**BIRDS OF SOUTHERN WISCONSIN**

- **SYLLABUS -**

**Laboratory:** 321 Noland (Meet in Noland Hall lobby on Mills Street for all *outdoor* labs)
7:45-9:40 AM **BEFORE** Spring Recess
7:00-9:40 AM **AFTER** Spring Recess

**Discussion:** 321 Noland
9:55-10:45 AM

**Course website:** [http://ornithology.wisc.edu/521](http://ornithology.wisc.edu/521)

**TA:**

- office:_______________________
- phone:______________________
- email:_______________________

**Co-TA:**

- office:_______________________
- phone:______________________
- email:_______________________

**REQUIRED MATERIALS:** (available at the UW-Bookstore)

1. **Course text:** National Geographic *Birding Essentials*. This book is an excellent introduction to *general* bird identification. It effectively covers the basic concepts of bird identification (a rather abstract process) and how to accommodate inevitable variations in plumages. Thoroughly packed with useful information, this book is appropriate for the level of AnSci/Zoo 521. Unfortunately, this book lacks a good discussion of avian vocalizations. Instead, read chapter 8 (Voice) in Sibley’s *birding basics* available as a PDF on the course website. We will also devote an indoor lab to song/call analysis.

2. **Field guide:** The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America. Originally published as a large book covering the entirety of North America (but excluding most of Mexico), the publishers have recently divided this work into two (Eastern and Western North America) manageable field guides. Akin to how Roger Tory Peterson revolutionized bird identification, Sibley presents a system appropriate for both novices and experts alike. The plate drawings are excellent and accompanied by practical species information. Electronic guides are **not** a substitute for the printed book.

*Wisconsin Bird Watching, A Year-Round Guide* (recommended; currently out of print, Pages 7-36 [required for laboratory] are available as a PDF document on the course website). Unlike the Sibley field guide, whose primary purpose is species identification across a large geographical range, this book provides more comprehensive information on birds and birding exclusively in Wisconsin. Topics include specific eco-regions, birding hotspots, seasonal changes to the avifauna, and a host of other useful resources. It also provides expanded descriptions for 100 of the most commonly observed birds in Wisconsin. In fact, we can (almost) guarantee that you will see and hear *all* of these species before the course ends.
We encourage you to use The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America as it set a good standard of merit. However, any of the following field guides are suitable for use in this course: (1) Peterson's Field Guide to Eastern Birds; (2) National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America; (3) Focus Guide to the Birds of North America by Ken Kaufman; or (4) Birds of Eastern North America, A photographic guide by Paul Sterry and Brian Small (photographic guides are appropriate only for students with prior birding experience). Older editions of field guides may have common names for some birds which are no longer valid; the master bird list (provided to you) contains all of the current nomenclature. Lastly, we recommend Wisconsin Birds, A Seasonal and Geographical Guide by Stanley Temple. This optional book provides a synopsis of the Wisconsin Checklist Project, an initiative to monitor long-term trends for birds found in Wisconsin. Data summaries provide useful information for the more avid birder, including county-level sighting frequencies and average monthly abundance.

BRING YOUR FIELD GUIDES AND NOTEBOOK TO LAB AND DISCUSSION EVERY WEEK!

3. Binoculars: Due to the nature of bird observation, each student is required to have binoculars. We are proud to have available to everyone enrolled in AnSci/Zoo 521 premium-quality binoculars (Vortex Viper 8X42). These binoculars will improve tremendously your observational and learning experiences. To obtain these binoculars, you will be required to check them out. Doing so incurs some personal liability, much like borrowing a book from the library or electronic equipment from DoIT. Please read carefully the Binocular and Case Check-out Form and Cardinal rules for binocular care. The checkout period is for the entire semester. If you opt not to use this equipment, you will still need to obtain binoculars on your own (try your parents or friends). During the second week of class, we will thoroughly review proper binocular care and usage.

BRING YOUR BINOCULARS TO ALL SUBSEQUENT LABS AND FIELD TRIPS!

