Dr. Carl L. Hubbs, geological and biological recognition, naming of Lake Hubbs

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Dr. Carl L. Hubbs, Professor of Biology at the University of California's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, has been recognized for his pioneering geological and biological work in the Great Basin Region of the western United States in a most fitting manner: The United States Geological Survey of the Department of Interior has named a lake in that area after him.

Lake 52, in one of three long valleys in the region, is now officially known as Lake Hubbs.

Dr. Hubbs, a world-known authority on fishes whose researches have carried him into the field of geology, learned of the naming through receipt of a new Geological Survey map of the Great Basin Region.

The region is a great arid area of interior drainage in which water does not run to the sea but rather runs into basins and dries up. It is located between the Sierra Nevada range of California and the Wasatch Mountain range of Utah. It encompasses all of Nevada, most of western Utah, and extends into southeast Oregon and the extreme eastern portion of California, including the Mojave desert.

Lake Hubbs is located about midway between the mining towns of Eureka and Ely, Nevada, about 200 miles southwest of the Great Salt Lake. It is 30 miles long and 9 miles wide and it is completely dry!

"No water except when a summer cloudburst is heavy enough to fill the 3 mile dry lake located in the center of the larger lake," Dr. Hubbs said. "Most of the time the lake is dry and hard enough to speed a racing car across the flat surface."

Dr. Hubbs first explored the Great Basin Region when he was a student at Stanford University in 1915. He returned to the area for extensive field work four more times, the last being in 1942 while on the faculty of the University of Michigan.

How is it that a professor of biology should be interested in dried up lakes in the middle of Nevada?

As Dr. Hubbs puts it, "I came into the area as an ichthyologist and ended up in Pleistocene geology."

His interest was in the distribution of fishes among the scores of lakes, and their tributary streams, when the lakes were filled with water during The Ice Age, which ended abruptly about 10,000 years ago. He has found evidence of distinct types of fish in many of the lakes which were cut off from the other lakes in the area, and evidence of the same kind in lake basins that are now totally separate but were connected by lakes or streams during The Ice Age.

Since the problem required knowledge of how the lakes were connected at one time, quite a bit of time was spent studying the geological aspects of the region, including the ancient water lines and gravel bars left by the glacial lakes. Dr. Hubbs discovered several of the lakes and mapped most of them, naming some for geologists who had worked on the same problem. Much of the area had never been properly mapped and about the only

existing maps in some areas dated from the 1880's, when the surveyors must have had one eye out for Indians and made some pretty bad mistakes in the process, he said.

While at the University of Michigan, Dr. Hubbs, together with his son-in-law Dr. Robert R. Miller, wrote a summary of the work they had done in the desert region. The work was published in 1948 in the Bulletin of the University of Utah and included a map drawn by Dr. Hubbs which was by far the most detailed accounting of the area to that time.

A tribute to the work done by Dr. Hubbs 20 years ago is the fact that the government geologists relied heavily on his map as a basis for the new map. The accuracy of the early map is born out by the work published by the government.

According to Dr. Hubbs, the government geologists are following through with the same work but in more detail.

"They have much improved equipment and are able to fly over the area for their research, he said.

The marginal notes of the Geological Survey map read: "More than a century ago it was recognized that many of the valleys in the Great Basin states of Utah and Nevada and nearby areas in Oregon and California, were completely enclosed and lacked outlets to the sea.

"Throughout many of these valleys the early investigators recognized land forms as having been developed in a lake environment.

"The first serious attempt to treat the Great Basin valleys as such units was made by (Drs.) Hubbs and Miller (1948). Their map was based in large part on their own field investigations."