

Ornithology. Raptors: Discovering Raptors: From Field to Aviary

Faculty: Heather Huson, Associate Professor of Animal Genetics, Animal Science

Faculty: Meghan Jensen, Ph.D., Raptor Researcher & Trainer, Cornell Raptor Program, Department of Animal Science

Week One: July 5 – 11, 2026

Schedule: Monday - Friday, 9-12 and 1:30-3:30, except Wednesday afternoon.

Location: Frank Morrison Hall, room 174 with some field work at Raptor Barn, Game Farm Road

Dear Lifelong learners,

Welcome to *Discovering Raptors: From Field to Aviary*! I'm delighted to welcome you to this new course and excited to share this unique learning experience with you.

Raptors occupy a distinctive place in human history and imagination; admired as skilled hunting partners and powerful symbols, yet at times feared or misunderstood. In this course, our focus will be on understanding birds of prey as ecological specialists and ambassadors for conservation, using science, observation, and direct experience to explore their biology, behavior, and essential roles in healthy ecosystems.

Our week together will be immersive and hands-on. Each day will blend engaging lectures with close-up encounters with live raptors, behind-the-scenes visits to Cornell's raptor facilities, and opportunities to observe training, cooperative care, and enrichment in action. You'll learn to identify local species, examine anatomy and adaptations, explore museum specimens, and gain insight into raptor health, nutrition, conservation, and public education. For many of you, a highlight will be the opportunity to handle one of the Cornell Raptor Program's trained education ambassador birds under expert guidance.

I bring over a decade of experience working with birds of prey in captivity and nearly two decades of field experience across 15 different raptor species. Admittedly, I'm also a lifelong raptor enthusiast who still gets excited every time I step into an aviary or head into the field. I'm joined by the director of the Cornell Raptor Program, who brings decades of experience working with captive raptors in rehabilitation and education. Together, we look forward to sharing not only scientific knowledge, but also the practical skills, ethics, and relationships that shape modern raptor care and conservation.

This course is designed to engage your curiosity, spark conversation, and create a shared learning experience around birds of prey. If you have questions, want to keep a discussion going, or simply feel like talking raptors over lunch or after class, I'm always happy to do so. Fair warning that I can talk about birds of prey at length! I hope you leave the week not only with new knowledge, but with lasting memories and a deeper appreciation for these remarkable birds.

I'm very much looking forward to working with you and beginning this journey together.

See you soon,

Meghan Jensen, Ph.D.

Program Manager, Cornell Raptor Program

Department of Animal Science, Cornell University