

Salton Sea: lost lakes and salt dreams

Exhibit dates: February 11—June 18, 2006 • Contact: Jennifer Reynolds, media specialist, (909) 307-2669 ext. 278

Salton Sea: lost lakes and salt dreams

The largest lake in California – nearly 380 square miles of surface area, but if you visited the Salton Sea in 1904, it wouldn't have been there.

Today's Salton Sea was formed as the result of an industrial accident, when a temporary levee along the Colorado River was breached and floodwaters filled the Salton basin. Water continued to flow from the river into the basin until 1907. The name "Salton Sea" was first used in 1905.

But the Salton Sea was not the first lake to occupy the basin. In 1853 William Blake, a geologist surveying routes for a transcontinental railroad, recognized the significance of ancient watermarks and shorelines on the mountains that surround the basin. The indigenous Cahuilla described to the survey party the "great water" filled with fish and water birds that once covered the valley, the gradual subsidence of the water, and a catastrophic flood that drove them from their lakeside homes. In fact, bodies of water variously known as Lake Cahuilla, Lake LeConte, the Blake Sea, and the Salton Sea have intermittently filled the valley for well over 6,000 years.

A new exhibit at the San Bernardino County Museum, "Salton Sea: lost lakes and salt dreams," explores the cultural and natural history of the Salton basin from prehistoric to modern times. Drawing on museum research projects and collections in history, anthropology, geological sciences, and biological science, the exhibit incorporates objects, maps, and photographs to offer an integrated view of the sea: past, present, and future. The exhibit also incorporates photographs by Ryann Ford from her "Silent Sea" series and a photographic essay, "Salt Dreams: Reflections of a Downstream West," a traveling exhibit from the California Exhibition Resources Alliance, that examine the fascinating and troubled history of the Salton Sea. The exhibit opens on February 11, 2006, and is free with museum general admission.

continues

San Bernardino County Museum

2024 Orange Tree Lane • Redlands CA 92374 • (909) 307-2669 • www.sbcountymuseum.org

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Visitors will see artifacts from the native peoples that lived on the shores of Lake Cahuilla; fossils and mineral specimens; historic photographs and documents; mounted birds and animals that live in the Salton basin and migrate through the area, and a range of maps, charts, and graphs that help explain the dynamics of this ever-changing region.

Special lectures, gallery talks, and a field trip are planned in conjunction with “Salton Sea: lost lakes and salt dreams,” which runs through June 18.

The San Bernardino County Museum is at the California Street exit from Interstate 10 in Redlands. The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays and holiday Mondays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$6 (adult), \$5 (student or senior), and \$4 (child aged 5 to 12). Children under five and Museum Association members are admitted free. Parking is free. For more information, visit www.sbcountymuseum.org or call (909) 307-2669.

The San Bernardino County Museum is accessible to persons with disabilities. If assistive listening devices or other auxiliary aids are needed in order to participate in museum exhibits or programs, requests should be made through Museum Visitor Services at least three business days prior to your visit. Visitor Services' telephone number is (909) 307-2669 ext. 229.

