildflowers, this book is designed to take with you on the trails of the Little Lakes Valley and other high country locations in the Eastern Sierra. Featuring 125 plant species with natural history details and diagnostic photos of each plant in a pocket-friendly format that includes a trail map, it's the perfect hiking buddy for anyone who loves flowers.

Rock Creek Wildflowers, paperback, California Native Plant Society, 160 pages, 5"x 7": \$16.95



PETERSON REFERENCE GUIDE TO WOODPECKERS OF NORTH AMERICA

BY STEPHEN A. SHUNK

Written by Mono Lake Committee member and Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua presenter Stephen Shunk, this comprehensive guide to North American woodpeckers will make a great addition to your bookshelf. This full-color book explores the natural history, ecology, and conservation of 23 woodpecker species and is loaded with photographs and drawings from 70 different photographers and artists. If you love birds you can't go wrong with this beautifully compiled book.

Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America, hardcover, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 320 pages, 7"x 10": \$35.00

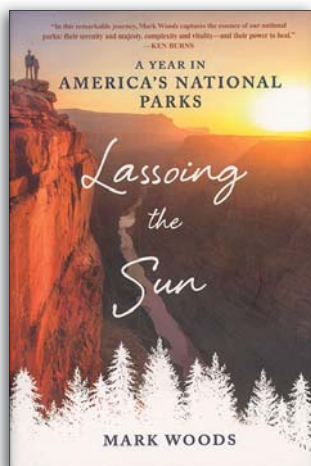
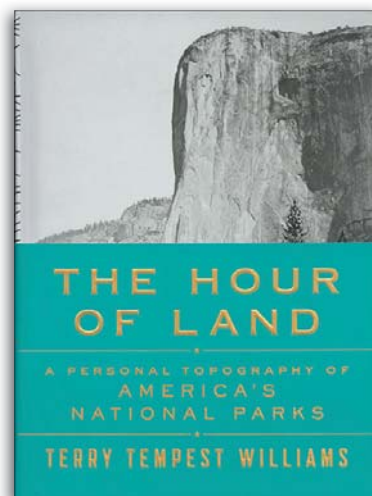
THE HOUR OF LAND:

A PERSONAL TOPOGRAPHY OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

BY TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS

In this wonderful celebration of America's National Parks Terry Tempest Williams reflects on her visits to 12 different parks, showcasing why these special places are so important. This is a great read for any fan of America's greatest treasures. *Terry stopped by Mono Lake this past summer—see page 27!*

The Hour of Land, hardcover, Sarah Crichton Books, 416 pages, 6½"x 8½": \$27.00



LASSOING THE SUN:

A YEAR IN AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

BY MARK WOODS

This heartfelt memoir follows Mark Woods on a year-long journey in America's National Parks. It's a story of family, memory, loss, love, solitude, and the power of wilderness to restore and heal the human spirit. It's a timely and touching book to read as we celebrate the National Park Service's centennial.

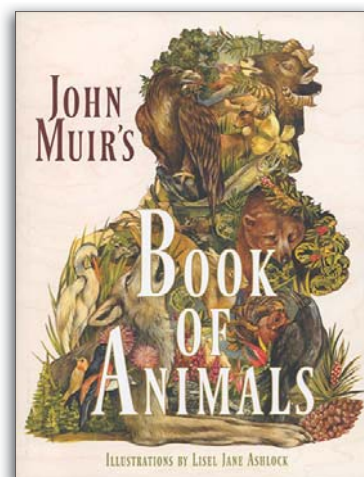
Lassoing the Sun, hardcover, Thomas Dunne Books, 320 pages, 6½"x 9½": \$26.99

JOHN MUIR'S BOOK OF ANIMALS

WRITINGS BY JOHN MUIR, ILLUSTRATIONS BY LISEL JANE ASHLOCK

This lovely little book is full of vibrant illustrations and a compelling collection of John Muir's writings on the animals of the Sierra Nevada. Each excerpt demonstrates Muir's sense of wonder for the animal world, making it a great read for lovers of animals and wilderness alike.

John Muir's Book of Animals, paperback, Heyday Books, 128 pages, 5½"x 8": \$18.00





BRINE SHRIMP ORNAMENT

These brine shrimp ornaments by Wild Bryde serve as a festive tribute to the *Artemia monica* of Mono Lake. Ornaments measure 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

BIRD GOURD ORNAMENT

Decorate your tree or home with these fair trade gourd ornaments. Each ornament is approximately 2 inches tall and has a hand-carved scene featuring migrating bird species you can find at Mono Lake.

