



DESERT INSTITUTE
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK ASSOCIATION

+1-760-819-4714
desertinstitute@joshuatree.org
55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,
Yucca Valley, 92284

LIZARDS & SNAKES OF THE EASTERN MOJAVE

FIELD WEEKEND EXPERIENCE / SPRING 2024 / INSTRUCTOR: JASON WALLACE

MAY 16 (ZOOM, 7:00 PM-8:30 PM), MAY 17 (ARRIVE 4:00 PM) - MAY 19 (DEPART 12:00 PM)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Do you love reptiles? Do you love the desert? You are not alone. Reptiles are among the most interesting and diverse vertebrates that inhabit the desert southwest. The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the identification and natural history of the lizard and snake species found in the Eastern Mojave Desert. Over three days we will explore the Mojave National Preserve, visiting several different ecological habitats including Sand dunes, Joshua tree woodland, Creosote scrub, and ancient Volcanic lava fields and flows. The course fee includes two nights' lodging at the Desert Studies Center along with meals starting with breakfast Saturday through lunch on Sunday. This is an experience you don't want to miss.

This field study is based at the Desert Studies Center (of California State University) located within the Preserve at Soda Springs (Zzyzx), about a three-hour drive from Joshua Tree. The course fee includes two nights' lodging at the Center (dormitory rooms & some couple rooms), and meals starting with breakfast Saturday through breakfast on Sunday. Upon enrollment, you will be sent detailed information about the Center and what to bring.

PROGRAM AGENDA

Day 1: Thursday, May 16th

We'll meet on zoom at 7:00 pm (link sent after registering) for an introduction, course overview and objectives. We'll finish by 8:30p.

Day 2: Friday, May 17th

Arrive at the Desert Studies Center between 4 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 18th

We'll get started early with breakfast at Desert Studies Center at 7:30 am and then depart with sack lunches to examine Kelso Dunes Trail. We will eat our lunch at Kelso Depot around 12pm and around 1pm we will head back towards zzyzx via Kelbaker Rd and stop at the Volcanic flows. By 3pm we will return to zzyzx and open the pit traps

and explore alluvial fan habitat. We will have free time until dinner around 7pm, and at 8pm we will cruise along zzyzx rd and Kelbaker rd (weather permitting).

Day 4: Sunday, May 19th

We'll start early in the morning at 7am with breakfast and we will clean up our rooms (if you are not returning after lunch). Around 7:30am we will check pit-fall traps (lizards, snakes, insects and other arthropods). At 8:30am we will leave zzyzx for Cima Rd (turn East on Cima Rd) and arrive at Teutonia Peak trailhead parking area and we will explore the Joshua Tree habitat. Around noon we will have lunch and this marks the official end of 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

- Sleeping gear
- Toiletries
- Water/snacks
- Sleeping bag/pillows

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:

- Read herp field trip guide
- Read herp syllabus
- Read herp species list

GET TO KNOW YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Jason Wallace began his career at the Desert Studies Center back in 2007. As Field Station Manager, he is responsible for overseeing and participating in all aspects of facility operations and guest services. Before joining the DSC, Jason was a part-time faculty member at California State University, Fullerton and Orange Coast College, teaching classes in biology, zoology and ecology. He was also a zookeeper for seven years, caring for a wide variety of Central and South American animals, most of them primates. Jason earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Biology from California State University, Fullerton. His Master's thesis examined population dynamics of desert reptiles in the East Mojave/Soda Springs area. In 2008, after joining the staff, he resurrected this research to establish a long-term study of our local herpetofauna. This ongoing study is now among the most comprehensive herpetological surveys in the western deserts of North America. Jason's other research experiences include studies on Mojave fringe-toed lizards, Mojave desert tortoise, Mohave tui chub, green sea turtle, and desert willow. Jason has an extensive understanding of desert organisms and desert ecology and regularly collaborates with federal, state and local agencies.

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.



DESERT INSTITUTE JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION

+1-760-819-4714
desertinstitute@joshuatree.org
55922 Twentynine Palms Highway,
Yucca Valley, 92284

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.

