



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,
Yucca Valley, 92284

ANIMAL TRACKS of DESERT DUNES

FIELD CLASS / SPRING 2024 / INSTRUCTOR: SCOTT HEACOX

SATURDAY, MAY 26TH, 8:00 AM - NOON

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Desert sands provide an excellent canvas for otherwise cryptic animals to leave their mark. Using the skills gained in this class, students will be able to reconstruct the lives of these hidden animals using tracking. Using desert dunes as our classrooms, we'll spend the morning reviewing track ID guides, discussing the sand-dwelling animals whose tracks we may find, and going on short walks in and along the dunes to find tracks. Common tracks we may observe include a variety of lizards, snakes, rodents, insects, and arachnids.

PROGRAM AGENDA

Participants will meet in the morning at the Oasis of Mara parking lot at Joshua Tree National Park headquarters in 29 Palms (not past the entrance gate, no fee waiver needed.) We will caravan as a group to the Sheephole Valley Wilderness off Amboy Road, where we will stay for the duration of the class. Activities will include reviewing track ID guides, discussing the sand-dwelling animals whose tracks we may find, and going on short walks to find tracks.

MEETING LOCATION

[Oasis of Mara](#) at Joshua Tree National Park Headquarters, 74485 National Park Drive, 29 Palms, CA 92277.

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

Moderate ▾ Participants should be comfortable walking up to two miles, mostly off-trail, in sandy and possibly undulating desert landscapes. Elevation gains of up to 100+/- feet are possible. Conditions will likely be warm, sunny, and dry.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- First aid and emergency supplies for the group
- 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

Recommended:

- Binoculars and cameras are encouraged, but not necessary
- If you have any field guides that pertain to this course, you may bring them

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+ _

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 and 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.

