

Ecology and Management of Louisiana Wildlife
RNR 3018- 4 credits
Spring 2012

This is a Service-Learning and Field Intensive Course

Prerequisite: RNR 2101

Class meetings: 12:40-4:30 Wednesday and Friday, RNR 206

Instructor: Dr. Philip Stouffer, RNR 329, 578-4221, pstouffer@lsu.edu, 985-634-9224 (emergency or in the field only)

Office hours: M, W, 10:30-11:30, and by appointment

TA: Luke Powell, RNR 324, lpowel9@lsu.edu, 516-313-0457 (emergency or in the field only)

Office hours: Th, F, 10:30-12, and by appointment

BREC contact: Greg Grandy, BREC Conservation Director, ggrandy@brec.org, 225-278-7068

Course Objectives: The main objectives are to learn identification, life history, habitat selection, and basic ecology of the amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals of Louisiana. We will use three approaches to achieve these objectives. First, we will have classroom lectures on the basic biology of the taxa. Second, we will take field trips to sample the variety of habitats in Louisiana. Third, we will conduct a semester-long inventory of the terrestrial vertebrate biodiversity of Burbank Park, an urban park in the Recreation and Park Commission of East Baton Rouge (BREC) system. This work will be conducted in partnership with BREC, and will lead to providing information they can use to manage their parks and to enhance public awareness of urban biodiversity. Through their work in this course, students will prepare for careers in natural resources by learning not just factual material, but also by gaining an appreciation for the techniques (and pitfalls) of field sampling. Extensive work at a single site will also provide students with a chance to appreciate the biodiversity, educational role, and recreational value of urban parks.

Service-Learning: Service-learning is a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs. Fundamentally integrated with the work are periodic pauses to reflect on how the activities outside the classroom enhance course content, professional preparation, and civic responsibility. This course has been certified as a service-learning course by LSU's Center for Community Engagement, Learning, and Leadership (CCELL). For more information on service-learning, see the CCELL website at <http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/ccell.nsf/index>.

Field-intensive: This course will require time in the field both during class fieldtrips and outside of class. Notice the schedule for field trips; some are on weekends or will not return to campus until after scheduled end of class. These field trips are mandatory; you cannot earn an A in the class if you miss a field trip. Your work at the BREC park will be more flexible, but you will need to be prepared to work there outside of class time.

Text: We will have no textbook, but you will need resources for identification of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. We'll discuss your options during lecture.

Web materials: I will post PowerPoint presentations (but **not** lecture notes) on Moodle. We will also use Moodle to share information, including assignments.

Laptops: Lecture PowerPoints will be available for every lecture, but not until after class. You should come to class prepared to take notes in a notebook. You may not use a laptop during class except for in-class exercises.

Phones: Phones are essential for security when working in the field outside of class. There are also useful smartphone apps for field identification. Phones are a distraction in the classroom. You may not talk or text on your phone in class or during field trips (except while we are travelling in the van). I reserve the right to dock your final grade by up to one letter grade for distracting me or the class by using your phone. The easy way to avoid this consequence is to get through the entire semester without me ever seeing your phone during class.

Required materials for the field: You will need rubber boots, a waterproof pocket notebook (available at the LSU bookstore), and binoculars (see handout in Moodle on selecting binoculars).

Materials available for the class: In my lab we have equipment for sampling, as well as resources for id. You are welcome to use these materials (in fact, you will need to use these tools to do well in the class), but you must sign them out and take responsibility for their safe return.

Disabled students: If you are a qualified student with a disability seeking accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to self-identify with the Office of Disability Services, Room 112, Johnston Hall. No accommodations will be granted without documentation from the Office of Disability Services.

