



Desert Studies Institute Workshops May 15 - July 16, 2025

The Long-Billed Curlew: Tracking a Species of Greatest Conservation Need

May 15 & 16, Heather Hayes

This 2-part workshop focusing on Long-billed Curlews invites participants to join a research biologist for a power point discussion and a morning out in the field to gain experiential knowledge of what it means to be a curlew on public lands. Required reading material will be provided before the workshop to introduce the species, the current issues facing the southwest Idaho population and what studies are being conducted to learn more about the dramatic localized decline. The field trip portion will be conducted on the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area south of Boise. We will locate curlews during the morning to observe them exhibiting territorial flight displays, establishing and defending territories, as well as courtship displays that may have started since their arrival back to their breeding grounds.

Field Trip. Students must provide their own transportation to site. Cross-listed with Anthropology, Biological Sciences, and Environmental Studies, 1 credit. 494/594

Late Pleistocene Megafauna Extinctions: The Great Debate

May 24 & 25, Allison Wolfe

38 genera of mostly large mammals went extinct in North America at the end of the Pleistocene—but to this day, no one is exactly sure why. This workshop will focus on the hotly debated topic of what caused these extinctions. Did humans hunt them to extinction? Did climate change or disease cause their demise? Or is it not that simple? You'll learn about the different theories and the debates that are still raging amongst scientists today, dive into the actual archaeological and paleontological evidence yourself, and discover how solving this mystery can be applied to modern wildlife conservation and might help to prevent future extinctions.

Cross-listed with Anthropology, Biological Sciences, and Environmental Studies, 1 credit. 494/594

Ancient Peoples of Southern Idaho

June 11 & 12, Mark Plew & Nicki Schwend

This workshop reviews the prehistory of Southern Idaho from its earliest beginnings some 16,000 years ago to peoples at the time of European contact. The first day of this workshop will consist of on campus PowerPoint lectures and demonstrations. The second day will meet at Celebration Park--Idaho's only archaeological park where additional presentations will be presented prior to visits to and discussions of the park's archaeological sites.

Field Trip. Students must provide their own transportation. Cross-listed with Anthropology, Environmental Studies, and History 1 credit. 494/594

Desert Ecology

June 4 & 5, Nicki Schwend & Laura Barbour

Desert Ecology is a two-day workshop combining guided interpretive hikes, short lectures, and introductory field research and data collection. The course explores the ecology of one of our region's most striking arid landscapes--the Snake River Canyon. Participants will learn about how native plants and animals, as well as human cultures, have adapted to contend with the challenges of desert environments. While investigating the present-day ecology of local landscapes, students will also learn about their geologic history--how they were shaped by everything from catastrophic floods, ancient lakes, and volcanic activity. We will learn how the flora and fauna of this landscapes have continued to develop since the end of the last Ice Age, and we will examine human history in this area over that same time span. The workshop will be held at Celebration Park.

Field Trip. Students must provide their own transportation. Cross-listed with Anthropology, Biological Sciences, and Environmental Studies, 1 credit. 494/594

Ethnobotany: Introduction to Edible, Medicinal, and Useful Plants

June 9 & 10, Ray Vizgerdas

Our cultural history is intimately tied to our environment. This workshop focuses primarily on plants used by Native Americans as food, medicine, clothing and building materials. Classroom and field activities bring together aspects of the natural and cultural history of our region in emphasizing native plant identification, ecology, and ethnobotany. Please Note: students will need to arrange transportation to and from Bogus Basin Ski area for the field component of the course (day 2).

Field Trip. Cross-listed with Anthropology, Biological Sciences, Environmental Studies. 1 credit. 494/594

The Way West Through Southern Idaho

June 17 & 18, Jerry Jerrems

Review the history of emigration associated with the Oregon Trail in southern Idaho, placing an emphasis upon its role leading to environmental degradation along the trail corridor. Alternate perspective of the Oregon Trail as the relationship of the emigrants and Native Americans has been chronicled in the historic record and a clearer perspective of the archaeological evidence of the trail itself as observed in the field. Field Trip the Three Island Crossing, Bonneville Point, and Interpretive Station on Hwy 21.

Field Trip. Students must provide their own transportation.

The Bonneville Flood: A History of Idaho's Great Flood

June 25 & 26, Jerry Jerrems

Pleistocene Lake Bonneville unleashed its fury on the Snake River Plain some 17, 000 years ago. In its wake it swept away old landforms while creating new ones. The flood tossed boulders the size of small houses--what geologists call melon gravels. Swept away were animals and plant life as the Snake River corridor was reconfigured. Of interest is the possibility that the event was witnessed by first Americans. This workshop provides an overview of the event and its impacts.

Field Trip. Cross-listed with Anthropology, Environmental Studies, and History. 1 credit. 494/594

Death of an Ecosystem

June 22 & 23, Eric Yensen

This workshop will focus on ecological interactions in pre-settlement shrub-steppe ecosystems in the northern Great Basin (e.g., the ecological roles of sagebrush, jackrabbits, ground squirrels, badgers, raptors, coyotes, and many other iconic shrub-steppe species) and how they interacted to form a functional ecosystem. The course then shows how human activities are causing the collapse of this ecosystem. On campus the first day and a field trip the second day to see examples of topics discussed on day one.

Field Trip. Students must provide their own transportation. Cross-listed with Anthropology, Biological Sciences, Environmental Studies, and Geosciences. 1 credit. 494/ 594

Knowing Fish

July 15 & 16, Chris Walser

Knowing Fish is a two-day workshop focusing on the identification, ecology, and conservation of fishes in the Boise River watershed. The workshop combines lectures, group discussion, laboratory work, and field study. Field study will involve collecting fish using standard research protocols from a variety of riverine habitats. Participants must be in good physical condition and comfortable walking in flowing water over.

Field Trip. Students must provide their own transportation. Cross-listed with Anthropology, Biological Sciences, and Environmental Studies, 1 credit. 494/594



DESERT STUDIES INSTITUTE



The Desert Studies Institute (DSI) was established in 1997 as a cooperative program between the Department of Anthropology at Boise State University and Celebration Park, which is operated by Canyon County Parks, Recreation and Waterways. Each year the Desert Studies Institute provides a broad range of academic offerings of interest and value to students, teaching professionals, Idaho's citizens and visitors.

The mission of the Institute is to provide educational programs and scholarly presentations concerning the prehistory, history, ecology and politics of Idaho's desert environments and deserts worldwide. The programs are presented to enrich the understanding and appreciation of complex desert ecosystems in Idaho and to promote their perpetual preservation as educational resources for the future.

REGISTRATION

Registration is now open on my.boisestate.edu.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions, call Boise State Summer Sessions/Extended Studies (208) 426-1709 or visit boisestate.edu/summer.

FACULTY

The faculty of the Desert Studies Institute are selected annually on the basis of their expertise in areas relating to the objectives of DSI. Faculty from Boise State University and the region form the core of the instructional faculty.

COST

The Desert Studies Institute workshops are charged the summer per credit rates. There may be additional class fees. Learn more at boisestate.edu/summer.

***The Desert Studies Institute workshops
combine classroom instruction with field
experiences appropriate to an
integration of knowledge concerning
desert environments.***