

Butterflies of the Mono Basin & Sierra Nevada



West Coast Lady, *Vanessa annabella*

Kristie Nelson

July 13–14, 2019 • Kristie Nelson

\$172 per person / \$157 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

Join local naturalist Kristie Nelson for an exploration of butterflies of the Mono Basin and adjacent Sierra Nevada. 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.

Butterfly diversity in any location reflects their relationships with the plant species on which they depend. Thus, learning about butterflies naturally encompasses a bit of botany and flower identification, and noticing all of this enriches your outdoor experience. Throughout this seminar, we will also be keeping an eye out for other creatures including, but not limited to, bees and other pollinators, dragonflies, beetles, and birds.

Our leisurely walks will mostly be in high elevation areas if they are snow-free—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 noticing and keying into butterflies, identifying host plants, habitat preferences, and understanding the life cycle of butterflies. This seminar is designed for everyone from the serious naturalist 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 13 at 9:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore (51365 Highway 395 in Lee Vining). After introductions we’ll view a slide show 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 locations in the Mono Basin to enjoy a day of butterfly-watching.

Sunday, July 14 at 9:00am: Meet out front of the Mono Lake Committee. We’ll spend this day in the high country—likely the Tioga Pass region. We should find a few 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, likely at high elevation. The day will end around 3:00pm.

*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 bring 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, if 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

P.O. Box 29 • Lee Vining, CA 93541 • (760) 647-6595 • monolake.org/seminars