After three years of socio-political themes, Black Rock City 2009 will take a scientific turn with Evolution: The Tangled Bank.

Larry Harvey, the Burning Man founder, said, “The theme prompts three related questions: What are we as human beings, where have we come from, and how may we adapt to meet an ever-changing world?”

The Tangled Bank subtitle refers to Charles Darwin’s “Origin of Species” and is reflected in the design of the Man. Harvey and Rod Garrett have designed the Man to rise above a tangled bank of irregular wooden triangles. The design is reminiscent of “the Belgian Waffle,” formally Uchronia, of 2006 vintage and serves as “a chaotic truss,” according to Harvey.

An airy, revealing open plaza under the Man will feature “Strange Ur-creatures crawling out from a pond representing the Gene Pool.”

Is it our evolution by nature or by nurture that Harvey wants us to express? At this point in human development, Harvey claims “we have encountered a new phase of evolution – a conscious breed of culture-bearing animals.”

The theme seems to correlate with Harvey’s plan — discussed in the Saturday issue of the Black Rock Beacon — to create some kind of permanent structure alongside the annual Black Rock City event and the regional burns. Harvey claimed Black Rock City is a kind of Petrie dish, and Burning Man is an experiment in generating culture while our community is a fitting social vessel to sustain culture.

A statement describing the theme in more detail is available on the Burning Man website at www.burningman.com.

Drug Drag

Uncle Sam wants you — to stay away from drugs. Data from the federal Bureau of Land Management shows that through Saturday morning, BLM rangers made the war on drugs their priority.

From Friday morning to Saturday morning, BLM rangers made three arrests for drug trafficking. That brought the total arrests so far this year to six, of which five were for trafficking. There were also 10 citations for possession of drugs and nine for possession of drug-related paraphernalia. For the week, there were 46 citations for possession and 39 for paraphernalia, out of a total of 129 citations.

The federal rangers have also been helpful to Burners. They recorded 135 cases of assisting citizens, more than the total citations and also more than the 128 warnings given for various forms of miscreancy.

Black Rock City Population: 49,599 as of 8:00 A.M. Saturday.
Feeding Those Left Behind

BY CALEB “SHOOTER” SCHABER

For the dust serials and citizens of Black Rock City adventure home, the BBC Department of Public Works technologically begins the process of removing the footprint of about 50,000 people on the Black Rock Desert.

Workers toil well into October restoring the Playa to its original condition, and the ensuing event will be permitted by the Federal Bureau of Land Management for another year by leaving no trace of Black Rock City.

For those who remain behind, donations of food and other items are extremely helpful. However, waste and open containers are not accepted.

Referred to as Exodus donations, the items collected as citizens leave Black Rock City provide crucial sustenance for the DPW and Nevada Project crews — as long as it is the right kind of gift.

“We got unexpected soufflés,” said Ranger Jinx, the Black Rock Saloon keeper, who keeps a journal of the year-round residents.

So long, and thanks for all the pork. We’ve really enjoyed bringing you the fourth year of the Black Rock Beacon, with our signature mix of news, views and pork-related trivia for the Burning Man community. Please visit us on the web at www.blackrockbeacon.org.

Babylon on the Playa

BY TECHNOMAD

A 30-story raked steel framework, unlike any Black Rock City has ever seen, Babylon took a lot of egressing: four days of work on the Playa, sometimes in adverse weather, plus a crew of four skilled ironworkers and 15 volunteers, a “70-ton, 140-foot boom crane and a man lift. The project began last year when now six-time Burner and construction contractor “Lucky” invited his friend and fellow architect Bob Simmons to Burning Man. Inspired partly by the Burning Man ethos, as they talk it, “building something for Black Rock City led to using a new and modular way of building that Simmons invented and patented.”

Lucky said he was drawn to the “American Dream” theme because it gave him a way to honor his father, an immigrant from Greece who came to the United States with $200 and found success.

Over the year, San Francisco-area-based Lucky and Simmons refined their ideas with help from San Francisco 7-year-old son Max, who modeled the project with Google Sketch Up. “No paper drawings,” he said. “We modeled the entire project with our computer.”

For construction geeks, Babylon reveals the modular construction and novel steel “knuckles.” The tallest platform in Black Rock City treats its visitors to a commanding view and reveals how dust carries from the entrance road and speeding vehicles. Unlike the narrow ones in the Man, its wide stairs accommodate many people.

Like the independently funded Playa surprise Uchronia in 2006, the “Belgian Waffle,” Babylon received no Burning Man art grant. Observers may note Babylon missing from some Artery guides. Though detractors fault Babylon for its un playa-esque precision and commercial potential, Larry Harvey said he believes it bridges the worlds of Playa and commercial art.

Perpetrators of The Black Rock Beacon...


Great Darners is a town in the Uttlesford district of Essex, England. Originally the site of a Roman settlement on Stanway Street, the town thrived during the middle ages. Many buildings survive from this period, including a 16th-century town hall.

The town is famous for its biennial ritual of the Flitch Trials, in which unstable couples must convince a jury of local bachelors and six local maidens that they have not indeed themselves avowed for a year and a day. If successful the couple are paraded through the High Street and receive a Flitch of bacon.

This is a scene of years. On July 12, four couples in the world were sufficiently faithful and happy with each other to claim this prize. Those were from Britain, but the fourth was from Tennessee and are heroes, though press reports indicate they were not allowed to take their bacon back to Nashville because of import restrictions.

It also appears that a local couple was unable to convince the jury of their joint donation and won a consolation prize of Canadian bacon.

More information at www.courthouselife trials.co.uk.

Some of this information was provided by Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.