

BIOGEOGRAPHY  
Spring 1994/ Group Contract  
Faculty Sponsor: Peter B. Taylor

The primary subject was biogeography, which, in turn, draws from several fields of environmental science, including ecology, evolutionary biology, phylogenetic systematics, and geology. Biogeography was covered by the text *Biogeography* (Brown & Gibson, 1983), complemented by *After the Ice Age: the Return of Life to Glaciated North America* (Pielou, 1991), *The Diversity of Life* (Wilson, 1992), and *Where Have All the Birds Gone?* (Terborgh, 1989). These were read in entirety through weekly assigned reading, supported by review and discussion in class meetings. The latter two titles also addressed topics of conservation biology, which was the secondary subject of this program. Lectures featured topics of biogeography and conservation about the Pacific Northwest, Olympic Peninsula, Mount Saint Helens, Hawaii, and New Zealand. Videos about Africa's Great Rift, Galapagos Islands, Mount Saint Helens, Hawaiian Islands, New Zealand, and Madagascar were shown. An invited speaker talked about conservation problems and programs in Madagascar. These topics illustrate the global geographic scope and the Pacific Northwest regional focus of the program.

Three field trips were conducted: to the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge to observe the spring migration of shorebirds; to Mount Saint Helens Volcanic National Monument to observe ecological disturbance and recovery; and to the Olympic National Park (Hurricane Ridge), where a staff biologist led a tour featuring ecological and historical aspects of Olympic Peninsula biogeography.

As an ongoing general assignment, each student was expected to write weekly or biweekly summaries of learning from all program activities. An early assignment was to compile species resumes of one plant and one bird personally observed in this region. A final assignment was to read and respond to interpretive questions about an article describing a new bird species (shrike, Somalia), which featured several prominent concepts of modern biogeography, including cladistic systematics.

Weekly seminars were based on students' presentations of articles of their choosing about topics of conservation biology (or other aspects of conservation). Each student presented two of these talks.

A major research assignment for each student was to review literature to compile a biogeographic profile about a particular taxonomic group or region, to be produced as a written report. Final exchange of information about the individual projects took the form of poster sessions and discussions of the findings presented.