

Introduction to

High Country Plants & Habitats



Ann Howald • August 3–5, 2012

\$150 per person / \$135 for Committee members
enrollment limited to 15 participants

During this field seminar on the plants and habitats of the Mono Basin high country we will visit a variety of high country habitats: sub-alpine meadows and forests, shores of sub-alpine lakes, streams that cascade toward Mono Lake, and natural rock gardens. We'll learn to recognize the common trees, shrubs, wildflowers and ferns that are characteristic of each habitat. We'll see some of the resident birds, insects and other wildlife, and discuss many of the ways that plants, insects, and animals rely on each other for food, seed distribution, nesting sites and other necessities.

Wildflowers will be at their prime during our visit and we expect to see scarlet paintbrushes, purple monkshood, red columbines, blue lupines and larkspurs, pink penstemons and primroses, and an assortment of yellow "daisies," just to name a few. We'll learn to recognize plant communities by their dominant species, and the soil and terrain they commonly occupy. We will also explore plants' connections to their environment—how special adaptations permit them to survive the cold, wind, snow, and drought of high altitudes, how they reproduce, and the essential relationships between plants and their insect, bird, and mammal neighbors.

Instructor Ann Howald was trained as a plant ecologist. She is a consulting botanist who focuses on rare plant surveys and conservation issues. Ann is also an active volunteer for the California Native Plant Society and California State Parks. She lives in Sonoma, and spends some of each summer studying plants in the Eastern Sierra.

ITINERARY

Friday, August 3: Meet at 6:45pm at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining. We'll introduce ourselves, distribute course materials, discuss a few basics of plant identification and plant names, and then enjoy a slideshow preview of the habitats and some of the wildflowers that we expect to see on Saturday and Sunday. We'll also go over the details of where and when to meeting on Saturday and Sunday, which will be determined by where the flowers are at their best during our class. Sample locations from past workshops include the Hall Natural Area, the Warren Fork of Lee Vining Creek, the Tioga Lake area, the Twenty Lakes Basin, and the Nunatak Trail area.

Saturday, August 4: Meet at 8:00am at a location we will discuss on Friday night. Detailed directions will be provided Friday night. Bring a packed lunch, plenty of water, and other supplies as described below.

Plan to hike 3–4 miles at a leisurely pace. Our day will end around 5:00pm. During past classes, many of us have had dinner together at a local restaurant on Saturday night, which is optional.

Sunday, August 5: Meet at 8:00am, location and directions to be provided Friday night. Bring a field lunch, water, and other supplies. We will visit one or two different locations, hiking about 2–3 miles total. We usually end the day around 3:00pm so that folks have time to drive home.

High Altitude Cautions: Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at high altitudes. Begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is fierce at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly, using sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, and a bandanna to protect the back of your neck. If you have a history of heart or respiratory related problems, please consult with a doctor before joining this field seminar. Our walks will be at a leisurely pace, over level to moderately steep terrain, and 2–3 miles per day. We will spend most of our time at 9,000–10,000 feet in elevation; at least 24 hours of prior acclimation in Lee Vining is advised.

MEALS

Bring a packable picnic lunch and snacks for both days. On Saturday we'll definitely have lunch along the trail, and it's likely we'll do the same on Sunday.

TO BRING

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| <input type="checkbox"/> lunch, both days | <input type="checkbox"/> field guide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> plenty of water | <input type="checkbox"/> sunscreen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> notebook or clipboard & paper | <input type="checkbox"/> mosquito repellent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hat, bandanna | <input type="checkbox"/> pens & pencils |
| <input type="checkbox"/> camera and binoculars (optional) | <input type="checkbox"/> sunglasses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10X hand lens | <input type="checkbox"/> light, portable field chair (optional) |

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Laws, John Muir. *The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada*. California Academy of Sciences, 2007.

This beautifully illustrated guide has it all: trees, shrubs, wildflowers, ferns, fungi, lichens, fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, insects, weather, and constellations. Includes many of the plants, birds and butterflies we will see, with lots of ecology tidbits and “fun facts.”

Wiese, Karen. *Sierra Nevada Wildflowers*. Falcon Guide, 2000.

Good photos arranged by flower color. Includes many of the plants we will see on our walks.

Blackwell, Laird R. *Wildflowers of the Eastern Sierra & Adjoining Mojave Desert & Great Basin*. Lone Pine Publishing, 2002.

Some like this book for its broad habitat coverage and information on how plants get their names, however, photos are of variable quality and the inclusion of many non-native “weeds” is puzzling.

Smith, Genny. *Sierra East*. UC Press, 2000.

A well-illustrated, thorough introduction to the geology, weather and climate, plants, insects, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals of the Eastern Sierra. Now available in paperback.

Weeden, Norman F. *A Sierra Nevada Flora*. Wilderness Press, 1996.

No photos but useful for those who have keying experience. Includes almost all plants we will see in the high country. Recently reprinted, so date may differ. Nomenclature is out-of-date.

Taylor, Dean Wm. *Flora of the Yosemite Sierra*, LuLu Press, 2010.

For the serious botanist. Thorough coverage of the Mono Basin, as well as the Yosemite Sierra. No photos or drawings, just keys and short descriptions. Paperback. Available online only, through LuLu Press.



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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