

# ***Wolves and Northwoods Carnivores: Predator Ecology***

**Jan 4-18, 2026**

## ***2026 January Interim Course at Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center***

We look forward to meeting you in January and sharing this month of winter, wolves, and other large predators with each one of you. No season creates as much stress on the ecology of wildlife as winter. In the summer, there is always enough to eat when the plants are green and abundant, but what food is to be found when three feet of snow covers the ground? There is always shade in the heat of summer, but is there always a warm place to be found in winter? What are some of the physical and behavioral adaptations of organisms to the cold, dry winter environment?

During this season, we will attempt to understand winter through interpretation of wolf and predator ecology, research and practical experience. We will be tracking wolves to locate territorial packs and observing the environmental impacts of deer on their habitat. We will assist lynx researchers with tracking data. We will also spend a week divided between Superior National Forest and the North Shore of Lake Superior to survey the wolf population on the Jonvick Deer Yard, a special ecological zone which concentrates over 100 deer/sq. mi., and at one time the largest wolf pack in Minnesota. We will prepare for our experiences with lectures on wolves, lynx, and the other predators of Minnesota, as well as their interactions with prey species, and will practice data gathering techniques and do tracking surveys which will benefit wolf and lynx researchers and managers.

We will furnish snowshoes for the research, and will work with you on first aid and winter survival skills. There will be some time for cross country skiing on your own and some of our routes are better run on skis.

Transportation during the course will be provided by Osprey Wilds' 15- and 7-passenger vans.

The books listed below are field guides to have out on the trail with you. They need to be purchased or borrowed in good time, as Osprey Wilds does not have any to share.

### **Required Reading:**

- \* *Track Pack: Animals in Full Life Size* by Ed Gray
- \* *Animal Tracks of Minnesota and Wisconsin* by Ian Sheldon and Tamara Eder

### **Recommended Reading:**

- \* *Wolves: Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation* by L. David Mech and Luigi Boitani
- \* *Recovery of Gray Wolves in the Great Lakes Region of the United States* by Adrian P. Wydeven, Timothy R. Deelen and Edward Heske
- \* *The Company of Wolves* by Peter Steinhart
- \* *Tracking and the Art of Seeing* by Paul Rezendes

Driving directions to

## Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center

54165 Audubon Dr, Sandstone, MN 55072

Tel. 320.245.2648

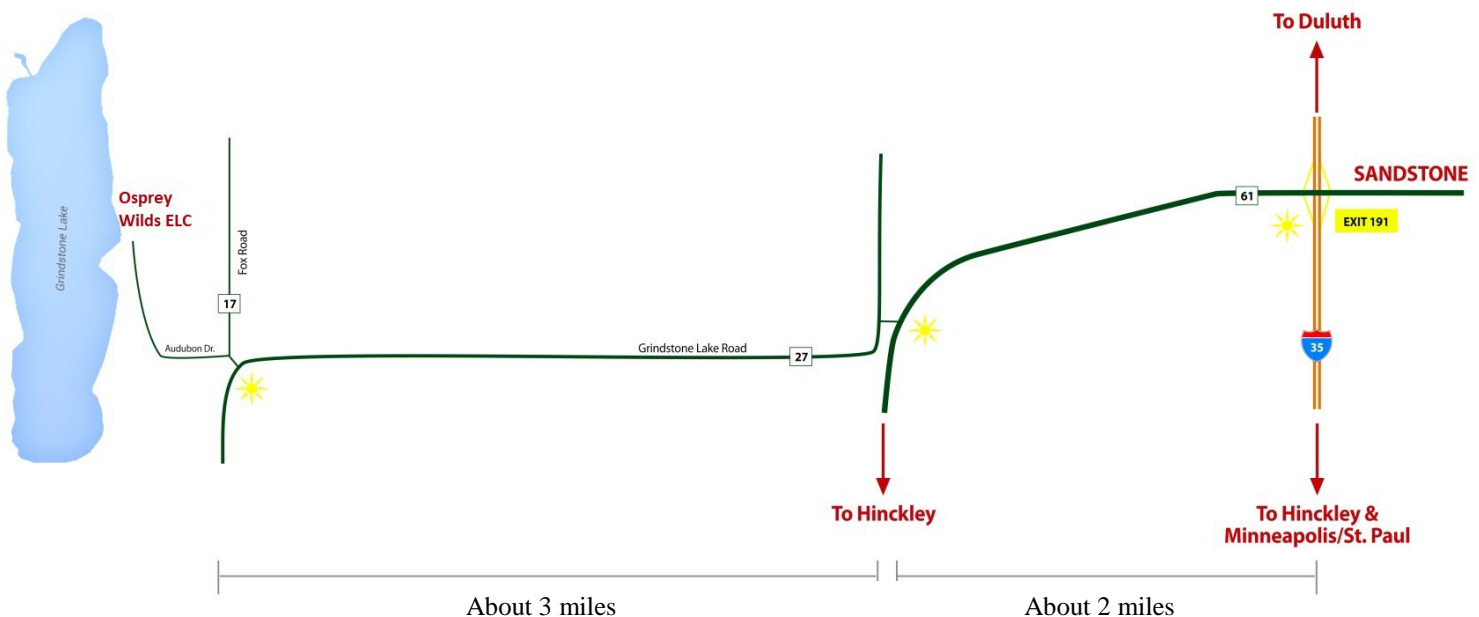
*If searching for our location online, use [maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com)*

