

Course Syllabus:
Avian Life History BIOL 830P-02, 3 credits
Summer 2020

Instructor:

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NOTE: Email is my preferred method of contact if you inquire about a personal issue. General questions about the course can be posted on the Frequently Asked Questions Discussion Board on Canvas.

Office Hours: Email to arrange a time for a phone discussion or Zoom meeting

Course Description: This course is an investigation of the major life history stages of birds. We will discuss topics including: evolution of birds, reproduction, migration, flight, and a variety of current topics in ornithology. Assigned readings from the scientific literature, exams, inquiry based activities/assignments, and online discussions will be used to explore these topics. Plan to spend several hours each week on reading, writing, responding to topic discussions, and participating in activities.

Course Objectives:

- 1). Gain familiarity with basic biology of birds
- 2). Examine and discuss recent research for current topics in avian biology
- 3). Learn basic identification skills for birds, students will develop a species list for the local region in which they reside
- 4). Learn techniques used to study birds and identify potential research questions from discussions of current literature

Instructor Role: As your instructor I will provide feedback to students in two ways. First, I will participate in directing online class discussions by providing background information where appropriate, providing initial topics for discussion, reading comments posted by students, and providing clarification or summary information for student comments. In addition I will likely comment on individual student posts, but I may not comment on every single post for every student. Any comments or observations I post will be made available to all students via the

general discussion board, unless they concern a personal matter. Second, students will receive individual feedback for several major assignments.

Required Text & Equipment:

1. A regional field guide.

For students in North America I recommend one of the following three field guides:

- ❖ Dunn, J.L., and J. Alderfer. 2017. National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Seventh Edition.
- ❖ Sibley, David Allen. 2014. The Sibley Guide to Birds, Second Edition.

2. Webcam and Binoculars (Best magnification for beginning birders are 8 x 42 binoculars)

Please let me know if you would like recommendations.

Required Hardware/Software: Students should refer to the eCampus Student orientation course available within Canvas to make sure you meet the minimum hardware/software and internet connection speed required by all UNK eCampus students. You can also access the course via the link below: <https://canvas.unk.edu/courses/25822/pages/minimum-and-recommended-computer-requirements-renewed>

Academic Integrity: UNK's Policy is the maintenance of academic honesty and integrity is a vital concern of the University community. Any student found in violation of the standards of academic honesty shall be subject to both academic and disciplinary sanctions. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: Cheating, Fabrication and Falsification, **Plagiarism**, and Other Acts of Academic Dishonesty. You are expected to uphold the UNK standard of Student Conduct relating to Academic Integrity. You assume full responsibility for the content and integrity of the work you submit. Academic integrity will be strongly enforced in this course and plagiarism will not be tolerated. All assignments will be scanned through Turnitin via Canvas. **Students who plagiarize will fail this course.**

Grading System: Grades will be determined according to the following scheme:

| | Assignments | Points |
|---|--|---------------|
| 1 | Personal Introduction | 10 |
| 2 | Group Topic Assignments | |
| | <i>Topic</i> | 20 |
| | <i>Outline</i> | 30 |
| | <i>One-page Summary</i> | 50 |
| 3 | Quizzes (5, 10pts each) | 50 |
| 4 | Group Discussions (8 discussions, 10pts each - 2 posts required) | 80 |
| 5 | Essay Exams (2, 100pts each) | 200 |
| 6 | Powerpoint Presentation - GroupTopic | 100 |
| 7 | Field Observations & Notebook | 150 |
| | Total Course Points | 690 |

GRADING SCALE

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 93 - 100 % = A | 78 - 79 % = C+ | 60 - 62 % = D- |
| 90 - 92 % = A- | 73 - 77 % = C | 59% or less = F |
| 88 - 89 % = B+ | 70 - 72 % = C- | |
| 83 - 87 % = B | 68 - 69 % = D+ | |
| 80 - 82 % = B- | 63 - 67 % = D | |

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to students with documented disabilities. To receive accommodation services for a disability, students must be registered with UNK Disabilities Services Coordinator, David Brandt, in the Disability Services for Students office, 175 Memorial Student Affairs Building, 308-865-8214 or by email unkdso@unk.edu

STUDENTS WHO ARE PREGNANT:

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to students who are pregnant. To receive accommodation services due to pregnancy, students must contact Cindy Ference in Student Health, 308-865-8219. The following link provides information for students and faculty regarding pregnancy rights. <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/pregnant-and-parenting-students-rights-faqs-college-and-graduate-students>

VETERANS SERVICES: UNK works diligently to support UNK's military community by providing military and veteran students and families with resources and services to help them succeed. Veterans Services assists with the GI Bill process and acts as a liaison between the student and the Veterans Administration. If you need assistance or would like more information, please contact Lori Weed Skarka at 308-865-8520 or unkveterans@unk.edu.

REPORTING STUDENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT:

Reporting allegations of rape, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking enables the University to promptly provide support to the impacted student(s), and to take appropriate action to prevent a recurrence of such sexual misconduct and protect the campus community. Confidentiality will be respected to the greatest degree possible. Any student who believes she or he may be the victim of sexual misconduct is encouraged to report to one or more of the following resources:

Local Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault Advocacy Agency 308-237-2599

Campus Police (or Security) 308-865-8911

Title IX Coordinator 308-865-8655

Retaliation against the student making the report, whether by students or University employees, will not be tolerated.

