
Ornithology
BIOL 4340 and BIOL 5340
Fall 2025

Instructor: Jessica L. Coleman, MS.

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Office hours: MWF 10:30 am – 12:00 pm, or by appointment

Course Objectives: This course will cover diverse aspects of avian biology, including anatomy, physiology, evolution, classification, ecology, reproduction, and behavior.

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

- To develop the ability to evaluate scientific inquiry on issues in ornithology
- To learn the various mechanisms that birds use in interacting with both the physical and natural world.
- To learn the structure and function of bird anatomy and physiology.
- To develop an understanding and appreciation of the importance of birds in the natural world.

Textbook: Lovett, Irby J. and John W. Fitzpatrick. 2016. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Handbook of Bird Biology. 3rd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell. Pgs. 730
(it is available as an e-text)

Grading:

		Grade Distribution		
	Points Possible	Percentage	Points	Grade
Exam 1	100	90-100%	358-400	A
Exam 2	100	80-89%	357-318	B
Exam 3	100	70-79%	317-278	C
**Species Account	50	60-69%	277-238	D
Research Presentation	50	0-59%	207-0	F
Total	400			

**** Graduate Students:** In lieu of writing a species account, graduate students will serve as editors for undergraduate submissions. This editorial role is designed to develop your skills in scientific communication, peer review, and mentorship. More details to be provided in class.

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 of your course grades will be in Canvas, so you will be able to view your current course grade at any time. 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 LESS LECTURES, TWO or LESS WEEKLY QUIZZES**, and has a **CLASS PARTICIPATION GRADE OF 80% or HIGHER**. If you meet these criteria, then 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 three exams during the semester. All exams will have a combination of question types, including: fill-in-the blank, short answer, compare and contrast, and essay questions. Specifics will be discussed at least one week ahead of the exam date. The material for each exam will be from the lecture material and from material from the textbook. Remember the textbook is a reference that is used to assist you with the lecture material! **Be warned that I typically DO NOT curve exams, so don't bother to ask!**

Make-up Exams: If you are unable to take an exam when scheduled due to unforeseen illnesses, deaths in the family or other traumatic events, contact me with in 24 hrs 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 issues, then you must let me know well in **ADVANCE**. Students who fail to make timely arrangements will most likely receive a grade of "0" for the exam missed.

Attendance: Attendance is essential to success in this class. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact another student (not the instructor) to get notes and other announcements made during class.

Class Assignments: Undergraduates will have two main assignments this semester: 1) Writing a Species Account and 2) a one-slide research presentation. The goal of these assignments is to guide you through the process of researching and writing a detailed species account for a bird of your choice. This will involve describing the bird's physical characteristics, behavior, habitat, conservation status, and other relevant details. You will also explore the latest scientific research related to your chosen species in a follow-up assignment. Graduate students will serve as "Editors" for the undergraduate assignments. More details will be provided during class and on Canvas.

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 IN 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 4340/5340	
Topic	Chapter
Why study Birds	1
Avian Diversity and Classification	2
How Birds Evolve	3
Feathers and Plumages	4
Avian Flight	5
<i>Exam I (Ch. 1-5) – *September 25th</i>	
Avian Anatomy	6
Bird Physiology	7
Avian Food and Foraging	8
Avian Mating and Social Behavior	9
Avian Vocal Behavior	10
<i>Exam II (Ch. 6-10) – *Oct 30th</i>	
Breeding Biology of Birds	11
Avian Migration and Dispersal	12
Ecology and Bird Populations	13
Bird Communities	14
Bird Conservation	15
<i>Exam III (Ch. 11-15) – December 9th (Final's week)</i>	

****Tentative Exam Dates – subject to change Last Day to Drop with a “W”: November 4, 2025**

Thanksgiving Break – November 24th – 29th, 2025

Presentation Dates: November 18th, November 19th, and December 2nd