

DESERT INSTITUTE

at Joshua Tree National Park

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Spring Session

2022

Flora of Joshua Tree National Park

Information

Date/ Time: Tuesday, March 8, 7 pm – 8:30 pm Zoom lecture
Saturday, March 12, 8 am – 4 pm Meet at Joshua Tree Visitor Center
Sunday, March 13, 8:30 am – 1 pm Meet at Cottonwood Visitor Center
Instructor: Kurt Leuschner, M.S., Wildlife Ecology, Professor of Natural Resources,
College of the Desert

Overview

Students in this informal but purposeful class will have the opportunity to observe many of the flowering plants in Joshua Tree National Park, learn their names and something about their different places in the Park's greater plant community. Discussions in the field will also include plant families, pollinators and other insect associations, and general natural history. In addition, students will gain familiarity with the tools necessary to identify plants on their own.

Tuesday nights' class will include a basic botany lecture with emphasis on local desert plants. This will be followed by an introduction to basic field guides, and to the use of plant keys in identification. We will preview many of the expected annuals we hope to find during the field portion of the class.

Saturday and Sunday are field days and will be spent in various regions of the Park. With instructor assistance, students will practice identifying flowering plants as we wander through Joshua Tree's different plant communities, learning as we go along. Walking distances for this class will be moderate, so bring comfortable hiking shoes.

Itinerary

Tuesday, March 8, 7 – 8:30 pm

Location: **Zoom lecture**

- Introductions and Class Overview
- Slide Show / Lecture
- Using a Plant Identification Key

Saturday, March 12, 8 am – 4 pm

Location: **Meet at the Joshua Tree Visitor Center on Park Blvd. just off Highway 62**

- Field class in Mojave Desert section of the Joshua Tree National Park
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- We will carpool to Barker Dam, Queen Valley and 49 Palms

Sunday, March 13, 8:30 am – 1 pm

Location: **Meet at the Cottonwood Visitor Center between 8-8:15am**

- Field class in Colorado Desert section of the Joshua Tree National Park
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- We will explore the Cottonwood area including the Bajada Trail and adjacent Box Canyon. *Please note that the class will end around 1 pm near Interstate 10 and the East entrance to Joshua Tree National Park.*

What to Bring to the Course

Optional Class Materials

- 10x hand lens

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

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 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.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.
- Before leaving the class, check out with the Desert Institute Representative.

College Credit

If taking this course for 1.5 units of Botany and Plant Sciences (X420.5) credit through the University of California Riverside Extension, 100% attendance & participation as well as a passing grade of 70% on the quiz/essay is required to earn the credit.

Suggested Reading (recommended but not required)

**Mojave Desert Wildflowers*, Falcon Guide by Pam MacKay

**Sonoran Desert Wildflowers*, Falcon Guide by Richard Spellenberg

**California Desert Flowers* by Morhardt

**The Jepson Desert Manual*, edited by Bruce Baldwin

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 and leads field trips for the Desert Institute, the Desert Studies Center at Zzyzx, the Living Desert, the Desert Cities Bird Club, Western Field Ornithologists, UCR Extension, California State Parks, the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association, 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.