
WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND SERVICE LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE COURSES: POTENTIAL AND PITFALLS

Michelle L. Anderson, Department of Biology, The University of Montana Western, 710 South Atlantic, Dillon, Montana 59725

The benefit of authentic research for student learning in undergraduate biology curricula is well documented, with examples of innovative investigations at a wide variety of colleges and universities around the United States. Similar benefits in undergraduate wildlife programs are anticipated but less broadly documented. The block scheduling available at The University of Montana Western (UMW) provides unique opportunities to pursue long-term research projects across multiple science courses. Examples are presented of undergraduate research and management projects conducted in Southwest Montana in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy and the Ecological Research as Education Network over the last three years. Research projects entail investigating wildlife habitat, non-game and game species. The potentials and pitfalls inherent in designing research protocols, collaborative investigations, peer mentoring, obtaining funding, and publishing research are reviewed. Prospects for refining existing projects and implementing new investigations will be discussed.