### Osprey Wilds GPS coordinates

(46.117186384284004, -92.99793720245361)

### Driving directions to Osprey Wilds From the Twin Cities and Duluth

1. From Interstate 35, exit on the Sandstone **Exit 191**.
2. Go west on Hwy 61 just over two miles.
3. Take a right on County Road 27, cross the Munger bike trail, turn left at the 'T' (Grindstone Lake Road) and go just over three miles.
4. Take a right on County Road 17 (Fox Road) and go about 100 feet.
5. Turn left between the stone pillars (Audubon Drive – our driveway).
6. **Proceed directly to main office/dining hall for check-in** – just follow our mile-long driveway all the way until it ends at the parking lot and the office.



## **2026 January Interim Tentative Schedule (subject to change)**

- 1/4** - Plan to arrive at Osprey Wilds between 2 pm and 4 pm  
*(Please try to arrive no earlier than 2 pm – lodging facilities may not be ready until after 2)*
- Introduction to Osprey Wilds  
Overview of month  
Expectations, Journals, and Grading
- 1/5** - Wolves Presentation
- Orienteering & Predator Prey (2 split classes)  
Winter Safety and First Aid  
Optional Climbing Wall - Rock Climbing
- 1/6** - Wolves Presentation
- Survivor & Telemetry (split class)  
Live Animal Program
- 1/7** - Wolves & Job Opportunities
- Intro to Tracking Presentation  
Survivor & Telemetry (split class)  
Tracking Scenarios - indoor
- 1/8** - Dr Dave Mech Q & A - Zoom
- Wildlife Science Center - Tour & Lecture
- 1/9** - Tracking at Hidden Falls & Osprey Wilds
- 1/10** - Banning State Park (Arches) and Blacklock Campus
- 1/11** - Depart for Cloquet Airport
- Radio Telemetry Flights
- 1/12** - Depart for Ely
- International Wolf Center (Lynx)  
Depart for Camp Du Nord  
Sauna & Polar Plunge
- 1/13** - Tracking at Birch Lake Road & Listening Point
- Visit Wintergreen Sled Dogs  
North American Bear Center
- 1/14** - Hegman Lake - snowshoeing/tracking
- Head to North Shore & Solbakken Resort
- 1/15** - Winter Tree & Plant Identification
- Transects & Ski Groups  
Recap Day from groups, Reading by the Fire, Night Hike to Agnes Lake
- 1/16** - Transects - Skiing/Hiking
- Return to Osprey Wilds
- 1/17** - Work on homework, study
- Turn in journals, reflection and research paper  
Pre-test Question and answer session  
Test  
Movie Night. Drive home if local
- 1/18** - Leave by Noon

## Travel Information

### Travel by car

Plan to arrive between 2 pm and 4 pm on Sunday, January 4.

You may leave on Saturday, January 17 after the final test, or if you have a long way to drive, you can stay the night and leave by Noon on Sunday, January 18.

### Travel by plane

**Osprey Wilds will provide an airport pickup/dropoff for \$40 each way**

Fly into MSP (Minneapolis/St Paul Intl) Airport TERMINAL 1.

Arrive by Noon on Sunday, January 4, to allow for any flight delays.

The van departs for Osprey Wilds from Terminal 1 at Baggage Claim Door 4 at 2 pm

Flight departure must be after Noon on Sunday, January 18.

We will have you at the airport by 10:30 am

### Alternate shuttle

If you will be arriving/departing outside of the above times, you can book Groome Transportation shuttle service. This travels between the Twin Cities and Duluth. It also picks up and drops off at the Airports.

Go to [www.groometransportation.com](http://www.groometransportation.com) (tel. 218.724.4676) for the schedule (click on Duluth).

The nearest stop to Osprey Wilds is Tobies in Hinckley – we can pick you up and/or drop you off there.

