



Wildlife Ecology, B.S.

Course Planning Guide

Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology

Reference this guide to learn about the unique requirements, procedures, resources, and information for students in the Wildlife Ecology major.

Last updated: April 2024

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Wildlife Ecology Course Planning Guide

Welcome! You are receiving this information because you are an interested or new student in the Wildlife Ecology B.S. program at UW-Madison. This guide is meant to complement information found in the [Degree Audit Reporting System \(DARS\)](#), [Guide](#), and [Course Search & Enroll](#) and should *not* be used a substitute for meeting with your academic and faculty advisors.

The Wildlife Ecology major has a relatively high number of required courses, most of which are term specific. Therefore, it is crucial to plan ahead and consult with advisors regularly. When planning, you and your advisor will also check for enrollment requisites (found in Guide and Course Search & Enroll) to ensure proper course sequencing.

We hope you will find this information helpful as you map out a plan to complete the major in your **Degree Planner** tool in Course Search & Enroll! Information on how to use the Degree Planner can be found here in the Office of the Registrar's Knowledge Base: <https://kb.wisc.edu/registrar/98640>

Once you finish creating your plan, you can run a DARS "What-if" report **including planned terms** to make sure you are on track to graduate when you intend to. Information on how to do this can be found here: <https://kb.wisc.edu/registrar/94068>

Screenshot from **DARS** (Degree Audit Reporting System):

Run degree audit [X]

1 Select academic plan/program

2 Choose audit settings

Include courses from

- Previous, current, future, and planned terms**
Includes courses already completed, enrolled courses that are in progress, enrolled courses that have not started, and courses in the degree planner from future terms that are not enrolled.
- Previous, current, and future terms**
Includes courses already completed, enrolled courses that are in progress, enrolled courses that have not started.
- Previous and current terms**
Includes courses already completed and enrolled courses that are in progress.
- Previous terms**
Includes courses already completed.

Honors Degree Options
Keep current status [v]

Back Request audit

Wildlife Ecology Course Rotation Schedule

Note that many courses are only offered in certain semesters – pay attention when mapping your plan for degree completion!

The department will generally adhere to these patterns, barring budgetary or staffing constraints. Last updated April 2024.

Fall Only	Spring Only	Multi-term options
F&W ECOL 101 – Orientation to Wildlife Ecology (core and First Year Seminar) F&W ECOL 318 – Principles of Wildlife Ecology (core) F&W ECOL 561 – Wildlife Management Techniques (core) F&W ECOL/SURGI SCI 548 – Diseases of Wildlife (major elective) F&W ECOL 515 – Natural Resources Policy (Comm B OR Social Science, major elective) F&W ECOL 651 – Conservation Biology (major elective) F&W ECOL 660 – Climate Change Ecology (major elective) F&W ECOL 577 – Complexity and Conservation of White-Tailed Deer (capstone option)	F&W ECOL 306 – Terrestrial Vertebrates (core) F&W ECOL 379 – Principles of Wildlife Management (core) F&W ECOL 395 – Data and Spatial Tools for Ecologists (major elective) F&W ECOL 410 – Principles of Silviculture (major elective) F&W ECOL 448 – Disturbance Ecology (major elective) ZOOLOGY 510/511 – Ecology of Fishes and Ecology of Fishes Lab (core wildlife biology option) ZOOLOGY 520/521 – Ornithology and Birds of Southern Wisconsin (core wildlife biology option) F&W ECOL 599 – Wildlife Research Capstone (capstone option) F&W ECOL 655 – Animal Population Dynamics (core)	Evolution/Genetics Core ZOOLOGY 410 OR GENETICS 466 Plant Taxonomy Core BOTANY 400 – Plant Systematics (Fall) OR BOTANY 401 – Vascular Flora of Wisconsin (Spring and odd summers) Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math, Statistics, major electives F&W ECOL 699 – Special Problems (capstone option) F&W ECOL 681 – Senior Thesis (capstone option)
		Summer Only F&W ECOL 424 – Summer Field Practicum (major elective, EVEN summers only) F&W ECOL 658 – Forest Resource Practicum (major elective, ODD summers only)

Options for Gen Eds

Looking for courses that meet Social Sciences, Humanities, or Ethnic Studies requirements? Check out options in the ENVIR ST, GEOG, and AMER IND subjects.

