

Western University

Ontario Universities Program in Field Biology

Course Title:	Urban Ecology	
Instructor(s):	Tim Hain University of Western Ontario, Department of Biology (thain@uwo.ca)	Contact: Brenda Beretta (bberetta@uwo.ca) Biology, Univ. of Western Ontario, London , ON N6A 5B7; 519-661-2111 x 82555, fax 519-661-3935
Dates:	Saturday 1 August – Saturday 15 August, 2026 (12 days minimum in the field). Last day of class is August 14, but the last day of accommodations is August 15.	
Location:	The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario	
Cost:	<p>Students can provide their own accommodations. Cost for students who have their own accommodations is \$700.</p> <p>Costs for students who wish to stay in Western's residence is \$1483.15 (\$700 for course fees and \$783.15 for accommodations). Rooms have been set aside for students at Western's London Hall at a preferred rate, and students will make the reservations themselves by mid-May using this registration link: Urban Ecology Accommodations. Breakfasts are available at an additional cost. Students are encouraged to bring their own cookware and eating utensils. Grocery trips will be made on the two Saturdays, and students are otherwise encouraged to bring their own food.</p> <p>\$350 deposit at registration; balance of \$350 due to UWO by mid-May. Cost of meals and transportation to UWO are not included.</p>	
Prerequisites:	completion of two years in a Biology program, an introductory Ecology course (equivalent to UWO BIOL 2483), and introductory statistics (ANOVA, correlation, and regression)	
Enrolment:	Maximum 16 (6 reserved for UWO students), minimum 8	
Course Description (brief):	<p>The growth of urban centres has destroyed many habitats, but created opportunities for many species. In this course, we will look at how species use novel environments that had not existed before cities, and consider how populations found in urban areas differ from populations in more natural environments, with a focus on terrestrial ecosystems.</p> <p>In the first week, we will develop fieldwork skills as we visit sites around London and other neighbouring communities to build knowledge of habitats found in urban. Skill development includes bird and plant identification, quadrat sampling, insect collection, behavioural observation, fish trapping, and stream invertebrate sampling. Students will make their own observations for use in assignments. The second week is devoted to research projects of the students' design, based in the field.</p>	
Evaluation:	<p>(i) quiz based on assigned pre-course video, in-person (5%); (ii) on-site Participation and professionalism (10%); Two presentations: one on proposed research and one on preliminary findings (2x10% each); Field notebook including data and reflections (10%); written assignment on urbanization (10%); peer review assignment (5%); (iii) report (in the style of a journal article) based on the second week's project (40%; due 6 weeks after August 14; the end of field course).</p> <p>When evaluating your performance, we will follow UWO criteria, which can be found below: Academic Calendar - Western University (uwo.ca)</p>	

