

VIRGINIA TECH - COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

NR5424 - URBAN WILDLIFE

Fall Semester 2009

3 credits

CLASS LOCATION AND MEETING TIMES

This is an asynchronous distance learning course delivered primarily through Blackboard.

INSTRUCTOR

Kieran J. Lindsey (Ph.D., Texas A&M University, 2007)

Associate Director, Natural Resources Distance Learning Consortium

University Gateway Center, Suite 120, 902 Prices Fork Road (0392)

Blacksburg, VA 24061

Tel: 540-808-6099

Email: klindsey@vt.edu

Office hours ad hoc

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Prior to 1915 more Americans lived in rural than urban areas. Since then this has reversed, and now eight of every ten us live in cities or towns of 50,000 people or more. Urbanization has created new challenges for wildlife management professionals, and most have little or no special training in this area. The transition has impacted wild animal populations as well--while it is a common assumption that cities are inhospitable to animal life, there is ample evidence that many wildlife species not only survive in urban areas, some thrive and even exploit the humans living nearby.

One positive consequence of this is that people can directly enjoy and appreciate the integral part of nature that wild animals comprise. A negative consequence is that conflicts between people and wildlife may arise, in an environment that often is charged with discord and misunderstanding.

This course will provide a topical and historical overview of the field of urban wildlife and the many issues encompassed by the idea of wildlife in cities and towns. We will examine the values, attitudes and beliefs that underlie human-wildlife relationships. Urban nature, in turn, is a part of urban ecology and we will also attempt to put urban wildlife in context with what is known about the structure and nature of cities as ecosystems. The course is divided into five learning units: urban landscapes, urban ecosystems, urban habitats and hazards, sociopolitical issues, and special management considerations. These units coincide with the material presented in the course textbook, *Urban Wildlife Management* (Adams et al. 2006).

PREREQUISITES

Baccalaureate degree

CREDITS

3 Semester Credits

GOAL

Students should expect to finish the course with a basic understanding of the concept of urban wildlife within its ecological context.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Provide a historical synopsis of the field of urban wildlife.
- Identify the basic physical environment of cities and the ecological principles that differentiate urban from nonurban ecosystems.
- Summarize the basic principles of urban ecology and characterize the urban environment from an ecological perspective.
- Describe urban environments in terms of the composition and nature of wildlife species that utilize them.
- Identify the principal attitudes, values and perceptions of Americans toward urban wildlife.
- Summarize the nature and causes of human-wildlife conflicts in urban areas.
- Explain how the design and planning of urban landscapes can influence wildlife in both positive and negative fashions.
- Discuss how the concept of ecological restoration can relate to urban environments and the wildlife species of cities and towns.
- Develop arguments pro and con regarding the need and desirability of developing urban habitats for wildlife.

REQUIRED TEXT AND REQUIRED READING ASSIGNMENTS

Adams, Clark, Kieran J. Lindsey & Sara J. Ash. 2006. *Urban Wildlife Management*. Boca Raton: CRC Press. [The text is available, used or new, from various book sellers, including Amazon.com]

Additional reading assignments will be provided to students via download of pdf files from on Blackboard.

BLACKBOARD

Course announcements, information, assignments, and documents will be posted on Blackboard, accessible with your PID and Password at www.learn.vt.edu or the Virginia Tech Home Page.

GRADUATE HONOR CODE

The tenets of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code will be strictly enforced in this course, and all assignments shall be subject to the stipulations of the Graduate Honor Code as outlined in the Graduate Catalog at <http://www.ncr.vt.edu>. For more information on the Graduate Honor Code, please refer to the GHS Constitution, located online at <http://fbox.vt.edu/studentinfo/gradhonor/> Please contact the instructor immediately if you have questions.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological; physical, etc.), if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. My office location and hours are shown above at the beginning of the syllabus.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the instructor seeks ways to improve this course and values your input. To that end, you will be asked to complete an informal evaluation mid-term and at the end of the semester as well as a formal evaluation on May 10. At any point during the course, your suggestions and comments are most welcome.

WEATHER LINE

Weather cancellations should not be an issue for this course, except in the event that weather causes a shutdown of Virginia Tech computing services.

NOTE: The course syllabus is a work in progress. Changes and updates will be made to accommodate the needs and interests of the students. Modifications may also be made if natural resource communications issues surface during the semester that may provide a unique learning experience for students.