

BIO 4401/5401

Ornithology



Instructor:

Email: Dr. Ben Skipper

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Office: Cavness 029B

Office Hours: Monday 8:00-10:00 & 1:00-2:00; Tuesday 1:00-2:00; Wednesday 1:00 – 2:00, Thursday 8:00-10:00, Friday 8:00-10:00, or by appointment. If any of these times do not fit your schedule, email me so that we may arrange a different time.

Course Information

Course Description

A study of the biology of birds, their anatomy, evolutionary history, diversity, ecology, behavior, and zoogeography. Laboratory exercises will emphasize the identification and natural history of Texas birds.

Prerequisite and Co-requisite Courses

Completion of BIOL 1413 or equivalent

Prerequisite Skills

Accessing Internet websites, using ASU Library resources, and using Blackboard.

Student Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this course are as follows:

1. To gain factual knowledge of aspects of ornithology, including evolutionary history, ecology, anatomy, physiology, behavior, and conservation.
 - You will be able to define relevant terms used in ornithology, identify parts of the avian body and their purpose, and recount important aspects of avian evolution, ecology, and behavior.
2. To learn fundamental principles, theories, and hypotheses that have been prominent in the science of ornithology.
 - You will be able to explain competing hypotheses for the evolution of flight.

- You will be able to recount competing hypotheses for control of migratory behavior.
3. To learn and develop skills that ornithologists use to study birds.
- You will learn about several tools and techniques used to capture birds.

Course Delivery

This is a face-to-face course with online components that students are expected to access in [Blackboard](#).¹

Required Texts and Materials

Required Texts

Ornithological literature provided by the instructor.

Any field guide to the birds of North America or Eastern North America. While you certainly do not need to purchase all the examples below, anyone will suffice for our class.

Dunn, J. L. and J. Alderfer. 2017. *National geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. National Geographic, Washington, D. C.

Peterson, R. T. 2010. *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston.

Peterson, R. T. 2010. *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston.

Sibley, D. 2010. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Knopf, New York.

Sibley, D. 2016. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. Knopf, New York.

Field Notebook

Recording notes is an important aspect of any field of study where detailed observations are made. As such, you will be required to keep a field notebook detailing experiences on class field trips and individual trips afield. The notebook need not be expensive, but I do require that it is bound (i.e., no loose-leaf paper will be accepted).

Binoculars

I will be able to provide several sets of binoculars for use during the course. However, if you have your own set, you are strongly encouraged to bring them when we take field trips. If you are considering purchasing a set of binoculars, see the information on Blackboard.

Technology Requirements

To successfully complete this course, students need to access to the internet.

Communication

Faculty will respond to email and/or telephone messages within 24 hours during working hours Monday through Friday. Weekend messages may not be returned until Monday.

Written communication via email: All private communication will be done exclusively through your ASU email address. Check frequently for announcements and policy changes. In your emails to faculty, include the course name and section number in your subject line.

Virtual communication: Office hours and/or advising may be done with the assistance of the telephone, Collaborate, etc.

Grading

Evaluation and Grades

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There will be three exams (includes final exam) worth 100 points each and three lab practical worth 100 points each. In-class quizzes will account for 100 points. Each student will be required to write an account of one avian family. The account will be worth 100 points. The field notebook and the notes it will contain will be worth 25 points. Quizzes on Blackboard will be open notes and worth 50 points total. Lastly, there will be several low-stakes writing activities that will be worth 25 points.

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In addition to the requirements for undergraduate students, graduate student will have additional assignments to deepen their understanding of avian biology. These assignments will include 2 written reviews of current literature (50 points each) and an additional term paper (100 points) on a topic agreed on by the instructor and the student.

Grade Assignment:

A = \geq 90% of points

B = 80% – 89% of points

C = 70% – 79% of points

D = 65% – 69% of points

F = \leq 64% of points

Final Exam:

Wednesday, May 11, 1:00 – 3:00 PM.

General Policies Related to This Course

All students are required to follow the policies and procedures presented in these documents:

- [Angelo State University Student Handbook](#)²
- [Angelo State University Catalog](#)³

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in all work. Any student found guilty of any form of dishonesty in academic work is subject of disciplinary action and possible expulsion from ASU.

The College of Science and Engineering adheres to the university's [Statement of Academic Integrity](#)⁴ (Page 97).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA) and subsequent legislation.

Student Disability Services is located in the Office of Student Affairs, and is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability. It is the student's responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting an employee of the Office of Student Affairs, in the Houston Harte University Center, Room 112, or contacting the department via email at ADA@angelo.edu. For more information about the application process and requirements, visit the [Student Disability Services website](#).⁵ The employee charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing accommodation requests is:

Dr. Dallas Swafford
Director of Student Disability Services
Office of Student Affairs
325-942-2047
dallas.swafford@angelo.edu
Houston Harte University Center, Room 112

Incomplete Grade Policy

It is policy that incomplete grades be reserved for student illness or personal misfortune. Please contact faculty if you have serious illness or a personal misfortune that would keep you from completing course work. Documentation may be required. See ASU Operating Policy 10.11 [Grading Procedures](#)⁶ for more information.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious topic covered in ASU's [Academic Integrity Statement](#)⁷ in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism is the action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own. Plagiarism is literary theft.

