

Falling for the Migration: Bridgeport, Crowley, Mono



American Avocets in flight, photo by Bob Steele

August 21–23, 2026 • Dave Shuford

\$310 per person / \$295 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

Welcome to our field seminar on the fall migration of birds in the Bridgeport Valley and the adjacent Sierra, the Mono Basin, Crowley Lake, Long Valley, and the outskirts of Mammoth Lakes. Beginners as well as experts will enjoy this introduction to the area's birdlife found in a wide variety of habitats, from the shimmering shores of Mono Lake to lofty Sierra peaks. We will identify about 100 species by plumage and calls and probe the secrets of their natural history. This seminar will include informal discussions on migration strategies, behavior, and ecology that complement our field observations.

Dave Shuford is an expert birder, avid naturalist and teacher, and a retired professional ornithologist. Dave's bird research in the region includes a long-term study on the ecology of Mono Lake's California Gull colony, an atlas of breeding birds in the Glass Mountain area, and surveys of Snowy Plovers at Mono and Owens lakes. More broadly his work focused on the distribution, abundance, and habitat needs of shorebirds and waterbirds in California and the West, particularly in areas where competition for water threatens Pacific Flyway bird populations (e.g., Klamath Basin, Central Valley, Salton Sea).

The first stop Friday morning is at Bridgeport Reservoir, a mecca for migrant and late-breeding waterbirds. For those who prefer to meet the seminar at this location (arriving Friday morning from points north), please email fieldseminars@monolake.org to obtain directions.

ITINERARY (may vary with bird activity, weather, or the instructor's whims)

Friday, August 21, 7:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore (51365 Highway 395) in Lee Vining. After brief introductions, we will travel to Bridgeport Reservoir where we can expect to see riparian landbirds and a wide variety of ducks, grebes, shorebirds, gulls, terns, and other waterbirds. Please note that for much of the day we will be out in the open in the sun. Around noon we will break for a picnic lunch at a fishing access spot along the shoreline. In the afternoon, we will bird meadows, riparian, sagebrush, pinyon pine woodland, and conifer forest. Besides the reservoir, sites visited may include East Walker River below the dam, Bodie Hills from Masonic Road, meadows and riparian areas behind town of Bridgeport, extensive meadows on Twin Lakes Road, riparian and conifer on Robinson and Buckeye creeks, and Virginia Lakes. The class usually breaks for the day at about 5:00pm.

Saturday, August 22, 7:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. We will then travel to Crowley Lake Reservoir where—from Layton Springs to the Owens River mouth—we can expect to see a wide variety of shorebirds, ducks, grebes (still nesting), gulls, and terns, plus sagebrush and open-country landbirds. Please note that we will be out in the open in the hot sun and away from bathrooms for the morning, so be prepared. Around noon we will break for lunch at Sherwin Creek and afterwards we will bird riparian, meadow, Jeffrey or lodgepole pine, and sagebrush habitats. Sites visited may include the meadow at the Valentine Lake trailhead, Laurel Pond, Inyo Craters, and the Earthquake Trail. The class usually breaks for the day at about 5:00pm.

Sunday, August 23, 7:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. We will explore a wide variety of habitats around Mono Lake and in nearby Sierra canyons. Sites visited may include Lee Vining Canyon, South Tufa, and Mono Mills, or other places in nearby Jeffrey pine forests. The class usually ends about 3:00pm on Sunday; participants may leave at varying times depending on travel plans.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE

This seminar's activity level: *moderate*. Though this seminar will involve easy hiking at elevations ranging from 6,400 to 9,600 feet above sea level, we will be standing for several hours at a time while out in the field; much of that time may be in the sun without much shade. 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 will include stepping up and over obstacles. This type of walking requires good balance, some agility, and stamina.

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 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

Please bring a bag/picnic lunch for all three days. Also, please bring snacks in case we run behind time for lunch because of good birding. Please bring plenty of drinking water.

TO BRING

- binoculars and/or spotting scope
- field guide(s)
- footwear you don't mind getting muddy or wet
- appropriate field clothing: hat, sunglasses, warm layers, rain gear
- day pack including plenty of water, sunscreen, insect repellent, etc.
- packed lunch and snacks
- plenty of drinking water



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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