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The 2025 Eta Aquarids meteor shower will peak on the nights of May 5-6, with the best viewing time being the pre-dawn hours of May 5. While the meteor shower has been active since April 19 and will be visible through May 28, focusing your viewing plans around the peak dates will maximize your chances of seeing these celestial visitors.



Mike on dune. Image courtesy of Michael P. Branch.

Damned ancient Mayans. In anticipation of the end of the world on December 21, I put off my Christmas shopping, blew off my writing deadlines, told a few folks what I actually think of them, and ran up a huge whiskey bill on my credit card. But as we enter the new year it has become obvious that prophecies about the apocalypse belong with weather reports, political predictions, and football bets. You know you're part of a cosmic crapshoot when even the end of the world turns out to be a disappointment. Now we'll just have to hang tough until the Earth's impending collision with the planet Nibiru. At least I'll have ample sour mash and rye while I wait around for a more dependable cataclysm.

To appreciate Sand Mountain requires vast leaps of imagination. Fifteen thousand years ago the Sierra Nevada range 100 miles east of here was heavily glaciated, but a subsequent warming trend began to melt the glaciers, dumping enough water down the eastern Sierra to fill immense expanses of the Great Basin with massive inland lakes. Ancient Lake Lahontan, which extended across much of present-day northern Nevada, once covered 8,500 square miles of now desiccated high desert and was up to 800 feet deep. Toward the end of the Pleistocene Epoch the giant lake began to dry up, and by 4,000 years ago it had contracted so far as to expose the spot where Sand Mountain now rises.



Kids on Sand Mountain. Image courtesy of Michael P. Branch

This is the story of the birth of Sand Mountain, which is still being born. As the massive, retreating glaciers scoured the Sierra Nevada, they ground off flakes and pebbles of granite, which were further degraded as they tumbled down rivers and were borne out into the Great Basin. At the delta of the Walker River near Shurz, Nevada (pop. 896)—where the Ghost Dance prophet Wovoka lies buried in the Paiute graveyard—this granitic sand accumulates in a place that is made special by wind. The prevailing Southwesterlies swoop down and gather up this mountain-blasted and river-trundled sand, lifting it high into the air and carrying it across the open high desert more than thirty miles, where the flanks of the Stillwater Mountains at last slow the winds, forcing them to drop their payload of Sierra sand in this magical spot. Over time this weird, lovely pile of sand has grown to 600 feet, making Sand Mountain one of the tallest dunes in North America.

Sand Mountain is one of only thirty-five dunes on the planet that knows how to sing. A “singing dune” consists of what is called singing, whistling, or even barking sand—sand that can make a roaring or booming sound. Although scientists aren’t entirely sure how the sound is created, it has to do with the rate of collision in the shear band where avalanching sand on a steep face contacts the static sand below. Even dunes well situated to sing remain silent unless consisting of perfectly clean sand with silica-based grains of a specific and nearly uniform size and shape. When Sand Mountain sings, it produces a unique note of between 60 and 105 hertz. Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone people have long honored this distinctive song, which they attribute to Kwansee, their ancient tribal benefactor, who lies buried beneath the dune and who sings for his lost love.

When Eryn and the girls and I arrived at Sand Mountain, the sun was setting into the horizon clouds and dropping for home. Although it was cold and windy the snow held off, so we decided to take the girls and try for the summit ridge of the dune before dark, clambering first up the flank of the mountain and then along one of its winding knife ridges straight up into the sky.



Caroline on dune. Image courtesy of Michael P. Branch.

Each step pushed a small avalanche of sand behind us, making the climb challenging, so eventually we adopted the technique the girls had instinctively known to use from the start, scrambling upwards on all fours. At last we reached the summit, which turned out to be a single ridge so incredibly narrow that we all straddled it as if riding horseback, in order to keep from sliding down the even more precipitous incline on the far side. From this precarious position we had a sweeping view along the dragon-backed ridge of the giant dune, down to the expansive playa below, and then out to the basin and range country rippling to the distant horizon.

From our perch we discerned no life apart from our own, but there is one secret life that is lived here, and here alone. The Sand Mountain blue butterfly (*Euphilotes pallescens arenamontana*) is a lovely little sister in the family *Lycaenidae*, the gossamer-winged butterflies. It lives nowhere on earth save for this strikingly sinuous massive mound of sand. The little blue's existence is restricted to this place because its survival depends entirely on Kearney buckwheat (*Eriogonum nummulare*), a local plant that is the sole food source for its larvae. The Sand Mountain blue spends its entire life within 200 feet of this host plant, and that life consists of no more than one single, beautiful week. We too often forget how much life-changing beauty a week can produce. The little blue butterfly is here because of the buckwheat, which is here because of the dune, which is here because a special wind delivered the harvest of a long-vanished glacier that patiently turned a mountain of stone into one of sand.

