

Los Angeles Geographical Society

Southland Geographical Notes

www.lageographic.org



April

2009

President's Message *2009-2010 Lectures*

By Gary Booher

The 2009-2010 Lecture Series will again span the breadth of geography, with regional, physical, and cultural topics presented by prestigious and popular faculty from local colleges and universities. The entire Lecture Series is summarized on page 6 in this Newsletter.

On September 11, the Lecture Series will begin with Dr. Helen Cox speaking about *Global Warming and Meeting Our Energy Demands*. The lecture will broaden and replace our traditional "Weather Month" and local members of the American Meteorological Society are anticipated to join us that night. Dr. Cox is an Associate Professor of Geography at California State University, Northridge. She is an expert about the earth's changing climate and has had research projects at Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Huntsville Naval Research Laboratory. Dr. Cox earned BA and MA degrees in Physics at Oxford University, plus MA and PhD degrees in Atmospheric Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles.

On October 2, Dr. Bipasha Baruah will present *Slumdogs and Millionaires: Making Sense of Contemporary India*. Dr. Baruah is an Assistant Professor of Geography at California State University, Long Beach, and is also the Associate Director of the Yadunandan Center for India Studies. She is from India and her research specialties include gender and development, women and housing, and globalization and labor. Dr. Baruah earned a BS degree at Delhi University, India, plus Master of Environmental Science at the University of Northern British Columbia and PhD in Environmental Studies at York University (Toronto, Canada).

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 8, 2009

7:00 pm

Student
Presentations
Night

Research by
Geography Students
at local Universities in
Southern California

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On November 6, Dr. Julie Laity will speak about *Deserts and Desert Environments: The Role of Wind*. Dr. Laity is a Professor of Geography at California State University, Northridge. She is an expert on arid environments and aeolian, fluvial, and groundwater systems in deserts, and has recently published the book-length *Deserts and Desert Environments* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). Dr. Laity earned BA, MA and PhD degrees in Geography from the University of California, Los Angeles.

On December 4, the Annual Banquet will again be held at Taix French Restaurant and will feature *A Photographic Safari to Tanzania and Kenya* by James Woods. He describes himself as a “Geographer and World Traveler” and he has also been a GIS lab manager. Mr. Woods earned an MA degree in Geography from California State University, Long Beach.

On February 5, the Lecture Series will resume with Dr. Hong-lie Qiu speaking about *Environment in Western China: The Disappearance of Lop Nur Lake*. Dr. Qiu is a Professor of Geography at California State University, Los Angeles. He has done research and projects in China and his interests include remote sensing, GIS, computer cartography and biogeography. Dr. Qiu earned a PhD degree from Louisiana State University.

On March 5, Matt Ebner will speak about *Arabian Opposites: Yemen and Dubai*. Mr. Ebner is a Professor of Geography at El Camino College and in 2002 he received the Outstanding Educator Award from the California Geographical Society. Mr. Ebner earned BA and MA degrees in Geography from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is also a Past President of the LA Geographical Society.

On April 2, Dr. Ray Sumner will share a travel project to *Easter Island: Mysteries and Adventures of Rapa Nui*. She visited Easter Island (Rapa Nui) as part of the Geosciences Diversity Enhancement Program (a National Science Foundation funded project to bring high school and two-year college students into contact with researchers in the field) through California State University, Long Beach. Dr. Sumner is a Professor of Geography at Long Beach City College and is the Southern California Vice President of the Society of Woman Geographers. She earned an MA degree from James Cook University (Townsville, Australia) and a PhD degree from the University of Queensland (Brisbane, Australia).

On May 7, the Lecture Series will close for the academic year when we return again to hear our students present their research completed while studying Geography at local universities in Southern California. The evening will be a “mini-conference” with multiple 20-minute presentations, plus the display of posters and maps. The evening should again provide the breadth and depth of geographical research by current local university students.

