

Birds of Joshua Tree National Park

Information

Date/ Time: Friday, May 1, 6 pm – 8 pm

Saturday, May 2, 7:30 am – 4:30 pm

Sunday, May 3, 7:15 am – 1:15 pm

Meet at: [Black Rock Visitor Center](#)

9800 Black Rock Canyon, Yucca Valley, CA 92284

Instructor: Kurt Leuschner, M.S., Wildlife Ecology, Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert in Palm Desert, CA

Overview

The deceptively barren Mojave Desert landscape is home and resting grounds for numerous endemic and migratory bird species. Joshua trees do not make a typical forest, the landscape is open, the climate dry and vegetation relatively sparse. Despite this, over 240 species of birds have been recorded in Joshua Tree National Park! Kurt Leuschner, Professor of College of the Desert, Palm Desert, will guide this three-day field class through the Mojave and Colorado Deserts to identify common and rare birds. Leuschner's focus will be on identifying individual species and separating summer and winter residents from true migrants. He will discuss nesting and feeding habits, interactions with plant life, and adaptive strategies. Participants will have the thrill of identifying the park's common spring bird species, better understand the role each plays in the high desert ecosystem, and have the chance of sighting rare species like the Pinyon Jay, Prairie Falcon, or Lawrence's Goldfinch.

Itinerary

Friday, May 1, 6 pm – 8 pm

Black Rock Visitor Center

*Arriving early is recommended to bird the Black Rock Campground area – birds to look for include: Scott's Oriole, Pinyon Jay, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Cactus Wren, Black-throated sparrow, Bushtit, and Oak Titmouse.

- 6 pm, Introduction to ornithology, identification skills, field guides, and songs
- 7 pm, Resident species versus migrants: an overview of the birds JTNP

Saturday, May 2, 7:30 am – 4:30 pm

Meet at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

- Field class focusing on high desert riparian oasis loaded with migrants, featuring a hike around the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve and the chance to see warblers, tanagers, vireos, flycatchers, and more.
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- Field class in Joshua Tree National Park including exclusive session at Key's Ranch

Sunday, May 3, 7:15 am – 1:15 pm

Meet at Luckie Park

- Field class at Luckie Park, focus on migrants
- Roaming field class in Joshua Tree National Park, focus on migrants
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- Turn in field notes and take home quiz for students taking class for college credit
- Class will end near the Cottonwood, Interstate 10 entrance.

What to Bring to the Course

Required Class Materials

- Binoculars

Optional Class Materials

- Bird guide, *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* by Jon Dunn recommended

The 10 Essentials: Every day in the Desert

- Day pack
- 4 quarts of water
- Closed toe hiking shoes
- Lunch and snacks
- Clothing layers
- Hat
- Sun glasses
- Sunscreen
- Notebook and pencil/pen
- Whistle

Fitness Requirements

Participants must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold.

Hike Level

Easy to Moderate

College Credit

If taking this course for 1 unit of Biology (X404) credit through the University of California Riverside Extension, (70%) attendance/participation, (30%) field notes, quiz and species profile will determine your grade.

Guidelines

- You are responsible for your safety.
- Park your car in designated areas only. Parking along the side of the road is dangerous to you and the environment.
- Rattlesnakes are present in the desert. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see them.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.
- Before leaving the class, check out with the Desert Institute Representative.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.

Instructor Biography

Kurt Leuschner, M.S., Wildlife Ecology, 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 Bureau of Land Management, UCR Extension, the Desert Institute, the Living Desert, California State Parks, Riverside County Parks, and many other conservation organizations.

* The Desert Institute staff/instructors will attempt to accommodate participant's needs; however we reserve the right to deny a student participation in the course due to concerns regarding health and safety issues.