

Lizards and Snakes of the East Mojave

Information

Date/ Time: Friday, May 20, 7; 30 pm – 9 pm

Saturday, May 21, 7 am - 3 pm, 8 - 10 pm

Sunday, May 22, 7:30 am – noon

Meet at: [Desert Studies Center, Zzyzx](#) (click on link for a map of the meeting site)

Zzyzx Road exit off of Highway 15

Instructor: Jason Wallace, Field Station Manager, CSU Desert Studies Center

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 lunch on Sunday. Upon enrollment, you will be sent detailed information about the Center and what to bring.

Itinerary

Friday, **MAY 20**

Arrive between 5 pm – 7 pm at the Desert Studies Center

7:30 Course overview and objectives.

Presentation of information relating to desert environments and the natural history of the local reptile fauna.

Saturday, May 21

7:00 **BREAKFAST**

7:30 Leave Zzyzx for Kelso Dunes via KelBaker Rd. Possible short stops along the way. Examine **Kelso dunes**. Observe *Aspidoscelis*, *Uma*, *Callisaurus*, *Dipsosaurus*, *Phrynosoma*, *Uta*, *Urosaurus*, *Gambelia*, *Crotalus* and *Masticophis*.

12:00 **LUNCH** at Kelso Dunes (or Kelso Depot).

1:00 Leave Kelso. Head back towards Zzyzx via Kelbaker Rd. Stop at Cima **Volcanic flows**. Observe *Dipsosaurus*, *Sauramalus*, *Crotophytus* and *Uta* on the lava flow.

3:00 Return to Zzyzx. Open **Pit-fall traps**. Explore **alluvial fan** habitat (*Aspidoscelis*, *Gambelia*, *Crotophytus*, *Dipsosaurus*, *Uta*, *Urosaurus*, *Phrynosoma*, *Xantusia*, *Crotalus*, *Pituophis*, *Masticophis*).

Free time until dinner.

Explore the grounds / Reflect on the day / Work on your assignment.

7:00 **DINNER**

8:00 **Road cruising** along Zzyzx Rd. and Kelbaker Rd. Observe *Coleonyx variegates*, *Chionactis occipitalis*, *Arizona elegans*, *Hypsiglena deserticola*, *Phyllorhynchus decurtatus*, *Rhinocheilus lecontei*, *Crotalus* spp.

Sunday May 22

7:00 **BREAKFAST**

Clean out your room (if you are not returning after lunch).

7:30 Check **Pit-fall traps** (lizards, snakes, insects and other arthropods). Observe (*Aspidoscelis*, *Coleonyx*, *Gambelia*, *Crotophytus*, *Dipsosaurus*, *Uta*, *Urosaurus*, *Phrynosoma*, *Xantusia*, *Crotalus*, *Pituophis*, *Masticophis*).

8:30 Leave Zzyzx for Cima Rd. (Turn East on Cima Rd). Arrive at **Teutonia Peak** trailhead parking area. Explore **Joshua Tree habitat**. Observe *Xantusia vigilis*, *Phrynosoma platyrhinos*, *Sceloporus uniformis*, *Aspidoscelis tigris* and *Crotalus scutulatus*

12:00 **LUNCH at Teutonia Peak**

- 2:00 Return to Zzyzx. **(Optional)**
Clean out your room
Relax
Explore the grounds
Finish written assignment & Quiz

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: 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 2 unit of Biology (X414.5) credit through the University of California Riverside Extension, your grade will be determined by your attendance/participation, written assignment and quiz.

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

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 lizard, 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 such as NPS, BLM, NASA, USFWS, USGS, and CDFW. In his spare time, he enjoys music, traveling, chasing lizards, and spending quality time with his wife and two dogs.

Suggested Reading

* 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.