

Wildlife Tracking in the Mono Basin



May 8–10, 2026 • Phil Johnston

\$310 per person/ \$295 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 15 participants

Wildlife tracking is the key to understanding the lives and behaviors of animals who are not so easily observed. From kangaroo rats to mountain lions, millipedes to roadrunners, all animals leave evidence of their activities on the landscape, and learning to identify and interpret this evidence allows observers to glean massive amounts of ecological knowledge. Science-based and practical, this workshop will be educational and exciting for naturalists of all ages and experience levels.

This workshop will feature an evening presentation, then two days in the field searching for and interpreting the tracks and signs of wildlife. We will learn to identify tracks and scats from all

sorts of wildlife from lizards to black bears, and how to interpret the gaits of animals to understand their behavior. We will also learn to identify wildlife beds, feeding sign, marking sign, nests, runs, burrows, skeletons and more, and dive deep into the behavior of these species and the unique roles they play in the beautiful Mono Basin.

Phil Johnston has been teaching tracking for over 15 years, and is certified as a Senior Tracker by CyberTracker Conservation North America. Phil is a wildlife biologist with the California Department of Fish & Wildlife where he leads mountain lion research in the eastern Sierra.

ITINERARY

Friday, May 8 at 7:00pm: Meet in the gallery at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining (51365 Highway 395). After introductions, Phil will give a roughly one-hour presentation on wildlife tracking including its history, its significant role in the evolution of our species, and modern applications for this ancient skillset.

Saturday, May 9 at 9:00 am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. From there we will travel to a nearby location in the Mono Basin, to be determined based on conditions at the time of the workshop. We will carpool and will drive between 5 and 30 minutes from Lee Vining, depending on weather and tracking conditions. We will end the day at 4:00 pm.

Sunday, May 10 at 9:00 am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. From there we will travel to a nearby location in the Mono Basin, to be determined based on conditions at the time of the workshop. We will carpool and will drive between 5 and 30 minutes from Lee Vining, depending on weather and tracking conditions. We will end the day at 4:00 pm.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE

This seminar's activity level: *moderate*. We will be walking up to two miles at a leisurely pace, much 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. We will be gaining altitude steadily throughout the day.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Temperatures in spring will be cool during the day and drop to chilly at night, with possible windy conditions and afternoon thunderstorms. Average temperatures in May in Lee Vining are 67°F (max) and 39°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 lunch already packed in the morning plus water and snacks to eat during both days.

TO BRING

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| <input type="checkbox"/> warm clothing/layers | <input type="checkbox"/> daypack |
| <input type="checkbox"/> long pants (due to brush) | <input type="checkbox"/> plenty of water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> raincoat, just in case | <input type="checkbox"/> boots or supportive shoes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses | |

RECOMMENDED READING

- *Mammal Track and Sign of North America*, 2nd Edition, by Mark Elbroch and Casey McFarland



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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