

THE BODIE TIMES

PROTECTING BODIE'S FUTURE BY PRESERVING ITS PAST

THE NEWS OF BODIE, MONO LAKE & GROVER HOT SPRINGS
www.BodieFoundation.org

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NUMBER 1

Executive Director's Report

Foundation Names Executive Director

Editor's Note - Earlier this year, we welcomed Jessica Schneider as the Bodie Foundation's new Executive Director. For the last five years she was on the Board of Trustees for the Bodie Foundation, serving as the Vice President for the past two. She also was the Office Director at the Mono Lake Committee, a non-profit that works with the Bodie Foundation occasionally when it comes to supporting Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve. She originally moved to the Eastern Sierra in 2010, planning to stay for a summer, and never left. Now, with her husband and new baby, she is

firmly planted in Bridgeport, CA. Her favorite spots in the three parks that the Bodie Foundation helps fund are the hot springs pool at Grover, the State Reserve Boardwalk at County Park and Bodie's schoolhouse.

Thank you, Chris, for the introduction. I'd like to thank the Board of Trustees for entrusting me with this operation, and Brad Sturdivant for handing me the keys and teaching me how to drive the organization that he and others built from the ground up only 12 years ago. I'd also like to thank the Foundation and



current State Parks staff for their patience with me as I get up to speed on everything.

I've inherited a wonderful organization, and I'm looking forward to using my background in non-profit operations to update and streamline a few processes, but my greatest hope is to continue building on the Foundation's relationship with our partners at California State Parks so we can provide Bodie, Mono and Grover with funding and additional boots on the ground where they can be used most effectively.

Stepping into Brad's shoes has

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COVID-19 Changes for Parks

**By Jessica Schneider
Bodie Foundation
Executive Director**

Many have been following the saga of closures throughout the country. Unfortunately, our need to be outside and recreate state-wide amidst quarantine has made it difficult for California State Parks to enforce the governor's social distancing requirements. Because of this, many state parks saw a move from soft closures, where foot traffic into parks was allowed and hiking trails and restrooms

remained open, to hard closures. This is precisely what happened at Bodie. Mono Lake and Grover remain soft closures.

At the time of this writing we are at the peak of closures. Parking lots, visitor centers, indoor areas, and campgrounds in all parks are closed. Per the Governor's order, all events and tours are canceled until further notice. That means FOB Day in August will be a digital gathering, and we will keep you posted on social media and via email on what

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Bodie Needs Your Help More than Ever Now!

Even though our economy is halting, unfortunately the elements that cause wear and tear on Bodie are not taking a season off. As an organization we have been set back with many of our fundraising methods, such as events, workshops, tours, and our visitor centers. Now more than ever, if you are able to give, Bodie is in need of donations. All of our fundraising within Bodie goes toward stabilization efforts, so without your help, we could end up a year behind on major stabilization efforts. We do our best to keep buildings standing, but as you all know, it is more than a full-time job for State Parks maintenance staff and HistoriCorps volunteers. Consider donating money that you would otherwise spend on a canceled tour or event to the Bodie Foundation.

We appreciate your support! Donate online at our website, bodiefoundation.org/take-action or mail a check payable to Bodie Foundation, P. O. Box 278, Bridgeport, CA 93517.

Friends of Bodie Railway Donates Assets to Foundation

By Dick Canton
Member, Bodie Foundation
Board of Trustees

On Nov. 5, 2019, the California Secretary of State approved and filed Certificates of Dissolution of the Friends of Bodie Railway & Lumber Company, Inc.

With approval from the California Attorney General's Office, all remaining assets of this non-profit group have been distributed to the Bodie Foundation.

The assets distributed to Bodie Foundation include merchandise: caps, t-shirts, and "Railway in the Sky" books. The restored 1881 Bodie Railway Flat Car #8 was moved from the June Lake Marina to the Laws Railroad Museum in Bishop, CA on a loan basis for display and safekeeping for a three-year term. This will give Bodie Foundation time to work with Bodie State Historic Park staff to determine the best place for the Flat Car's location in the park after the old Railway Office is finished.

All remaining funds have been transferred to Bodie Foundation's Railroad Office Donor Restricted Account to help complete the current work on the old Railway Office and establish a Rails & Mines Museum in the RR Office.