Tentative schedule

- January 18 Introduction to the course and community partner; **Preflection due**
- January 20 **Field trip** to Burbank
- January 25 Introduction to sampling; Teams assigned
- January 27 **Field trip** to Burbank
- February 1 More on sampling
- February 3 No class- weekend field trip
- February 4-5 **Field trip** to Lee Forest. Leave 8 am Saturday, return 7 pm Sunday
- February 8 **ID quiz 1**; Biology of amphibians
- February 10 Open for independent sampling
- February 15 Biology of reptiles
- February 17 **Presentations**- preliminary results and sampling plan
- February 22 Biology of birds; **Midterm reflection due**
- February 24 **Field trip** to Tunica Hills- return 6 pm
- February 29 Biology of mammals; **ID quiz 2**
- March 2 Open for independent sampling

March 7	Midterm exam- Lecture material
March 9	Field trip to BR lakes and Aquaculture
March 14	Open for independent sampling
March 16	Field trip to BR levee and batture forest
March 21	ID quiz 3
March 23	Open for independent sampling or consultation on results
March 28	Presentations- progress reports
March 30	Open for independent sampling
April 2	Monday- Last day to drop
April 4	Open for independent sampling
April 6-13	Spring Break
April 18	ID quiz 4
April 20	No class- weekend field trip
April 21-22	Field trip to Rockefeller SWR. Leave 8 am Saturday, return 8 pm Sunday
April 25	Midterm exam- animals and habitats
April 27	Field trip to Sherburne WMA- return 7 pm
May 2	ID quiz 5; Open for sampling or consultation
May 4	Open for sampling or consultation
May 8	Tuesday, 3-5 pm- Final presentations to BREC
May 11	Friday, 9:30 am- Final reflection due

Grading: The list below is tentative. Grades will be posted on Moodle, but you will need to come to class to get back graded materials.

First midterm exam	100	points
Second midterm exam	100	
Final project	100	
ID quizzes (5)	100	
Preflection	25	
Midterm reflection	25	
Final reflection	50	
Presentation- sampling plan	50	
Presentation- progress report	50	
Final presentation	50	
Course participation	50	
Total	700	points

Attendance Rules: Attendance is required, according to University policy.

Missed exams, late assignments, and decorum:

There will be no make-up exams. If you miss an exam, you will be given a zero unless you have a medical excuse or missed the class due to an approved activity (see LSU Policy Statement 22). If you have a valid excuse, your grade will be pro-rated without the missed exam. If you have an excused absence from the final, you will be given an alternative final upon your return to campus. Five points will be deducted per day from late assignments, beginning at the start of the class period when the assignment was due.

Free discussion, inquiry, and expression are encouraged in this class. Classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor's ability to conduct the class, or (b) the ability of students to benefit from instruction is not acceptable. Examples may include entering class late or departing early; use of telephones or beepers; talking in class without being recognized; or arguing in a way that 'crosses the civility line.'

Tobacco and food are not permitted in class.

More on course activities:

Sampling teams- Each student will be assigned to one of three sampling teams (herptiles, birds, or mammals). You will work as a group to determine how you will sample your taxon, to conduct the sampling, to evaluate and document the results, and to present your findings to the class and to BREC. All members of the group will earn the same grade on group exercises, although I reserve the right to dock the grade of poor participants, following the criteria under Participation (see below). I encourage everyone to get out in the field with other teams. This is not required, but will enhance your experience and help you prepare for quizzes.

Quizzes- These will cover id by sight or sound of species we detect on field trips.

Reflective activities- These allow you to consider how your experiences affect your views on a career as a wildlife professional, on the civic responsibility of a wildlife professional, and on the value of the urban biodiversity you will be studying. These exercises will also provide you with a chance to consider how classroom learning integrates with your experience sampling in the field. Each reflective activity will include several questions to guide your responses. The details of individual assignments will be available on Moodle.

Presentations- These will provide a chance to show what you have found and to get feedback from the class.

Final presentation- Over the course of the semester we will work with BREC to determine the deliverable that best meets their needs. By the last week of class, we will standardize the format of the final presentation for all of the teams to produce the appropriate product. The final presentation will be an oral version of that deliverable; a final written report will also be required.

Participation- Showing up does not guarantee full credit. Here are some guidelines for how participation will be assessed. These apply to field trips, team exercises, and feedback offered on presentations.

Outstanding Contributor: Contributions in the field reveal exceptional preparation and curiosity. The student frequently is the first to sight wildlife. When identifying animals, identifications offered are

based on multiple characteristics. Challenges to offered identifications are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of fieldwork would be diminished markedly.