PLAGIARISM OR CHEATING:

Plagiarism or cheating will not be allowed under any circumstances! Never copy the exact words of any author (from book, newspaper, journal, or website) without giving the author the proper credit. To claim another person's work as your own work is PLAGIARISM! Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with at the time of the occurrence. Please see student code of conduct for comments on the consequences of plagiarism, available at the following url:

http://www.unk.edu/offices/reslife/_documents/university-of-nebraska-at-kearney-student-code-of-conduct.pdf

Class Schedule & Assignments: A general class schedule and reading assignments can be found below. There will be two-three recorded video lectures each week (weeks 1-5) for general lecture topics. I will also assign readings from the primary literature to supplement lecture material. A discussion topic will be provided each week that examines the general topic with respect to the reading from the primary literature. Exams will be essay and will cover topics discussed during weeks 1-5. The final three weeks of class will be focused on current topics presented by student groups. Presentation viewing and discussion will be distributed evenly across the remaining two weeks of class. A detailed schedule will be posted on Canvas. Due dates must be followed and assignments are due by midnight CST on the date given, specific dates will be specified when the assignment is posted. For assignments turned in late, a penalty of 5 points per day will be deducted.

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to modify the class schedule and assignments if necessary; however, students will be informed of minor modifications via Canvas announcements.

Group topic assignment (Current Ornithology)

The field of ornithology is diverse and encompasses a variety of topics, which results in a large number of publications each year. During the lecture/discussion part of this course I will introduce some of the basic concepts and basic biology of birds and will also cover a few areas in more depth, but it will not be possible to cover the entire scope of topics in this course. Therefore, the class will work together to write and present a series of topics to summarize key areas of research within the field. Students will first be randomly assigned to a group of two or three students, then as a group you will choose a topic of interest from a list provided during the second week of class. Groups will prepare a short one-page summary of the topic via Google docs and include an appropriate paper from the primary scientific literature. Groups will also then prepare a short 12 - 15 minute presentation, on the topic. During the last two weeks of class, students will be responsible for watching, commenting and discussing topics presented by the class.

To prepare the one-page summary and presentation, groups should read several key papers on your group's topic from the relevant literature (e.g., journals such as *The Auk*, *Condor*, *IBIS*, *Waterbirds*, *Journal of Field Ornithology*, etc.). Also, we will use Zoom to record group

presentations then you will share the recorded file with me and I will post them on Canvas. During group topic presentations, we will use discussion boards to identify interesting points brought out by the presentations and written summaries provided by each group.

Field Notebooks & Observation Activities

Students will also complete observations of birds in the field via observation activities and via virtual field trips. I will provide 3 virtual field trips that you can either join me via Zoom in real-time or participate in, by watching the recording. Observation activities will be assigned to practice basic bird identification skills. Four observation activities and three virtual field trips will be required throughout the course and a field notebook will be used to document observations and species observed. The final field notebook will also include a species list of all the birds observed throughout the duration of the course. Students are encouraged to participate in additional observation activities throughout the course and you are welcome to include these in your field notebooks as well.

Expectations: Students are expected to keep up with assigned course material and are responsible for checking announcements and assignments for each week. All grades will be based on participation and the quality of the assignment or discussion board post. For most discussion board posts, content should be a critical evaluation of the topic we discuss and should not be a brief thoughtless response, such as "this was a really cool study," OR "I agree with the other members of the group," etc. I expect students to spend time thinking about ideas, providing quality comments and/or posing articulate questions for each discussion topic. Most weeks will require two or more discussion posts per student. I **will not require** all discussion board posts to have comments with citations; however, I expect students will be able to use information gleaned from lectures or assigned primary literature to provide appropriately detailed comments.

In addition, I expect students to use appropriate language (e.g., profanity and derogatory comments are unacceptable), to respect differences in opinion, and to show evidence of knowledge on the subject matter (i.e., gleaned from assigned readings).

| Table 1. Avian Life History Course Schedule | | | | | |
|--|-------------|---|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Week | Date | Assignments | Discussion Board | Lecture Topics | Reading Topic |
| 1 | 5/26-6/2 | Personal Introduction, Avian Topography & Identification Skills Activity, and Quiz 1 - Due June 2 | 1 | Introduction to Birds, Evolution of Birds (Avian Orders), Feathers | Avian Speciation |
| 2 | 6/2-6/9 | Field Notebooks, Observation Activity 1 | 2 | Flight, Avian | Migratory Connectivity, |

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|---|---|---|
| | | and Quiz 2 - Due June 9 | | Migration, & Avian Physiology | Physiology |
| 3 | 6/9- 6/16 | Observation Activity 2, Current Topic Assignment and Quiz 3 - Due June 16; Exam 1-DUE June 16 | 3 | Avian Foraging Adaptations, Avian Communities | Social Networking in Avian Communities |
| 4 | 6/16- 6/23 | Observation Activity 3, Current Topic Outline, and Quiz 4 - Due June 23 | 4 | Avian Reproduction: Mating Systems, Offspring development | Maternal Effects |
| 5 | 6/23- 6/30 | Observation Activity 4, Current Topic Summary, and Quiz 5 - DUE June 30 | 5 | Avian Reproduction: Reproductive Strategies, Role of Kin Selection | Extra-pair fertilizations , brood parasitism |
| 6 | 6/30- 7/7 | Current Topic Presentations Due July 7 | 6 | Finish Current Topic Presentations | |
| 7 | 7/7- 7/14 | Exam 2 - DUE July 14 | 7 | View & Discuss Current Topic Presentations | |
| 8 | 7/14- 7/17 | Final Field Notebook Due - July 17 | 8 | View & Discuss Current Topic Presentations | |