

NRM 5302
Avian Ecology
Instructor: Dan Collins
RAS 126
930 AM – 1045 AM, Tuesday and Thursday
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, or by appointment.



Course Overview

The fascination with birds is a shared experience between humans and nature. Birds have been a source of wonder, inspiration, and companionship throughout history. In Avian Ecology we will cover a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to migration, foraging ecology, mate choice, mating systems, and reproductive behavior. The course will emphasize the importance of avian ecology in order to learn how best to manage and work towards conservation of this natural resource that has been shaping the human-nature experience for millennia.

Each week (***schedule below***) we will spend lecture on a topic from Avian Ecology, discussing theory, research and monitoring techniques, and then considering how the topic can be applied in management scenarios. Assignments will be varied but useful, ranging from discussing theory / techniques, reading papers, summarizing said papers and discussing (i.e., Wait what? You have to write and talk!), quizzes, eBird lists, and hands-on experience through field trips. By the end of the class, you should be able to:

- Understand the status of bird populations and communities globally, be able to identify major threats to birds, and the management strategies used to conserve and maintain healthy populations
- Foster an appreciation for avian diversity, learn major avian groups, and be able to identify ONE maybe more bird species by sight and sound
- Become more proficient with basic field ornithology methods (e.g., point counts, banding, mist netting, rocket-netting, etc.), and how these methods are used in ecological and evolutionary studies of birds

Required Apps

eBird: <https://ebird.org/home>

Merlin: <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

Recommended Text

Wiens, J.A. The Ecology of Bird Communities Volumes I & II. Cambridge Studies in Ecology

Sutherland, W.J., I. Newton, and R.E. Green. Bird Ecology and Conservation. Techniques in Ecology and Conservation Series.

These books cover topics beyond what we will touch on in class, but by starting with first principles you will have the tools to learn those things on your own when you need them. The material in the book can be a little dense sometimes, but those that dive deep will be rewarded.

Assignments

- **Reading Assignments**
 - Read select paper and summarize in your own words. Do not pull directly from the Abstract (it will be obvious if you do!). Be prepared to have a group discussion about the paper during class.
- **Quizzes**
 - Short 10-20 question quizzes covering anything discussed in class or during field trips. For example, Bird ID, proper technique used, theory discussed, etc.
- **Field Trips**
 - Attendance and participation. Show up and talk, you'll be good.
- **eBird Lists**
 - Every week, spend at least 10 minutes creating 2 eBird lists and share them with me by the following weeks first class (basically every Tuesday) unless told otherwise.

Grading Policy

I DO NOT ROUND! Grades are based on Discussion and Participation (10 pts / discussion), field trip participation (10 pts / trip), eBird lists (5 pts / list) and quizzes (20 points / quiz): Letter grades follow: $100 > A \geq 90 > B \geq 80 > C \geq 70 > D \geq 60 > F$. There is no curve.

<u>Assignment Type</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
Reading Discussion and Participation	90
Quizzes	100
Field Trips	80
<u>eBird</u>	<u>120</u>
Total	390

Attendance

Showing up is the only way to get the material you need. If you don't come to class, your grade will reflect it with no penalty needed from me. In the event of an excused absence, make arrangements with me to go over material ahead of time.

Class etiquette:

Please turn cell phones off at the beginning of each class. Put away all computers during lectures and do not web surf or email during class. In this course, we value a positive and respectful learning environment. Please adhere to the following class etiquette guidelines to ensure a smooth and productive experience for everyone. Attend all classes regularly and arrive punctually, notifying the instructor in advance if you must miss a class. Actively participate in class discussions, respecting the opinions of your classmates. Use respectful language in all forms of communication, maintaining professionalism in emails. Keep the classroom clean and organized. If you bring an apple for the instructor on the second day of class, you will earn one extra point on your first exam. Uphold principles of academic honesty and integrity. Dress appropriately for the learning environment and provide constructive feedback to peers and the instructor. Your commitment to these guidelines contributes to a positive and enriching learning atmosphere.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty includes copying, sharing, or obtaining information from an unauthorized source, attempting to take credit for the intellectual work of another person, falsifying information, and giving or receiving information about a test, quiz, or assignment to other students. Any student involved in academic dishonesty will receive no credit (0) for work done and/or may be penalized in accordance with published University Rules.

