A. COURSE INFORMATION

Course number/section: BIOL 4425.001; BIOL 4425.101 (lab)
Class meeting time: Lecture – TR 8-9:15 am; Lab – F 8-10:50
Class location: Lecture – ECMS 207; Lab – ECMS 114

B. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Kim Withers
Office location: NRC 3205
Office Hours: 10-12 MW, 9:30-11 TR
Telephone: 825-5907
Email: Kim.Withers@tamu-edu
Appointments: Call to set up an appointment outside of office hours

C. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Course Description
Systematics, anatomy, physiology, ecology, behavior, and field identification of birds. SMTE 0091 is a co-requisite for this course. Documented completion of this safety training is required early in the semester for continued participation in this course. Safety training given during a laboratory meeting early in the semester is required for continued participation in the course.

Extended Course Description
Students in this course will investigate the natural history, biology, ecology, evolution, and conservation of birds around the world. The lab will be focused on bird identification in the field including visual, auditory, habitat, and behavioral traits and methods for studying birds in the field.

D. PREREQUISITES AND CO-REQUISITES

Prerequisites
None

Corequisite
SMTE 0091 Biological Laboratory Safety Seminar

E. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS, READINGS, & SUPPLIES

Required Textbooks

A bird field guide—pick one of the following:

**Robbins, C. S., B. Bruun, and H. Zim. 2001. Birds of North America: A Guide to Field Identification (2nd, revised edition). New York: St. Martin’s Press. Note: this is the guide I usually recommend, however, the most recent printing was poorly done — the colors were very washed out (check the shorebird pages—if they look yellow, then not a good sign). Feel free to pick up either the 1st (yellow cover) or the unrevised, early version of the 2nd edition (blue cover)—the taxonomy is not up to date, but that won’t be a big problem, and the colors in the plates are glorious.

Dunn, J. L. and J. Alderfer. 2017. National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 7th edition. Washington, DC: National Geographic. Note: this is a beautiful book, but it suffers from being a little too large and bulky to carry in the field. It is not that bad however, so I recommend this one over Sibley or the more recent printings of Robbins et al.
D. A. Sibley. 2003. The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America (1st edition). New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Note: I am not a big fan of this book and don’t recommend it, largely because there are too few birds on each page, I don’t like the layout of text, maps, and plates together, and you really need both the Eastern and Western versions to cover Texas well. But it is acceptable and many people love it. I think the format is difficult for beginners.

There are a few other guides out there, but I don’t recommend them.

Recommended Books


Other Required References

Additional readings from the primary literature and other sources will be assigned throughout the semester.

Required Supplies

Field Notebook—MUST be a Rite in the Rain notebook.

Best page format choices (from Amazon):

Rite in the Rain Spiral Notebook – Journal #393 (just lined paper throughout).
Rite in the Rain Birders Journal #195 (this has helpful diagrams of birds, and pages that can be used for drawings or diagrams.

Binoculars—MUST be 8X42 or 8X50

Recommendation

Nikon Prostaff 3S Binoculars, 8X42 (~$120, multiple vendors). With Nikon optics, these are a very good value and will give you good service for a long time.

For other top scoring binoculars for less the $200, see this review https://www.audubon.org/news/category-get-game; any of the recommended models will work well for you if you have a little bit more to spend.

If these live up to the reviews then they are an exceptional value for an inexpensive, entry-level binocular. Orion ShoreView 8X42 Waterproof Binoculars (right now on sale for $49.99 https://www.telescope.com/catalog/product.jsp?productId=9471&gclid=Cj0KCQjw3uboBRDCAR1sAO2XcYA8spMsc9740DjLhGJ1jMldI3FqOqG1mRH2WMnkjh27eyTnQj1uAhM0EALw_wcB). I do not have direct knowledge of the quality of these binoculars.

Recommended Supplies

Binocular harness system to replace standard binocular neck strap (search on “binocular harness). Prices range from $20-$50. These harnesses (and there are several styles) take the strain off your neck and make it much easier to spend long days in the field. You can usually pick up one of the basic styles at Academy.

Large fanny pack, multi-pocketed field vest, or something like a belted game bag or shell pouch so that you can quickly and easily get your field guide, field notebook, and water etc. in hand.

F. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

The objective of this course is to provide students with an understanding of the varied roles of birds in ecosystems, how the environment has shaped their biology and ecology, and the issues and challenges of conserving birds.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:
1. DEMONSTRATE knowledge of biology and ecology of birds
2. UNDERSTAND the biogeography of birds and the reasons for their patterns of distribution
3. UNDERSTAND the biotic and abiotic interactions that shape bird communities
4. UNDERSTAND the challenges to and opportunities for bird conservation
5. DEMONSTRATE the ability to identify birds by sight and sound.
6. PLAN & CARRY OUT a field study on some aspect of bird ecology or behavior

G. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS & ACTIVITIES

Lecture, readings with discussion, case studies, and student presentations will be the bulk of the “lecture” portion of the course. For the lab, most of our time will be spent in the field observing birds, learning to identify birds, learning how to make behavioral and other research-oriented observations on birds in natural settings. There will be some in-lab activities associated with bird anatomy and physiology late in the semester or during bad weather days.

H. MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams (2)</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies (3)</td>
<td>1-3, 4</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist Compilation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification Practicals (3)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Lab Exercises (3)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Study Extended Abstract &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>850</td>
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Grades will be assigned as follows:
A = 90% or greater
B = 80-89%
C = 70-79%
D = 60-69%
F = <70%

I. COURSE CONTENT/SCHEDULE

See separate schedule document

J. COURSE POLICIES

Attendance/Tardiness

You are expected to attend every lecture and lab. Courtesy dictates that you will be on time for lecture. For case studies and associated discussion activities you will not get credit for the in-class portion if you do not attend class that day.

Make sure that you arrive at the time directed for assembly, not at the time of departure. We will leave promptly at the time of departure. YOU WILL BE LEFT BEHIND IF YOU ARE NOT ON TIME.

Late Work and Make-up Exams

Late work is not accepted.

For case studies and associated discussion activities you will not get credit for the in-class portion of the activity if you do not attend class that day. You may be offered the opportunity to complete the outside of class portion – but you should make those arrangements PRIOR to the absence.
Make-up lecture exams are only given in the case of extreme circumstances, such as hospitalization or death. Documentation of the circumstances through the appropriate on-campus division will be expected and arrangements must be made PRIOR to the exam for a make-up exam to be given. If you have a University-sponsored event (e.g., student athletic events) that takes you out of town, then you must make arrangements to take the exam prior to the event, and ideally will take the exam before you go.

There are NO make-ups given for lab exams. You must take the lab exam on the day it is scheduled.

Extra Credit

There is NO such thing as “extra credit” in this class. In the words of Spongebob Squarepants and Mrs. Puff:

Spongebob: “Mrs. Puff, I don’t feel like I really did anything.”
Mrs. Puff: “That’s how extra credit is supposed to feel.”

For more about my attitude toward extra credit, see this article by Jack Slay Jr. http://chronicle.com/article/No-Extra-Credit-For-You/44956

Cell Phone Use

Please turn off and stow your cell phone when you come to class.

Laptop Use

Many studies have shown that laptops in the classroom are mostly a distraction (to both you and the people around you); this article describes some of the issues http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom. You may get more words than when you take notes on the computer but the increased number of words does not translate into better grades on quizzes or tests.

While more words were recorded, with more precision, by laptop typists, more ended up being less: regardless of whether a quiz on the material immediately followed the lecture or took place after a week, the pen-and-paper students performed better. The act of typing effectively turns the note-taker into a transcription zombie, while the imperfect recordings of the pencil-pusher reflect and excite a process of integration, creating more textured and effective modes of recall. D. Rockmore, “The Case for Banning Laptops in the Classroom” The New Yorker, 6 June 2014.

I think you are generally better off to take notes by hand and transcribing them later. I will tolerate laptop use in class as long as you limit yourself to taking notes. I will also ask that if you use a laptop you sit in a particular area of the classroom so that you do not distract other students and so that I can more easily monitor your laptop use. If I see you are doing other things, like surfing the web, I will ask you to turn the laptop off.

Food in Class

Food or drinks are allowed in the lecture classroom but cannot be taken into the lab.

Missed Exam

See “Late Work and Make-up Exams” policies above.

K. COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- Academic Integrity (University)
  University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work). In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade.
• **Classroom/Professional Behavior**  
  Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

• **Statement of Civility**  
  Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

• **Deadline for Dropping a Course with a Grade of W (University)**  
  I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Please consult the Academic Calendar (http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/calendar/) for the last day to drop a course.

• **Grade Appeals (College of Science and Engineering)**  
  As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules website at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html, and the College of Science and Engineering Grade Appeals webpage at http://sci.tamucc.edu/students/GradeAppeal.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the chair or director of the appropriate department or school, the Office of the College of Science and Engineering Dean, or the Office of the Provost.

• **Disability Services**  
  The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call (361) 825-5816 or visit Disability Services in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

  If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

  [http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/](http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/)
- **Statement of Academic Continuity**
  In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

L. **OTHER INFORMATION**

- **Academic Advising**
  The College of Science & Engineering requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. Meetings are by appointment only; advisors do not take walk-ins. Please call or stop by the Advising Center to check availability and schedule an appointment. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Center for Instruction 350 or can be reached at (361) 825-3928.

**GENERAL DISCLAIMER**

I reserve the right to modify the information, schedule, assignments, deadlines, and course policies in this syllabus if and when necessary. I will announce such changes in a timely manner during regularly scheduled lecture periods.