



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

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INSECTS & ARTHROPODS OF THE EASTERN MOJAVE

FIELD WEEKEND EXPERIENCE / SPRING 2024 / INSTRUCTOR: KURT LEUSCHNER

MAY 14 (ZOOM, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM), MAY 17 (ARRIVE 4:00 PM) - MAY 19 (DEPART 12:00 PM)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In this course students will learn about the basic anatomy of insects, and how to tell them apart from other desert arthropods. We will also review the many insect orders and families found in the East Mojave Desert region. Some of these local insects have some very interesting stories to tell! Specimens in a demonstration collection will be examined. Mimicry, the use of pheromones, fluorescence, and other important survival traits will be discussed.

We will spend time in the field to observe *diurnal* (day active) insects and examine them up close, using a variety of different catch-and-release collecting methods such as pit traps, light traps, and aerial nets. Some of the insects will be hiding in the leaf litter or on leaves, while others will be flying around and nectaring on flowering plants. As we walk around the Desert Studies Center and explore a local Joshua Tree ecosystem during a Saturday field trip, we will examine the different habitats and behaviors of insects that we encounter and discuss the various adaptations that enable insects to survive in this harsh desert environment.

The fascinating world of insects awaits you!

PROGRAM AGENDA

Day 1: Tuesday, May 14 via zoom

We'll meet on zoom at 7:00 pm (link sent after registering) for an introduction to Insects & Arthropods. We'll discuss the weekend activities and answer any questions you have about the weekend. We'll finish by 8:30p.

Day 2: Friday, May 17

Arrive at the Desert Studies Center to check-in anytime between 5 and 7p and get settled in for the weekend. Please plan to eat before you arrive or bring dinner with you.

Day 3: Saturday, May 18

We'll get started early at 7am with breakfast and depart on a field trip by 7:55 am to Teutonia Peak or possibly Kelso Dunes depending on weather conditions. We'll have our

sack lunch around noon and then possibly visit the lava tube (4.5 miles each way on washboard dirt). We will return to the Desert Studies Center at around 4:30pm for a siesta and have dinner at 7pm. Other activities such as setting up pit traps and a classroom movie will take place. We may go scorpion hunting if time and weather permits at 9-9:30pm.

Day 4: Sunday, May 19

We'll start with breakfast at 7:00 am and check big pit traps for insects, reptiles, and mammals. At 8a-10:15am we will take a short break and grab our lunch to go. At 10:30 am we will meet at the classroom to review the insect collection/discuss findings, and watch a powerpoint presentation on Desert Insects. Around noon we will wrap things up and end the class.

MEETING LOCATION

[Desert Studies Center, Zzyzx](#) (click on link for a map of the meeting site) Zzyzx Road exit off of Highway 15

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 must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold. Please contact us if you have questions about your ability to participate.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- First aid and emergency supplies for the group
- Five meals (Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch)
- Two-nights' lodging (dormitory-style rooms)

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- 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

Required for this course:

- Sleeping bag or set of bed sheets (full size bed)
- Pillows
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Toiletries and towel (communal bath house)
- Water, between 3 and 4 liters per person for a full day outing; there is potable water onsite, please bring a reusable water bottle or reservoir
- Food and snacks, easily packed and eaten in the field (sack lunch provided for both Saturday and Sunday)
- Sturdy closed-toe 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

Recommended

- Hiking poles
- Binoculars
- Camera
- 10x Loupe

- UV Flashlight

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR

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, the Living Desert, California State Parks, Riverside County Parks, and many other conservation organizations.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

This course takes place at the Desert Studies Center, a field station operated by several CSU campuses and located within the Mojave National Preserve at Soda Springs (Zzyzx), about a three-hour drive from Joshua Tree. The course fee includes lodging on Friday and Saturday nights in dormitory-style rooms, as well as five meals, beginning with breakfast Saturday and ending with lunch Sunday. There are very few amenities in the Baker area, so please plan to bring dinner with you on Friday, or eat before you arrive. Please review the DSC at Zzyzx document for details about the center.



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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.