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New Zealand and Sydney Study Abroad

Study Abroad to New Zealand and Sydney, Australia in January 2010 with Matt Ebner of El Camino College. All ages are welcome, and you do not have to be an El Camino student to join. For more information go the LAGS website or to:

www.elcamino.edu/faculty/mebner
mebner@elcamino.edu

February 2009 Lecture

La Niña and the Wild Weather of 2008

Presentation by Jeff Brown
MA Candidate, Geography
California State University, Los Angeles

Review by Matt Ebner

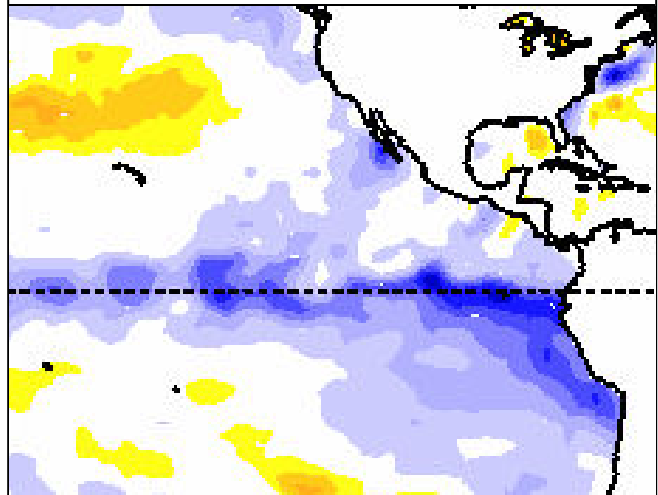
The audience braved a rainy evening to attend a lecture on the weather patterns of Southern California over the past year. Starting in the fall of 2007 we had the expected wildfires which were fanned by the offshore Santa Ana winds. There were occasional “fire whirls” resulting from rapid ground heating, one of the fire features most feared by firefighters. In 2008 there was some severe weather in Southern California, including a rare tornado near Palm Springs in May, an impressive lightning storm in August, and hail storms in December.

La Niña and El Niño were discussed along with their effects on California weather. Better known than La Niña, El Niño occurs when warmer than normal surface water in the Equatorial Pacific leads to dramatic winter rainfall totals in Southern California, oftentimes twice as much as normal. The last major El Niño was during the winter of 1997-98 when mudslides and flooding made headline news.

The La Niña phenomenon is a bit more subtle in its effects, bringing drought which Californians can more easily ignore. La Niña is associated with a cooling of the central and eastern part of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, due to trade winds blowing stronger than normal. The Jet Stream

then stays north of its normal path, with less winter storm tracks moving through California, while the Pacific Northwest gets our rain. The Santa Ana winds blow more frequently than normal, enhancing the drought conditions of Southern California. La Niña usually occurs every three to seven years. By December 2008 the sea surface temperatures in the Pacific were cooler than normal, indicating that a La Niña condition was indeed developing. January of 2009 certainly affirmed this with its warm, dry conditions with Santa Ana winds blowing on several days, atypical for winds that normally stop blowing in November.

Mr. Brown concluded with the sobering thought that Southern California might be amidst a long-term drought pattern that could last decades.



Ocean Temperatures in the central and eastern Equatorial Pacific area were below normal last year and associated with La Niña.

March 2009 Lecture

"Lost World" of the Venezuelan Tepuis

Presentation by Cristy Brenner
Professor of Geography
Saddleback College

Review by Matt Ebner

Cristy went on an expedition to Venezuela in 2008 under the leadership of eminent tropical ecologist Hal Heatwole of North Carolina State University. Their objective was to explore some of Venezuela's tepuis, the flat-topped mountains of the Guiana Highlands.

Nearly a hundred years earlier the British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had written a novel that was inspired by a lecture he had heard about the unique ecology of Venezuela's tepuis. His Novel *Lost World* described a place where dinosaurs still survived in isolation, atop heavily vegetated tepuis that were inaccessible except to the most intrepid. Cristy didn't discover any creatures long thought to be extinct, but she did see many fascinating plants, insects, and beautiful landscapes.

The tepuis are part of the ancient Guyana Shield, mostly composed of granite and gneiss up to 3.6 billion years old, but also with layered sandstone on much of the exposed surface. All of the geology has been heavily weathered and eroded due to the tropical climate, resulting in sandstone plateaus and mesas that are geologically similar to the American Southwest.

The travel group had a long journey to reach the tepuis, first flying into Caracas,

and then on a smaller plane to Puerto Ayacucho and finally to Auyan Tepui by helicopter. Accommodations were spartan once they left the towns, sleeping in hammocks or sleeping bags, under thatched roofs or in tents. "Barking" frogs made sleep difficult at times, and the occasional electric eel in streams below flimsy log bridges caused some nervous crossings. There were also beautiful butterflies with translucent wings and bright green, poisonous caterpillars. A dung beetle worked like Sisyphus to roll a small ball of dung up an incline, only to have it repeatedly roll back down, and geckoes in an outhouse respectfully kept their distance.

