Mono Basin Winter Wanders

Nora Livingston
February 1 • February 15 • March 7 • March 21
9:00am–12:00pm

$90 per person / $80 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 9 participants

Winter in the Mono Basin is silent, mysterious, and majestic. A rabbit track in the snow leads under a shrub, a nutcracker digs up a hidden cache, or a pine branch bends under the weight of snow and showers the observers below. Winter invites us to experience the forgotten season and wander in a mountain meadow or along a frozen creek, curious and in awe. In this half day field seminar we will investigate the wonders of winter and how plants and animals survive in the cold and often snow-covered landscape. We will either hike or snowshoe at least two miles, depending on the amount of recent snowfall.

Nora Livingston is the Mono Lake Committee’s Lead Naturalist Guide. She has spent over ten years learning about the unique natural history of the Mono Basin and is an expert on Mono Basin birding locations. Before moving to Lee Vining permanently, she bounced around California for eight years as a field biologist, studying birds on the Channel Islands, the Farallon Islands, and in the Eastern Sierra.
ITINERARY (subject to change based on weather and road conditions)

9:00am on the day of the seminar: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining. After brief introductions, we will carpool to our destination. Possible locations include South Tufa, the west shore of Mono Lake, Panum Crater, Lee Vining Canyon, Lundy Canyon, and a few lesser-known locations. The itinerary may vary with snowfall, weather conditions, wildlife sightings, or the instructor’s whims. The class will end around 12:00pm.

WEATHER & ROAD CONDITIONS
Weather conditions can be quite variable—relatively warm and sunny days are possible, but prepare for cold, wintry weather. Bring layered clothing in case of pleasant midday sunshine.

Highway 120 (Tioga Pass) will be closed for the winter at this time (as will be Highway 108, Sonora Pass), so plan on seeking alternate routes if you are coming from the Central Valley, western Sierra, or Bay Area. Highway 395 rarely closes except during a severe winter storm. If you don’t have 4WD with snow tires, you need to carry chains in case of winter weather. There is a possibility of significant travel on ice- or snow-covered roads so please be prepared.

Thirty-year February and March climate data for Lee Vining, along with road and weather information can be found at monolake.org. There will be no refunds or credit of tuition for weather-related reasons.

ALTITUDE & 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 cold and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen and sunglasses.

TO BRING
___ field guide (optional)
___ notebook and pen/pencil (optional)
___ camera (optional)
___ sturdy footwear suitable for snowy conditions
___ sun protection: hat, sunglasses, sunscreen
___ day pack including plenty of drinking water, snacks
___ warm layers: jacket, warm hat, gloves/mittens, scarf