Any members of the Friends of



The Friends of Bodie Railway and Lumber Co. flat car, recently moved from June Lake Marina to the Laws Railroad Museum in Bishop, California.

Photo courtesy of Dick Canton

Bodie Railway and Lumber Co. who were not already Bodie Foundation members were added to the Bodie Foundation's database.

The Bodie Foundation's Board of Trustees expressed its unanimous appreciation of these donations at its January 18, 2020 meeting.

Speaking as the former treasurer of Friends of Bodie Railway and Lumber Company, we are very proud of the projects we as a group have been able to establish over these last 20-plus years to help keep the history of the old Bodie Railway & Lumber Co. alive for current and future generations.

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to expect. Our June Ghost Walks/ Cemetery Tour are canceled, and we will keep you updated on the July and September tours as we know more.

The Bodie Foundation has created a YouTube channel where we have started posting interpretive tours of Bodie and Mono Lake. We are posting the links on our Facebook and Instagram accounts for easy viewing. Since these tours don't include a large group of visitors, our Interpreters are able to go into areas that normally can't be visited on an in-person tour, so enjoy the extra content and information!

As of mid-May, Bodie has a hard closure: all entrance into Bodie is prohibited. Mono Lake is closed to all but local foot traffic. Grover's pool, campgrounds and visitor center are closed, but trails surrounding Grover remain open for hiking.

When parks reopen:

We at the Bodie Foundation are working closely with State Parks staff for a phased re-opening of

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2021 Calendar Contest Winners Named

The 2021 Bodie Calendar is now on sale for \$11.95 at the Bodie Foundation online store, www.bodiefoundation.org/store/. Close to 250 entries for the annual contest were voted upon by a team of judges. Thank you to all our entrants and congratulations to the winners.

The cover photo of the Methodist Church organ was taken by Jeff Dean. Other photographers with winning images include Dustin LeBrun, Lori Hibbett, Gigi Dean, Kevin McLoughlin, Greg Lugo, Jamie Byers, J.J. Johnson, Morgan Wright, Jeff Sullivan, Beth Zuckerman, Linda M. Brown, Jerome Gibson, Alain Defline, Rick Whitacre and Gregory Cruthis.

The 2022 calendar entry website will open in Fall 2020. We'll announce when entries open on our Bodie Foundation Facebook and Instagram pages or you can visit our website, www.bodiefoundation.org/bodie-calendar-contest.



You can order your 2021 Bodie Calendar today at our online store, www.bodiefoundation.org/store

Calendar Cover Photo by Jeff Dean

New, But Old-Style Bodie Kiosk Installed

When you visit Bodie again, you'll notice a new kiosk, delivered in Fall 2019, that looks at home in our historic town.

Alpine Mono Sector Park Mainte-



nance Chief John Campbell, shown at lower left, worked hard to make sure the new kiosk was built to resemble buildings from 1880.

The roof is cedar shingles and the exterior wood is treated with wood preservative stain that will darken a little but should have the same weathered look to it for a long time.

Wiring for electricity and fiber optic cable for internet connection is finishing up this spring. Also planned is an auto-pay machine that can take credit cards/cash.

The Bodie Foundation provided about \$25,000 in funds toward the new structure.



Photos by Betty McCuniff and Dustin LeBrun

Research Gathered On Mono Lake's Phalaropes

By Ryan Carle
Science Manager

Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge

Mono Lake is internationally renowned as a place important to migratory birds, and two of the banner species of the lake are Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes. Phalaropes are tiny shorebirds that belie their "shore" bird status by spending their time swimming around in open water, where they eat invertebrates—at Mono Lake, alkali flies and brine shrimp. Most famously, flocks of thousands will frequently take to the wing and put on a fantastic flight display, with lightning quick hairpin turns of thousands of birds in a shifting and morphing flock.

These diminutive charmers have won the hearts of many a Mono Lake enthusiast, but have received little conservation attention. We don't have good estimates of their world population, whether they're declining, or annual numbers at Mono Lake. However, there is ample reason to be concerned for them. Both Wilson's and Red-necked phalaropes rely on extreme environments that are highly vulnerable to climate change. They breed in wetlands in northern latitudes of North America, and then stop in flocks of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands at saline lakes in the western U.S., where they fatten up on flies and shrimp before migrating to the southern hemisphere.

