

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Ontario Universities Program in Field Biology

Course Title:	Coastal Field Ornithology																
Instructor(s):	Dr. Erica Nol, Department of Biology, Trent University, Phone: 705-748-1011 x 7640 or 249-357-9707, e-mail: enol@trentu.ca																
Dates:	28 April to 11 May 2024																
Location:	Chincoteague, Virginia, U.S.A.																
Cost:	<p>\$1800 total cost (\$350 non-refundable deposit to home university; balance to be paid by credit card to Trent University). Travel costs by van from Peterborough, ON are covered (as well as accommodation, food and local travel in Virginia.). Food on the trip down need to be covered by participants (e.g., sack lunches).</p> <p>To confirm your enrolment, we must receive the \$1450 balance (credit card) by 31 March 2024. Failure to pay the balance on time will result in your losing your spot to someone from the waiting list.</p> <p>To cancel and get your balance back, you must inform us in writing by 5 April 2024. This gives sufficient time to find a replacement for you. If we cannot find a replacement, your deposit is forfeit.</p> <p>If you cancel after 5 April 2024, we reserve the option of keeping your deposit + balance, but will do so only if we have no alternative. We will try to find a replacement, and if we do, you'll get your money back. You may find a replacement for yourself.</p> <p>You are responsible for obtaining (and payment for) travel documents required for entry into (and returning from) the USA and supplementary medical insurance for the duration of the course. Travel insurance is also strongly advised.</p>																
Prerequisites:	University level course in Biology emphasizing Ecology and Evolution, or equivalent. This class is targeted at undergraduates that have completed at least 5 course credits.																
Enrolment:	15 (4) with a minimum of 12 to run																
Course Description (brief):	This field course will cover ornithological field techniques, research methods, bird identification and an introduction to coastal ecology in and around Chincoteague Island, Virginia . Located on the Atlantic side of the Delmarva Peninsula, in the mid-Atlantic coastal region of the United States, the area supports a variety of habitats including sandy beaches, salt marshes, maritime forest and freshwater wetlands. Students will learn bird identification skills, avian survey techniques, coastal ecology including aspects of climate change on these fragile ecosystems. Students will need to formulate a research proposal, collect field data, and will be presenting a project at the end of the course.																
Evaluation:	<table> <tr> <td>Chapter synopsis –</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Field quizzes (4) –</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Focal species project –</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Participation –</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Field notebook –</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Research Project:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td> Presentation –</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Written report –</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> </table>	Chapter synopsis –	6%	Field quizzes (4) –	24%	Focal species project –	15%	Participation –	10%	Field notebook –	15%	Research Project:		Presentation –	10%	Written report –	20%
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An Average Day – What to Expect

(a) Daily timeline	An average work day includes an early (6:30) breakfast, 8:00 start to field work, 12:00 lunch break, 1:30 continuing field work or field trips, 6:00 dinner, 7:30-9:00 lectures and project reviews.
(b) Work habitat & Physical exertion	The work habitat can range from cool spring to hot and muggy summery temperatures. Coastal breezes provide both chilling and relieving effects. Daily walking on beaches or well-established trails will be required. During the project week students will need to spend long hours in the field collecting data sometimes in mudflats, salt marshes and forests where insect activity can be bothersome. Water bottles are required and rest breaks are frequent. Students should bring rubber boots (knee high) for walking in salt marshes and in meadows where ticks can be possible hazards.
(c) Common activities	Common activities will include early morning birding expeditions, long hikes, some biking as a choice of local transportation during project week, kayaking (if evidence of swimming ability provided), sitting and watching birds for long periods through spotting scopes. Associated risks include insect bites, tick bites, blisters from poor footwear, exposure to sun or cold winds.
(d) Weather, dehydration, & biting insects	Weather in Chincoteague during the spring is mostly pleasant and mild. Temperatures range from 16-25°C. Conditions likely to be encountered include windy but sunny days. Biting insects include mosquitoes and ticks. Long-sleeve light-coloured clothing and tucking pant legs into footwear is recommended. Rain gear (jacket and pants) is also recommended as well as are layers in case of cold or foggy mornings.
(e) Toxic/poisonous, wildlife/ plants	Poison Ivy is very common in the area so students should stay on paths as much as possible and wear long pants. This plant will be identified to all students on first day. Ticks and the potential for Lyme disease is also a common threat. Daily checks for ticks after returning from the field are recommended. Methods for removing ticks will be demonstrated.
(f) Sleeping, washroom & laundry facilities	Sleeping accommodations will be in a large and comfortable beach house overlooking a salt marsh. Bedding will be provided but students will need to provide towels. There are ample washroom and washing facilities on site.
(g) Meal plans & food allergies	Students will be responsible for preparing dinners with groceries purchased by instructor. A suggested meal plan will be provided. Students will prepare their own breakfasts and lunches with provided groceries.
(h) Non-academic responsibilities	Clean-up of kitchen and bathrooms will be the responsibility of students. A sign-up sheet for kitchen clean-up will be circulated the first evening. Valid travel documents for entering the US and returning to Canada are required, including a passport and may include a Visa depending on your citizenship. It is your responsibility to determine what documents you need and to obtain them. Full COVID-19 vaccination approved by the USA. Proof of supplementary medical insurance for travel to the US is required. Health and Travel Insurance are strongly advised. Please check the OUPFB website for updates about policies.
(i) Degree of isolation	Chincoteague, Virginia is a small beach resort town with many smaller stores. There are medical facilities, and communication via wifi and cellular services are easy. Students will need to purchase US data plans if they wish to use data while in the field away from wifi.
(j) Alcohol & drugs	The legal age for purchase and consumption of alcohol and for possession of marijuana in the U.S.A. is 21. Bringing marijuana across the Canada-US border is illegal. Use of alcohol and legal marijuana is discouraged and not permitted during course hours, or at times that their use affects student behaviour during course hours. <i>Appropriate code of conduct must be adhered to at all times that other students and/or instructors are present. Violations of the policy will result in removal from the course with no refund.</i>
(k) Vaccinations/ Insurances	Vaccinations for Covid-19 are required. Vaccination for Hepatitis A & B is <i>strongly</i> encouraged. • Students are strongly encouraged to purchase travel medical insurance.
(l) Social Situations	While the students will be living in a large home as a group, there are plenty of places to spread out and find privacy if desired. Students are encouraged to talk with the instructor in advance if there are any concerns regarding the social experience. It is the shared responsibility of all members of the course to foster a welcoming, supportive and respectful learning, teaching, research, and work environment. Students must adhere to the Trent University Student Charter of Rights and Responsibilities during course hours and at all times that other students and/or instructors are present.

(m) Final comments

This course has provided other previous students with a chance to explore the world of ornithological research to determine whether this is an area that provides interest for future opportunities. Past students have gone on to graduate school and work in natural resource agencies. The course also provides the opportunity to publish a small contribution to the journal of the Virginia Ornithological Society, The Raven, as your findings may provide original insights into the biology of Virginia Birds. The area is beautiful and there will be opportunities to enjoy the Atlantic Ocean and see the famous Chincoteague ponies.