Bring your binoculars to all subsequent laboratories. If you forget them, access to other binoculars is not possible and you will lose some points (see #10 below). If you are considering purchasing binoculars, ask your TA for additional information. The first few pages of the product catalog from Eagle Optics (a local company in Middleton, WI) [http://www.eagleoptics.com](http://www.eagleoptics.com) is a great place for general binocular information.

4. Bird Songs and calls: The songs and calls of birds you need to learn are available on the course website ([http://ornithology.wisc.edu](http://ornithology.wisc.edu)). These pre-packaged digital recordings can be downloaded directly to your computer, iPod, or other playback device. While organized by coverage in discussion section, we encourage you to explore
alternate ways of organization to help you learn best. Your TA will discuss this with you during class. If you want to purchase a CD containing all of the Eastern North American bird songs, we recommend either A Field Guide to Bird Songs: Eastern Region (Stokes) or Peterson's Guide to Eastern/Central Bird Songs. Other bird song CDs are available in local bookstores, Wild Bird Unlimited (Middleton), Eagle Optics (Middleton) or at online retailers. The Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds is also an excellent online resource (http://macaulaylibrary.org). We recommend listening to as many different recordings of bird species as possible. Together with a healthy dose of enthusiasm, these tools – including your course instructors – will help you to learn not only the birds of Southern Wisconsin, but a system of identification applicable to birds anywhere in the World.

5. Clothing: Warm clothing is a must as we will be outside for hours, often standing in the cold, wind, and rain. Bring hats, gloves, mittens, and really warm boots. Standing in one spot for long periods of time can quickly become miserable if the cold seeps through your boots! Also, if you have sensitive skin, you may want to wear sun screen (even in the winter) and a heavy face cream to prevent wind and sun burn.

6. Field Notebook: Your field notebook must be waterproof and sturdy (no spirals). We recommend Dietzgen engineering notebooks (orange) or "Rite in Rain" (yellow) notebooks. Check the University Bookstore (art section) or online retailers.

Field Notebook Requirements:
I. Name on outside and inside cover
II. Table of Contents
   1. Leave about 2-3 pages blank in the front of the notebook to serve as a Table of Contents. List here locations and dates of each lab or field trip, as well as the page number on which they can be located in your field notebook.
III. Appendix of first sightings for each year
   1. In the back of your book, list each first sighting in chronological order with the date (and page number). If you repeat this every year, you will begin to see patterns of arrival of migrating birds. Place an asterisk next to birds you are recording for the first time ever.
IV. Entry for each day in the field (lab, field trips, private bird outings)
   1. Record the current date and time.
   2. Location: List the city or township, county, state, nearby roads, park names, or any other information that could help you or someone else find that location again.
   3. Weather: Record the temperature (in degrees), wind speed (in mph or using the Beaufort scale) and direction, cloud cover, and the type and amount (in inches) of any precipitation.
   4. Record all bird sightings, sounds, and other observations. This may include all or some of the following: gender, number, behaviors, location of activity, and any interesting notes such as molting, or abnormal plumage. Use drawings to augment descriptions of habitats or birds.
V. Other entries depending on individual situation and needs. For example:
   1. Specimens collected - ONLY with proper U.S. Fish & Wildlife collection permits or CITES permits! It is illegal to collect even a feather without a permit.
   2. Nest locations (do not disturb nesting birds)
   3. Counts of birds at roost sites
Example entries from a top-quality field notebook:

7. Grading: Letter grades are assigned within percentage intervals using a class-wide curve of all scores. **Note:** AnSci/Zoo 521 is extremely competitive. Cumulative scores from the best students often range from 96-98%. Thus, even though a grading curve is implemented, there is usually no change from a straight-scale (i.e. 90-100%: A; 88-89%: AB; 80-87%: B; etc.). Nevertheless, we will **NOT** curve upward.

