



**DESERT INSTITUTE**  
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL  
PARK ASSOCIATION

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55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,  
Yucca Valley, 92284

## **ANTS: the UNSUNG HEROES of the DESERT**

**FIELD CLASS / SPRING 2024 / INSTRUCTOR: SCOTT HEACOX**

**SUNDAY, MAY 12TH, 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Most people can recognize a few species of ants, but there are actually dozens of bizarre species all around us, often hidden in plain sight. In this class, participants will embark on short hikes at multiple locations throughout Joshua Tree National Park. During these hikes, we will learn how to find and identify various desert ant species. We will discuss the biology of the ants we find, and emphasize how they are a critical component to desert ecosystems. This course will involve caravan driving from location-to-location, and participants are responsible for their own transportation; the class will end at Cottonwood Bajada, a different location from where it begins.

### **PROGRAM AGENDA**

We'll start out with a short presentation about ants, followed by a hike around Black Rock Nature Center to see some ant species at these higher elevations within the park. We will then move through the park to Pinto Basin to see some of the species living in hotter, drier parts of the park. After lunch, we will finish the day with a mission to locate leafcutter ants at Cottonwood Bajada.

### **MEETING LOCATION**

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

### **REQUIRED PREPARATION**

**Waiver:** All participants must complete the [participation waiver](#) at least 24 hours before a class begins. *Failure to do so may forfeit your right to participate.*

**Park Pass (\$30 per vehicle):** For classes inside Joshua Tree National Park, participants are now required to purchase a [park pass](#). You can purchase a park pass [online](#), or pay at a park entrance. If you have an existing pass, you may use that!

## ACTIVITY LEVEL

**Easy**. All levels are welcome. Please contact us if you have questions about your ability to participate.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- First aid and emergency supplies for the group
- Loupes
- Instructor will share field guides/photographic guides with group

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Admission to Joshua Tree National Park
- Meals, Lodging, or Transportation

## 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 (please leave no trace)
- 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

## GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR

**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.

## *SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY*

There is no cell service in the park! Please allow ample time to arrive at the meeting location; park entrances may be very busy on weekends (see FAQs).

Please make sure you check weather conditions and dress accordingly.



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## FAQ+<sub>-</sub>

### WHO DO I CONTACT IF I AM RUNNING LATE?

Desert Institute Manager Benny Erdahl: **949-241-9693**  
or Education Director Dr. Justin Lenzi: **760-819-4714**

For classes meeting inside the park, it can take up to 45 minutes to go through an entrance gate on weekends after 9am (though 15-20 minutes is typical.) Please 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***, please plan accordingly.

### WHAT IF I NEED TO CANCEL?

Desert Institute will provide a full refund if we are notified more than 14 days in advance. We are unable to process refunds for *any* cancellations less than 14 days in advance.

### DOES DESERT INSTITUTE CANCEL ACTIVITIES FOR WEATHER OR LOW ENROLLMENT?

If we do not meet our minimum of 6 registered participants for any given activity, we will likely cancel the activity with at least 48+ hours notice.

*Desert Institute runs classes rain or shine*, with the exception of astrophotography classes, which require mostly clear skies in order to be successful.

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.

### WHAT IF I FORGOT SOMETHING I NEED?

Our visitor centers, park stores, are stocked with amazing essentials for your adventure. Preview or purchase items from our [online shop](#); we carry [hats](#), [shirts](#), bandanas, water bottles, notebooks, [maps](#), [books](#). And more!

### 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) are registered and meet the age requirements.

As much as we love pets, we don't allow them in the field with any of our activities.