
Ornithology Laboratory
BIOL 4141 / BIOL 5141
Fall 2025

Instructor: Jessica L. Coleman, MS.

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Office hours: MWF 10:30am – 12pm, or by appointment

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Office Hours: TDB ... or by appointment

Course Objectives: The laboratory course is comprised of three exercises: (1) in-lab study of species identification, (2) in-lab exercises on aspects of avian biology (external and internal anatomy), and (3) field trips to nearby areas to observe birds.

Student Learning Outcomes: After this class, you should be able to...

- To learn the external anatomy of birds
- To learn the internal anatomy of birds
- To learn field identification of birds based on visual and auditory cues

Textbook: A bird field guide is required for the course; it can be either a hardback OR an app on your smartphone device. Below are two field guide (hardback) options (** indicate recommended)

**Peterson, Roger. 2010. Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America. 6th Edition.

Sibley, David A. 2000. The Sibley Guide to Birds. Alfred A. Knopf Inc., NY

Useful Apps for smart devices (e.g. iPhone, iPad, etc...) – include songs

**Merlin Bird ID (The Cornell Lab) (Free)

Peterson Birds – A Field Guide to Birds (\$14.99)

**iBird Pro Guide to Birds (\$14.99)

The Sibley eGuide to the Birds of North America (\$19.99 for the full version)

Required Equipment: A good pair of binoculars. Typically, you want them to be 10x50, 8x42, or close to that range. You can purchase binoculars from a variety of places (i.e., Amazon, eagle optics, Academy Sports, etc...). A good set of binoculars can range in price, but for a good set, plan on a price between 100-300 dollars.

If you want some advice for binocular birding, you can visit the Audubon Guide to Binoculars webpage. This page will give you a good look at possible binoculars in various price ranges.

<https://www.audubon.org/gear/binocular-guide>

Grading:

	Points Possible
Practical I	100
Practical II	100
Quizzes (10)	100
Bird Prep (1/5)	50
eBird Report (5/10)	50
Total	400

Grade Distribution		
Percentage	Points	Grade
90-100%	360 – 400	A
80-89%	320 – 359	B
70-79%	280 – 319	C
60-69%	240 – 279	D
0-59%	0 – 239	F

Grading: Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A = above 89.5 B = 79.5 – 89.49 C = 69.5 – 79.49 D = 59.5 – 69.49 F = Below 59.5

All your course grades will be in Canvas so that you can view your current course grade anytime. Please be aware that I cannot give you EXTRA CREDIT or WORK at the end of the semester. Your average shown in Canvas will determine your final grade in the course.

At the end of the semester, grades will be calculated in Canvas according to the syllabus. If your average is **within 0.5 points** of the next letter grade, I will round it up **automatically** (see grade scale above). The only other adjustment that will be made is if the final percentage is **WITHIN ONE POINT** of the next letter grade (and **NO** more), and the student has missed **THREE OR FEWER LECTURES, TWO or FEWER WEEKLY QUIZZES** and has a **CLASS PARTICIPATION GRADE OF 80% or HIGHER**. If you meet these criteria, I will **round up to the next letter grade**. (Mitigating circumstances will be taken into account at the discretion of the instructor).

Exam policy: There will be two practical exams during the semester. These exams will consist of actual bird specimens for identification and a field component to identify birds. You will be responsible for knowing the birds observed in the **field by sight and sound**. Based on sight and sound, these birds will be asked (if seen on the day of the exam). More information about the practical exams will be discussed in class. **No exam will be curved!**

Make-up Exams: If you are unable to take an exam when scheduled due to unforeseen illnesses, family deaths, or other traumatic events, contact me within 24 hours of the event to schedule a make-up exam. Please provide **documentation** (letters from family are NOT acceptable) of the events that may conflict with exam dates. I will work with you to schedule a makeup exam.

If you are unable to take an exam as scheduled for some sort of non-emergency issue, you must let me know in **advance**. Students who fail to make timely arrangements will most likely receive a grade of “0” for the exam missed.