Bird gourd ornament, designs vary slightly: \$11.50



FRONT

BACK



MOUNTAINSCAPE EARRINGS

Show your love for the mountains of the Mono Basin with these beautiful locally-made earrings. Each pair features a mountain scene created by Bishop artist Mary Lou Aukee. Earrings are approximately 1 inch in diameter and contain mixed metals: copper, silver, and brass, with sterling silver ear wires.

Mountainscape earrings, designs vary slightly: \$45.00

MONO LAKE QUOTE KEYCHAIN

Be reminded of Mono Lake each time you reach for your keys with this lightweight but sturdy keychain by Truckee artist Krista Tranquilla.

Each stainless steel keychain features the outline of Mono Lake with a quote from Mono Lake Committee co-founder David Gaines: "Mono Lake can teach us to listen, to watch, to live quietly, to see the world anew." *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Mono Lake quote keychain, 2½" x ¾": \$12.00



NEW!

SPA FAVORITES

Living at high altitude we've become connoisseurs of good potions and lotions—these are our staff picks! We love the invigorating fragrance of wild-harvested white sage in this all natural liquid body wash by one of our favorite companies, Juniper Ridge. Nothing beats organic whipped body butter with therapeutic-grade essential citrus vanilla or jasmine oils made by our friends at Joyous Organics in Mammoth

Lakes. Mountain man beard balm is the perfect gift for the mountain man in your life! This organic balm is formulated to condition and soften beards and skin while providing a light hold for styling.

*White sage body wash,
8-oz: \$12.00*

*Organic whipped body butter,
please specify citrus vanilla or
jasmine, 7-oz: \$29.00*

*Mountain man beard balm,
2-oz: \$15.00*



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2017 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

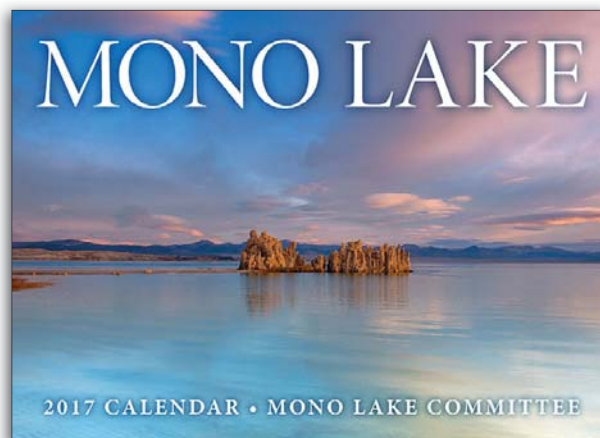
The *2017 Mono Lake Calendar* features stunning images of our favorite wild and wonderful watershed. See the Mono Basin's birds, tufa towers, sunsets, fall colors, winter landscapes, and high country views as captured by skilled photographers. Bring Mono Lake into your home 365 days of the year, and call us for holiday shipping options for gifts this season. Printed in the USA on recycled paper. *Mono Lake*

CALENDAR

BULK DISCOUNTS

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Committee exclusive.
2017 Mono Lake
Calendar, 13"x 9½":
\$14.95



We can ship your calendars to your holiday list! Just provide us with the address information when ordering, and we will package and send each calendar separately. Please call for details: (760) 647-6595.

CHICKADEE ART TILE TRIVET

Featuring a festive chickadee motif, these tiles are great used as a trivet for serving up hot holiday meals, or as a wall decoration. Each tile is made to handle heat and is equipped with a small hole at the back for mounting on the wall. However you use it, this tile, handmade in California, is sure to brighten your home.

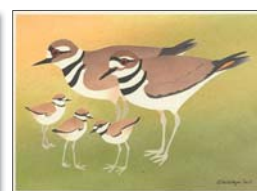
Chickadee art tile trivet, 6"x 6": \$32.00

MONO LAKE CARD SET

Featuring the popular art of Wendy Morgan, this Mono Lake Committee exclusive card set features 12 local and beloved wildlife species from avocets to pikas. These cards are blank inside making them great for any occasion.

Mono Lake Committee exclusive.

Mono Lake card set, 12 notecards with envelopes, 4½"x 6¼": \$18.90



See all products in color and place your order online at MONOLAKE.ORG/STORE. Or call (760) 647-6595—we're here weekdays, 9:00AM to 5:00PM, ready to take your order.

The science that saved Mono Lake

by Ellen King

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the arrival in Lee Vining of the Mono Basin Research Group, comprised of a dozen undergraduate students, mostly from Stanford and UC Davis.

