

Our much hoped for spring storms never materialized this year resulting in "crunchy" dry surroundings except for areas that are lucky enough to have access to some ground water. Persistent, strong, warm winds add to the dryness. The invasive cheat grass, which looks beautiful as it first emerges green then turns purple as the seed heads form, finished its cycle in a matter of weeks and is now tinder dry. We are so fortunate to have plentiful spring water at our Home Farm oasis to keep the lawns, landscape, orchard trees and garden green and watered.

With the eradication of so many coyotes over the years, the rodent population continues to burgeon. Early morning drives down Home Farm Road can be a moving obstacle course while trying to avoid the numerous jackrabbits and cottontails racing in all directions. Many little antelope squirrels, which look like chipmunks, also scamper around the property. While they look really cute, they have caused considerable damage to our newly planted garden. Fewer ravens are in evidence in the area but many loud magpies have taken up residence here and have made large nests in several locations around the Farm. We have witnessed quite a few battles between the larger predatory birds such as the ravens and magpies as well as smaller birds trying to defend their nests. We are always glad to see the return of migratory birds such as red-winged blackbirds, hummingbirds, orioles, killdeer and night hawks.

Seeds for this year's garden were started under the grow lights a few weeks earlier this year since it appeared that our spring snows were not going to materialize. All but the tomatoes and basil, which are still in the greenhouse, were planted several weeks ahead of schedule.



On Saturday mornings our community garden volunteers and Home Farm gardeners diligently weed, till, plant young plants and seeds, mulch and water. The garden is already producing kale, radishes and carrots and the peppers and brassicas are thriving despite the rodent damage and wind.

After months of careful planning and consultation, the major renovation project on the meditation center was finally begun. Several weeks ago a hard working crew of SNO student-volunteers from California and Colorado (with assistance from several Home Farm residents) removed old stucco, tar paper, support wire, nails and old insulation, then rebuilt the existing framing, installed new windows and swamp cooler, added new insulation and put up an exterior plywood sub layer. Time commitments ran out before the actual outside siding could be installed, so the group plans to arrive a week or two before seminar in August to finish the project.



Another major project that is nearing completion is the rehabilitation of the three bedroom "south trailer" that a long term resident plans to move into in a few days. This was truly a group effort with almost everyone at Home Farm lending some kind of help. Roof leaks were repaired, utilities were reconnected and checked for safety, every wall was carefully painted, a new door was installed, floors were scrubbed and carpets shampooed. The mobile home now has a bright, fresh, clean atmosphere after several years of neglect.



Our main house dining room doesn't look very clean right now with piles of books stacked everywhere. We are preparing for the Snake Valley Festival book sale near the end of the month which Home Farm folks run for the annual fundraiser. We sort hundreds of donated books by subject, which is a tedious but interesting task, and set up and run the booth. We also sell lavender lemonade and geranium plants and usually net from \$350 to \$500 for the Great Basin Water Network.

Our yard sale in April was definitely worth the time and effort of cleaning out so many storage areas since it raised nearly \$800 for the SNO building fund. We donated about 20% of our

proceeds to the Great Basin Water Network to continue efforts to save our Snake Valley water from being piped to Las Vegas. Not only were we glad to have been so successful monetarily, but it is a great feeling to see clean, orderly spaces around the Farm that have been catch-alls for years. We have already targeted our next areas to clean out.



With so few residents here now we often feel overwhelmed with the work of maintaining the School's headquarters (along with all the new publishing going on). Then we realize how much we actually get accomplished and can that see we are making "progress" on several levels. We are also very grateful for the support and help (objective and otherwise) we receive from other SNO students as well as local friends and neighbors and know that we are part of a wider network and purpose. We hope we are fulfilling our part of that purpose, with a little help from our friends!

Jane Murray, June 2014