

Internships for undergraduates in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences



FWCS undergraduates must complete two internship courses before graduation: the Exploratory Internship for 1 credit, and the Intensive Internship for 3 credits:

1) 40-hour exploratory internship -

- *Goal is to introduce student to an off-campus, professional setting and provide real-world learning opportunity within their career path.*
- Ex. Weekend job shadow, data analysis, volunteering, attending a professional conference

2) 200-hour Intensive Internship -

- *Goal is to set students up well for their first jobs post-graduation, both by gaining skills relevant to their own career path, and by building contacts with relevant employers.*
- Should be completed in junior or early senior year
- Can be completed part-time over multiple terms, as needed
- Ex. seasonal field work, remote project work, internship with a conservation non-profit, wildlife rehabilitation apprentice, international internship...you name it and students have done it.

A good Intensive Internship does the following:

- Provides 200 hours of work within an employer-employee relationship structure, in which students have tangible deliverables, expectations, and a timeline for completion
- Sets students up with networking opportunities and job skills within their career path
- Offers a supervisor that provides mentorship, opportunities for feedback and check-in's
- Provides funding, or alternatively, flexible schedules + professional development + other benefits.
- ****Most importantly, achieves the mission of bringing the student closer to their desired post-graduation career.**

If you have further questions, please review the detailed FAQs starting on the following page. The FWCS Internship Coordinator at FW.internship@oregonstate.edu is available for further inquiries and internship approval.



Internship - Frequently Asked Questions

Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences

Section I. Internship coordination

What is the role of the Internship Coordinator?

The Internship Coordinator's role is to guide students through the process of choosing appropriate career development opportunities to meet their goals including internships, volunteer activities, jobs, research experiences and networking; to teach career skills in **FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences**; and to approve internships that meet your career goals and facilitate learning during the internship.

Should I get in touch with my Academic Advisor if I have questions about internships?

No; contact the Internship Coordinator (fw.internship@oregonstate.edu). Be sure to include all pertinent background information related to your questions.

Section II. FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences

What is FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries & Wildlife Sciences?

FW 209 is a required, one-credit course and part of the professional series offered to Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences majors, which includes FW 107 Orientation to Fisheries and Wildlife and FW 307 Specialization Development.

FW 209 is a precursor for internships and is taught by the Internship Coordinator. The course helps students identify local organizations that may offer internships that align with their academic/professional interests and time/geographic constraints. It also helps students prepare internship and job application materials specific to the fisheries and wildlife field. The Internship Coordinator works individually with each student in the course to explore current opportunities in their geographic and interest areas, refine their resumé and cover letter to show transferable skills, practice interviewing, and build skills to network locally.

What are the course prerequisites for FW 209?

FW 107 Orientation to Fisheries and Wildlife is the only enforced prerequisite to FW 209 and must be taken first. Before taking FW 209, ideally you should have completed FW 251 Principles of Fish and Wildlife Conservation and the chemistry series, and at least started the biology series. Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences (FWCS) approval is required to take FW 209, after prerequisites have been satisfied.

When should I take FW 209?

Take FW 209 two terms before you plan to seek internships so that your resumé, cover letter, and information are current when you begin to apply to internships. If you take FW 209 too far in advance, organizations may change, your interest and qualifications may change. Department approval is required to register for FW 209 – if you are working with your advisor, this will be done for you. If you receive an error message when registering for FW 209, contact your advisor.

Is FW 209 a prerequisite for another course?

FW 209 should be completed prior to taking FW 307 Specialization Development. After completion of FW 307, Specialization courses will be added to your degree program, so you will need to plan carefully to ensure FW 209 and FW 307 are taken in a timely manner.

Section III. Past and current experiences

Can I use past experience for my internship requirement?

In general, past experience cannot be used to fulfill an internship requirement. However, if you have significant past experience -- for example, 3+ years of recent experience with a FW employer -- you should contact the Internship Coordinator (fw.internship@oregonstate.edu) to discuss this possibility. In that email, please include your updated resume with total hours completed for each FW-related experience, and a description of your professional goals.

What if I am currently volunteering (or will be soon?)

See [Section X. Volunteering](#)

What if I find an internship prior to taking FW 209?

If an internship opportunity arises beforehand and/or before you can take FW 209, email the Internship Coordinator at fw.internship@oregonstate.edu - include the following in your email request:

- a description of your academic/professional goals;
- the internship position description;
- a description of how the position supports your goals;
- a request to approve taking FW 410 Internship; and
- your resumé.

