

Your Place in Las Vegas Conservation

Your Place in Conservation is a guided introduction to the Mojave Desert and conservation community working across Southern Nevada. Through virtual classes, two in-person field mornings, and follow-up cohort check-ins, you'll learn how conservation works and leave with a clearer path toward meaningful involvement.

What's Included

- **10 virtual class meetings** exploring Mojave ecology, conservation, civic systems, local organizations, and pathways for getting involved
- **Two in-person field mornings** at Floyd Lamb Park and the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve
- **Guided naturalist and interpretive instruction** focused on learning to read landscapes, habitats, plants, birds, wildlife, and ecological relationships
- **A practical introduction to Southern Nevada's conservation community**, including agencies, nonprofits, Friends groups, and other organizations working locally
- **A directory of local conservation and volunteer opportunities** to help you identify organizations that match your interests
- **Exercises to help you identify your conservation role**, whether that is stewardship, education, science, storytelling, advocacy, organizing, connecting people, fundraising, or leadership
- **Help identifying a realistic next step** based on your interests, skills, and the amount of time you actually want to contribute
- **Course recordings and materials** so participants can revisit sessions they miss or want to review
- **Continued connection with the cohort** through the course community and follow-up conversations after the main program ends. We use Skool.com

By the End of the Course

You should be able to:

- Recognize the major habitats and plant communities of Southern Nevada
- Explain some of the ecological relationships that make the Mojave function
- Understand the major pressures affecting the region
- Identify the agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations involved in local conservation
- Better understand how conservation decisions are made.
- Recognize several different ways people can contribute to conservation
- Identify the kinds of work you are most interested in doing
- Find organizations and opportunities that fit your interests and available time
- Leave with at least one concrete next step for becoming more involved

Fall 2026 Course Curriculum

This course is designed to help you better understand the Mojave Desert, the conservation community working across Southern Nevada, and the many ways you can find a meaningful role within it. Across virtual classes and two in-person field mornings, we'll go from understanding the landscape itself to understanding how conservation works. By the end, you'll have a clearer sense of where your interest, skills, and attention can be most useful and energizing.

October 18 — Floyd Lamb Park

In-Person Interpretive Walk

We'll begin by getting to know one another while exploring Floyd Lamb Park and the surrounding landscape.

Along the way, we'll talk about water, habitat, major trees and plant communities, wildlife, and how the park is managed. We'll also introduce the idea of interpretation: how a naturalist can help others understand not only what they are seeing, but why it matters and how the pieces of a landscape connect. Expect great bird sightings, with possibilities of hawks and owls.

Plan to spend the morning outside and finish around lunchtime.

Please bring:

- Closed-toed shoes
- Approximately 2 liters of water
- Binoculars, if you have them
- Sun protection and clothing appropriate for the weather

Binoculars may be available to borrow upon request. Restroom facilities are available. There may be a small entrance fee at Floyd Lamb Park. The exact meeting time and location will be sent by email before the course begins.

October 19 — Getting to Know the Cohort

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

We'll continue getting to know one another and reflect on what we noticed during our first field morning.

We'll talk about what brought each person to the course, what you hope to understand better, and what you would like to be able to do by the end of the program. Small-group conversations may be used to help participants identify their interests, experiences, questions, and goals.

October 20 — How the Mojave Works

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

The Mojave Desert is not one uniform habitat.

We'll explore the major ecological communities of Southern Nevada, including alpine environments, coniferous forest, pinyon-juniper woodland, Joshua tree woodland, desert scrub, washes, springs, and riparian areas.

We'll look at how elevation, temperature, geology, and especially water shape these habitats. We'll also introduce watersheds and place Southern Nevada within the much larger Colorado River Basin.

October 21–22 — Plants, Wildlife, and Ecological Relationships

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

We'll return to the major habitats of the Mojave and take a closer look at the wildlife communities they support.

Rather than simply memorizing species, we'll use examples such as Pinyon Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers, desert tortoises, kit foxes, badgers, Burrowing Owls, predators, prey, seed dispersers, pollinators, and other important species to understand how ecosystems function.

We'll explore concepts such as food webs, adaptations, habitat relationships, keystone species, foundation species, mutualism, predation, and the connections that hold ecological communities together.

October 25 — Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve

In-Person Interpretive Walk

Our second field morning will take place at the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve

This outing will focus more heavily on wetlands, plants, and birds while continuing to practice reading habitat, observing wildlife behavior, recognizing native and nonnative plants, and interpreting ecological relationships.

Participants will also begin taking a more active role in observation and interpretation, moving from being shown a landscape toward explaining what they notice themselves. We will discuss what makes for strong interpretive events.

Plan to spend the morning outside and finish around lunchtime.

Please bring:

- Closed-toed shoes
- Approximately 2 liters of water

- Binoculars, if you have them
- Sun protection and clothing appropriate for the weather

Binoculars will be available to borrow upon request. Restroom facilities are available, and entry to the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve is free. The exact meeting time and location will be sent by email.

