

# life in death valley

## Clackamas students explore natural history



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER PORTER

21 students attended this year's Death Valley trip during spring break. Back row, left: Erin, Lisa, Raquel, Sarah, Nathan, Jeff, Eric and Nicole. Second row, left: Suzanne, Terry, Patrick, Kristine, Christine, Jonel and Bob. Third row, left: BethAnne, Dan, instructor Porter and Jodi. Front row, left: Tim, Craig, instructor Hoover, Jeff, Andrew and Loyd.

**MAGGIE JIRASEK**  
Feature Editor

The annual college Death Valley Trip, a three-credit science course, was lead this year by biology instructors Jennifer Porter and Sarah Hoover with the goal to give students a chance to apply their knowledge 'out in the real world.'

Over spring break, 21 Clackamas students went to Death Valley Park in California to study animals, plants and rocks in a place where

the average temperature during this time of year ranges between 90-100 degrees.

"It was really hot which was kind of good because it brought out the critters. We saw more snakes, lizards and scorpions than ever before. We even found a gecko. I have never seen a desert gecko before," explained Porter.

The Death Valley Trip, which is a natural field course, has been coordinated by Clackamas for over 20 years now.

"It's natural history and we do some geology, biology as well as archeology," said Porter.

For students who went on the trip, prior meetings were required.

Each student was assigned a research topic for the trip.

"While the students were down there, they actually had to give presentations and lectures," said Porter.

Camping for ten days in a place like Death Valley was not easy. Sleeping in tents and three showers per week was all the comfort Death Valley had to offer.

"We usually got up in the mornings, made breakfast, jumped in the vans and drove around. We went to various spots around the whole Death Valley Park where I gave a lecture or students gave theirs," explained Porter. "Other times, we were just running around, chasing animals and looking at plants and rocks."

The students made a trip up in the mountains where they studied types of cacti as well as learned how to identify different types of bushes. At Scottie's castle, the national park service gave them a guided tour. According to Porter, one of the most amazing experiences was visiting Ash Meadows, which is located outside the park and consists of a whole system of little springs.

"It was just incredible, almost like an oasis in the middle of a desert," said Porter. "Unfortunately, none of the plants were blooming yet in Death Valley. The rain hit too late and so the plants haven't gotten enough water yet."

Instructors as well as students enjoyed the trip and were fascinated by seeing how animals and plants can manage to survive in such a



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER PORTER

One of the highlights while camping out in Death Valley was visiting Scottie's castle where students enjoyed a guided tour. Bottom left: Christine, Jeff, Jodi and instructor Porter. Top row left: Suzanne, Patrick and Loyd. Middle: Lisa.

harsh environment.

"It was the year of the critters. It's just a beautiful place. All the animals there have their own little history of how to survive in this awful hot place. To me, that is amazing," said Porter.

In all the years that students have been visiting the Death Valley Park, no one has ever been injured, stung or bitten.

"This time, we had some sidewinders right on the street in front of our campsite. They were sitting there every night, keeping themselves warm. This was the only thing that caused some concern," explained Porter. "This group was pretty fearless though. They wanted to pick up everything, even the scorpions and snakes. But we had a great time"



**Think You're Pregnant?**  
We can help you work through your choices.

**PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTERS**

- Milwaukie ..... 503.659.3336
- Lloyd Center Area ..... 503.284.1977
- Gresham ..... 503.666.6527
- Lake Grove ..... 503.968.6780
- Beaverton ..... 503.643.4503
- SE Portland ..... 503.777.7097

www.portlandprc.org

FREE Pregnancy Tests Confidential Counseling

Located in the Berry Hill Shopping Center next to the Postal Annex

**Lindy's**

Donuts  
Espresso  
Soups

19097 S Beavercreek Rd.  
Oregon City, OR 97045  
503-742-1855  
FAX 503-742-1857