

BIG BEND NATURAL HISTORY

FIELD LEARNING IN WEST TEXAS' WILDERNESS TREASURE

We are currently recruiting both undergraduate and graduate students for a 10 day field experience in Big Bend National Park during August 2014. Exact dates are yet to be determined, but the field portion will be between the end of the summer session and the beginning of the fall semester. There will also be a few informal meetings the week before departure in order to prepare students for the field.

Big Bend National Park is part of the Trans-Pecos ecoregion, and is considered a semi-arid desert. August is part of the rainy season, which triggers many species of plants and animals to become active, and can result in a time of great biological activity. In addition, Big Bend is an exceptionally diverse region geologically, featuring an extinct volcanic caldera, tectonic features that reflect the assembly of the North American continent, and fossil deposits ranging from ancient marine reefs to river deposits containing dinosaur remains.

Students can take the course for geology (Geology 330) or biology (Biology 491) credit. Graduate students may also be eligible for graduate credit (contact instructors for details). Students may also attend the course for no academic credit on a space available basis. The majority of travel expenses are covered through a grant from the university, greatly reducing individual student expenses. The primary learning outcome is for students to experience how geology, landscape, flora, and fauna are inter-related in the ecosystem of the Chihuahuan Desert. Students will be expected to keep a daily journal of the various learning events experienced and submit a final document at the end of the course.

Please contact either of us with questions concerning the course.

COURSE INSTRUCTORS:

David E. Baumgardner, PhD, Department of Biology
e-mail: dbaumgardner@tamu.edu

Thomas Olszewski, PhD, Dept. of Geology and Geophysics
e-mail: olszewski@geos.tamu.edu

