

Valdosta State University
Department of Biology
BIOL 6000: Special Topics – Field Methods in Ornithology
Course Syllabus, Summer I 2023

Instructor: Dr. Erin Grabarczyk

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Office drop-in hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 1-2PM, BSC 2216

Lab: M-F: 8:00-11:50AM

Lecture: M-F: 12:00-12:50PM

Required materials: National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, by Jon L. Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer. A field notebook.

If needed, binoculars will be supplied to all students.

Course overview: The purpose of this course is to explore methods in field ornithology used to ask questions of avian biology, ecology, and behavior. Students will learn various techniques such as how to identify birds by sight and sound, mist net and band birds, safe handling practices, point counts, line transects, keeping a field notebook, taking behavioral observations of wild birds, and working with data. This course builds off of material covered in BIOL3950 (Ornithology), but focuses specifically on survey techniques, field methodology, and analyses used in current ornithology research.

BIOL 6000 student learning objectives:

1. Identify migratory and resident birds of the southeastern USA by sight and sound.
2. Learn and practice a variety of methodologies used to study birds including mist netting and banding, census tracking, nest monitoring, and behavioral observations.
3. Keep a detailed field notebook.
4. Develop and test a hypothesis through an independent project, observe birds in the wild, collect and analysis data, and present findings in a presentation.
5. Graduate students will present a guest lecture based on a topic approved by Dr. Grabarczyk and their major advisor.

Prerequisites for BIOL 6000: Admission to the Biology graduate program.

Class Policies

- **Classroom etiquette:** Please be on time. Please turn off your cell phone. If you are disrupting the class, I will ask you to leave. Do not use the internet in class unless the class requires it. Be respectful of yourself, your classmates, and your instructor.
- **Transportation to field sites:** A Biology department van will be available to transport students to field sites. The van will leave BSC promptly at 8AM. Students that arrive late will need to meet the class at designated field sites.
- **Attire:** For class, please wear walking shoes and dress for the weather. We will often be working in areas that have ticks, mosquitos, biting flies, poison ivy, poison sumac, etc.. **Acceptable clothes include long pants, socks, and comfortable walking shoes. You may wish to bring a hat, insect repellent, drinking water, and wear sunscreen.**

- **Ask questions:** If you have a question or don't understand something let me know. I am more than willing to take as much time as necessary to help you understand a concept, but you have to ask questions.
- **Email:** Use your VSU account for e-mail communication.
- **Cheating:** You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate Catalogs that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. [The policies can be found at <http://valdosta.edu> under Student Code of Conduct.] If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test. All forms of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to collusion, fabrication, cheating and plagiarism are worthy of punishment according to the policy set forth by Valdosta State University. This includes doing your own work on assignments. While you are allowed to brainstorm with each other, it is expected that your answers are your own. **I will not tolerate any form of cheating.**

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities who are experiencing barriers in this course may contact the Access Office for assistance in determining and implementing reasonable accommodations. The Access Office is located in University Center Room 4136 Entrance 5. The phone numbers are 229-245-2498 (V), 229-375-5871. For more information, please visit [VSU's Access Office](#) or email: access@valdosta.edu

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Assessments:

- Field notebook (50 points)
- Point counts (15 points)
- Concept map (15 points)
- Mist net extraction demonstration (10 points)
- Safe handling demonstration (10 points)
- Final project (50 points)
- Final exam (100 points)
- GRAD STUDENTS:** Class lecture (100 points)

BIOL 6000 Grading Scale:

Letter	%	Points
A	90-100	315-350

B	80-89	280-314
C	70-79	245-279
D	60-69	210-244
F	<60	<210

Tentative course schedule*

Date	Week	Topics	Assignments
May 11	1	Lab: Mist nest management. Lecture: Introduction to mist netting, banding, safe handling of birds.	
May 12	1	Lab: Bird extraction, safe handling, binoculars. Lecture: Introduce bird list 1.	Bird list 1, Select research paper topics.
May 15	2	Lab: Mist netting @ field station. Lecture: Conservation challenges facing birds today. Introduce bird list 2.	Bird list 2
May 16	2	Lab: Mist netting @ field station. Playback experiments (territorial interactions) Lecture: How to measure behavior	
May 17	2	Lab: ID color-banded birds on campus, territory mapping. Lecture: How to measure behavior – introduce independent projects	Start independent project collection
May 18	2	Lab: Mist netting @ field station, check-in for independent projects Lecture: Sample collection and processing	
May 19	2	Lab: Mist netting @ field station, finish data collection round 1. Lecture: Identify species, age, and sex of birds in hand + introduce concept maps	First round of independent project data collection due
May 22	3	Lab: Mist netting @ field station Lecture: Identify species, age, and sex of birds in hand. Introduce bird list 3.	Bird list 3
May 23	3	Lab: Mist netting @ field station Lecture: Introduction to census techniques + census assignment	Concept map due
May 24	3	Lab: Mist netting @ field station, finish data collection round 2. Lecture: Census techniques, merlin app & website.	Last day for 2 nd round of independent data collection
May 25	3	Lab: Field trip (practice merlin). Lecture: Working with nestlings.	
May 26	3	Lab: Mist netting @ field station Lecture: How to give a research presentation, working with data.	Census assignment due, last day for handling and net extraction demonstrations
May 30	4	Research presentations	Field notebook due
June 1	4	Research presentations	
June 2	4	Final exam	

***Changes will be announced on BlazeView. Weather permitting, plan to spend most of every lab and lecture outdoors.**