Wilson's Phalaropes are particularly wedded to saline lakes, and migrate to hyper-saline wetlands in the Andes in South America—places that look very similar to Mono Lake. Red-necked Phalaropes migrate to the areas far out at sea off South America. The reliance of both species on saline lakes during migration means



Sarah Hecocks looks for phalaropes during the Oikonos survey at Mono Lake in the summer of 2019.

Photo courtesy of Ryan Carle

that their fate is entwined with these imperiled habitats, which worldwide are threatened by water diversion and climate change.

I grew up at Mono Lake, the son of State Park Rangers Janet and David Carle who were the rangers there for many a decade. I have gone on to become an ecologist

focused on birds, working for the conservation science non-profit Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge. While much of my work has focused on conservation of seabirds, which takes me to islands in North and South America, I had long wished to spend more time in my

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Annual Mono Bird Chautauqua Canceled

The organizers of the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua announced a few weeks ago that due to COVID-19 the event would have to be canceled for 2020.

Originally, the Bird Chautauqua was scheduled for June 19-21 in Lee Vining. The popular event brings birders together to enhance appreciation and understanding of the Mono Basin's diverse and abundant bird life and to educate the public about this area's value to birds and people.

In a statement, the Chautauqua planning team said: "Mono County is discouraging visitation right now, which, combined with Governor Newsom's stay-at-home order and plans to reopen the state in stages, with large gatherings likely last on the list, makes it clear that we cannot proceed with the festival. The Chautauqua partners are committed to the health and safety of our community and therefore not encouraging anyone to visit or gather in large groups."

However, the planning team said a few "virtual Chautauqua treats" are being offered online on June 20 to help those who would have attended to enjoy the beauty of the basin.

"Thank you so much for offering your birding expertise to our festival. We will miss seeing you here in the Mono Basin in June, but we trust that we'll be able to go birding and celebrate the Mono Basin together when this pandemic has passed. We hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy—we're thinking of you," concluded the Chautauqua team's statement.

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favorite place, the Mono Basin.

About two years ago, I heard that there was concern among birders and park managers that fewer phalaropes were being seen at Mono Lake. No one was sure whether they were declining, or if they were just in inaccessible parts of the lake, or maybe they had moved to other places like Great Salt Lake. I started contacting everyone interested in phalaropes that I could find, and last year we launched a project to regularly survey phalaropes at Mono Lake for the first time since the 1990s. We conducted nine boat-based surveys during 2019, covering the entire lake every two weeks in a



A Wilson's Phalarope feeds at Mono Lake. Photo courtesy of Ryan Carle

systematic series of count stations. California State Parks has been a critical partner in this effort, by securing funding for the surveys and providing staff time. Sierra District Environmental Scientist Ashli Lewis was a phalarope counter, and Bodie State Park Ranger Taylor Jackson was the intrepid boat captain on many surveys.

Our results showed that the timing of Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes visiting Mono Lake was similar to patterns in the 1980s-1990s. We also found many phalaropes far out in the northeastern reaches of the lake, where they are all but impossible to see from shore. However, the maximum counts of both species were also lower than historic surveys. Our peak 2019 count of Wilson's Phalaropes was near 11,000 birds, compared with historic peaks in the range of 30,000-70,000. Our peak Red-necked phalarope counts were around 5,500 birds compared with peak counts of 15,000-18,000 in the 1990s. There are some methodological differences to consider when comparing these numbers, but the sheer order of magnitude of difference is worrisome. On the bright side, partners at Great Salt Lake conducted surveys there in 2019 for the first time in many years, and found flocks of both Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes in the hundreds of thousands.

Collaboration is key for understanding what is happening with far-ranging species like phalaropes. By combining our efforts with partners at other Great Basin lakes, we hope to create an index to compare current and historic data and understand trends in world population. Another rewarding part of this project has been bringing people from all around the Americas together for the sake of phalaropes. Margaret Rubega and I hosted a phalarope meeting at Mono Lake this June, in which we brought people from six countries together. Researchers from Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Paraguay were thrilled to see Mono Lake, which so closely resembles the phalarope habitat they know and love in South America. We identified threats, research and conservation needs, and steps forward for phalaropes and their habitat. Some ideas have already come to fruition, such as a coordinated survey of habitat in South America that I participated in this January.