As the story goes, David Gaines, who had recently completed a Master's degree in ecology, was teaching at both institutions. He had just done an inventory of the natural areas in Mono County and eagerly shared his knowledge about Mono Lake with his students. He provided encouragement and guidance when a few of them decided to apply for a grant to conduct a comprehensive study of Mono Lake. Their application was successful, and the Mono Basin Research Group was formed.

The Research Group studied the geology and hydrology of the Mono Basin, the flora and fauna, and the lake itself. They learned that Mono Lake's simple but extremely productive ecosystem was headed for the point at which it would collapse due to the effects of diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power. Although they were concerned for the future of Mono Lake, most of these young scientists weren't prepared for the mammoth effort it would take to avert a calamity. In the fall they returned to college, and David Gaines and Sally Judy moved to the northern California coast.

David Winkler, however, remained closely involved with Mono Lake. Back at UC Davis, he edited the findings of the Research Group, which was published by the UC Davis Institute of Ecology as "An Ecological Study of Mono Lake, California." One year later Winkler returned to Mono Lake. Walking across the nearly-dry lakebed bridging Negit Island and the mainland convinced him that someone needed to do something. He headed north and "got David Gaines out of the woods."



Wink discusses protecting Mono's California Gulls from predation.

The rest, as Mono Lake Committee members know, is precedent-setting history.

This past June, two of the original Research Group members were presenters at the 15th annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua. "Wink" (David Winkler) and "Bug" (David Herbst) led a field trip slated to visit two sites—Black Point and Old Marina—where much of their research was conducted. At Black Point the group made the long walk to the shoreline at the edge of the strait separating Negit Island from the mainland. At the shore, Wink and Bug commented that today's low lake is very close to the level it had been back when the Research Group was conducting their study. The big difference is that, fortunately, today there are protections in place to ensure that Mono Lake will rise in the future.

Bug set up a table with viewing stations and Wink started pointing out birds. For the next few hours we learned about *Artemia monica*, *Ephydra hians*, *Larus californicus*, and *Podiceps nigricollis*, and were treated to good-natured banter between two longtime friends. Talk turned to the second stop on the field trip—Old Marina—but no one seemed ready to head back to the cars. After all, it was a beautiful day, we were at Mono Lake, and we were in the presence of two world-class scientists who still embody the commitment to thorough scientific research that formed the basis for victories in the fight to save Mono Lake.

Old Marina would have to wait for what we know will be another fascinating field trip. ♦

Ellen King is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. In February she will celebrate her 10th anniversary as a Committee staff member. Being hired at the Mono Lake Committee was—and still is—her dream come true.



Bug hands an invertebrate over to Wink for inspection.

Free Drawing to protect Mono Lake

Tickets due December 10

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

You can win...

- **Grand Prize:** two round-trip airline tickets on Southwest
- a Cali4nia ski pass for Mammoth Mountain, June Mountain, Bear Mountain, and Snow Summit
- a Mono Basin adventure with lodging at the Double Eagle Resort & Spa, a Committee guided trip, gift cards to Stellar Brew and The Stove, a horseback ride with Frontier Pack Train, a boat rental at Silver Lake, and Committee logo gifts
- a sailing trip on San Francisco Bay with Captain Kirk's Sailing Adventures, passes to the Aquarium of the Bay, and a stay at the Golden Gate Hotel

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At Crowley Lake



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Vacations & Adventures

- a Yosemite retreat at the Big Trees Lodge and an outdoor adventure, hat, water bottle, and selection of books from the Yosemite Conservancy
- a Death Valley vacation with lodging at Furnace Creek Resort, a round of golf, and copies of Dan Suzio's *Death Valley Photographer's Guide*
- a two-night stay at the Inn at Benton Hot Springs
- a getaway to the Westin Monache Resort, a boat rental and lunch at Silver Lake, coffee at Stellar Brew, and movie tickets for Minaret Cinemas
- a stay at Convict Lake Resort with movie passes for Minaret Cinemas, dinner at Giovanni's Restaurant, and an REI Camp X Chair
- a stay at Rainbow Tarns Bed & Breakfast with lunch at The Stove, a movie at Minaret Cinemas, and dinner at Giovanni's Restaurant
- a Bishop adventure including gift cards from: Black Sheep Coffee Roasters, Great Basin Bakery, Spellbinder Books, and Eastside Sports, merchandise from Juniper Ridge, and a stay at the Joseph House Inn Bed & Breakfast
- passes to the California Academy of Sciences and the Conservatory of Flowers with lodging at the Golden Gate Hotel
- a stay at Cedar Grove Lodge in Kings Canyon National Park
- a mountain escape at Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley
- a day cruise adventure to Channel Islands National Park

...and more!