An Average Day – What to Expect

(a) Daily timeline	<p>In the first week, a typical day involves lecture time from 9:00am-12noon, lunch from 12noon-1pm, then a trip to the field from 1:00-5:30pm. Students are expected to travel with the class even if they have their own transportation.</p> <p>In the second week, students will conduct their own experiment. Students will meet with the instructors at 9:00am and depart within 10 minutes. Field collection days will be split with a 1-hour lunch break and will typically end by 5pm. In both the morning and afternoon, students will get to choose between two different locations for their data collection. The instructors will drive you to the location and back to the university after data collection is complete. Students must travel with the rest of the class even if they have their own vehicles.</p> <p>Students who need groceries for the week should arrive at London Hall by 4pm on August 1. The instructors will take students to a grocery store at 4pm on both August 1 and August 8.</p>
(b) Work habitat & Physical exertion	<p>Some of the work environment will seem familiar: London is a mid-sized Canadian city. There is traffic around London Hall, so students should be careful to obey traffic signals for their own safety.</p> <p>Our field trips will take a few hours each day, and students should prepare themselves each day by packing the food and drink they need. Some field trips in the first week and data collection locations in the second week will not have washrooms: students may need to improvise if nature calls.</p> <p>London Hall is a 20-minute walk to where we meet each day. Students should be prepared to make that walk and should plan their mornings so that they are not late.</p> <p>Our field trips will involve walking up to 5km, and students will have to carry their own equipment into the field.</p>
(c) Common activities	<p>The class will include visits to the field in the morning and afternoon, and an independent work period in the evening. During the day, field trips will include some travel. Students should bring a small bag or backpack that they can use to carry their notebooks, pens, pencils, binoculars, water bottle, and lunch. In the field, we will be exploring sites of ecological interest in urban areas, including abandoned properties, sewage lagoons, and city parks. These activities will require comfortable footwear.</p>
(d) Weather, dehydration, & biting insects	<p>August weather in London is likely to be hot and sunny, so students should come with a supply of sunscreen, a protective hat and sunglasses. But check the weather! What you choose to wear will depend on conditions that day: it's a good idea to come with at least one set of clothes to wear in cool weather. Because of the risk of ticks, we recommend that students wear long pants, so students should bring a water bottle to the field every day. Fieldwork will involve a lot of walking, so wear comfortable shoes. Mosquitos will be present, so students may want to apply insect repellent when going on some field excursions.</p>
(e) Toxic/poisonous, wildlife/ plants	<p>Much of our fieldwork will involve walking through tall grass. Students should do frequent checks for ticks. Some sites may have poison ivy. We will provide some training on what to watch for to avoid these risks, and recommend that students wear long pants that can tuck into socks, even in hot weather.</p>
(f) Sleeping, washroom & laundry facilities	<p>Some students will provide their own accommodations. Students who wish to stay in residence at UWO will have their own room in London Hall (London Hall Residence), which has a washroom with shower, sink and toilet, and a kitchen with stove, microwave, fridge, and sink. Bed linens and towels are provided, but students who plan to do their own cooking will need to provide pots, pans, dishes, and utensils. Laundry facilities are available in the building.</p>
(g) Meal plans & food allergies	<p>Students are responsible for providing their own meals, and should come to class every day with food for the day. Students staying in London Hall will have access to a kitchen in their suite. Time for grocery shopping will be provided on August 1 and August 8.</p>
(h) Non-academic responsibilities	<p>Students will be responsible for cleaning their accommodations upon checkout.</p>
(i) Degree of isolation	<p>The course is based out of the University of Western Ontario in the city of London. While on campus, students will have reliable access to electricity, running water, washrooms, and internet. London Hall is a short walk from a convenience store and a restaurant at the corner of Sarnia Rd. and Western Rd. University Hospital is on Western's campus.</p> <p>The course will involve some day-trips off campus, which will have reduced access to washrooms, and students should ensure that they have their electronic devices charged before these trips.</p>
(j) Alcohol & drugs	<p>Alcohol consumption is only permitted outside of class hours. Anyone judged to be unable to fully function as a result of intoxication will not be allowed to participate in field activities; and this impairment will be reflected in the student's grade for those activities. Smoking of any legal substance is permitted only in designated areas, but the rules regarding intoxication always apply.</p>
(k) Vaccinations/ Insurances	<p>OHIP (or other Canadian equivalent) is the only required insurance. We will request your health card number and information about any supplemental insurance you may have. All such information will be kept strictly confidential.</p>

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(l) Social Situations	Field courses can be very fun! We will have a few activities at the beginning of the course where students get to know each other. In a small course with students staying in different locations, it can be easy to accidentally exclude people from impromptu social gatherings after the coursework is done for the day. Please extend invitations to group events to everyone in the class, and be aware that fieldwork is often tiring: there are good reasons for personal health to say yes to rest!
(m) Final comments	Many students live in cities but have never had an opportunity to appreciate the great variety of habitats that exist so close to home. This course is intended for students with an interest in pursuing a career in an ecology-related field. You will learn how species have adapted to changing environments by exploiting new niches. August is a great time for seeing species in migration. There's a good chance that you'll be able to leave this course with knowledge that can impress your friends and family about wildlife that exists in their neighbourhood.