



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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BEGINNING BIRD BANDING

FIELD CLASS / FALL 2023

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This course is a basic introduction to banding birds, which is a valuable tool in ornithological research and monitoring. An evening class session will briefly discuss the history, purpose, goals, and methods of banding. Among the topics discussed will be the federal and state permits required of bird banders, the submittal of data to the Bird Banding Laboratory, capture methods, the handling of wild birds, banding birds, the collection of morphological data, and the sexing and aging of birds. The evening class session will be followed by two days of hands-on experience capturing, handling, and banding birds in the field.

MEETING LOCATIONS

- **Classroom lecture:** [Wildlands Conservancy Whitewater Preserve](#), 9160 Whitewater Canyon Rd, Whitewater, CA 92282
- **Banding sessions:** [Black Widow Ranch](#), Riverside, CA 92507

DATES and TIMES

- **Classroom lecture:** November 15th, 6p to 8p (Whitewater Preserve)
- **Banding Sessions:** November 18th and 19th, 7a to 1p both days (Black Widow Ranch)

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

There will be leisurely walking every 30 minutes around the ranch to check for bird captures in mist nets. The terrain is flat, and most walks will be no more than 100 yards or so. There will be up to 10 of these walks, so participants should be comfortable

walking up to a mile over the course of the day. Please contact us if you have questions about your ability to participate.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

None

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- First aid and emergency supplies for the group
- All banding equipment
- Digital educational materials/handouts
- All banding materials

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Meals
- Lodging
- Transportation

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR: Stephen Myers

Stephen J. Myers is a retired wildlife biologist, and has specialized in bird studies for over 40 years, mostly in southern California. He has been a federally permitted bird bander since 1990, and has participated in banding studies of species such as the Coastal California Gnatcatcher, Least Bell's Vireo, Nelson's Sparrow, and Red-winged Blackbird. In addition to bird surveys conducted as a professional biologist, he has led birding field trips for the National Audubon Society, Western Field Ornithologists, and local bird clubs since the early 1980s. He is interested in all aspects of nature study, including botany, herpetology, entomology, and mammalogy. He and his wife, Vesta, enjoy occasional international birding trips to tropical America, Australia, and south Asia.

PROGRAM AGENDA

Wednesday, November 15th, 6-8p

The classroom session will be conducted at the Wildland Conservancy's Whitewater Preserve. A two-part PowerPoint presentation will begin at 6:00 pm, and we'll take a brief break between each presentation. The evening will prepare students for the weekend's banding sessions and allow the instructor and students to become acquainted.

Saturday, November 18th, 7a-1p

The first day of banding will start at 7a with a brief orientation around a campfire, which will include guidelines for safe banding, location of restroom facilities, and other site-specific information. We will then spend the rest of the morning studying and handling birds.

Sunday, November 19th, 7a-1p

The second day of banding will begin at 7a with another brief orientation around a campfire, which will address questions students may have after the previous day's banding activities before we get into the hands-on work for the day.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

There is no cell service at Whitewater Preserve. Please make sure you check the weather ahead of time and dress accordingly. All participants must complete a [health and participant waiver](#) ahead of time.

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

- Clothing free of exposed buttons and zippers (which can get caught in mist nets)

Recommended

- Camera allowing close-up photographs (smartphones are usually adequate)

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 national 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)