In 2020, we will continue phalarope surveys at Mono Lake. It has been a real pleasure to work back home at Mono Lake, collaborate with California State Parks, and to work for the benefit of the phalaropes and salt lakes. Phalaropes, tiny and resilient, migrate tens of thousands of miles, and in doing so connect not only Mono Lake and other wetlands, but people who love those places, from Argentina to California, from Canada to Chile.

To learn more about this project visit www.oikonos.org/shore-bird-conservation, and donations can be made at (www.oikonos.org/donate) to keep this fledgling project off the ground!

News Briefs

Park Staff Changes

This season we say goodbye to several State Park employees. State Park Ranger Taylor Jackson and Park Interpretive Specialist Kaytlen Jackson moved to Tahoe State Parks this spring, and Park Maintenance Worker 1 Paul Serna-Garcia will also be missed as he moves on to another State Park.

There were plans to fill many positions in Bodie, Mono, and Grover this year, but COVID-19 hit right in the midst of hiring for State Parks. Supervisors are now back to hiring, but with the delay and many unknowns, some positions taking longer to fill.

Earthquakes!

Just to mix things up during the quarantine, two earthquakes, first a 5.3 magnitude on April 11 and the second, a 6.5 magnitude on May 15, were both felt in Bodie and surrounding areas. Fortunately, no visible damage was done by either quake, but all of us were certainly feeling a bit shaken, nonetheless.

The first quake's epicenter was southeast of Mono Lake while the May 15 epicenter was much farther south near Tonopah, NV.

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already proved a hefty task. The number of past donors and their donations that he has filed away in his brain is enough to ensure he will always be needed, even if it means a quick phone call. But really, Brad is still the heart of the Foundation after his 12 years serving under one Bodie Foundation leadership title or another, and 35 years with State Parks. He says he'd like to retire, but I've convinced him to log a few hours here and there to help keep an eye on stabilization projects, give input on our more detailed interpretive brochures, and be the encyclopedia of the Foundation's work from 2008 to present. We are all grateful for the organization that Brad helped build, and will continue to honor his vision for the future. Thank you for your service to so many State Parks, Brad.

COVID-19 Stirs Things Up

I must say, I wasn't planning on my first year leading this organization to coincide with the spread of a virus that resulted in closed parks, businesses, and an entire state quarantined. Plans the staff and I have been working on since I started in February are now up in the air, some seeming more realistic at some point this summer than others. This year Chris Spiller and Betty McCuniff are planning on new interpretive programs like the Ridge Tour, which will take visitors outside of park boundaries to visit the Railroad Office, see abandoned mining operations from a safe distance and more. Remember that every special tour you book with our experienced guides directly funds stabilization work and program funding at Bodie.

We've had to cancel the June Ghost Walks, but are still hopeful that the July and September Ghost Walks will still occur. Our big event, Friends of Bodie Days, has now become a digital event, that you can



Closure signs in May at Bodie's entry kiosk.

Photo by Hillary Colyer

watch from the safety and comfort of your own home. We are hoping to still provide the excellent historical interpretation that you expect from FOB day, just online. The all new Bodie 5K Run/Walk should still take place in October as planned, but again, check our website for updates, and join our mailing list for updates in your inbox (or mailbox if you prefer).

Park closures due to the governor's directives following the COVID-19 outbreak will greatly impact the work we do, and our bottom line (read more about COVID-19 effects on page 1). Whether the impact is felt this year or next depends on a few factors. However, rest assured that your donations are still going to fund stabilization projects. This year the Board of Trustees voted to fund \$40,000 for HistoriCorps to finish Phase III of the Railroad Office Project, which means installing "sashes" and fixing window jambs in the 17 window openings in the Railroad office. The Board also funded \$50,000 for much-needed stabilization of the D.V. Cain Barn and the Fouke Residence, also done by HistoriCorps. These projects were ready to launch this spring, weather permitting, but are now on hold due to COVID-19. We are hoping these projects will begin this fall, but if contracts are held up and HistoriCorps volunteers are unable to work due to restrictions still in place, we will have to wait un-

til next spring. The good news is, the money is in restricted accounts with State Parks, just waiting to be used for these projects specifically.