Your final grade will be calculated out of 230 points based on the following:

a.) **Avian topography quiz (10 points):** This quiz will be given during the 3rd week of class in your discussion section. See laboratory handout.

b.) **11 Weekly Discussion Quizzes (5 points each; lowest score dropped):** These brief weekly quizzes will test you on the birds assigned for the previous week.

c.) **2 Field Quizzes: (10 points each):** Identification of birds by sight and/or sound in the field. These quizzes will be given during the first part of a regularly scheduled
laboratory outing. They are designed to provide you with feedback about your field identification performance before each of the two field exams.

d.) 2 Field Exams (30 [mid-term], 40 [final] points): Identification of birds by sight and/or sound in the field. Your TA will discuss with you the specifics of the exam.

e.) 2 Discussion Exams (15 [mid-term], 25 [final] points): Identification of birds from slides, video, recorded songs, or specimens; questions on taxonomic names, behavior, field marks, concepts and techniques presented in indoor and outdoor labs.


9. Attendance: You are required to attend and participate in your assigned laboratory and discussion section. Each missed morning lab will result in the automatic loss of 10 points from your total of 230 possible points. Since space is limited and we strive to maintain a good student to TA ratio, there will be no opportunity to attend different labs or discussions. Excusable absences (a very rare occurrence and always known in advance) will be handled on a case-by-case basis by your TA and Dr. Berres.

10. Participation (20 points): AnSci/Zoo 521 – Birds of Southern Wisconsin - offers many unforgettable and lifelong enriching experiences of which we regard as much of its allure. But on the same hand, it is also a challenging activity that, for many of you, may be entirely new (not a problem!). So while there is plenty of opportunity for camaraderie and we want you to enjoy yourselves (how could you possibly not running around outside looking at birds) realize that when we are birding together – you are still in class! As such, we expect a collegial attitude toward learning, not only from you but everyone in the class. This means that you should be an active on-task participant, discuss with your TA and classmates bird-related topics, and above all else: be quiet while birding in the field!

Because this is so important, 20 points of your total grade will consist of discretionary participation points awarded by both of your TAs. For example, expect spot checks for your binoculars, field books, and notebooks [on-task]. The best advice? Engage yourself! Stick close to your TA and continually listen-look-listen. I guarantee it will be well worth the effort.

11. Weekend Field Trips: You are required to attend two (2) weekend field trips during the semester. Each missed field trip below the two required will result in the direct loss of 20 points from your 230 point total. You may go on as many trips as you like as long as there is space (see Weekend Field Trips handout). Please note that your name on the list affects space availability and planning for the trip. If you are signed up for a field trip and do not attend, five (5) points will be subtracted from your grade total. If you find that you cannot go on a trip you signed up for, you must ask a TA or Dr. Berres to remove your name from the list at least 24 hours prior to the departure date.
12. Point allocation summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum points:</th>
<th>for:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>avian topography quiz (3rd week)</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>weekly quizzes (11 administered; lowest score dropped)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>field quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>field exams</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>discussion exams</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>field notebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>(-10)</td>
<td>for each missed lab</td>
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<tr>
<td>(-20)</td>
<td>for each missed weekend trip below the two required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-5)</td>
<td>for each “no-show” on any scheduled field trip</td>
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<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>Total points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Special notes:

A. Under no circumstance is it permissible to use transportation other than what AnSci/Zoo 521 provides as a means to reach the destination of regularly scheduled off-campus outdoor laboratories and/or field trips. This includes the UW-Arboretum, Picnic Point, and Frautschi Point areas. Doing so is contrary to UW-Madison safety policy. Let us do the driving for you and wear your seatbelts!

B. At the beginning of class (laboratory and discussion), TURN OFF your cell phones and other electronic devices. Remember, even though you are outside during most laboratories, you are still in class. At certain times, usage of these devices may be permitted by your TAs. Violation of this “golden rule” is the quickest way to lose participation points!

C. For those wishing to participate with other UW-Madison student birders, check out Students for Bird Conservation (SBC) a registered student organization founded by David Laufenberg, a former 520/521 student. Check out their website at http://birdconserve.rso.wisc.edu/index.html