

**Instructor-** Dr. Stephanie A. Strickler, Illinois State University

## **COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this course is to build a foundation of knowledge about birds and the natural world that will inspire you to continue learning about them throughout your life.

This course introduces the biology of birds, with an emphasis on basic avian anatomy, physiology, behavior, reproduction, and ecology. It combines field trips and field studies, lectures, and laboratory sessions. Throughout, the course emphasizes avian diversity and the relationship between form and function, with a focus on the ecological and evolutionary processes that have generated the diversity of birds on Earth.

Upon completion of the course, you will have:

- Developed skills to identify birds by sight & sound
- Developed proficiency in taking scientific field notes
- Developed skills in reading and using scientific literature
- Used common field techniques to study birds
- Contributed to citizen science projects on avian behavior and conservation
- Communicated the results of news and field research in formats appropriate for scientific and lay audiences

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Field trips:** Weekday mornings; some trips will be all-day; there will be one ~two-hour night trip.

Generally, we will have breakfast and pack lunch at 6AM, vans will depart at 6:30 AM, and we will spend the rest of the morning (or, in some cases, the whole day) in the field. **You must bring to every field trip: field notebook and binoculars (issued to you by us), field guide (the small book), field-appropriate clothing and gear (including water), pencil or pen with water-resistant ink.** Generally, we will return to the housing site after field work; you can pick up your materials for lecture/lab then.

**Lectures & Laboratories:** Most weekday afternoons; 12:30-3:30 PM

**Required books:** *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior* (2001), by David A. Sibley, and *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America* (2003), by David A. Sibley. Both of these books can be purchased at Pymatuning Laboratory of Ecology. You will also be assigned supplementary readings, which we will provide to you.

**Optional resources:** Merlin bird ID app, while *not an acceptable replacement for your Sibley field guide*, is free, includes bird sounds, and can tell you which birds are likely in your area on X date (based on citizen science data). Cornell Lab of Ornithology has some great online resources, including species accounts (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>) and tips on learning bird ID (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/browse/topic/bird-id-skills/>). SORA (Searchable Ornithological Research Archive) catalogs peer-reviewed articles published in the “bird journals”, and you don’t need an institutional subscription to access them. <https://sora.unm.edu/>