

Griswold: San Joaquin Valley drought photos make splash

By Lewis Griswold



Photographer Matt Black of Exeter took this photo of birds and smoke to illustrate the drought in the San Joaquin Valley for The New Yorker magazine. MATT BLACK FOR THE NEW YORKER — Special to The Bee

Visalia — Documentary photographer Matt Black of Exeter achieved a career milestone when The New Yorker magazine published four of his photographs illustrating the California drought.

All were taken near Firebaugh and Corcoran.

Four may sound like small number, but it's a lot for The New Yorker.

Black, 44, who grew up in Visalia, specializes in stark black and white photographs evoking the hard work and poverty of those living in remote areas, including far reaches of the San Joaquin Valley.

It all started when The New Yorker prepared a video about the drought incorporating video by Ed Kashi and photos by Black.

The result was a seven-minute video entitled "[California: Paradise Burning,](#)" which is on The New Yorker website.

But New Yorker editor David Remnick liked Black's photos so much that he decided to publish them in the magazine as well.

Black's portfolio was published as "The Dry Land" in the Sept. 29 edition and included his byline.

The [website photo gallery](#) includes the four published photos and others taken in Lanare, Farmersville and other Valley locales.

Accompanying the photographs is an article about the drought by writer Dana Goodyear.

"Only the water witches are in high demand," Goodyear wrote.

The same week, [a New York Times writer blogged](#) about the The New Yorker video, praising the images by Black and Kashi.

The spotlight switched on at just the right moment for Black, whose gallery showing in New York City at Anastasia Photo, which sells his prints, had just opened.

"It's a double honor," Black said. "I was back there already for this gallery exhibit and this happened at the same time."

Black said what he likes most is that the rural San Joaquin Valley, which he has spent much of his life documenting, is getting wider exposure.

"It features the Valley and the stories of the people," he said. "I was doing it last year, I'll be doing it next year and I'll be doing it five years from now."

HALL OF FAME: Four people were inducted into the College of the Sequoias Hall of Fame last week:

-- Al Branco, a former COS faculty member and administrator who coached football, baseball, wrestling, softball, women's tennis and golf, and was athletic director for 11 years.

-- Bert Holt, head baseball coach for 21 years. He coached several players who went on to Major League Baseball and served as a baseball scout for 20 years.

-- John Lehn, a COS alumnus who is president of the Kings County Economic Development Corporation.

-- Brad Mills, a COS alumnus who played baseball for Holt, played in the major leagues from 1980 to 1983 and is now a Major League coach. He managed the Houston Astros, served as bench coach for the World Series champion Boston Red Sox, and is the current third base coach for the Cleveland Indians.

-- Sue Shannon, a COS alumna who was the first woman to serve on the COS Board of Trustees.

PINK T-SHIRTS: Visalia firefighters are wearing pink T-shirts this month in recognition of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

It's part of the Kaweah Delta Medical Center "Paint the Town Pink" campaign.

The public can buy a Visalia Fire Department pink T-shirt at the fire administration office, 707 W. Acequia Ave.

Cost is \$10, with profits going to the Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation "Lost Girls" Fund, which helps women in need.

Sales have been brisk: Organizers sold 400 T-shirts in two days and had to reorder.

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