O Pro tip – narrow your search by using the filtering tools in [Course Search & Enroll](#)

W
Course Search
My Courses
Scheduler
Degree Planner
Degree Audit (DARS)

Search for courses
17 results
Relevance ▾

Subject
Environmental Studies - Gaylord Nelson... ▾

Keywords

Seats

Open Wait listed Closed

+ Add by class number

✦ Breadth
^

- Biological Sciences
- Humanities
- Literature
- Natural Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Social Sciences

🎓 General Education
^

- Communication A
- Communication B
- Quantitative Reasoning A
- Quantitative Reasoning B
- Ethnic Studies

ENVIR ST 101 Forum on the Environment	1.00-2.00 credits
ENVIR ST 113 Environmental Studies: Environmental Humanities	3.00 credits
ENVIR ST 139 Global Environmental Issues	3.00 credits
ENVIR ST 213 Global Environmental Health: An Interdisciplinary Introduction	3.00 credits
ENVIR ST 309 People, Land and Food: Comparative Study of Agriculture Systems	3.00 credits
ENVIR ST 333 Green Urbanism	3.00 credits
ENVIR ST 339 Environmental Conservation	4.00 credits
ENVIR ST 343 Environmental Economics	3.00-4.00 credits
ENVIR ST 402 Special Topics: Social Perspectives in Environmental Studies	1.00-4.00 credits

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Options for Gen Eds continued

Remember - courses **cannot double count** across these categories but *can* be used to meet other major and college-level requirements. For example, F&W ECOL 515 can count towards both major and Social Science requirements. When in doubt, check DARS and consult with your academic advisor.

Humanities or Ethnic Studies	Humanities or Social Science	Humanities	Social Science	Ethnic Studies	Comm B
ENVIR ST 306: Indigenous Peoples and the Environment AMER IND 341: Indigenous Environmental Communicators	HIST SCI 132: Bees, Trees, Germs, and Genes: A History of Biology HIST SCI/C&E SOC 230: Agricultural and Social Change in Western History	GEOG 460: American Environmental History ENVIR ST 328: Environmental History of Europe, ENVIR ST 404: Racism & Environmental Science AMER IND/GEOG 410: Critical Indigenous Ecological Knowledges HIST SCI 301: The Origins of Scientific Thought HIST SCI 404 – A History of Disease	F&W ECOL 515 – Natural Resources Policy (<i>or</i> can count towards Comm B) Many more options in AMER IND and ENVIR ST subjects!	AMER IND/BOT 474: Ethnobotany Many more options in AMER IND and ENVIR ST subjects!	BIO 152: Intro Biology F&W ECOL 515: Natural Resources Policy

Note: The courses above are used as examples because they relate to biology and/or ecological issues and can double count towards major requirements. Feel free to find courses that are NOT directly related to the sciences if you prefer to take something

different. You can search for gen eds in subjects such as psychology, history, philosophy, anthropology, and many more.

Wildlife Ecology 4-year Plan (Example)

This plan is an EXAMPLE of how major requirements MAY be met. All other university requirements must be met to be eligible for graduation. Check DARS academic record to ensure accuracy. Students should maintain an average of 15 credits per semester (30 per year) to reach 120 credits needed to graduate in four years or less. See [Course Guide](#) for credit values, requisites, and additional course information.

Fall	Spring	Summer
<p>F&WE ECOL 101 Orientation to Wildlife Ecology*</p> <p>F&WE ECOL 318 Principles of Wildlife Ecology*</p> <p>Math 113 (depending on placement)</p> <p>Chem 103</p>	<p>F&WE ECOL 379 Principles of Wildlife Management*</p> <p>Chem 104 (optional, recommended if interested in research/advanced study)</p> <p>Comm A (if needed)</p>	
Fall	Spring	Summer
<p>F&WE ECOL 561 Wildlife Management Techniques*</p> <p>BIO 151</p> <p>F&WE 360 Extinction of Species (CALS International Studies Req)*</p> <p>C&E SOC 248 Environment, Natural Resources, and Society (or another major elective of student's choice)</p>	<p>F&WE ECOL 306 Terrestrial Vertebrates*</p> <p>Stats 301 or 371</p> <p>BIO 152</p> <p>Another major elective (student choice)</p>	<p>F&WE ECOL 424 Summer Field Practicum (only taught in <i>even</i> Summer terms)*</p>
Fall	Spring	Summer
<p>F&W ECOL 548 Diseases of Wildlife*</p> <p>BOT 400: Plant Systematics*</p> <p>ZOOL 410: Evolutionary Biology</p>	<p>F&W ECOL 410 Silviculture*</p> <p>Wildlife Ecology major elective</p> <p>F&WE ECOL 520 Ornithology*</p> <p>F&WE ECOL 521 Birds of Southern Wisconsin*</p>	
Fall	Spring	Summer
<p>F&WE ECOL 577 Capstone (White-tailed Deer capstone option)*</p> <p>F&WE ECOL 515 Natural Resources Policy (counts for Social Science <i>or</i> Comm B <i>and can double count as major elective</i>)</p>	<p>F&WE ECOL 655 Population Dynamics*</p> <p>Major elective</p>	

