



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,
Yucca Valley, 92284

DESERT INSECTS: WHO THEY ARE and WHY THEY MATTER

FIELD CLASS / SPRING 2024 / INSTRUCTOR: SCOTT HEACOX

MARCH 30, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

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.

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.

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 at the entrance!

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.

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

- 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 for this course (but not required):

- Notebook and pencil are always good to have

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.