Funding for the Bodie maintenance staff's re-roofing project was also approved by the Board, so \$46,600 is in the State Park's account and this work is more likely to move forward, with social distancing rules in place for employees. The Foundation's donation will pay for materials and seasonal park aides' time.

Thank you, members and donors!

We are so grateful to those of you that renewed your memberships, and forever thankful to those that included an extra donation in the envelope or online. Every little bit helps in times like these, as many of our fundraising programs, visitor centers, and events will likely be altered or not happen at all this summer. If you haven't renewed yet and are able, it's now easier than ever to do online at bodiefoundation.org. You no longer need to have a PayPal account to pay your membership, any credit card will now do.

We recognize that times are difficult and will continue to be so in the near future. If you are currently a member and cannot renew your membership but still want to remain up to date on all things Bodie, Mono and Grover, please call or email us at info@bodiefoundation.org and let us know. We can put your member-

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Bodie, Mono and Grover in a way that safely allows for interpretive programs, visitor centers and general visitation. We were instructed to propose rules for the district to approve before parks reopen. Rules include wearing face masks, limits on group size for tours, limits on numbers of people allowed inside buildings such as visitor centers and the Stamp Mill.

There will likely be a reservation system for the pool at Grover Hot Springs that will limit the number of entrants at a time.

Park restrooms will be kept stocked with soap and will have running water. Cleaning of restrooms will occur more regularly to ensure everyone's health and safety. Bodie Mercantile on Main Street in Bridgeport will open its doors when the Mono County Health Department approves all businesses in Bridgeport to reopen.

HistoriCorps funding is approved and provided to state parks, but contracts that would normally be signed and ready to go in April have been held up due to the COVID-19 quarantine. State parks and HistoriCorps are now working on contracts, and hope to have volunteers on the ground this fall. If it doesn't happen then, work will have to wait until spring 2021. Details of HistoriCorps' projects for this year (or next) are detailed in the ED Report on page 1.

Please remember these rules when entering any state park or gateway communities: maintain social distancing of six feet or more, do not congregate in the outdoors, wear face masks, wash your hands and do not visit the park when sick. If these requirements cannot be met, visitors will be asked to leave the park.

"Today Show" Visits Bodie

NBC's Today show came to our favorite ghost town in October 2019 to learn about life in Bodie over 100 years ago and how it is preserved today. Reporter Joe Fryer and crew interviewed Bodie Foundation's Betty McCunniff and Chris Spiller during the segment. Here, a drone (upper right) captures video of Joe and Betty walking down Main Street. The segment was shown a few weeks later. If you missed it, look for it at this link:

www.today.com/video/california-ghost-town-keeps-its-old-charm-72313925871



Photo by Chris Spiller

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ship on hold so you don't get renewal notices for 2020 but we will continue to send you the good stuff: news and updates on the Bodie Foundation. We'll remind you to renew at the beginning of 2021.

Other ways to help

How else can you help without giving money directly to us? You don't even have to leave your house! The Bodie Foundation has a great online store where you can get books, apparel, mugs, maps and more with just a few clicks of a mouse. Simply visit bodiefoundation.org/store. All proceeds from our store go straight to the Bodie Foundation's work.

Next, most folks have to buy one thing or another online through Amazon. Now, with one little change, we can benefit from all of your purchases. Simply type smile.amazon.com into your web browser, follow the prompts and select "Bodie Foundation", then continue to shop as normal on Amazon Smile. We will receive a small percentage of each purchase, as long as you are using the "Smile" website instead of the normal Amazon.com.

This summer there will likely be changes to how visitors experience Bodie, Mono, and Grover. Another way to help is to abide by all rules and regulations put forth by the State Parks and accepting that some things may be different for the year. There may be reduced staff, and changes to events and tours. We ask for your patience, and hope that we and the State Park staff can still provide you with an outstanding visitor experience at all three parks.

I wish nothing but health and safety to every one of you as we work through this pandemic together as a nation. Thank you, again, for your tireless support of the Bodie Foundation, and may we all meet in one way or another this summer!



Bodie Foundation

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www.visitgroverhotsprings.org
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Photo by Holly Calinsky Jauch