Welcome to BIO 130 Field Biology Online! Here are some introductory remarks, some course details, and instructions for getting started.

1. If you are enrolled in the course, you should already have received from me an email with some important information and a preliminary syllabus. If you did not receive that email, you should contact me by email at vails@wpunj.edu.

2. If you are not enrolled in the course, but would like to be, be aware that the enrollment is strictly limited at 20 students. It is possible that some currently-enrolled students will drop before the start of the session, so watch for opportunities to enroll.

3. The class begins at 12:00 AM Tuesday 5/24 (that’s midnight between Monday and Tuesday) and ends at 12:00 AM Thursday June 30 (that’s midnight between Wednesday and Thursday). Kind of confusing, I know. The summer session is intense and it’s very important that you be prepared to start work without delay. It is vitally important that you have the textbook before the first day of class because of the fast pace of the summer session. The only required textbook is the 12th edition of Starr and Taggart’s “Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life.” The WPUNJ Bookstore sells a customized package with just the chapters that we need for this course. Here is a link to the WPUNJ Bookstore web page, where you can order the package: http://www.bkstr.com/Home/10001-10151-1?demoKey=d. You can buy the full text elsewhere, just make sure you get the 12th edition.

4. At the bottom of this Welcome Letter you will find preliminary syllabus information with which you can prepare for the class, and even get ahead in the reading before class begins. This information is preliminary and subject to revision, but will be a good basis for preparing.

5. This is a fully-online course, including a laboratory component, which will present special challenges. For the laboratory component, some of the planned activities will require the use of Microsoft Excel (the spreadsheet component of Microsoft Office) and PowerPoint (the presentation software component of Microsoft Office). ALSO, there is one software package for a lab exercise that only runs on Windows and does NOT run on Windows-7. I would like to confirm that you have access to this software and that you have access to a computer with Windows that is NOT Windows-7. Don’t panic if you do not, but let me know right away by email to vails@wpunj.edu so we can look for a solution.

6. Make sure that you are familiar with the basics of Blackboard, online instruction, system requirements, procedures for dealing with technical difficulties, and other matters discussed on the Blackboard home page at http://bb.wpunj.edu

7. As soon as the Blackboard site for our course is available, and no later than first thing in the morning Tuesday May 24, you should log on and explore the course site, where you will find a final syllabus and detailed instructions for getting started on both the “Lecture” and “Laboratory” components of the course. We will cover the equivalent of a 15-week regular-semester course in a little over five weeks, so you should expect to work about three times as hard! Do not underestimate the required commitment. If you are slow getting up to speed, or fall behind during the course, it will be very difficult to catch up.
BIO 130-80 Field Biology Online PRELIMINARY
Summer 6A 2011

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**Course Description and Objectives:** Introduction to biological diversity, ecology, and evolutionary biology, with research experiences equivalent to a laboratory course.

**Required Text:** Starr, Taggart, Evers, & Starr. 2009. Biology: The Unity and Diversity of Life, 12th edition, Brooks/Cole. Selected chapters for this course are sold as a bundle by the WPUNJ bookstore.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar</th>
<th>Lecture Content</th>
<th>Lab Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Chapter 1 Concepts in Biology</td>
<td>Evolution of Flying Birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/24 – 5/27</td>
<td>Chapter 19 Diversity &amp; Classification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Chapter 20 History of Life</td>
<td>Origin of Whales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/27-6/3</td>
<td>Chapter 17 Principles of Evolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Chapter 18 Processes of Evolution</td>
<td>Cat Population Genetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/3-6/10</td>
<td>Chapter 44 Animal Behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Chapter 45 Population Ecology</td>
<td>Population Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/10-6/17</td>
<td>Chapter 46 Community Ecology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Chapter 47 Ecosystems</td>
<td>Community Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/17-6/24</td>
<td>Chapter 48 The Biosphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Chapter 49 Human Impacts</td>
<td>Field Trip Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/24-30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessments & Grading**

Lecture: Chapter Tests 40%  Lab: Lab Assignments 30%
Final Exam 20%
Discussion 10%

Chapter tests and the final examination are “open-book” tests with time limits. You may use your books and notes, but may not collaborate with any other individual (student or nonstudent). You will not have much time for looking things up, so you must be fully prepared as if for a closed-book examination.

**Teaching Methods**

This is a fully online course. Instead of daily lectures in a classroom, students and instructor will interact entirely online by use of the Blackboard course management system (abbreviated as “Bb”). You
should log on to Blackboard at least once per day to check postings. All assignments and tests will be completed online. It is essential that students have high-speed internet access, a reliable computer, and the ability to use Blackboard and standard application software including an internet browser, email, word processing software, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Microsoft Excel. The learning process will depend, as always but more-so, on diligent independent study of the text and materials provided by the instructor. Materials equivalent to lectures will be provided each week in units corresponding to the chapters for the week. At the same time, a Blackboard Discussion Forum will be opened for seven days of ongoing discussion of those chapters. Also at that time, online tests corresponding to each chapter will be made available. During the ensuing week, students will study the text and other materials, post questions and comments to the Discussion Forum, respond to the questions and comments of others, and generally use the Discussion Forum as a substitute for the interactions that would take place in a classroom or the instructor’s office. Students may, on occasion, be directed by the instructor to respond to a particular issue or question, but most discussions are expected to be directed by student questions and comments with the goal of mastering the material in preparation for the tests. Participation in Discussion Forum will be graded on the quantity and quality of contributions. Chapter tests (usually 2 per week) can be taken at any time during the week before the deadline, but must be completed in one attempt, so don’t take them until you are ready. Your lowest chapter test score will be dropped from your course grade.

The LABORATORY experiences are integral to the course and will constitute 30% of your grade. Laboratory experiences will combine online activities with outdoor activities that you will undertake on your own. The outdoor activities will include a field trip to a museum, park, or natural area that you will propose and the instructor will approve. Other outdoor activities might include collection and analysis of observations and measurements in a setting near your home. You may have to purchase some inexpensive supplies. Detailed instructions will be provided.

**Special Considerations**

**Academic Integrity:**
We all share a heightened responsibility for Academic Integrity in the online environment and I will expect the highest level of academic integrity from every individual. That means a clear understanding of the requirements, a clear understanding of how to comply with them, and a commitment to full compliance. There will be zero tolerance for any violations, which means an F for the course and a letter in your file at the Dean of Students Office. No excuses, no second chances. The WPUNJ policy on Academic Integrity is found in full on pages 50-51 in the undergraduate catalog, available online at [http://www.wpunj.edu/dotAsset/136382.pdf](http://www.wpunj.edu/dotAsset/136382.pdf). Contact me immediately if you have any questions or concerns about academic integrity.

**Technical Difficulties:**
Successful completion of the course requires a reliable computer with reliable high-speed internet access. If there is a problem with the WPUNJ system, our IT staff will deal with it. If there are problems with your computer or internet service, it is your responsibility. In fairness to others and especially in the context of the compressed summer schedule, I cannot extend deadlines, reset aborted tests, or make exceptions to the requirements under any circumstances. I will include some flexibility in the scoring (details to be announced) partly to provide some accommodation for the possibility of technical problems.