

Insects and Arthropods of the Morongo Basin

Information

Date/ Time: Friday, October 8, 6:30PM – 9:00PM

Saturday, October 9, 8:00AM – 2:00PM; 6:00PM – 8:30PM

Sunday, October 10, 8:00AM – 12 noon

Meet at: [Black Rock Canyon Campground \(Friday night only\)](#)

9800 Black Rock Canyon Rd, Yucca Valley, CA. 92284

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

Overview

Did you know that some insects can survive in temperatures over 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade with little or no water? Kurt Leuschner, M.S. and Professor at College of the Desert, will explain the lives of the largest group of animals in the world through a study of insect anatomy, taxonomy, survival traits, habitats, and behaviors. Participants will learn to identify and distinguish insects from other arthropods and then practice their skills in the field. Field observations will include visits to the Joshua Tree forest, palm oases, desert, dune, and riparian habitats as well as a special night session with black lights at the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Leuschner will share amazing stories of insects including the yucca moth, the antlion, and the tarantula hawk wasp and their interconnections with the world around them.

Itinerary

Friday, October 8, 6:30 PM – 9 PM

Black Rock Canyon Visitor Center – Please eat dinner before class or bring food

- Short walk in the Joshua Tree forest
- Lecture
- Insect observation

Note: Yucca Valley is the closest town to Blackrock Campground (5 miles away) and is the ideal place to stay tonight – or Blackrock Campground is a beautiful place to camp

Saturday, October 9, 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM; 6 PM – 8:30 PM

Meet at Joshua Tree Visitor Center on Park Blvd. in the town of Joshua Tree – about a 7 mile drive from Yucca Valley. Please either eat dinner before the evening session or it's ok to eat in the classroom.

- Morning field class in Joshua Tree National Park including hikes at Barker Dam and possibly Hidden Valley (time and weather permitting)
- Snack/lunch break, **bring a lunch to eat.**
- Return to JT Visitor Center by 2:00 PM
- Siesta 2-6 PM – rest or explore the area on your own
- 6 PM evening field class/lecture at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve – in Morongo Valley (approx. 10 miles from Yucca Valley). Note: Try to arrive by 5:45PM as we will do a nature walk through the marsh from 6-7pm.
- 7-8 PM movie and dinner (if you haven't already eaten...)
- 8-8:30 PM Evening observation including catch and release with the use of mercury vapor and ultraviolet lights

Sunday, October 10, 8:00 AM – 12 PM

Meet at 8:15 AM along 38th Ave, Palm Desert (Washington exit) (45-60 minutes drive from Yucca Valley)

- Check our pit traps in the sand dune area – catch and release
- Drive to nearby College of the Desert for a tour of the collection including a spreading board demonstration and Desert Insects powerpoint – OR (weather permitting) we may take a hike in the Coachella Valley Preserve.
- Finish by noon.

What to Bring to the Course

Required Class Materials

- Flashlight/headlamp

Optional Equipment

- Hiking Poles
- Binoculars
- Camera
- 10x Loupe (magnifier)
- UV flashlight

The 10 Essentials: Everyday in the Desert

- Day pack
- 4 quarts of water
- Closed-toed Hiking shoes
- Lunch and snacks
- Clothing layers
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Notebook and pencil/pen

- Whistle

Fitness Requirements

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

Hike Level

Moderate

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 park. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see.
- Only you know your limits, please let the instructor or Desert Institute Representative know if you do not want to continue.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.
- Watch your step. Some of the class is at night, please bring a flashlight and beware of uneven ground and equipment.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative. Instructor's cell phone #760-799-1423 (reception varies)
- Before leaving the class, check with the Desert Institute Representative.

College Credit

If taking this course for 1.5 units of Entomology x405 credit through the University of California Riverside Extension, participation, completion of field notebook, completion of research paper, and a take-home quiz will determine the grade.

Instructor Biography

Kurt Leuschner, M.S., Wildlife Ecology, Professor of Natural Resources, 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, UCR Extension, the Desert Studies Center at Zzyzx, the Living Desert, California State Parks, and many other conservation organizations.

Suggested Reading

Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America by Kenn Kaufman 2007

Other resources will be suggested Friday night.

* 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.