*Term-specific – Consult with advisor and see [Department Course Rotation Schedules](#)

Bold Dark Green = Wildlife Ecology Core (MUST take, no exceptions)

Unbold Green = Satisfies Gen Ed/CALS/ Major Requirement

Bright Green = Major elective

Wildlife Ecology 2-year Plan (Example)

This plan serves as an *example* to transfer students and/or those who declare the Wildlife Ecology major after sophomore year. It assumes gen eds, math, stats, chem, bio requirements are complete. All university requirements must be satisfied to be eligible for graduation. Check DARS academic record to ensure accuracy. Students should maintain an average of 15 credits per semester (30 per year) to reach the 120 credits needed to graduate in four years total. See [Course Guide](#) for credit values, requisites, and additional course information.

Fall	Spring	Summer
C&E SOC 248 Environment, Natural Resources, and Society F&W ECOL 101 Orientation to Wildlife Ecology* F&W ECOL 318 Principles of Wildlife Ecology* F&W ECOL 561 Wildlife Management Techniques	F&W ECOL 379 Principles of Wildlife Management* F&WE 306 Terrestrial Vertebrates F&WE 520 Ornithology* F&WE 521 Birds of Southern Wisconsin*	F&W ECOL 360 Extinction of Species (CALS International Studies Req)*
Fall	Spring	Summer
F&W ECOL 577 Capstone (White-tailed Deer Capstone option) F&W ECOL 548 Diseases of Wildlife* F&W ECOL 515 Natural Resources Policy (counts for Social Science or Comm B)* ZOOL 410 Evolutionary Biology	F&W ECOL 410 Silviculture* BOT 401 Vascular Flora of Wisconsin* F&WE 655 Population Dynamics LAND ARC 581 Prescribed Fire (major elective)*	F&W ECOL 424 Summer Field Practicum (only taught in <i>even</i> Summer terms)*

***Term-specific – Consult with advisor and see [Department Course Rotation Schedules](#)**

Bold Dark Green = Wildlife Ecology Core (MUST take, no exceptions)

Unbold Green = Satisfies Gen Ed/CALS/ Major Requirement

Bright Green = Major elective

Capstone Options

All CALS students are required to complete a final capstone, which is meant to be a cumulative project integrating the knowledge a student has acquired throughout their program. Students are required to integrate diverse bodies of knowledge to solve a problem or formulate a policy of societal importance with the intent of facilitating the transition to post-baccalaureate life.

A Capstone Experience should:

- Develop problem solving skills
- Expose the student to multidisciplinary approach
- Develop teamwork and interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate effectively to multiple audiences
- Develop skills in accessing and using information resources (e.g., electronic databases, library resources, national repositories)
- Address societal, economic, ethical, scientific, and professional issues
- Communicate and extend the capstone experience via written, oral, and/or multimedia reports by each student

The Capstone Experience will normally be completed during the student's final 2 or 3 semesters. The intent is to have the student utilize and integrate their undergraduate learning into a culminating, or capstone, experience.

The Wildlife Ecology major approves the following courses to count towards the CALS capstone requirement:

Select one of the following:		3
F&W ECOL 577	Complexity and Conservation of White-tailed Deer	
F&W ECOL 599	Wildlife Research Capstone	

Potential substitutions: F&W ECOL 699: Special Problems or F&W ECOL 681: Senior Thesis. These options require instructor consent through a Capstone Agreement form.

Frequently Asked Questions

Policies and Requirements

I'm a sophomore – is it too late to join the major and graduate on time?

Not at all! However, you do want to make sure you are taking math, chemistry, and biology courses relatively early in your undergraduate career. These courses are often prerequisite requirements for more advanced courses in the major. If you are transferring from a major outside CALS or have not taken an introductory biology sequence, it may be more difficult to catch up. You will also want to take F&W ECOL 101 and 318 as early as possible, noting that these classes are only taught in Fall.

Can I double major?

Yes, students are able to double major in Wildlife Ecology and many other majors on campus. However, because the Wildlife Ecology major has several core courses that are term-specific, careful planning is crucial.

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) policy and procedures can be found [here](#). The best way to start the process is by building a 4-year plan to complete your primary major. Then, an advisor from your intended second major can help determine if adding an additional major is a good fit with your goals and overall student experience. In some cases, a certificate or other opportunities may be more beneficial than adding an additional major.

Can I study abroad in this major?