- tickets for two to The Huntington
- passes to the Aquarium of the Pacific
- Patagonia clothing: men's and women's Nano Puff jackets
- a membership and T-shirt from Friends of the Inyo
- a season pass to Tamarack Cross Country Ski Resort
- Friends of the River package including a whitewater rafting trip, tickets to the 2017 California River Awards, and a water bottle, mug, and cap
- a private Bodie Foundation tour at Bodie State Historic Park
- Mono Lake Committee gift pack: *The Mono Lake Story* DVD and a Mono Lake Klean Kanteen, T-shirt, cap, and 2017 Mono Lake Calendar

JUNIPER RIDGE



Staff migrations

by Jessica Horn

Seasonal staff have gone the way of Mono Lake's Eared Grebes and visitors, and once again the Mono Basin has felt the settling of the fall and winter season.

Membership Assistant **Terry McLaughlin** is taking a temporary migration to finish kicking cancer's butt with radiation treatment and will be back in the office in November. Meanwhile, **Maureen McGlinchy** filled in as Membership Assistant and has stayed on upon Terry's return to aid in the busy year-end membership tasks. Maureen has a Master's degree in Forest Science and lives in Mono City with her husband and two daughters.

Gabrielle Renteria returned for a second year, this time as a Mono Lake Intern. She did an exceptional job leading South Tufa tours, canoe tours, and helping with just about any task around the office. She transitioned to Project Specialist for the winter to help with bookstore orders, membership tasks, and events.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Connor Mullinix** was a great asset in the bookstore due to his voracious reading and information gathering. He spent much of his free time participating in the Mono Lake Volunteer Program as a roaming interpreter at Old Marina and South Tufa. While Connor has left the Committee for the winter he is staying in the Mono Basin. Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **John Warneke** brought thoughtful insights about bookstore life to each staff meeting, and got to know interesting facts about as many visitors as he could. John plans to stick around the Mono Basin through the winter helping catalog historical items and information for the Mono Basin Historical Society.

Outdoor Education Instructor **Antonia Chihuahua** first visited Mono Lake through an Outdoor Education Center program as a 14-year-old student with Dorsey High School in 2002. This past summer she taught groups about Mono Lake and the source of their water. Antonia took a counseling position in Auburn upon finishing the season at Mono Lake. **Lisa Godenick**, Outdoor Education Instructor, also finished up the season of leading students on night hikes in the Mono Basin, taking groups to Bodie State Historic Park, and seeing progress through each group's closing circle. She has returned to Reno, Nevada to pursue a career in public health.

Sandra Noll and **Erv Nichols** returned for a third year, sharing the Birding Intern position. Sandra created a new interpretive program called "Bird Beak & Feet Adaptations" that you will see on the front deck next summer. Erv took photos all around the Mono Basin, specifically documenting the changes in the Lee Vining Rockfall Safety Project after the Marina Fire. They are off to "volunteer for nature" around the country this winter.

Mono Lake Intern **Grace Aleman** organized the "Refreshments with Refreshing 'Ologists" program of weekly science presentations—talks about yellow-legged frogs, land trusts, and melting glaciers in Yosemite, to name a few—in addition to helping with the expansion of the Mono Lake Mobile site (monolakemobile.org). Grace is now running the after-school program for Lee Vining Elementary School.

Returning Mono Lake Intern **Adam Dalton** spent much of the summer translating Mono Lake outreach materials into Mandarin Chinese. Adam is now enrolled in the University of Utah's Community and Metropolitan Planning graduate program, on the shores of Mono Lake's sister Great Basin saline lake.

Second-year Mono Lake Intern **Sara Matthews** is back to teaching Geography at Humboldt State University. This summer Sara helped with the Inyo National Forest plan revision comment letter party, and spent much of the season on Mono Lake's islands assisting with California Gull research.

Matt Rice returned for his second year as a Mono Lake Intern as well, and has moved on to Humboldt County working with the California Department of Fish & Wildlife. During the summer, he helped with the Field Seminar program, creek monitoring, resurrected the Committee's eBay account to rid the office of really old computer accessories.

If you are interested in working at Mono Lake next summer, visit monolake.org/jobs in January to apply. ❖



The 2016 Mono Lake Committee staff.