Prospect, a word that only became associated with mining in the 1840s, has been used since the early fifteenth century to describe "the act of looking into the distance." By the early sixteenth century the word also connoted an "extensive view of the landscape," and since the early seventeenth century its meaning has expanded to reference a psychological outlook, a "mental view or survey." At its Latin root, *prospect* implies a vantage from which to look ahead of oneself into both space and time ("pro" means "forward"). To experience a prospect is to have a view of the land, of oneself, and of what is yet to come. And what was the prospect from the windy, knife-ridge summit of Sand Mountain? Night descending on endless salt flats. The Great Basin rolling out to forever. My smiling daughters sitting on top of the world. The old year dying before me, already mid-burial in these shifting sands. I can't see the future from here, but there is no apocalypse in sight.

The desert darkness began its long fall, and the time had come to descend Sand Mountain. We agreed with the girls that we should all head downhill in the most exciting and dramatic way possible: by rolling. We lay down laterally along the ridge, pulled our hats down firmly, tucked our arms in tightly against our bodies, and then held our breath and let gravity take over. The

pitch was surprisingly steep, and we gained speed so quickly that we were soon blasted out of rolling position and into a wild tumble down the face of the dune. The sand cascaded away before us as the world spun and spun, and we fell into the new year, the mountain falling gently with us. When we reached bottom, little Caroline, her face and hair completely covered in sand, pumped her fists above her head and shouted “That was *magnifulous!*”

As the old year becomes the new, I am still waiting for my imagination to return from Sand Mountain. I contemplate a 600-foot-tall dune of white sand that was brought to its place one grain at a time over the windswept course of four millennia. It is a graceful heap of the powdered bones of the Sierra Nevada, pulverized by glaciers, tumbled in rivers, lifted by wind, carried aloft to a new home. Like its rare butterfly, this mountain can exist in only one place, where the conditions necessary for its existence conspire to make its unreal beauty not only possible but necessary and inevitable. And yet the mountain changes shape every year, and every hour. It flows, like the currents of water and wind that formed it. Like an advancing or retreating glacier. Like time, which moves mountains.

My dream is to become as endemic to the high desert as Sand Mountain and its petite blue, but the shifting sands that turn these years remind me that we are being constantly resculpted by movement and change. *Tempus fugit, ergo carpe diem*. Because even mountains flow, I am far too old not to roll down them with my children.

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An earlier version of this essay appeared as “Singing Mountain” in Mike’s book [\*Rants from the Hill: On Packrats, Bobcats, Wildfires, Curmudgeons, a Drunken Mary Kay Lady, and Other Encounters with the Wild in the High Desert\*](#) (Roost Books, 2017).

[Michael P. Branch](#) is University Foundation Professor, Emeritus, at the University of Nevada, Reno. An award-winning creative nonfiction writer and humorist, he is the author of 300 essays, and ten books including *Raising Wild*, *Rants from the Hill*, *How to Cuss in Western*, and [\*On the Trail of the Jackalope\*](#). Mike lives with his wife and two daughters in the western Great Basin Desert, on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada Range.

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nevadasindianterritory.com

<https://nevadasindianterritory.com > itineraries > numu-northern-paiute-people-tour>

[**NUMU \(Northern Paiute People\) Tour | Nevada's Indian Territory**](#)

11. **Sand Mountain** Recreation Area. Location: Fallon, Nevada, Highway 50 Recreation Opportunities: Major all-terrain recreational site, camping, biking, nature walk, cultural interpretation Cultural Significance: Sacred and culturally significant cultural site

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[**Numu \(Northern Paiute\) Tour Sheet**](#)

Fallon Through the Eyes of its First Nations - Visit Fallon

Nearby, ancient petroglyphs hammered and chipped into basalt rock tell timeless stories of the land at Grimes Point. Out of view, the singing sand dunes of Sand Mountain bring an otherworldly texture to the Great Basin landscape. These are not just points on a map for members of the Paiute-Shoshone tribe.

5 Ways Northern Nevada Supports the Entrepreneurial Community

The region is set up to help entrepreneurs succeed.

<https://livability.com/topics/education-careers-opportunity/most-beautiful-college-campuses-in-the-us/>

- **A crackdown on diversity programs is reshaping college graduation ceremonies**

Lead with Languages Teacher Scholarship Amount: \$6,000

Deadline: May 30, 2025 Awards Available: 10 Eligibility

Criteria: GPA Selected Major(s) Current Year in School Citizenship Age

Just to reiterate that some of what is going on is not new:

<https://law-journals-books.vlex.com › vid › giving-the-west-away-54316222>

Giving the West Away. - Vol. 65 No. 4, April 2001 - The Progressive ...

