

JOSHUA TREE

VOICE

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES
DECEMBER 2022



THROUGH THE LENS OF CASEY KIERNAN

CELEBRATED PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER'S CONCERN FOR OUR TREES

BREWJA ELIXIR TINY PONY TAVERN JOSHUA TREE DISTILLERY ANNIVERSARY

QUEMA DEL DIABLO 2022 INSIDE THE BEAUTY BUBBLE JOSHUA TREE NO-HILL ADOPTABLES

ARTIST SIMI DABAH iHAY FESTIVAL! REVIEW YUCCA VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW LOS PONCHO TONES

Through the Lens of Award-Winning
Photographer/Videographer

Casey Kiernan

By Lisa Lynn Morgan

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Casey Kiernan's ambitions are clear. None of them have to do with fame or notoriety. The joy he takes in the breathtaking capture and sharing of our desert's unique and precious topography flows out of his prints and video projects into hearts and minds like few others. And his passion for protecting it is contagious. Following Kiernan's honor for Outstanding Videography at the 2022 Joshuas this past October (one of many he's earned), we were happy to catch up with him (virtually) while he was filming the stunning sites of Iceland.



"I've always had a camera, for as long as I can remember," shared Kiernan. "I've had many film cameras, Nikons back then, and a dark room in my house. Photography and videography have evolved into a very technical craft, which is intriguing to me. And I get to combine that with the beauty of the California High Desert - and the Milky Way! I'm hooked!"

Kiernan has only recently turned his passion into a full-time career. "Since 2000, I have been a professional photographer. I had a studio where I photographed cars and motorcycles - for print and advertising. I am self-taught. I have always been amazed with the work of

Morning Snow in Joshua Tree, 2nd Place Two-Dimensional Art Winner at the 2022 Joshua Tree National Park Art Expo.



Ansel Adams. I've read almost every one of his books. Ansel was a master technician, he taught us how to 'craft' an image - from the initial visualization, through the process of making it in the dark room. That end-to-end craftsmanship has always stayed with me. It still applies today, even as photography and videography have become much more technical. The concept of the image, shadows, and light still applies. Only now, we have more amazing technology which allows us to capture more of the beauty of nature."

Originally from San Luis Obispo, California, Kiernan has spent his life in the Golden State. "Growing up in

Southern California, we used to come to Joshua Tree's 'The Monument' in the seventies. I fell in love with the desert back then. I always wanted to live here - and now I do!"

During his "amateur" years, Kiernan was fascinated with timelapse. That fascination blossomed into a business. "I started doing Timelapse back in 2014. I came to Joshua Tree and took a workshop from Henry Lee, and I was hooked! Photography + Timelapse + Milky Way + Joshua Tree - what's not to like?! I was coming here almost every weekend (living in Marina Del Ray at the time), and I noticed that there were no

'regular' photography workshops offered in the park. So, I met with the park service and got a permit (CUA - Commercial Use Authorization) to run a business in Joshua Tree National Park. I started 'Joshua Tree Workshops' (<http://www.joshuatreeworkshops.com>). Milky Way Photography is my most popular workshop, which is offered in the summer months. I also offer Timelapse, Star Trails, Light Painting, Sunset Tours, and Wildflowers in the spring. I have something for each season, and I am optimistic for 2023! I now also offer workshops in Death Valley National Park (via 4x4), and Iceland! icelandphotographersworkshops.com



I THOUGHT THEY WERE PROTECTED

DOCUMENTARY - COMING IN 2023
WWW.JOSHUATREEONFILM.COM

Kiernan also founded a Timelapse Film Festival:

"I have won at film festivals before with my timelapse films, but there was a need for a specific festival, dedicated to the art of timelapse films. I started the Timelapse Film Festival (<http://www.timelapsefilmfestival.com>) 5 years ago in Santa Monica as a showcase for the best timelapse films from around the world. Timelapse is really a universal art form. It crosses all language barriers. When you watch a timelapse film, you are amazed with the beautiful images, and you are also amazed to see a glimpse of how nature works. That is what is so compelling about the art form! You can see how the stars and Milky Way cross the sky at night. You can see how the clouds form over a mountain top and then disappear. You can see a flower grow and bloom before your eyes. It's captivating!"

"I moved the Timelapse Film Festival to Joshua Tree a few years ago. It was a natural fit and very well received. We had over 300 folks at our festival at the Joshua Tree Retreat Center. Then COVID hit, so we are still recovering from that. The next festival is planned for 2023."

As an official videographer for Joshua Tree National Park, and with the vast amount of time spent in the park, Kiernan was able to fill a communication gap through his website:

"The 'Joshua Tree Visitors Guide' (www.joshuatree.guide) started as a single page on my 'Joshua Tree Workshops' website. It was called 'Top Ten Tips for Visiting Joshua Tree.' That was back in 2015. I discovered that this was the most visited page on my entire website! Since there was no official Joshua Tree website, I decided to make one. I am in the park about 100 days (and nights) a year, so I have a complete library of images and video from everywhere in the park, covering each season. It has been a fun project to put together. I just launched a new version recently. Check it out!