Reaching the top of Auyan Tepui required a helicopter ride which cost \$16,000 for 12 passengers, an expensive but easier alternative than what the Pemon Indian porters had to face in their 3-day ascent to reach the camp. The plants atop the tepui were rare, from bromeliads (Cristy's favorite) to orchids to carnivorous plants. Birds were few and so were mammals, although she did spot a possum.

The sandstone and quartzite geology was also impressive, but best were photos of countless waterfalls, sometimes fifteen of them in a single view. The granddaddy of all was Angel Falls, tumbling more than 3,200 feet down the face of Auyan Tepui. Angel Falls is the highest waterfall on earth and nineteen times higher than Niagara Falls. Cristy paid an extra \$200 for a helicopter ride over and around Angel Falls, and her photos showed that it was worth every penny.

The audience was offered a rare glimpse of a remote environment which is known to very few. Thanks, Cristy!



Autana Tepui



Angel Falls
World's Highest Waterfall
3,212 feet



Glass Wing Butterfly

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In Memoriam:
Gail Hobbs

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Gail Hobbs of Los Angeles Pierce College. Gail's death in February has taken us all by surprise, and since Gail was organizing the 2009 Conference of the California Geographical Society, it is fitting that the Conference is dedicated to honor her lifetime of achievement.

Gail Hobbs was also a past President of the Los Angeles Geographical Society.

A Gail Hobbs Memorial Scholarship fund is being created through the Pierce College Foundation. More information on donating to this fund may be found at:

www.csun.edu/~calgeosoc/



Los Angeles Geographical Society
 Los Angeles City College
 855 North Vermont Avenue, Box # 1259
 Los Angeles, CA 90029

Free Public Lecture Series

8:00 p.m. – First Friday of most months

Los Angeles City College
 855 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles CA
Lecture Hall – Chemistry Building
 Complimentary Refreshments after the Lecture

www.lageographic.org

FALL 2009	SPRING 2010
<p>September 11 <i>Global Warming and Meeting Our Energy Demands</i> Dr. Helen Cox Associate Professor of Geography, CSU Northridge</p>	<p>February 5 <i>Environment in Western China: The Disappearance of Lop Nur Lake</i> Dr. Hong-lie Qiu Professor of Geography, CSU Los Angeles</p>
<p>October 2 <i>Slumdogs and Millionaires: Making Sense of Contemporary India</i> Dr. Bipasha Baruah Assistant Professor of Geography, CSU Long Beach</p>	<p>March 5 <i>Arabian Opposites: Yemen and Dubai</i> Matt Ebner Professor of Geography, El Camino College</p>
<p>November 6 <i>Deserts and Desert Environments: The Role of the Wind</i> Dr. Julie Laity Professor of Geography, CSU Northridge</p>	<p>April 2 <i>Easter Island: Mysteries and Adventures of Rapa Nui</i> Dr. Ray Sumner Professor of Geography, Long Beach City College</p>
<p>December 4 Annual Banquet <i>A Photographic Safari to Tanzania and Kenya</i> James Woods Geographer and World Traveler</p>	<p>May 7 <i>Student Presentations, Posters and Maps</i> <i>by students at universities in Southern California</i></p>

**California Geographical Society
Annual Conference
May 1-3, 2009**

The 2009 Conference of the California Geographical Society will meet in the Santa Ynez Valley on the weekend of May 1 to 3. The new and well equipped Santa Ynez Valley Union High School in the beautiful Santa Ynez Valley, heart of Santa Barbara’s wine country, will host the Annual Conference.

More information about the California Geographical Society and the Conference can be found at their website at:

www.csun.edu/~calgeosoc/

California State University, Fullerton will likely host the Spring 2010 conference.

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**Geography at UCLA –
The Todd Spieker Colloquium
Fridays at 3:00 pm – 1261 Bunche Hall**

April 17 –
**A Matter of Edge: Border vs. Boundary
at La Frontera – Edward S. Casey, State
University of New York at Stony Brook**

Dr. Casey will discuss the complex and evolving situation at La Frontera, the U.S.– Mexico border, as illuminated by what is now happening at Nogales and Tijuana.

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**Other Announcements for Local
Universities may be found at:**

www.lageographic.org



Los Angeles Geographical Society

Free public lectures on geographical topics are offered once a month from September through May (except for January). Speakers feature faculty and students who give illustrated presentations about geographical research and travel throughout the World. Lectures are usually held on the first Friday of each month at 8:00 pm at Los Angeles City College. Go to the website for room location:

www.lageographic.org
LAGeographicalSociety@yahoo.com

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