Good Contributor: Contributions in the field reflect thorough preparation and curiosity. The student often is the first to sight wildlife. When identifying animals, identifications offered usually are based on multiple characteristics. Challenges to offered identifications are well substantiated and often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of fieldwork would be diminished.

Adequate Contributor: Contributions in the field reflect satisfactory preparation and curiosity. The student sometimes is the first to sight wildlife, and is usually able to reach a tentative identification. Challenges to offered identifications are sometimes presented, fairly well substantiated, and sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of fieldwork would be diminished.

Non-Participant: This person contributes little or nothing. Hence, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of fieldwork would not be changed.

Unsatisfactory Contributor: Contributions in the field reflect apathy and inadequate preparation. The student seldom is the first to sight wildlife, and is not interested in reaching conclusive identification. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable field time would be saved.

Comments on flexibility- This syllabus, including the schedule, assignments, and grading, are tentative. I will do my best to alert you to any changes as soon as possible. At the beginning of the semester, you should make plans to accommodate the weekend and late-returning field trips. I will not require attendance on trips outside of class time if the schedule changes.

Risks and safety in the field:

Student trip insurance: The university has no liability in the case of injury during a class trip. Student trip travel insurance is available through LSU Student Government at no cost to the student. For trips involving the entire class, your instructors will complete the paperwork (these are indicated as '**Field trip**' on the syllabus). If you are driving your own car on a field trip you must fill out the 'Certificate of privately-owned automobiles' form, which certifies that your car is insured and safe. This form is available at <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/riskmgmt/files/2010/11/TripTravelAutoForm.pdf>.

For all other trips to Burbank you need to fill out an on-line form available at <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/riskmgmt/triptravelservice>. It is your responsibility to complete this form for yourself for every trip.

Check-in during independent fieldwork: Do not work alone at Burbank. You need to take a phone when you go into the field. We will use the social networking program Foursquare to monitor work at Burbank. You will need to sign up, put the ap on your phone, and become a contact with me and with Luke. Every time you go to Burbank you need to check in your group when you arrive (with the message '<names> arriving') and when you leave (with the message '<names> leaving'). If no one in the group has a smartphone, you may send a text to me.

Risks: Working as a professional in natural resources generally involves fieldwork, and fieldwork involves risks that you should recognize. Below is a list of some risks associated with this class. This is not meant to be exhaustive, but does cover most of the routine risks we will face.

Travel: See 'Student trip insurance' above. Wear your seat belt. Be alert to traffic when getting out of the van or walking along roads. Do not distract the driver. Do not use a phone while driving

Heat and hydration: Bring water, and drink regularly. Protect yourself from sunburn.

Cold and rain: Plan ahead for the trip. Bring adequate clothing (especially synthetics or wool rather than cotton) and raingear.

Poison ivy: Learn to recognize poison ivy. Wear long sleeves and long pants, and shower immediately after returning from trips. There are also commercial lotions that reduce reaction after exposure.

Mosquitoes, ants, ticks, chiggers, spiders, bees, etc.: Tuck your pants into your boots, and spray the outside of your pants with repellent. Apply repellent to your exposed skin as necessary. Don't sit on the ground (even if it looks inviting- chiggers are very small, and they are everywhere).

Snakes: Watch where you step. Do not handle any snake unless you are absolutely certain that it is not venomous. *You will fail the class if you handle a venomous snake.*

Other infections and reactions: Do not eat after you have handled animals, particularly frogs.

Night work: Bring a headlamp and backup batteries. Make sure you can change your batteries in the dark (maybe using your phone for a little light). Be especially alert to your surroundings and where you place your feet.

In case of accident during a field trip: Immediately alert the instructor or TA

In case of accident or other incident during independent fieldwork: There is a detailed protocol for managing accidents in the Handbook for Students from CCELL (available on Moodle). Obviously, the first step is to seek help if necessary. Dial 911 or get to the emergency room. The nearest hospital to Burbank is Baton Rouge General, on Bluebonnet about 3 miles north of Burbank.

I acknowledge having read the above list of LSU policies on liability and insurance. I understand the risks and safety precautions associated with RNR 3018. I hereby release the instructor, TA, and LSU from liability in the event of an accident. I further acknowledge that the above list does not include all possible risks.

Signature _____ Date _____