Science Societies

Classroom wildlife research expands undergraduate student skills

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Janel Ortiz (right) assisting an educator (left) in locating and identifying a bird. Photo by Angelica Arredondo.

Course-based undergraduate research experiences (CUREs) are becoming more common at colleges and universities. They provide students the opportunities to expand their skill sets, work collaboratively with their classmates, and learn by doing through a research project in the classroom.

In an article recently published in *Natural Sciences Education*, researchers report on a CURE that was created and applied in a wildlife management course at a university in South Texas. Research projects focused on birds, and students were quizzed on bird identification and were asked about their feelings towards their science skills and bird ecology and research.

The researchers found that students improved in their bird identification by 18% on average; however, there was no change in their interest in bird ecology. A majority of the students felt that the course experience helped improve their bird identification and research-related skills, yet barriers to these experiences continue to exist in the form of student engagement.

With the need for future wildlife professionals to have hands-on learning experiences, CUREs provide an opportunity where all students can participate. Integrating a research experience into the classroom exposes students to research and develops skills to make them more marketable for future careers or graduate school positions.

Dig deeper

Ortiz, J.L., Conkey, A.A.T., Brennan, L.A., Fedynich, L., & Green, M. (2020). Incorporating research into the undergraduate wildlife management curriculum. *Natural Sciences Education*, *49*, e20028. **https://doi.org/10.1002/nse2.20028**

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