



Boreal Forest Ecology



Dates

August 10-12, 2026



Difficulty

Level 3



Elevation Gain

Up to 1000 feet



Hiking Distance

Up to 3 miles per day

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 treeline, 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.

Difficulty Level 3

You must be physically prepared to hike off-trail up to 3 miles each day, comfortably, with elevation gains up to 1000 feet in undulating terrain. Expect uneven footing, wet boggy tundra, dense undergrowth, and minor stream crossings. Good coordination is recommended.

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 Monday. The course begins at 6:30pm and will return to the park entrance area around 4pm on Wednesday.

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 cabins and outhouses. Meals are simple and healthy.

Professional Development Credit

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 directions.

Questions? Email courses@akgeo.org or call 907-771-8485