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# Preface

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GREAT BASIN NATURALIST MEMOIRS  
**Utah Lake Monograph**

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PREFACE

Richard A. Heckmann<sup>1</sup> and Lavere B. Merritt<sup>2</sup>

Utah Lake is the largest freshwater lake in the United States west of the Mississippi River. It covers approximately 39,000 ha (150 miles<sup>2</sup>) and contains about  $1.11 \times 10^9$  m<sup>3</sup> (900,000 acre-feet) of water. It is a remnant of Lake Bonneville, which occupied most of western Utah until about 7250 BC. The lake is fed by several streams, including the Provo and Spanish Fork Rivers, and is drained by the Jordan River into the Great Salt Lake.

The three groups of Indians, Paiutes, Utes, and Shoshones, that utilized the areas around Utah Lake were nomadic and used it primarily for fishing and hunting. They were largely displaced, commencing in 1849, by the Mormon pioneers, who tilled the land, spread the mountain streams for irrigation, introduced grazing animals, and effectively changed the natural balance of plants and animals. In an effort to increase the fish production, they also introduced several species of fish into the lake. Such actions profoundly affected Utah Lake and drastically modified its biota. Other uses of the lake included barge transportation, water transportation, boating, and recreation. At one time, 15 resorts existed around it. The aesthetic quality of the lake is an important element of Utah Valley.

In 1978 a group of biological and physical scientists met and discussed various questions that relate to Utah Lake—for example, what are the potentials for Utah Lake as a multiple-use resource? Is it possible through sound research and proper management to

insure that future manipulation and use of the lake will be beneficial? Can maximum use of this resource be achieved and not detract from its utility and beauty? As a resource facing multiple demands, should any one use be given top priority? The consensus of the group was that the best way to approach these questions would be to prepare a volume that reviews and summarizes data pertaining to the lake. This goal is realized in the present volume.

This volume is divided into three parts: (1) the history of Utah Lake, (2) physical and climatic factors of the area, and (3) biology of the lake. Each article is written by invitation to scientists and historians who have made significant contributions to our knowledge of Utah Lake.

A wealth of renewable natural resources occur in and around Utah Lake. Not only can these resources be utilized now, but with proper management they will be available indefinitely. It is our hope that this volume will serve as a base for future studies of this valuable ecosystem. We feel strongly that Utah Lake should be carefully guarded and enjoyed, since it is a valuable asset to Utah Valley.

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