In your discussions and/or your papers, it is unacceptable to copy word-for-word without quotation marks and the source of the quotation. It is expected that you will summarize or paraphrase ideas giving appropriate credit to the source both in the body of your paper and the reference list.

Papers are subject to be evaluated for originality. Resources to help you understand this policy better are available at the [ASU Writing Center](#).⁸

Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Days

A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. See ASU Operating Policy 10.19 [Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Day](#)⁹ for more information.

Title IX at Angelo State University

Angelo State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. In accordance with Title VII, Title IX, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE), and other federal and state laws, the University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. The term includes sexual harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence or dating violence), sexual violence, and any other misconduct based on sex.

You are encouraged to report any incidents involving sexual misconduct to the Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator, Michelle Miller, J.D. You may submit reports in the following manner:

Online: [Incident Reporting Form](#)¹⁰

Face to Face: Mayer Administration Building, Room 210

Phone: 325-942-2022

Email: michelle.miller@angelo.edu

Note, as a faculty member at Angelo State, I am a mandatory reporter and must report incidents involving sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator. Should you wish to speak to someone in confidence about an issue, you may contact the University Counseling Center (325-942-2371), the 24-Hour Crisis Helpline (325-486-6345), or the University Health Clinic (325-942-2171).

For more information about resources related to sexual misconduct, Title IX, or Angelo State's policy please visit the [Title IX website](#).¹¹

Information About COVID-19

Please refer to ASU's [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Updates](#)¹² web page for current information about campus guidelines and safety standards as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Modifications to the Syllabus

This syllabus, including grade evaluation and course schedule, is subject to modification on potentially short notice based on developing circumstances.

Course Schedule

Lecture Schedule

Week of	Topic	Reading (to be completed BEFORE class)
17 January	Course intro, bird characteristics, origin of birds	
24 January	Feathers, Flight Physics, Evolution of Flight	Dial et al. 2006 (Friday)
31 January	Avian Senses	
7 February	Respiration/Circulation	Scott 2011 (Friday)
14 February	Digestive System, Feeding, Urinary System	
21 February	Acoustic Communication	
28 February	Migration	
7 March	Territorial Behavior	Gill and Wolf 1975 (Friday)

14 March	Spring Break	
21 March	Mating Systems	
28 March	Avian Reproduction and Nests	
4 April	Eggs and Clutch Size	Ricklefs 2000 (Friday)
11 April	Incubation and Parental Care	
18 April	Annual Cycles	
25 April	Brood Parasitism, Urban Birds	Hoover and Robinson 2007 (Friday)
2 May	Conservation	

Lecture Exam and Lab Practical Schedule

Date	Exam
5 February	Lecture Exam 1
12 February	Lab Practical 1
4 March	Lecture Exam 2
25 March	Lab Practical 2
8 April	Lecture Exam 3
29 April	Lab Practical 3
11 May	Final Lecture Exam

Lab Schedule

19 January	Orders and Families I; Intro to Bird Song
26 January	Orders and Families II, Bird Song Practice Quiz
2 February	Field Trip to San Angelo SP (outside)
9 February	Flight Lab
16 February	Practical I (Orders and Families)
23 February	Topology, External Anatomy, Feathers
2 March	Internal Anatomy (soft and hard anatomy)
9 March	Song Lab
16 March	Spring Break
23 March	Field Trip to Spring Creek
30 March	Practical II (all material since Practical I)
6 April	Common Birds of Concho Valley I
13 April	Common Birds of the Concho Valley II
20 April	Common Birds of the Concho Valley III

27 April	Field Trip Spring Creek or San Angelo SP
4 May	Practical 3 (bird song; all material since Practical II)

¹ <https://blackboard.angelo.edu/>

² <https://www.angelo.edu/current-students/student-handbook/>

³ <https://www.angelo.edu/academics/catalog/>

⁴ <https://www.angelo.edu/live/files/27603-student-handbook-2020-21#page=97>

⁵ <https://www.angelo.edu/current-students/disability-services/>

⁶ <https://angelo.policystat.com/policy/10659448/latest/>

⁷ <https://www.angelo.edu/live/files/27603-student-handbook-2020-21#page=97>

⁸ https://www.angelo.edu/current-students/writing-center/academic_honesty.php

⁹ <https://angelo.policystat.com/policy/10659368/latest/>

¹⁰ <https://www.angelo.edu/incident-form>

¹¹ <https://www.angelo.edu/title-ix>

¹² <https://www.angelo.edu/covid-19/>