Yes! Refer to the [Wildlife Ecology Study Abroad MAP](#) webpage for more information. Students in the major have completed a variety of different field experiences abroad. The best way to plan for a study abroad experience is to build out your plan to complete your degree in advance. If you plan to study abroad in a Fall or Spring semester, set aside a semester with lots of wiggle room for electives and focus area courses. There are also several study abroad programs that can be completed over the summer.

Courses taken abroad with direct equivalencies to courses in the major will automatically count in DARS once posted. Students should consult with their advisor when considering what courses to take abroad and how the equivalency process works.

What's the process for Requesting a DARS Exception? Who makes the decisions?

Meet with your advisor if you would like to request a substitution for any major requirement. If you are taking a new course that has not been approved as an exception in the past, you may

be asked to provide a syllabus that will be reviewed by the program's Curriculum Committee. Your advisor can help you navigate this process. Ultimately, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) approves and processes all exceptions to curricular requirements.

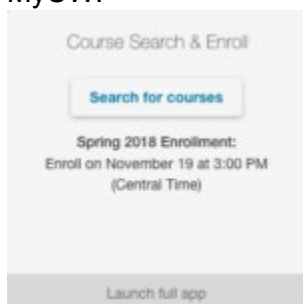
If I re-take a course, will the new grade replace my old grade?

No, if you retake a course both grades will be on your transcript and calculated into your GPA. In most cases, it is not advisable to re-take a course where you earned a poor grade. Talk to your advisor for specific situations when it may be required to re-take a course you did not pass with a D or better.

Advising, Enrollment, and Course Selection

How do I know when to enroll?

The Office of the Registrar will contact you with your enrollment appointment time. This happens in early November for Spring enrollment, and late March/early April for Summer and Fall enrollment. After times are assigned, you can find yours on the "Course Search & Enroll" tile in MyUW:



Note that this date is simply the *earliest date and time* you can enroll. You do not need to meet with your advisor on this date specifically. In fact, it is better to meet with your advisor prior to your enrollment appointment so you have enough time to build a schedule in your enrollment cart. Advisor's calendars start filling up once enrollment begins, so be proactive and plan accordingly.

How often should I meet with my advisor? Do I have to do it every semester?

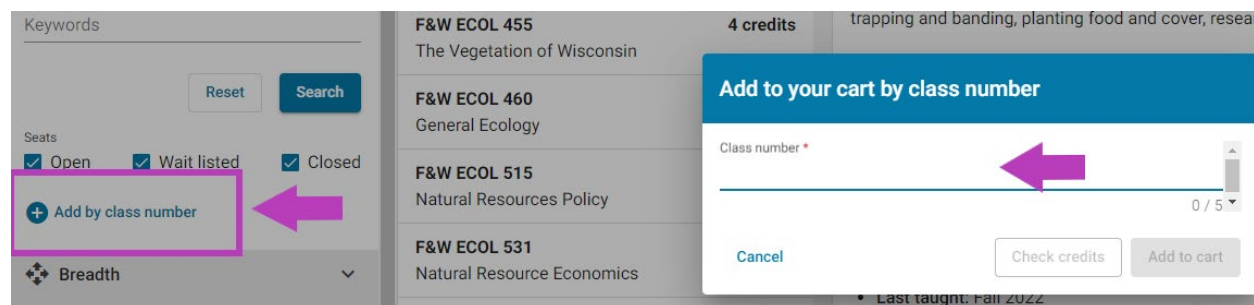
Freshman, sophomores, transfer students, and any student who has recently declared the major are required to consult with their staff and/or faculty advisor at least once per semester. This consultation must occur prior to enrollment for the upcoming term. Students may have an enrollment hold placed on their record that can be lifted after consulting with an advisor. **Most often, consulting happens through an advising appointment scheduled through Starfish** but can also be done through drop-ins or via email. Students who have built their 4-year plan

and have it saved as their “Primary Plan” in degree planner are encouraged to meet with an advisor regularly to discuss electives and progress towards degree completion.

How do I enroll in research credits?

Independent study credits like F&W ECOL 299 and 699 require instructor consent to enroll. This means you will need pre-approval from the professor you will enroll under and who will give you a grade. You will also need to negotiate with the professor to determine how many hours you will be spending in the lab, which determines how many credit hours you should earn.

Once you have come to an agreement with your professor, they should notify an appropriate staff member to grant you the permission necessary to enroll for credits. Each section has its own unique 5-digit class number. The staff member who grants you permission can give you this number, which can also be found in Course Search & Enroll. When enrolling for research credits, we suggest using the “Add by class number” feature which looks like this:



How do I know if I have an enrollment hold?

