

Communing With(in) Nature



Sagebrush stepping

Bree Salazar

August 29–31, 2025 • Bree Salazar

Sliding scale \$40–\$80

enrollment limited*

Optional, shared camping will be available

***This seminar is specifically designed to create a space for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) participants and field instructors to connect with the Eastern Sierra.**

The late Thich Nhat Hanh writes “The Earth is a beautiful planet; it has a multitude of life forms, vegetation, sounds, and colors. In the sky we can see the light of Venus and faraway stars. Looking at ourselves we see that we, too, are beautiful.” It is important to remember to connect with the Earth not as a separate entity, but as an extension of us, and vice versa. In this, we can cultivate healing and justice for our communities and for the land.

This naturalist-led field seminar will visit the varying ecosystems of Kootzagwae (the Mono Basin) and Payahuunadü (Owens Valley) where we will have the opportunity to learn about local natural history, regional environmental/Indigenous-led movements, and ways to feel more connected to and grounded on the land.

Some activities may include hiking, journaling, forest bathing, meditation, making art, and discussions, to name a few. Whether it’ll be your first time or your hundredth in the area, by the end of this seminar we will feel more confident and empowered to step beyond just recreation and into responsibility, while honoring each other’s identities.

Bree Salazar is an outdoor guide who splits her time between both ends of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, working with leaders & organizations aimed at educating communities about cultural and ecological landscapes. She's spent the better part of the past decade living and learning in this most beautiful mountain range and remarkable basin.

The Mono Lake Committee and this seminar series operates on the ancestral homelands of the Kutzadika'a people, who continue to have an inherent and indivisible connection to Mono Lake and Kootzagwae (the Mono Basin). To support their federal recognition efforts, please refer to [this link](#).

ITINERARY

Friday, August 29 at 4:00pm: Meet at a Lee Vining location designated and communicated by the instructor. After introductions, an ice breaker, and short community building activity, we will go over the expectations of the seminar. Afterwards, participants may choose to stay and share dinner together.

Saturday, August 30 at 8:00am: Meet at a Lee Vining location designated and communicated by the instructor, then we will carpool/caravan to the next spot where we will spend the day connecting with habitats on the edge of the Sierra from low elevation (sagebrush steppe) to high elevation (Tioga Pass region). This day will focus on grounding practices as we contemplate some ecological patterns at play, as well as how we can feel more in tune with them. The day will end mid-afternoon.

Sunday, August 31 at 8:00am: Meet at a Lee Vining location designated and communicated by the instructor, then we will carpool/caravan to the next spot where we will spend the day connecting with habitats on the edge of the Sierra from low elevation (sagebrush steppe) to high elevation (Tioga Pass region). This day will focus on diving deeper into mentioned environmental and Indigenous-led movements. The field trip will end midday, after which participants can opt to continue sharing space together by water.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: ADAPTIVE

This seminar's activity level: *adaptive*. This seminar's activity level and terrain will be dependent on the experience and comfort level of participants and the instructor will adapt the route and/or locations based on the group's need. There will likely be periods of sitting and reflecting, movement along trails, and using binoculars, which requires lifting arms up and down. We will be visiting high elevation areas as well as dry, arid areas. Please reach out to fieldseminars@monolake.org if you have questions or to share accessibility needs.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Temperatures in summer will be hot during the day and drop to chilly at night, with possible windy conditions and afternoon thunderstorms. Average temperatures in August in Lee Vining are 83°F (max) and 52°F (min).

This seminar will take place at elevations ranging from about 6,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level. It is a good idea to acclimate at the elevation of Lee Vining for at least 24 hours prior to the start of

the seminar. Those with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consider consulting a doctor before attending. Anyone recommended to remain in lower elevations should not enroll.

Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is intense at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat.

A practice of ongoing communication and respect of needs will be observed throughout this seminar.

TO BRING

- notebook and pen/pencil
- binoculars (optional)
- hiking poles (optional)
- appropriate field clothing: hat, sunglasses, layers, rain gear, shoes
- day pack including *plenty of water*, sunscreen, insect repellent, etc.
- packed lunch and snacks (for multiple days)
- a personal item to share with group (more details later)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES (non-exhaustive)

Lodging and Directions:

For information about getting to Lee Vining and lodging options, contact the Mono Lake Committee by phone at (760) 647-6595, Monday–Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm, or email fieldseminars@monolake.org.

Online:

Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe's [website](#)

Owens Valley Indian Water Commission's storymap:

[Reimagining Payahuunadü: An Indigenous Water and Land History of the Eastern Sierra](#),

Books:

Love Letter to the Earth by Thich Nhat Hanh

Voices of the People by The Traditionally Associated Tribes of Yosemite National Park

Film:

[The Aqueduct Between Us](#)



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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