



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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INSECTS & ARTHROPODS OF THE MORONGO BASIN

FIELD CLASS / FALL 2023

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Did you know that insects can survive in temperatures over 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade with little or no water? Explore the lives of the largest group of animals in the world through a study of insect anatomy, survival traits, habitats, and behaviors. Participants will learn to identify and distinguish insects from other arthropods and then practice their skills in the field. Field observations will include desert, dune, and riparian habitats, as well as a special night session with black lights at Black Rock in Joshua Tree National Park. Learn the amazing stories of insects like the yucca moth, the ant lion, and the worlds they inhabit. Please note that this class involves car caravanning to multiple locations; students are responsible for their own transportation between sites.

DATES, TIMES, and MEETING LOCATIONS

- Tuesday September 19th, 7p to 8:30p: online zoom session
- Saturday September 23rd, 8a to 8:30p: [Joshua Tree Visitor Center](#) parking lot, 6554 Park Blvd, Joshua Tree, CA 92252; evening portion of class meets at [Black Rock Nature Center](#), 9800 Black Rock Canyon Road, Yucca Valley, CA 92284
- Sunday September 24th, 8a to noon: [along 38th Avenue in Palm Desert](#)

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: EASY

Walking over mostly flat but possibly uneven terrain for no more than two miles each day, and standing for long periods of time. Rocky, sandy stretches are possible, with some gentle up and downhill sections. Please contact us if you have questions about accommodations or your ability to participate.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

None

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

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR: Kurt Leuschner, M.S., Wildlife Ecology

Kurt Leuschner is a Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert. Leuschner's specialties include ornithology, entomology, and desert ecology. He has led hundreds of field trips both locally and as far afield as Africa. He teaches natural history courses for the Desert Institute, UCR Extension, the Desert Studies Center at Zzyzx, the Living Desert, California State Parks, and many other conservation organizations.

PROGRAM AGENDA

DAY 1: Tuesday, Sept 19

This brief online zoom lecture will prepare students for the upcoming weekend field class. Students will learn general insect classification and groupings.

DAY 2: Saturday, Sept 23

We'll car caravan from Joshua Tree Visitor Center to Barker Dam and possibly Hidden Valley (time/weather permitting) to locate insects in their habitats. We'll have a lunch break around noon, and will return to the visitor center by 2pm. We'll reconvene at Black Rock Nature Center in Yucca Valley at 6p for an evening nature walk, film screening, and observation session using mercury vapor and UV lights. The class will end by 8:30p. Please plan to have dinner either before or after the evening session.

DAY 3: Sunday, Sept 24

We'll meet at 8:00am along 38th Ave in Palm Desert (off the I-10 Washington exit, about an hour drive from Yucca Valley) to check pit traps in the sand dune area where we catch and release specimens. Afterwards, we'll drive to the nearby Coachella Valley

Preserve to take a short nature hike through the native palm oasis in search of insects. We'll finish class by noon.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

There is no cell service in the park! Print or download your park pass ahead of time. **All participants must complete the [health questionnaire and liability waiver](#) at least one day ahead of the program.** This program involves car caravanning, and participants need to provide their own transportation. There are no facilities within the park, so make sure you have a full tank of gas or EV charge before arriving on Saturday.

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

Required equipment

- Flashlight/headlamp

Recommended

- Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America by Kenn Kaufman 2007.
- Hiking Poles
- Binoculars
- Camera
- 10x Loupe (magnifier)
- UV flashlight

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.