Section IV. Preparing for internships

Before taking FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife, you can take some steps to prepare for your internship:

- **Start brainstorming and draft your plan**

First answer the question – where do you want to work after graduation? What are some examples of employers and jobs that interest you and which skills do you need to be competitive for these? Then, research the locations of these employers and jobs, and note the options near you (or where you plan to live after graduation). Research their websites – do these employers offer structured internships? If not, find contact information for individuals at these employers by searching their websites and LinkedIn. While taking FW 209, you can email/call these individuals to inquire about internship opportunities.

- **Start volunteering**

Volunteering for a natural resources or animal-focused organization is essential for students to do prior to applying for internships. This gives you experiences to put on your resumé and makes you more competitive. Most students have at least one volunteer experience prior to landing an

internship. In some cases, it is possible that volunteer experience can be used as the Exploratory Internship. See [Section X. Volunteering](#) for more information.

Section V. FW 410 Internships Definitions

Internships allow students to gain professional-level skills for their resumés and references to support them in seeking jobs after graduation. Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences is a hands-on profession, and the internship is essential to gain hands-on experience.

Exploratory Internships

What is the goal of the FW 410 Exploratory Internship?

To make local professional connections that can help you find future hands-on learning opportunities, but also to help narrow your academic and professional aspirations. Many students complete short-term volunteer experiences or attend a local professional conference for exploratory internship. Attending a professional conference is critical in helping students build a local professional network.

What have students done for their Exploratory Internship?

This is 40+ hours of experience. Students generally attend a 2+ day professional conference in their field of study (“Conference Track”) OR complete 40 hours of work experience with a local employer or professional (“Experiential Track”). Common conferences include those hosted by The Wildlife Society or the American Fisheries Society. Common work experiences include volunteering, job shadowing, doing ride-alongs with law enforcement, or assisting in research such as with Oregon State-sponsored research program like URSA Engage.

Intensive Internships

What is the goal of the FW 410 Intensive Internship?

To help you build professional-level skills and references so you can advance professionally on your chosen career track. The experience must have enough depth and breadth that by the end of the experience, you can perform professional level tasks without supervision. Ideally, this intensive internship would be with an employer that you would like to work with after graduation. Some students work a paid, seasonal position for one term; however, students often have constraints related to work or parenting that preclude this. Instead, a student may have an internship that is parttime, volunteer and extended over several terms but has the same impact on your resumé as a short-term, full-time, paid position.

What have students done for their Intensive Internship?

This is 200+ hours of experience with a single employer, in which the student has work-related responsibilities and duties. Ideally, the student will receive mentorship, supervision, and networking opportunities. Students complete their Intensive at a wide variety of employers and positions including seasonal biological field technicians, summer outreach positions at local parks or zoos, virtual positions for conservation policy research, wildlife rehabilitation assistants, research assistants, fellowships such as REUs (Research Experience for Undergraduates). Students often complete their Intensive through either full-time and seasonal positions, OR through part-time positions that last up to 6 months.

Are remote/virtual internships accepted?

Yes.

Section VI. Registering for FW 410 Internship

How do I get credit for an internship?

You must register for FW 410 Exploratory Internship and FW 410 Intensive Internship to get credit toward your degree. Registering for these classes requires pre-approval by the Internship Coordinator.

How do I register for FW 410 Internship?

Your internship must be approved by the Internship Coordinator. Once approved, you may register for FW 410 Internship. For students who may be interning over several terms, consult with the Internship Coordinator to determine when it is appropriate to register for credit. Note that internship is a class and does require a certain level of time, skill development, and professional growth, just as any other course.

Section VII. Timing of FW 410 Internships

When should FW 410 be taken?

As a rule, students take FW 410 **Exploratory** Internship within a few months of completing FW 209 and take FW 410 **Intensive** Internship a few months after the exploratory internship. Exceptions to this happen all the time. Contact the Internship Coordinator at fw.internship@oregonstate.edu to discuss the best timing for you.

Can I do my internship just before graduation?

It's a good idea to have your internship completed well before graduation, because 1) it may take some time to find one, and 2) not having met the requirement will prevent you from graduating on time. The course FW 209 Careers Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences should be taken just prior to or within a couple of terms of when you want to begin looking for your internship, so plan accordingly.

How long do I have to complete the internship?

The length of time it takes to complete the internship will vary with the position and your schedule. Typically, most student complete this requirement between 3-6 months.

Can I stop out for a quarter of classes to complete my internship requirement?

Yes. Some students choose to stop out from classes to complete intensive internship, but most continue to take classes.

Do I have to register for credit the same quarter I do my internship?

Yes, as a rule, you should register for credit the quarter that you finish your internship (or at least, the minimum hours required -- 40 for exploratory and 200 for intensive). If the internship spans multiple terms, you will register in the term the internship ends, but also be in contact with the Internship Coordinator before you start your internship. Under certain circumstances (e.g., military), if you are doing a summer internship, you might be able to apply summer internship credits to fall term. Speak with the Internship Coordinator to see if this is an appropriate option for you.