Quizzes: There will be **at least** 10 quizzes during the semester. All quizzes will be taken individually, both in the lab and while in the field. The in-class quizzes will cover museum specimens and internal and external anatomy questions. Field quizzes will ask you questions about birds seen while in the field through your binoculars. You will be asked to **identify these birds by sight or sound**. All birds on quizzes could ask for one of the following: domain, order, family, or common name.

Attendance: Attendance is essential to success in this class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact another student (not the instructor) to get notes and other announcements made during class. In this course, if you do not come to class, you cannot see or hear the birds we see. If you miss a lab, you cannot make it up. Expect to stay the ENTIRE lab period. Be sure to **ARRIVE ON TIME**. You will be left behind and miss the class if you are late for any trip.

Bird Prep: During the semester, students will be responsible for preparing **one museum specimen (Three for graduate students)** to be cataloged for our teaching collections. One class period will be devoted to learning the bird preparation protocol, and one bird will be prepared. You must take your time and be committed to seriously prepping a bird specimen to the best of your ability. A total of 50 points will be assigned to the bird prep.

eBird Observations: Proficiency at bird identification requires practice and developing the requisite skills: using binoculars to observe birds, song recognition, the use of a field guide, and listening quietly. Over the semester, students are expected to spend time birding outside of the lab period at a spot appropriate to see birds in their natural habitat. Students should avoid areas heavily visited by people and traffic. Observations should be a minimum of 60 minutes in length, allowing identification of species, numbers, and behavior. **A minimum of five (undergraduate students) and ten (graduate students) independent observations** on different days must be uploaded to eBird spread evenly throughout the semester, with a **copy of the eBird report sent to the instructor/TA**. Additional information will be provided in the lab. You can also learn more by taking Cornell's FREE eBird Essentials course ([link](#)).

Lab Study Time: During the semester, you are welcome to come into the lab and study the bird specimens that you are required to learn for the practical exams. Please make sure you check with the times listed on the outside of the lab door to check for room availability. Please do not enter the lab when other labs are scheduled for the day. If you come into the lab outside of lab time, remember you must wear appropriate lab attire (closed-toed shoes, long pants, etc.). You cannot eat or drink in the lab at ANY TIME. If you are found in the lab with inappropriate clothing or are found to be drinking or eating, you will be asked to leave.

Outdoor Field Course: **BIOL 4141/5141 is a field course**, which means you will spend the majority of the labs outside! Be sure to come to the lab prepared.

1. **Weather** – Prepare for all kinds of weather. We will be outside for the majority of the semester. Some days, it may be hot (95+ and humid), while other days, it may be raining. It would be ideal to check the weather before coming to class. Bring appropriate gear for the weather.
2. **Insects** – We will encounter a wide rain of insects while in the field. Mosquitos or chiggers will most likely bite you. You may also encounter ticks. These ticks may carry Lyme disease. Visit the CDC page for guidance on preventing tick bites ([CDC LINK](#)). Consider having bug spray for each field trip or treating your “field” clothes with Permethrin.
3. **Wildlife** – There are many general Safety hazards pertaining to animals and other indigenous creatures that exist in nearly every location worldwide. All field researchers, regardless of their work location, should have a general idea of the risks they may encounter while in the field. Please see the handout (posted on Canvas) about UT Tyler Field Researchers—Safety Guidelines for more information.
4. **Gear** – It would be recommended to wear long pants, sturdy shoes (hiking boots),

and long sleeve shirt (in high mosquito areas). Keep the weather in mind, if it is cold out, you will want to wear layers. Bug spray, sunscreen, and drinking water are also recommended. You may want to consider a camera, your phone for recording calls and don't forget your binoculars.

