

Butterflies of the Mono Basin & Sierra Nevada



West Coast Lady, *Vanessa annabella*

Kristie Nelson

July 15–16, 2017 • Kristie Nelson

\$155 per person / \$140 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 15 participants

Join local naturalist Kristie Nelson for an exploration of butterflies of the Mono Basin and Sierra Nevada high country. With a range of habitats and plant species that butterflies depend on, this region is an excellent place to get acquainted with these bright splashes of living color. In fact, the Tioga Pass region is known as one of the most productive and species diverse regions for butterflies in the United States—one can often tally 30 or more species of butterfly on a Sierra hike.

The butterfly diversity found here reflects their relationships with the high diversity of plant species on which they depend. Thus, learning about butterflies naturally encompasses a bit of botany and flower identification, and noticing them enriches your outdoor experience. Throughout this seminar, we will also be keeping an eye out for other creatures including, but not limited to, dragonflies, damselflies, and birds.

Our leisurely walks will mostly be in high elevation areas—participants should be able to handle walking/hiking at high elevations up to 9,000 feet or more. We will learn the basics of “butterflying”—the insect lover’s counterpart to birding. This will include simply noticing and keying into butterflies, identifying host plants, habitat preferences, and understanding the life cycle of butterflies. Designed for everyone from the hardcore butterflyer or birder, to the leisurely lover of the outdoors.

Your leader for this seminar, Kristie Nelson, is a year-round resident of the Mono Basin. She has had a passionate love for birds and the outdoors since she was a tiny child. As a lifelong serious birder, discovering the world of butterflies of the local area has been life-changing for her. It’s really fun!

ITINERARY

Saturday, July 15 at 9:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee’s Information Center & Bookstore. After introductions we’ll view a slideshow presentation that will familiarize us with the local area, habitat types, and some of the stunning butterflies commonly found in the local area. We’ll go over the characteristics of a few butterfly families, with an emphasis on what to look for and how to identify them in the field. One of the greatest things about butterflies is that they are late risers; no need to be up at the crack of dawn to catch these colorful critters. They like warm, sunny places, just like us! Afterwards, we’ll carpool to several locations in the Mono Basin to enjoy a day of butterfly-watching.

Sunday, July 16 at 9:00am: Meet out front of the Mono Lake Committee. We’ll spend this day in the Tioga Pass region. We should find several species of coppers as well as some species endemic to the Sierra Nevada high country. Again, we’ll spend the day exploring the land and its life at a leisurely pace, but at high elevation. The day will end around 3:00pm.

For those interested, in the later afternoon, we will make an optional, targeted outing to see the Heather Blue, *Plebejus cassiope*. This tiny butterfly gem is a recently-described species (1998) known only from a handful of sub-alpine, rocky slopes where it’s host plant, White Mountain Heather, grows. *This a difficult hike that involves crossing a boulder-covered slope with no trail.*

*Note on the itinerary—individual sites may change due to seasonal variation in plant blooming and weather. No worries though, we’ll follow the butterflies.

Altitude and Dehydration Cautions: Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Experts recommend that you begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is rather fierce at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly, using sunscreen, sunglasses, hat and don’t forget a bandanna to protect the back of your neck.

MEALS

Please bring daily lunch and snacks. Also, be sure to carry (and DRINK!) plenty of water.

TO BRING

- binoculars (preferably with close focusing capabilities)
- a butterfly field guide, such as Ken Kaufman's *Butterflies of North America*, or Jeffrey Glassberg's *Butterflies through Binoculars: The West*
- notebook and pen or pencil
- appropriate clothing—sturdy shoes, wide-brimmed hat, and rain gear
- sun protection—sunglasses, sunscreen, etc.
- hiking poles (optional)
- other field guides, if desired
- a nice camera, of you have one. They are handy for identifying quick-moving butterflies!
- packed lunch, water and snacks
- do NOT bring nets—we will NOT be netting any butterflies

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Blackwell, Laird R. *Wildflowers of the Eastern Sierra & Adjoining Mojave Desert & Great Basin*. Lone Pine Publishing, 2002.
 - Glassberg, Jeffrey. 2001. *Butterflies through Binoculars: the west*. Oxford University Press.
- OR
- Kaufman, K. and J. Brock. 2003. *Field Guide to Butterflies of North America*. Houghton Mifflin.



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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