

# Mono Basin Landscape & Dark Sky Night Photography



**August 15–17, 2025 • Jeff Sullivan & Lori Hibbett**

\$380 per person / \$360 for Mono Lake Committee members  
enrollment limited to 10 participants

Summer is a great season for afternoon cumulus cloud formations for sunset color in the Eastern Sierra, but daytime convection ends, delivering clear dark skies for Milky Way night photography. Accomplished local professionals Jeff Sullivan and Lori Hibbett of Great Basin School of Photography will teach you some of their favorite techniques and show you some of their favorite spots for landscape and night photography in the Mono Basin.

This seminar will cover:

- How to anticipate and plan for great sunrise and sunset shots.
- How to use composition and light for greater impact.
- How to manage focus, noise, and sky movement in night shots.
- How to align the moon with a landscape landmark.
- How to capture a real sunset on a clear, blue-sky day.
- Software tools and settings you will need in order to maximize your in-camera results.
- Why post-processing is not a substitute for in-camera results.
- Which practices common in film photography are counterproductive for digital photography.

- When to use a circular polarizing filter.
- How to eliminate DSLR sensor dust spots with little or no post-processing.
- Best practices for creating star trail images.
- When multiple exposures (exposure bracketing) can be useful, even for night photography.

Jeff Sullivan is a landscape photography and astrophotography workshop instructor, and author of the landscape photography guidebook *Photographing California Vol. 2–South*. His photography is licensed for use in magazines, books, websites, calendars, and his time-lapse videos have been featured in commercials and documentaries. Jeff’s astrophotography won the “People and Space” special prize in the 2011 Astronomy Photographer of the Year contest, conducted by the Royal Observatory, Greenwich in London, home of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and the Prime Meridian (zero degrees longitude). His website is rated as one of the Top 30 Astrophotography Blogs.

Lori Hibbett has been named one of the top 100 female photographers and has been published in magazines, websites, and books. Her night photography time-lapse videos were highlighted in the passage of Nevada’s SB52 Night Skies Bill. Beyond teaching photography, she enjoys teaching others about the night sky, plants, animals, and wilderness survival. A photographer all of her life, she and Jeff have been teaching landscape and night photography workshops together since 2012.

## **ITINERARY\***

**Friday, August 15 at 4:30pm:** Meet at the Lee Vining Community Center (296 Mattly Avenue) in Lee Vining. We’ll head to dinner as a group at a local restaurant before heading out to shoot golden hour, sunset, and the Milky Way and star trails. Bring very warm clothing for the night photography, potentially at altitude in the High Sierra. The session will conclude around 11:15pm.

**Saturday, August 16:** With our late nights, sunrise will be optional and self-directed. In the morning, please back up your photos from the night before from memory cards to your laptop, and review your photos before the afternoon post-processing session.

**11:30am:** Bring lunch to a post-processing discussion and demonstration at the Lee Vining Community Center. We will continue with a mixture of classroom and field work. We’ll break for dinner at around 5:00pm, before heading out to shoot golden hour, sunset, then Milky Way, and star trails, again ending around 11:15pm.

**Sunday, August 17 at 9:00am:** Meet post-breakfast at the Lee Vining Community Center. We will continue with a mixture of fieldwork and classroom session. We’ll wrap up around 1:00pm so you can commute back home, or head to your choice of location for sunset (I’ll be happy to provide location suggestions based on current sunset forecast and your direction of travel home). If you want to reinforce your new skills, stay out for a bonus night of Milky Way photography!

**\*PLEASE NOTE:** *Successful landscape photography requires anticipation of, and reaction to, changing local weather conditions, so the itinerary is subject to change during the workshop. Since we’re close to the 11-year solar maximum, we’ll keep our eye out for another Aurora Borealis event like we enjoyed in Mono County on August 11–12, 2024!*

## **ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE**

This seminar's activity level: *moderate*. We will be walking up to two miles a day at a leisurely pace, some of which will be over uneven terrain, off trail, and may include stepping up and over obstacles. Finding stable footing can be difficult at night. Participants will need to carry their camera equipment from the cars to field locations and back. We will be standing for several hours at a time while out in the field; some of that time may be in the sun without much shade.

## **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).

Most of the weekend will find us at close to 6,400 feet above sea level, but we could visit areas as high as nearly 10,000 feet above sea level. Those with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consult their doctors before attending. Anyone restricted to 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.

## **MEALS**

We will decide by consensus when to break for meals and where to go to eat; participants are encouraged to take meals together and non-photographer partners are welcome to join us. Meals are not included in the tuition. Please be sure to bring plenty of snacks to eat in the field in case stunning conditions delay a meal.

## **FEES**

- **South Tufa fee:** the \$3-per-person entrance fee to South Tufa is good for a week; 80% of it stays at Mono Lake for improvements to interpretive/educational activities. A National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, annual or senior, is accepted here when displayed on your dashboard.
- **Old Marina fee:** the \$3-per-car-per-day fee enables Mono Lake's state park to stay open. An annual California State Park day use pass is accepted here.

## **TO BRING**

- digital SLR or mirrorless camera capable of shooting up to ISO 6400 (no point-and-shoot digital cameras please)
- lenses, especially wide angle and ultra-wide, f/2.8 or faster advised for the night photography. Mid-range and telephoto zoom lenses may be useful for daylight landscapes.
- tripod
- interval timer (intervalometer), built-in or external, for star trail and meteor shower shooting
- memory cards and spares, more than you might expect!

- fully charged batteries, extra batteries and battery charger
- owner's manual for your camera
- laptop with card reader and image editing software: Lightroom CC Classic (desktop) will be used for demonstrations (free trial can be downloaded before the seminar)
- headlamp to navigate terrain in the dark (white please, not red)
- warm clothing—dress in layers, be prepared for variable weather
- sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, insect repellent
- snacks for evenings in the field
- plenty of water: hydration is key to minimizing the effects of altitude

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Although we will be going over some basic features and adjustments of your camera, you should be familiar with the following basic concepts, which we will review the first class meeting:

- how to shoot in Manual Mode and adjust your aperture (f/stop) and shutter speed
- how to change your ISO settings (you will not be using auto-ISO)
- the relationship between f/stops, shutter-speeds and ISO settings
- how to get the same exposure with different combinations of f/stops, shutter-speeds and ISO settings
- how to turn Long Exposure Noise Reduction off and on
- how to turn on automatic exposure bracketing (AEB) off and on
- how to use your interval timer (internal or external) if you'd like to try star trails

If you have any questions about the specifics of the workshop, please contact Jeff and Lori by email at [info@jeffsullivanphotography.com](mailto:info@jeffsullivanphotography.com). For any other questions, please contact the Mono Lake Committee at [fieldseminars@monolake.org](mailto:fieldseminars@monolake.org).



### **Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars**

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