5. **Binoculars** – You must purchase a good pair of binoculars (8x42 or 10x42 are good ranges). You will want to ensure you have these with you every time you are in the field. You cannot see the birds and identify them without the binoculars. If you have financial hardships and need to use a loaner pair, we can check one out for you. If you do not return them at the end of the semester, you will be given an “incomplete” grade until they are returned.
6. **Walking** – We will walk quite a bit for this course in various weather conditions. So be prepared for long walks!
7. **Travel to Field Sites** – Most of our travel to field sites will involve meeting at the field locations. I strongly recommend that you carpool with your classmates to each location to reduce the number of vehicles. If you do not have a ride, please let me know, and we can arrange for you to ride with someone to the destination.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

UT Tyler Honor Code: Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Students Rights and Responsibilities: To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:

<http://www2.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Campus Carry: We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at

<http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

UT Tyler Tobacco-Free Policy: All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors.

- Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.
- There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies: Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract. The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy: Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Tyler at Texas offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The **Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR)** office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second-class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities: If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement: It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g. via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation: Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes

off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standard of Academic Conduct: Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

i. "Cheating: includes, but is not limited to:

- Copying from another student's test paper;
- Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- Failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- Possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person administering the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- Using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- Collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- Divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructor has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- Paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about the unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- Taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonable should know that that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- Misrepresenting facts including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining by an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

ii. "Plagiarism:" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by other means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit.

iii. "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students:

UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu

UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
 The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is an open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
 UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MODIFY THIS SYLLABUS AT ANY TIME. THEREFORE, YOUR ATTENDANCE AND ATTENTION TO THE ANNOUNCEMENTS ON CANVAS ARE CRUCIAL BECAUSE THEY WILL ASSIST YOU WITH REMAINING CURRENT ON THE MATERIAL AND KNOWING WHEN THE SYLLABUS MAY BE MODIFIED.

Schedule of Topics - BIOL 4141 / 5141	
Days	Topic
Aug 28 / Aug 30	Introductions and External Anatomy (on-campus birding)
Sep 4 / Sep 6	Internal Anatomy – Bird Dissection (on-campus birding)
Sep 11 / Sep 13	Field Techniques and Call Identifications (Intro – on-campus)
Sep 18 / Sep 20	Taxonomy - Field Identifications (Location TBD)
Sep 25 / Sep 27	Taxonomy - Field Identifications (Location TBD)
Oct 2 / Oct 4	Taxonomy - Field Identifications (Location TBD)
Oct 9 / Oct 11	PRACTICAL I
Oct 16 / Oct 18	Intro to Bird Prep (in Lab)
Oct 23 / 25	Taxonomy - Field Identifications (Location TBD)
Oct 30 / Nov 1	Taxonomy - Field Identifications (Location TBD)
**Nov 7 – 9	Upper Texas Coast Trip
Nov 13 / Nov 15	Taxonomy - Field Identifications (Location TBD)
Nov 20 / Nov 22	Taxonomy - Field Identifications (Location TBD)
Nov 24 -29	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Dec 4 / Dec 6	PRACTICAL II
Week of Dec 8	FINALS WEEK (NO LAB)

****OPTIONAL (STRONGLY RECOMMENDED) Weekend Trip to the Upper Texas Coast**

Every semester, I offer a weekend trip to the upper Texas coast to experience a prime birding location. In the spring, migration through the upper Texas coast can bring many South American Species through as they migrate to their northern breeding ranges. In the fall, we will have tons of shore birds, residents' birds, and a few migrant hawk species. Even outside of spring migration, it can be expected to see 100+ species of birds in one day. We will spend the entire Saturday birding from sun up to sun down and visit some popular birding spots. The following dates are tentatively scheduled for our bird adventure: **November 7 – 9, 2025**

I hope you can make arrangements to attend this wonderful birding experience. More information will be provided during the semester.

No classes: Labor Day – Sept. 1st, 2025 | Thanksgiving Break – November 24th - 29th, 2025

Last Day to Drop with a “W”: Nov. 4th, 2025