Giving the West Away. Document Cited in Related. Vincent. Author: St. Clair, Jeffrey: Position: Investigation into the administration of land exchange programs: Back in early days of Reagan time, Interior Secretary James Watt hatched a dark fantasy to sell off millions of acres of public forest and parklands to private corporations. When this ...

Trump Executive Order Raises Alarm Over Women's Financial Independence

Not only does President Trump's order for "restoring equality" result in a reevaluation of judgments based around sex discrimination, it also calls for an evaluation of ongoing cases related to Titles VII, and VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and says: "the Attorney General shall initiate appropriate action to repeal or amend the implementing regulations for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."

Title VI prohibits federal funds from going to programs that discriminate against people based on their race, color, or national origin, Title VII prohibits employment discrimination, and Title VIII is also known as the Fair Housing Act which is intended to prevent housing discrimination.

- <https://www.newsweek.com/trump-executive-order-raises-alarm-over-women-financial-independence-2063733>

- [Insider viewpoints on public lands: Secrecy and confusion abound regarding DOGE's mass firings and cutbacks. Here's what we know.](#)

by [Kris Vagner](#) April 26, 2025



At Great Basin National Park in remote Baker, five employees were fired by DOGE in February. Four are reportedly back, but the park's former superintendent cautions visitors to public lands: "Plan your trips a little more carefully. Make sure that you have the details arranged, because things will be subject to change." Photo/James Woolsey

"The money that people pay to go on a cave tour is what funds the park rangers," Woolsey said. "So letting those people go does not save the government any money whatsoever. It just reduces the services, to no effect."

<https://renonr.com/2025/04/26/insider-viewpoints-on-public-lands-secrecy-and-confusion-abound-regarding-doges-mass-firings-and-cutbacks-heres-what-we-know/>

[**A move to ban book bans: AB 416 seeks protections for librarians while letting courts—not boards—decide on book-removal requests**](#)

By Jimmy Boegle

April 25, 2025

AB 416 would also criminalize harassment, threats or coercion toward library employees regarding the removal of books, and make it illegal to disseminate the personal information of school and library employees.



Calving season: Our mission in action

Calving season is one of the most important and symbolic times of year for Buffalo herds and for the communities working to restore them. As the bright “red dog” calves arrive each spring, they mark not just the end of winter, but the renewal of life, resilience, and hope across Native lands.

For the Lakota people, the tribal affiliation of our founding staff, calving season carries deep spiritual meaning. New life among the Buffalo is a living reminder that when the Buffalo thrive, the people thrive — and that restoration is about more than numbers. It's about healing generations of connection between the land, the people, and our sacred relatives.

Through partnerships like The Nature Conservancy (TNC), we've been able to help our rancher partners grow their herds and continue this new life and connection. Just this month, a Buffalo from TNC that was donated to Dave and Patra Wise of Dancing Crane Ranch on the Fond du Lac Reservation in Sawyer, MN, gave birth to a new calf — a living testament to this work in action.

[READ MORE](#)

Scholarships with June 2 - 14 Deadlines

Achieve Atlanta Scholarship	\$20,000	June 02, 2025
AFCEA San Diego County Scholarship Program	\$8,000	June 02, 2025
Elizabeth Olson Legacy Scholarship - Interior Design	\$1,000	June 02, 2025
Fourth Circuit High School Essay Contest	\$2,000	June 02, 2025
GTE Foundation Scholarship	\$3,000	June 02, 2025
National Veteran Achievement Program	\$5,000	June 02, 2025
Provident Foundation Scholarship	\$3,000	June 02, 2025
SchoolHouse Connection Youth Scholarship	\$2,500	June 02, 2025
SVCF Roshan Rahbari Scholarship Fund	\$5,000	June 02, 2025
Credit Union of NJ Foundation Scholarship	\$2,500	June 03, 2025
Hawaii Education Association (HEA) Student Teacher Scholarship	\$2,000	June 03, 2025
LeRoy Apker Award	\$5,000	June 03, 2025
M. Hildred Blewett Fellowship	\$45,000	June 03, 2025
National Ocean Scholar Program	\$1,000	June 03, 2025
The Collegiate Inventors Competition	\$100,000	June 03, 2025
Stuck At Prom Scholarship Contest	\$15,000	June 04, 2025
OHDC NFJP Scholarship for Farmworkers/Agriculture	\$500	June 05, 2025
Washington-Nixon Nursing Scholarship for Single Mothers	\$500	June 05, 2025
ACF Andrew Piech Memorial Scholarship	\$2,200	June 06, 2025
ACF David R. Woodling Memorial Scholarship	Varies	June 06, 2025
ACF Youth in Foster Care Scholarship	Varies	June 06, 2025
American Public Transportation Foundation Scholarship	\$12,000	June 06, 2025
ASSP Foundation Family Scholarship Fund	Varies	June 06, 2025
Automotive Women's Alliance Foundation Scholarships	\$5,000	June 06, 2025
Chappie Hall Memorial Scholarship Program	\$1,000	June 06, 2025
Dr. Joseph W. Coleman Memorial Scholarship	\$10,000	June 06, 2025
ForEverglades Scholarships	\$30,000	June 06, 2025
G.B. Mann Scholarship	\$2,500	June 06, 2025
Hope Scholarship	\$2,500	June 06, 2025
Rae Lee Siporin Scholarship for Women	\$1,000	June 06, 2025
TCPS Teacher Education Scholarship	\$9,000	June 06, 2025