Section VIII. Funding for FW 410 Internships

Will I be compensated monetarily?

Internships may be volunteer or paid. Internships designed to accommodate a student's schedule will generally require volunteering. Internships that accommodate an employer's schedule will generally be paid. We suggest applying early and often for internship opportunities that interest you – this gives you time to prioritize internships that are paid and more competitive.

Can a student be paid or working in a paid position while getting internship credit?

Yes, seasonal biological jobs can be used for the intensive internship requirement. However, some students may not have the time or geographical flexibility to work in a paid seasonal position, so they must develop a local volunteer position that provides entry-level skills similar to a paid position.

Do we have to pay Oregon State tuition for the FW 410 Internships? Does financial aid cover the tuition for the internship?

Your internship courses are required for the degree program, and you register and pay tuition for them as you would your other courses. Similarly, if you are eligible for financial aid, the aid can be used to pay for the credits.

Is there funding for unfunded or low-funded internships?

Yes, Oregon State's College of Agricultural Sciences has a competitive internship award called the [E.R. Jackman Internship Support program](#) for students in low-paying or volunteer internships that contribute to their educational goals in natural resources. Funds may be used to help offset a variety of expenses including transportation, living expenses, projects, and research. Similarly, the Department also has some internship funds to award. See the [Funding Details](#) section on the internship resources page.

Section IX. Multiple FW 410 Internships

Can I do more than one Exploratory Internship?

Yes, but you may only want to pay for the one credit course that is required. The Internship Coordinator will continue to work with you to help you gain professional experience even if you are not doing it for credit.

Can I do more than one Intensive Internship?

Yes, but you may only want to pay for the three-credit course that is required. The Internship Coordinator will continue to work with you to help you gain professional experience even if you are not doing it for credit.

Can internships apply to Specialization?

Per Specialization Guidelines, a maximum of 12 credit hours, in any combination, of FW 401 (research) and FW 410 Internship (international or domestic), or as part of an Oregon State Study Abroad program may apply.

Can additional domestic internship credits apply to Specialization?

A student may receive a maximum of 8 credits of FW 410 by completing an additional domestic FW 410 intensive and/or exploratory internship. The additional domestic FW 410 internship can apply to

Specialization if the following are true: 1) the student has completed their first FW410 domestic exploratory or intensive internship; 2) the additional exploratory or intensive internship is significantly different from the first completed internship (e.g., different conference, project, employer, or skillset gained); 3) the student presents a strong case as to why more internship credits are needed, and; 4) it has been approved by the Internship Coordinator.

Section X. Volunteering

The terms “volunteering” and “interning” are sometimes used interchangeably. In practice however, typically volunteering indicates that you could volunteer for just a few hours, with little to no training, orientation, or longer-term deliverables. Interning, on the other hand, indicates a longer time commitment, a commitment from a supervisor or mentor who will oversee your duties and/or receive your deliverables, and higher-level duties which will require some training.

Prior to applying to internships, it can greatly benefit you to start volunteering for a natural resources or animal-focused organization. This gives you experiences to put on your resumé and makes you more competitive. It also may introduce you to professionals who can help you get your foot in the door at an agency or organization. Most students have at least one volunteer experience prior to landing an internship.

What if I am already volunteering?

The experience may or may not apply to the internship requirement. You would need to reach out to the Internship Coordinator to see how it might apply. Include the following in your email request:

- the volunteer position description;
- a description of your academic/professional goals;
- a description of how the position supports your goals;
- your resumé.

Is it a good idea to log all volunteer hours?

Yes, it is a good idea to log volunteer hours. In most instances, volunteer hours count as qualifying experience on job applications. The number of hours for work and volunteer experience is one aspect that federal and state agencies use when evaluating applications. For example, for two people with the exact same experience, the person who worked or volunteered 40 hours will rank lower than a person who completed 400 hours. Specific activities to include in your log are examples of leadership, accomplishments, any products you created, skills used relevant to fisheries and wildlife, and presentations/public speaking. For hours worked, log the hours volunteered per week, months, and years on average. Record your supervisor’s contact name, email, and phone number.

Section XI. Non-traditional Students

Students in the FWCS are often juggling employment, children, pets, mortgages, and other responsibilities along with their education; most are not able to take seasonal jobs in distant locations like traditional (campus-based) undergraduates. Every student in our program since it started in 2009 has met the internship requirements, and so can you. It is best if you develop a specific strategy to pursue (e.g., identify the organization, supervisor, skill sets, network, or project that will advance you on a chosen career track). **Stay in contact with the Internship Coordinator throughout the process.** Do not wait until you are frustrated.

How can I complete my internships when I work, parent, and attend Oregon State?

