



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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BUTTERFLIES OF JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK: AN APPRECIATION

SEMINAR AND FIELD COURSE / FALL 2023

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This entry-level classroom course will focus on the biology and ecology of butterflies that call Joshua Tree National Park their home. Students will learn how to tell a butterfly from a moth, the life stages of a butterfly, the significance of larval versus nectar plants, seasonal changes in the local butterfly fauna, and how to distinguish among the six major butterfly families, including representative park species from each family. There is an optional field outing (additional fee) on a separate date (TBD by mid-August) in which students will visit a location within Joshua Tree National Park where a variety of butterflies can be observed. Emphasis will be on low-impact butterfly identification using techniques familiar to birders such as recognition of field marks, behavior, and cues related to habitat and season.

MEETING LOCATION

- **Classroom lecture:** [Joshua Tree National Park Association](https://www.joshuatree.org/joshua-tree-national-park-association), 55922 Twentynine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley, CA 92284
- **Field outing** (for those who have registered): TBD by Mid-August

DATE and TIME

- **Classroom lecture:** Friday, Sept. 15th, 10a to 11:30a
- **Field outing:** TBD by mid-August

Please arrive on time; we start classes promptly, and in the case of hikes or other classes on the go, we cannot wait for students who arrive late.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: MODERATE (field outing)

Indoor presentation does not involve physical activity. Separate field portion of class may involve up to 3 miles of walking on maintained trails or in desert washes. Rock scrambling is not anticipated. Elevation gains will be minimal, generally no more than ± 400 feet. There will be some exposure to bees around flowers, so the field portion of the class may not be appropriate to those with severe allergic reactions to bee stings. Please contact us if you have questions about your ability to participate.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

None, although participants in the optional field outing should also attend the classroom lecture, or have foundational knowledge of butterflies.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Admission to Joshua Tree National Park (please download or print your park pass ahead of time, or you will have to pay fees at the gate!)
- First aid and emergency supplies for the group
- Digital reading material for identification of butterflies found in JTNP
- Please note that the field outing is a separate add-on that participants may register for when signing up for the classroom session

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR: Joe Zarki

I'm a retired career employee of the National Park Service and served 18 years as Chief Interpretation at Joshua Tree. One of my proudest accomplishments while serving as the park's Chief of Interpretation was the establishment of the Desert Institute (yes, this Desert Institute!), which was initially operated by the National Park Service and later absorbed by Joshua Tree National Park Association (JTNP) as part of its educational programming. I've been active with butterfly field work since the mid-1980s and, together with my wife, have an NPS Research Permit for inventorying and monitoring butterflies at the park. I am co-author of the recently published book, "The Butterflies and Skippers of Joshua Tree National Park." Besides butterflies, I also coordinate Christmas Bird Counts for Joshua Tree National Park and Morongo Valley. I also currently serve on the Board of Directors for JTNP.

PROGRAM AGENDA

Classroom session: Sept 15th

The short classroom session will take place indoors with a Powerpoint program and discussion of the biology and ecology of Joshua Tree butterflies.

Field outing: TBD by mid-August

We'll meet at a location within the park where we will search for butterflies, emphasizing the importance of habitat and specific butterfly plants. Special attention will be given to fall specialties, possible rare migrants, and late season plants that are highly attractive to fall butterflies. Depending on monsoon rains and plant conditions, anywhere from 10-25 species of butterflies should be found, including members of all the butterfly families found within the park.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

The field outing is a separate add-on and you must register for this in order to attend.

For those attending the field outing: there is no cell service in the park! Print or download your park pass ahead of time, and please allow ample travel time to arrive at the meeting location—extra time if you are meeting on a weekend morning (see FAQ notes about late arrivals.) Please make sure you check the weather ahead of time and dress accordingly. **Participants must complete the [health questionnaire and liability waiver](#) at least one day ahead of the program start date.**

WHAT TO BRING (FIELD OUTING)

The essentials for all field courses

- Water, between 3 and 4 liters per person for a full day outing
- Food and snacks, easily packed and eaten in the field, for the duration of your course
- Close-toed sturdy athletic shoes or hiking boots; no sandals, not even hiking sandals!

- Sun protection: hat, sunglasses, sunscreen; light-colored long-sleeved shirts are recommended and very effective on hot days
- Warm layers for cooler mornings/evenings (it can be surprisingly cold!)
- Backpack to carry food, water, and any personal items you need for the day
- Notebook and pencil are always good to have

Recommended

- Close focusing binoculars (<6 feet) are a tremendous help
- Cameras are helpful for identification and data recording
- A butterfly field guide is not essential, but is recommended. Here are a few we suggest:
 - Kaufmann, *Butterflies of North America*,
 - Pratt, et. al., *Butterflies and Skippers of Joshua Tree National Park*
 - Paul Opler, *Western Butterflies*

FAQ

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I AM RUNNING LATE?

Please call our main line: 760-819-4714 and if no one answers, please call the Desert Institute coordinator, Benny Lopez: 949-241-9693.

For classes meeting in the park, please take into consideration the time it will take to go through the entrance gate—on weekends after 9am, you may wait up to 45 minutes! (15-20 minutes is typical.) For afternoon activities, you will also want to allot time to park, as parking lots tend to be congested between 10am and 4p in the busy season. **There is no cell service in the park**, so please plan accordingly!

WHAT IF I NEED TO CANCEL?

Desert Institute will provide a full refund if we are notified 14 days in advance. If we are notified less than 14 days in advance, we are unable to process refunds for any reason. (But we would like you to notify us if you are unable to attend.)

DOES DESERT INSTITUTE CANCEL ACTIVITIES FOR WEATHER OR LOW ENROLLMENT?

Desert Institute runs classes rain or shine, with the exception of astrophotography classes, which require mostly clear skies in order to be successful. If we do not meet our minimum of 4 registered participants for any given activity, we will cancel the activity with 48+ hours notice. We recommend that you purchase travel insurance, as we are unable to reimburse for expenses you incur due to a canceled class, such as airfare and hotel.

ARE THERE ANY THINGS I NEED TO DO TO PREPARE?

All participants must return the completed [health questionnaire and signed waiver](#) before the day of their activity. **Failure to do so will cancel your registration.** If your course enters Joshua Tree National Park, you must **download or print your park pass** ahead of the class, or you will pay the entrance fee at the gate, which is currently \$35 per vehicle.

CAN I BRING MY KIDS? MY SPOUSE? PETS?

Only registered participants may attend Desert Institute activities unless noted in the activity description. If this is a kid-friendly activity, please make sure your child(ren) meets the age requirements. As much as we love our pets, we don't allow them in the field with any of our activities.