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

Though I tell everyone spring is my favorite season, autumn in the Mono Basin makes me question that. The blue, blue sky and splashes of fall color lighting up the canyons, coupled with the warm midday sun, make for a beautiful time of year. Maybe I have two favorite seasons? Thank you to all of you who sent in contributions to keep Mono Lake protected for future generations.

In honor

Mary Doherty made a donation in honor of **Renee Jones**. Jeff Ferguson of Ojai sent a contribution in honor of **Kathy & John Broesamle**. Camilla Saviz of Stockton gave a gift in honor of **Peter Wilkin & Amanda Courtauld**. Kristine Zeigler of Walnut Creek sent a contribution in honor of **Wanda Zeigler**. The **Dan Joraanstad and Bob Hermann Faith in the Future Fund of the Horizons Foundation**, based in San Francisco, made a donation in honor of **Randy Arnold** “for his energy and drive for this world.”

We received donations in honor of the wedding of former Mono Lake Intern **Katherine Getts** and **Kevin Varela-O’Hara** from **Michael Baeder & Maddy Noyes** of Brooklyn, NY, **Andrea Korte & Andrew Ramonas** of Washington, DC, **Jonathan & Buffy Lee** of Wickwar, England, and **Sandy Puljic** of Jupiter, FL.

Rebecca Detrich of Occidental sent a contribution in honor of Membership Assistant **Terry McLaughlin** and her battle to “kick cancer’s butt.” When Terry and her husband **Vern Gersh**, the Committee’s maintenance volunteer extraordinaire, renewed their wedding vows in September, they requested that any gifts in their honor be sent to the Mono Lake Committee. We received donations from **Liliane “Susi” Gersh** of Berlin, Germany, **Phillip Geller** of Minneapolis, MN, **Narciso & Reyna Vargas** of Lee Vining, and **Rebecca & Jim Watkins** of Lee Vining.

In memory

Mary Arney of Los Angeles and



In late August writer and conservationist Terry Tempest Williams paid us a visit to catch up on Mono Lake news and sign her books in the bookstore.

Susan Davila of Anaheim sent contributions in memory of **Ginger Krelle**. **John Carlson** of Montague made a donation in memory of **David T. Mason**. **Scott & Claudia Hein** of Concord gave a gift in memory of **Rich Stallcup**. **Laird Hendricks** of Ventura sent a contribution “in loving memory” of **Angela F. Wallace**. **Ebba Herritt** of Los Angeles made a donation in memory of **Steve Fisher**. **Carol Marshall** of Houston, TX and **Mark & Alice Perry** of Bakersfield gave gifts in memory of **Donald Haworth**. **Carol Mathews** of Walnut Creek made donations “in loving memory” of **Robert Mathews**. **James Moose & Kristi Wilson** of Sacramento and **Eaton Vance Investment Counsel** of Boston, MA sent contributions in memory of **Hildegard Manley**. **Marci & Eric Pealstrom** of Yucca Valley gave a gift in memory of **Earl B. Pealstrom**. **Jennifer Winn** of Palm Desert made a donation in memory of her husband **Eugenio Aburto**.

We received gifts in memory of longtime member **T.B. Lyons** from **Robert & Judith Allen** of Morgan Hill, **Eleanor & Michael Lyons** of Honolulu, HI, **McKinley Motor Service** of Honolulu, HI, **Healani Paaluhi** of Mililani, HI, and **Leroy & Elvine Victorine** of Hilo, HI.

Norm DeChambeau passes

Longtime Mono Basin resident and beloved local character **Norm DeChambeau** passed away in May at the age of 86. Norm’s grandparents were among the first ranchers in the north part of the Mono Basin in the early 1900s. Norm spent part of his childhood in the Mono Basin, at the DeChambeau Ranch, moving “home” after he retired. He became involved with the Mono Basin Historical Society, where he served as president and then as historian and museum curator. Norm helped many visitors to the museum learn more about their family connections to this place. ❖



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

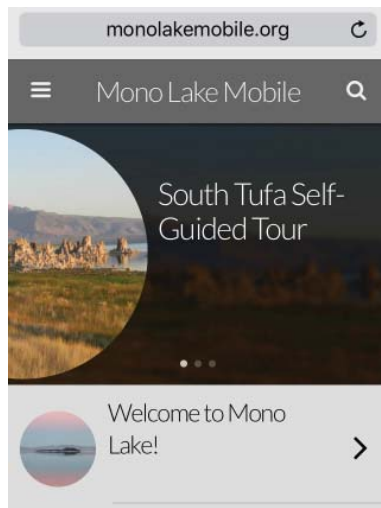
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