You can check to see if you have a hold on your account by logging onto your [MyUW Student Center](#), selecting Tasks and reviewing any Holds listed. Some holds require you to take action; others are informational only. Please [see this KB document](#) for details.

Who is my faculty advisor? What’s the difference between a faculty advisor and a staff advisor?

All Wildlife Ecology students will be assigned to a faculty advisor based on an alphabetical split.

- Jim Berkelman: Last names A-C
- Karie Cherwin: Last names D-F
- David Drake: Last names G-H
- Jess Hua: Last names I-K
- Jon Pauli: Last names L-M
- Zach Peery: Last names N-P
- Anna Pidgeon: Last names Q-S
- Tim Van Deelen: Last names T-W
- Ben Zuckerberg: Last names X-Z

This initial advisor assignment is not necessarily permanent. If you are looking for a specific faculty advisor for a research project, the best way to start is to review the bios for [individual faculty in the department](#). Read about their research areas and peruse their lab website if they have one. If there is a professor you think you want to make a connection with, reach out to them directly. You can also find out what classes they teach and enroll in one of them. This is a great way to make a first connection. Faculty tend to remember students who enroll in their classes, participate, and are enthusiastic about learning more.

Faculty advisors serve as mentors in a professional sense and are instrumental for students who wish to become involved in scientific research. Having a faculty advisor is crucial for students who want to complete an independent research project for their capstone.

Your staff advisor is more like a high school guidance counselor who can help you choose classes and understand program requirements. There is a crossover between areas of expertise, so please feel free to ask either advisor any question. If one of us doesn't know the answer, we will make a referral!

What's the Deal with 375 "Special Topics" Courses?

In the Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology, the F&W ECOL 375 subject listing is a placeholder for new courses, courses without their own permanent number, or courses that are taught very infrequently. With advanced planning and advisor approval, these courses can count as substitutions for program requirements. If you have a question about any specific special topics section, talk to your advisor about requesting a substitution/DARS exception.

Other Common Questions

If I complete this major, will I automatically be eligible for certification as a Wildlife Biologist through The Wildlife Society (TWS)?

Not necessarily, however our curriculum is well-aligned with the educational requirements needed for certification. Most students will need additional credits in Botany and Physical Sciences to satisfy TWS requirements. You also may need additional credits in communication, English, and environmental law/ natural resources policy. Please refer to TWS website for current requirements:

<https://wildlife.org/learn/professional-development-certification/certification-programs/>

Additionally, Professor Tim Van Deelen is a great person to talk to with any questions about TWS certification. He has served as a member of the certification review board and has held strategy sessions for the student chapter of The Wildlife Society.

What courses should I take if I want to go to graduate school?

One of the best things you can do if you plan to attend a research-based graduate program is to get involved in undergraduate research. See this tip sheet for more advice, including email templates: [TIPS FOR CONTACTING FACULTY ADVISORS in Russell Labs](#)

Beyond research lab experience, having a strong background in statistics and data science is very useful in preparing for advanced graduate study. Some programs may also prefer for students to have taken advanced mathematics and physics during their undergraduate career, but this is not always the case.

Minimum GPA requirements will also come into play. Most graduate programs require students to maintain a 3.0 GPA throughout their graduate career. Showing that you can maintain a strong GPA as an undergraduate student will be crucial to your success. While it may be possible to be admitted to some graduate programs with an undergraduate GPA below 3.0, it may make you a less competitive applicant or require that you provide additional evidence of admissibility to be considered. So keep up your GPA, especially in junior and senior years!

Where can I find more information on transfer credits?

To review how courses from other institutions transfer to UW-Madison we recommend using the Transferology database and resources from the Registrar's Course Equivalency Service (CES). For more information please visit the [CES website](#).

How do I apply for graduation?

1. [Apply to Graduate](#), ideally by the beginning of your final semester.
2. Run your DARS prior to the start of your final semester to ensure you will have satisfied all requirements.
3. At least 1-2 months before graduation, check the [Commencement website](#) to learn about attire rental and other important details.

Note: Attending commencement is optional. Students do not receive their diplomas at the commencement ceremony. Diplomas are mailed approximately 6-8 weeks after the end of each semester. This allows time for final grading, reviews by school/college degree clearance staff, posting of the degree to the student record (transcript), and processing of the diploma.

Your diploma will not be mailed if you still have certain types of holds on your academic record. When you [clear your holds](#), your diploma will then be automatically released for mailing. Contact the Registrar's Office with any specific questions about your diploma.

Where can I find more information?

Please visit the [Russell Labs Hub Student Services](#) page and follow us on Instagram @uwrusselllabshub.