Flexible internship options that meet both the exploratory and intensive internship requirements are accepted if appropriate professional development can be accomplished. Internships may be completed in a short, intensive time period or over an extended period with less intensity each week or month. The Internship Coordinator helps you evaluate what is effective for your goals.

How can I be effective during my internship when I have to work, parent, and take courses?

It is imperative that you demonstrate high performance during internships. Most students reduce or adjust their course load; some students “stop out” for a term of courses to do their internship. Be sure to establish a personal support system while balancing internship with personal and professional responsibilities. Tell your work supervisor that you have additional academic responsibilities, arrange back-up childcare, request support from family and friends, and update your academic advisor on your internship status.

Won't younger, traditional students outcompete me for internships and jobs?

No. FW biologists and organizations recognize the experience and maturity that non-traditional students generally bring. For this reason, they are often more willing to accommodate the flexible schedules of non-traditional students. Non-traditional students often use an internship to demonstrate their employability with a local organization they want to work for in the future.

What if I can't find an internship near me?

You will learn the skills to locate or create an internship in FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, but the Internship Coordinator is available to help you every step of the way, even outside of the class. One of the best ways to find internship opportunities is to attend a state-level conference attended by local professionals who are working in an area of career interest. Often a student meets a professional at the conference who then offers them the opportunity to gain experience and develop an internship.

Doesn't every professional want an intern?

No. It takes time to supervise an intern, so you will likely have to convince a supervisor that you are worth the time, even if you are volunteering. You have to determine how you can contribute your skills to benefit the organization and find a person with an appropriate skill set who is willing to mentor you.

What opportunities are available for students who are homebound or who have limited mobility?

Some of the possibilities for internships when students have limited mobility are data management/analysis, report writing, lab work, Geographic Information Systems (e.g., mapping, remote sensing) and image (e.g., trail camera) analysis. There is also the communications/public relations aspect: science writing, designing brochures, and social media are a few examples.

Can a detail at my current job qualify as an internship requirement?

It is possible to do work outside of your normal scope of duties within your current organization for internship. You will need to consult with the Internship Coordinator and your employer to find out if this detail will meet the internship requirements.

Section XII. Examples of Past Internships

S. E. volunteered with Blue Frontier Campaign, a marine conservation activist organization, to develop supporting curriculum for “50 ways to Save the Ocean” by David Helvarg that included compiling a 9th-12th grade Teachers Guide and developing new materials for K-2nd grade. S.E. wrote, *“This is not a project Blue Frontier was working on until I came into the picture. I came up with the concept and have run with it. Being involved in a program that gets children interested in marine science and conservation is very exciting. This project has been an excellent exercise in confidence building, because I see that despite my lack of education, I am able to conceptualize, put into motion and complete a complicated project with large organizations like National Geographic and this gives me hope for a future career that will not depend on my level of education, but rather my expertise, experience and ability to produce.”*

A. W. volunteered with NOAA on the Penobscot River Restoration Project where she helped conduct marine mammal and sea bird surveys for 10-12 hours/day 1-3 days per week for 8 weeks. A.W. wrote, *“I am only able to work with NOAA on my days off and on some vacation time. Dr. X was OK with that and was glad for any help since he works solo and has no budget for help. I am doing all of this for free but the experience for me is invaluable.”*

J. B. volunteered for the Department of Defense at Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), Environmental Conservation Section. J. B. is a civilian employee at VAFB. His internship was to design and implement a sampling plan for Columbian black-tailed deer and prepare a deer management plan for VAFB to include harvest quotas, military operations, human safety, and habitat carrying capacity. He worked for this supervisor as a part-time volunteer for seven months and when the supervisor retired, J. B. was asked to replace him but was not technically qualified until degree completion.

J. L. S. volunteered with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County as the wildlife biology assistant intern for 1-3 days/week over several months. She assisted the wildlife staff (wildlife biologists, wildlife specialists, wildlife technician and wildlife aids). This internship included primarily field work as well as some minor record keeping. The skills she gained were radio telemetry (with Blanding’s turtles and deer); setting up, baiting and moving turtle cage traps; blood sampling for DNA and micro-chipping Testudines (painted and snapping turtles); setting up mist nets with a decoy owl to try and catch a breeding pair of osprey to band and test blood for mercury, PCBs and organochlorine; and navigation to eastern bluebird, wren and sparrow nesting boxes to record clutch sizes and band chicks.

S. A. volunteered with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Wildlife Biologist, 1 day each week for 4-8 hours over 6 months.

P. W. had a strong interest in GIS; she completed an independent project for Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to develop maps of key wildlife sites in state parks.

R. M. worked as an independent volunteer with Eastern Box Turtle Conservation Trust to radio track turtles; he located each turtle every two weeks but did it when it worked into his schedule.