October 26 — Pressures on the Mojave

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

What is changing the Mojave Desert?

We'll explore some of the major pressures affecting Southern Nevada's ecosystems, primarily climate change and water demand, along with habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive species, altered fire regimes, pollution, recreation, development, and other forms of ecological change.

We'll also examine how these pressures interact and why conservation often requires responding to several connected challenges at once.

October 27 — How Conservation Actually Works

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

Who is responsible for protecting wildlife, habitat, water, and public lands? Who pays for it? Is there a coordinated strategy?

Today we'll look at the roles of federal agencies, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, local governments, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, Friends groups, and other community partners.

We'll use organizations across Southern Nevada to understand how conservation work is divided, where organizations overlap, and why collaboration is so important. We'll also begin looking at what organizations need from volunteers and what volunteers can contribute in return.

October 28 — Conservation, Civics, and How Decisions Get Made

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

Conservation happens through institutions, laws, planning, funding, public processes, and community participation.

We'll look at important conservation efforts in Southern Nevada while introducing a practical Civics 101 framework for understanding who makes decisions, how public processes work, and where individuals can participate.

The goal is not to turn participants into policy experts. It is to make the systems influencing local land, wildlife, and conservation easier to understand and engage with. Your voice can make a huge difference.

October 29 — What Do People Want, and What Makes Change Difficult?

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

Conservation does not happen separately from the people who live here.

We'll examine public attitudes, survey data, community priorities, and some of the practical barriers that can prevent widely supported conservation ideas from becoming reality.

Native landscaping will serve as one example. We'll explore why native plants can still be difficult to obtain at scale, how growers, landscapers, governments, nonprofits, and residents can better support one another, and where volunteers may be able to help through education, outreach, fundraising, planting, organizing, and relationship-building.

This session will help us begin identifying not only environmental challenges, but also gaps within the systems trying to address them.

November 2 — Finding Your Role in Conservation

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

There is no single way to contribute to conservation.

We'll explore a range of roles people can play, including steward, educator, naturalist, scientist, observer, connector, storyteller, policy advocate, organizer, fundraiser, resource-builder, and organizational leader.

You'll consider what you enjoy doing, what skills you already have, what you would like to learn, and how much time you realistically want to contribute. From there, we'll begin connecting those interests with organizations and opportunities across Southern Nevada.

November 3 — From Learning to Belonging

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

Our final session will focus on helping each participant identify a realistic next step.

We'll look at local nonprofit organizations, volunteer opportunities, and different levels of involvement — from occasional projects to recurring volunteering, citizen science, interpretation, advocacy, fundraising, organizing, leadership, and board service.

We'll also examine the conservation community itself. Where are volunteers having difficulty finding meaningful opportunities? What resources are missing?

Some of those answers are already known, and others are not. Part of this course is learning together where the gaps are and how people, organizations, skills, and resources might be better connected.

By the end of the course, the goal is not for you to have chosen a lifelong conservation identity. The goal is for you to understand Southern Nevada more deeply, know the people and organizations working on its behalf, recognize what you can contribute, and have a clear next step toward becoming part of the conservation community.

November 16 — Cohort Check-in

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

We meet after about two weeks to share personal updates and discuss developments in your search for volunteering and engagement. Alex will share upcoming volunteer opportunities and how to find them.

December 7 — Cohort Check-in

Virtual 6:00-7:30 pm

We meet in early December to share personal updates and discuss developments in your search for volunteering and engagement. Alex will share volunteer opportunities and how to find them.

[CLICK HERE](#) to apply

Send an email to Alex at alexkharper@gmail.com for questions or requests. Visit natureinmind.org to learn more about Alex.

Suggested Reading

***Urban Ecology: A Natural Way to Transform Kids, Cities, Parks, and the World* — Ken Leinbach**

A strong fit for this course because it connects urban nature, community participation, education, fundraising, and the idea that local people can help transform the places where they live.

***The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* — Peter M. Senge**

Especially useful for the later part of the course. Senge's emphasis on systems thinking, shared vision, mental models, and collective learning gives participants a way to think about conservation organizations not as isolated groups, but as parts of a larger system.

***Braiding Sweetgrass* — Robin Wall Kimmerer**

A thoughtful exploration of reciprocity, ecological knowledge, relationships with place, and what it means to participate in rather than simply observe the natural world.

***The Nature Fix* — Florence Williams**

Useful for connecting nature, human well-being, cities, and why access to natural spaces matters.

***Nature's Best Hope* — Douglas W. Tallamy**

Particularly relevant to your conversations about landscaping, native plants, neighborhoods, habitat creation, and the role ordinary residents can play in restoring ecological function.

***Bringing Nature Home* — Douglas W. Tallamy**

A deeper companion to the same idea: native plants support food webs, insects, birds, and broader ecological communities.