ACAA Educational Foundation Scholarship	\$5,000	June 07, 2025
ASAHP Scholarship of Excellence	\$1,000	June 07, 2025
EmPOWERED to Serve Scholars Program	\$5,000	June 07, 2025
Out To Innovate Scholarships for LGBTQ+ STEM Students	\$5,000	June 07, 2025
SMA Native American STEM Scholarship	\$1,500	June 07, 2025
The Ryan J. Gibbs Business Scholarship	\$1,000	June 07, 2025
Alan & Mary Jo Lincoln Scholarship	\$1,000	June 08, 2025
Kentucky Nursing Incentive Scholarship Fund	\$3,000	June 08, 2025
University of California Berkeley Leadership Award	\$10,000	June 08, 2025
Bow Seat Ocean Awareness Contest	\$1,000	June 09, 2025
Hospitality Education Scholarship	\$8,000	June 09, 2025
NASA Iowa Space Grant Consortium Scholarship	\$5,000	June 09, 2025
University of California-Davis CAAA Leadership Scholarship	\$10,000	June 09, 2025
Joseph Zukin Jr. Scholarship For Entrepreneurship	\$5,000	June 10, 2025
Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy Memorial Scholarship Award	\$10,000	June 12, 2025
Colorado Christian University Scripture Memory Scholarships	\$32,000	June 12, 2025
The Rotary Club of Branford "Service Above Self Scholarship Program"	\$7,000	June 12, 2025
Georgia Public Safety Memorial Grant	\$72,000	June 13, 2025
Meeting Street Scholarship Fund	\$40,000	June 13, 2025
North Carolina Wildlife Federation Scholarship Grants	\$2,500	June 13, 2025
AMS Father James B. Macelwane Award	\$1,000	June 14, 2025
APA Tom Cory Scholarship	\$2,000	June 14, 2025
FMAA Scholarship Program	\$2,000	June 14, 2025
Genesis Healthcare Foundation Scholarships	Varies	June 14, 2025
Marion Dorroh Memorial Scholarship	\$2,000	June 14, 2025
National Potato Council Scholarship	\$10,000	June 14, 2025
Singhaus Scholarship for the Performing Arts	\$2,000	June 14, 2025
Women in Finance Scholarship	\$20,000	June 14, 2025

More Executive Orders to Dissect and Understand

(please don't just read headlines - read the words/punctuation)

[Loyalty Day and Law Day, U.S.A., 2025](#) [May 1, 2025](#)

[National Day of Prayer, 2025](#) [May 1, 2025](#)

[National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend, 2025](#) [May 1, 2025](#)

[Ending Taxpayer Subsidization Of Biased Media](#) [May 1, 2025](#)

[Establishment of the Religious Liberty Commission](#) [May 1, 2025](#)

[Addressing Certain Tariffs on Imported Articles](#) [April 29, 2025](#)

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[418TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST LANDING AND THE RAISING OF THE CAPE HENRY CROSS](#) [April 29, 2025](#)

• [Amendments to Adjusting Imports of Automobiles and Automobile Parts Into the United States](#) [April 29, 2025](#)

• [Strengthening and Unleashing America's Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect Innocent Citizens](#) [April 28, 2025](#)

[Protecting American Communities from Criminal Aliens](#) [April 28, 2025](#)

• [Enforcing Commonsense Rules of the Road for America's Truck Drivers](#) [April 28, 2025](#)

[World Intellectual Property Day, 2025](#) [April 26, 2025](#)

[Investigation into Unlawful "Straw Donor" and Foreign Contributions in American Elections](#) [April 24, 2025](#)

[Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources](#) [April 24, 2025](#)

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Health Secretary RFK, Jr. has directed the CDC to design measles treatments using "existing drugs in combination with vitamins and other modalities." Pediatricians have described his claims about budesonide and clarithromycin as "unproven and risky."