The workshop Kiernan is holding in August 2023 for the Perseids meteor shower has already sold out, but there are other opportunities in the new year:

"The Perseids Meteor Shower (August 12) is the busiest night in the park for the entire year," shared Kiernan. "If you have not seen it, it is amazing (hint: bring a lawn chair)! 2023 is going to be a perfect year for the meteor shower - the Milky Way will be out, and the moon will not be out, so it will be dark. I am already sold out for 2023, because that night is going to be so amazing!"

"Although Perseids is sold out, you can still sign up for my Milky Way workshops (www.joshuatreeworkshops.com/milkyway). June and July are the best months for the Milky Way in the desert. Yes, it is hot in the summer during the day, but the summer nights are perfect! At

night it is about 80 degrees, with no humidity. And. No. Mosquitoes! And there are no bears in the park! I get asked about bears a lot because people assume there are bears all over California."

"We go out for the evening and shoot the Milky Way. My specialty is that most of my workshops are small (just 3-4 photographers) and I accept all skill levels (you do need to bring your own equipment). I'm an expert Joshua Tree guide. I know where and when to go - and where and when not to go. These days, I only offer my Milky Way workshops during the weeknights, because it has gotten so crowded at the popular night-photography spots on Fridays and Saturdays. I'm sure I am partly to blame for that. I was one of the first to capture the Milky Way as an arch over Arch Rock. Now, that location is a go-to shot for night-photographers world-wide."

"For most of my workshops, I provide post-processing training using Adobe Lightroom Classic. Photography has become so technical that you need to learn how to use photography software in order to craft your image."

Alongside Kiernan's talent at capturing the stunning beauty of our natural wonders, his documentary, "I Thought They Were Protected," captures the gut-wrenching truth about their impending demise.



"I have been filming the Joshua Tree community since I first arrived. My documentary is focused on the effort to get state-wide protection for the Joshua Trees. Since 2020, when the initial filing was made seeking state-wide protections from The California Fish and Game, I have been filming. The petition was filed by a local - Brenden Cummings of The Center for Biological Diversity. The urgency is based on a 2019 UC Riverside study showing that the High Desert ecosystem will not support the Joshua Tree habitat, or their sole pollinator - the Yucca Moth, by the year 2100. That means that in less than 80 years, the Joshua Trees will stop reproducing naturally, and the existing Joshua Trees will die off. That will be the end of our beloved trees. Whether you believe in climate change or not, the data is real. This is happening as we speak."

"COVID has also slowed down this project, but I have continued filming and interviewing the people involved. I received federal permission to interview the Joshua Tree National Park staff as well. My story arc is based on the effort to gain state protections, and it appears that this process will come to a head in the spring of 2023. My documentary will be ready by summer of 2023."

With his boots on the ground more than most, Kiernan has a front row seat to the effects of light pollution and the diminishing future of the Joshua Trees. When asked what things he is witnessing that the rest of us

who aren't out there all the time can't see, he replied, "What has shocked me the most is that there are so many 'bad guys' out there who are destroying the Joshua Tree habitat. I see so many press releases that say, 'I love Joshua Trees, but....', 'I love the Desert, but...'. Again - you don't even need to believe in climate change to see the devastation! I can walk you into the park today and show you that the forests at the lowest elevations are dying or dead (meaning that there is no new growth). Yes, there is a moratorium on 'taking' Joshua Trees currently which has a lot of homeowners understandably upset, but the reason there is a 'lock down' is because the habitat is in real danger - without a master plan."

"Their habitat is being devastated by the effects of climate change, wildfires, and development. If the Joshua Trees disappear, then the entire desert dies. There are real solutions for all these threats, but the major players need to come to the table. My documentary covers all of this. People will be shocked when they see what has been going on. As they say - follow the money."

"People need to get involved. You have a voice. Hundreds of people, just like you, call in to the Fish and Game hearings to help them understand what is at risk. There is a website set up so that people can

stay up to date: www.protectthejoshuatrees.com. The next Fish and Game hearing is in February. You need to write Fish and Game (we provide sample letters) and let them know that the habitat is in danger and needs protection. The Saguaro Cactus is protected in Arizona, and there are 'millions of them! Meanwhile, our San Bernardino Supervisors are distracted, making plans to secede from California. Clearly, they need to get back to the business at hand. Write them as well!"

To write: protectthejoshuatrees.com

To sign up for workshops:
joshuatreeworkshops.com/milkyway

For all other things Casey Kiernan:
icelandphotographersworkshops.com/casey-kiernan



Photo by Casey Kiernan
joshuatreeworkshops.com