



**DESERT INSTITUTE**  
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL  
PARK ASSOCIATION

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# DESERT INSECTS: WHO THEY ARE and WHY THEY MATTER

FIELD CLASS / FALL 2023

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Bugs...who needs 'em? We do! We know, it's not everyone's favorite topic, but these little creepy crawlers and flitty fliers are integral pieces in every ecosystem around the world. In this introductory entomology course, students will get to know the tiny and often invisible neighbors that make this desert the place it is and hopefully build a new-found appreciation for insects, large and small. In this classroom-based course we will discover a variety of common desert insects, learn about how they live, where they can be found, and what vital ecological roles they play. Students will get the chance to see how professional entomologists study insects by using microscopes, specimen collections, and a variety of collecting contraptions. Weather permitting, students will have the opportunity to go on short walks to observe some insects in situ.

## MEETING LOCATION

[Black Rock Nature Center](#), 9800 Black Rock Canyon Road, Yucca Valley, CA 92284

## DATE and TIME

Saturday, December 9th, 9a to 3p

*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: LEISURELY

This activity takes place indoors in a classroom environment. There will be opportunities for students to walk around the nature center (less than 0.5 miles total) to search for insects in their habitats, but students may opt to stay in the classroom during these walks.

## EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

This course is open to anyone ages 12 and up.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- First aid and emergency supplies for the group
- Microscope for group to share
- magnifying loupes
- Nets and collecting gear
- preserved and live specimens

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation

## GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR: Scott Heacox

Scott Heacox is a professional field biologist, desert ecologist, and Mojave Desert native. He works with a wide variety of plants and animals, but has a particular passion for the study of insects. His goal is to teach about the small, overlooked, and extremely misunderstood inhabitants of our deserts in order to reframe the way we see the world around us. Scott spends most of his time working in the Colorado and Mojave Deserts of California, but has also studied the biology of other areas of the American Southwest, Central America, and Southeast Asia.

## PROGRAM AGENDA

We'll start off with a general introduction to entomology and a presentation about insect roles in the natural world. We will engage in hands-on activities such as using a microscope, checking out collecting equipment, and looking at some preserved and live specimens. Classroom activities will be broken up by insect-hunting walks outdoors (weather permitting.) There will be a brief lunch break around noon. Participants provide their own lunch.

## SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

**All participants must complete the [health questionnaire and liability waiver](#) at least one day ahead of the program start date.**

## WHAT TO BRING

### 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 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

# 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.