

Boreal Forest Ecology

Denali National Park and Preserve

June 10 - 12, 2025

Course Description

Although Denali may be known more for its snow-capped peaks and open tundra ecosystems, Denali is also home to beautiful and intact expanses of boreal forest. Join Denali National Park Fire Ecologist Sarah Stehn to discover how forest systems grow, thrive, and cope with challenges like insect outbreaks and wildfires. We'll wander through different forest areas, explore tree line, and observe changes in plant life and vegetation structure. We'll explore how living things (like plants and animals) connect with non-living elements (like soil and topography) and how these relationships influence the way forests change over time. Boreal forests provide critical habitat and ecosystem function throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Let's dive in to understand the roles different plants play and how forest disturbance is crucial to forest health.

Hiking Distances and Physical Fitness

Field courses are active learning experiences and take place off trail in Denali's wilderness. Hiking may be moderately strenuous over uneven tundra, forest, and river bar terrain, covering distances of up to 3 - 5 miles round trip with as much as 1,500 feet of elevation gain. We will likely encounter wet tundra / forest conditions and minor stream crossings.

Participants must be in good physical condition. If you are uncertain about your physical ability for this course, please contact us for more information.

Times and Location

Participants meet at the Murie Science and Learning Center, located at mile 1 of the Denali Park Road. Check-in starts at 6:00pm on Tuesday. The course begins at 6:30pm and will return to the park entrance area around 4pm on Thursday.

Lodging and Meals

This course is based out of the Murie Science and Learning Center Field Camp, located 29 miles inside Denali National Park along the Teklanika River. The Field Camp includes rustic tent cabins and outhouses. Meals are simple and healthy.

Accreditation

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) offers one professional development credit (level 500) for an additional \$79 fee. You must register for the credit directly with UAA. Please see our website for registration instructions.

Questions?

More detailed information about this course can be found by opening the other documents in the "course details" tab on the website. If you have other questions, please contact the Murie Science and Learning Center by email courses@akgeo.org or by calling (907) 683-9632.