Statement Regarding Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):

The University does not recommend or endorse any specific AI tools or resources. Students should be aware that many generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) store user input and may use this data to train future models. For this reason, students should never upload or share personal, confidential, or identifiable information—such as names, ID numbers, health data, or assignment submissions containing such details—into any generative AI platform. When using AI tools, students should verify whether the tool complies with student privacy standards as indicated by the University.

Students may use AI as part of their research and preparation for assignments, or as a text editor, but text that is submitted must be written by the student. For example, students may use AI to generate ideas, questions, or summaries that they then revise, expand, or cite properly. Students should also be aware of the potential benefits and limitations of using AI as a tool for learning and research. AI systems can provide helpful information or suggestions, but they are not always reliable or accurate. Students should critically evaluate the sources, methods, and outputs of AI systems. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct. If you have any questions about this policy or if you are unsure whether a particular use of AI is acceptable, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification.

University Programs and Policies**Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Statement:**

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC,

SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartz@sulross.edu or ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832. Please note that instructors are not permitted to provide classroom accommodation to a student until the appropriate verification has been received.

SRSU Student Responsibilities Statement:

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

SRSU Distance Education Statement:

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

Technical Support. SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support: Toll Free: 888.837.6055.

Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

SRSU Library Services:

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, 6 and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu/. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123). No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

Counseling:

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting [Timelycare/SRSU](#). The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

Lobo Den:

The Lobo Den Tutoring Center offers FREE tutoring support to help you excel in your courses. Whether you need assistance in Writing, Math, Science, or other subjects, we're here to help!

Important Information:

- Drop-in and Scheduled Appointments: Flexible options to fit your needs.
- Hours of Operation: Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM.
- Workshops: Attend our regularly hosted academic workshops on STEM topics and professional development, often in collaboration with specialized faculty.
- Location: BWML (aka the library) Room 128.
- Contact Us: For more information or to book an appointment, email tutoring@sulross.edu or call (432) 837-8726.

Looking for additional support?

- Tutor.com offers FREE 24/7 online tutoring in over 200 subjects, including specialized support for ESL and ELL learners with native Spanish-speaking tutors.
- Access Tutor.com via Blackboard: Log in to your Blackboard account to get started anytime, anywhere.

Take advantage of these valuable resources to boost your confidence and performance in your classes. They look forward to helping you succeed!

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Introduction to Avian Ecology, conservation, and field methods			
25-Aug	Introduction, bird diversity, status trends	Rosenberg et al. 2019	
27-Aug	Intro to monitoring and Field Techniques (Dove banding)	Bander's Study Guide (1-5)	Discussion
1-Sep	Why Birds Matter	Whelan et al. 2015	eBird List
3-Sep	Foraging Ecology		Discussion
8-Sep	Breeding Ecology		eBird List, Quiz
10-Sep	Dr. Chavez: Case Study		
15-Sep	Major Drivers of bird loss / decline	Stanton et al. 2018	eBird List
17-Sep	Policies and Partnership		Discussion / Quiz
22-Sep	Birding in Town; Location TBD		eBird List
24-Sep	Sample Design and Analysis	Pollock et al. 2002	
29-Sep	Impacts of Invasive Species	Loss et al. 2013	eBird List, Quiz
1-Oct	Mist Netting; TBD		Discussion
6-Oct	Habitat Restoration and Management	Bernardes et al. 2026	eBird List
8-Oct	Conservation on Private Lands	Elmore and Dahlgren 2016	Discussion
13-Oct	Migration and Dispersal	Ruegg et al. 2020	eBird List, Quiz
15-Oct	Waterfowl Banding - Balmorhea		Discussion
20-Oct	Ecology of Bird Populations	Saether et al. 2016	eBird List
22-Oct	No Class		
27-Oct			
29-Oct	Avian Diversity and Classification	Tobias et al. 2020	eBird List / Discussion
3-Nov	Birding in Town; Location TBD		
5-Nov	Dr. Frank: Birds as Outreach		eBird List
10-Nov	Community Science / Monitoring	Neate-Clegg et al. 2020	
12-Nov	Birding in Town; Location TBD		Discussion / eBird List
17-Nov	Waterfowl Banding - Balmorhea		
19-Nov	Future of Bird Conservation	Langham et al. 2015	eBird List / Discussion/ Quiz
24-Nov	No Class Thanksgiving Break		
26-Nov			
1-Dec	Hancock Hill Point Count Trial		eBird List
Final	NM Sandhill Crane Trapping	Optional	