## Lodging Information

While at Osprey Wilds, you will stay in one of our Lodges. There are 4-6 bunks per room and men's and women's bathrooms and showers. While at Osprey Wilds, you will have bunks in rooms designated male or female. You will need to bring a sleeping bag and pillow, as well as towels and washcloths. You will have daily housekeeping responsibilities.

In Ely, you will be staying at YMCA Camp Du Nord on Burntside Lake, and while on the North Shore of Lake Superior, you will be staying at Solkbakken Resort near Lutsen, Minnesota. Since there are limited beds, and in order to keep costs reasonable, it will be necessary for participants to share double- or queen-sized beds with roommates.

**Call or email Osprey Wilds if you have any questions**

Tel. 320.245.2648

Email [frontdesk@ospreywilds.org](mailto:frontdesk@ospreywilds.org)

## Additional Course Information

**Meals** Served cafeteria style in the main lodge while at Osprey Wilds. Many lunches will be packed to eat in the field. On the North Shore, we will cook our own meals. We can prepare vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options. You will be responsible for three restaurant meals during the course.

**Training** Walk a lot ahead of time. **This is a physically demanding program.** We recommend getting up to 4 miles or more, 3-4 days every week, at a brisk pace with a daypack and water - see ***Clothing and Equipment Notes*** for information on what you might carry in your pack on a typical day. If you are physically prepared for the program, your experience will be much more enjoyable and safe.

**Tests** There will be various short quizzes. Research skills and background are important and we need to have some idea of where you're at. Some of you will need grades for school credits. These tests will help assess your grades. We will also ask you to research some aspect of wolf ecology or behavior to present to the class.

**Grades** Course requirements are outlined in the Syllabus. **Please let us know in advance if a grade is required, and the name, address, phone number, and email of the advisor we should send grades to.**

**Drug & Alcohol Policy** Alcoholic beverages and recreational drugs are not allowed at Osprey Wilds during this program. Smoking and vaping are not allowed in any of the buildings or vehicles. Smoking at OW is restricted to one outside area. Smokers/vapers will be asked to move away from the group when smoking in the field. Chewing tobacco is not allowed in any of the buildings or vehicles.

**Mail** Use Osprey Wilds' street address for all mail and deliveries (*your name*, Osprey Wilds ELC, 54165 Audubon Dr, Sandstone, MN 55072). UPS and FedEx deliver directly to us Monday through Friday – this is the best option for any packages, since USPS mail has to be picked up from town, and sometimes there is a delay with USPS mail packages. Mail arriving in advance of the course can be held for you.

**Phones** There is a phone in each of the Lodges and the dining hall for emergency use only. Osprey Wild's main phone (320.245.2648), is located in the office.

**Using Osprey Wilds Gear** - you are personally responsible for repair or replacement of any gear borrowed or rented by you from Osprey Wilds and will be charged for loss or damage if it is caused by personal negligence.

## Clothing and Equipment Notes

**Weather Conditions** January is our coldest month of the year, with a temperature range from above freezing to  $-45^{\circ}\text{F}$ . We are more concerned about the annual thaw and the wetness that accompanies it than with the cold weather. If you dress in layers and wear the proper fabrics, you should have no problems with the cold. We will discuss, in great detail, how to dress for and behave in cold conditions. Most temperatures will be in the  $-10$  to  $+20^{\circ}\text{F}$  range.

*A Suggested Packing List follows.*

**Cross Country Skiing** Osprey Wilds has cross country ski equipment which you can use. Our bindings are back country style which allows you to wear warm winter boots. Cross country skiing is an optional activity, however some of our wolf-tracking routes are best done on skis.

Please let Janette ([frontdesk@ospreywilds.org](mailto:frontdesk@ospreywilds.org)) know ahead of time if you plan to use any of our equipment.

**Winter Clothing Concerns** Please refer to the *Suggested Packing List*. Winter conditions demand far greater concern for proper clothing than any other season. The effects of cold, wind, and moisture are most severe at this time, so clothing should be chosen to serve adequately for safety and comfort.

Wool is one of the best materials since it has a high insulation value, and retains most of that value even when wet. Silk, polypropylene, pile, bunting, and a host of other materials are available, with specific uses and abilities, and they should also be considered, especially if layered with some wool. **Cotton should be avoided, because it holds moisture and loses all insulation value when wet.**

You should dress in multiple layers so you can take off or add layers to adjust your temperature, depending on weather conditions and your level of activity. If the snow is deep, you will be working hard and building up lots of heat. Layers should then be removed to reduce perspiration so you don't get your insulating layers wet. Wet clothing means quick conduction of heat away from your body.

At any time in the field on a cold day, you might be wearing the following (or an equivalent combination): wool hat, long underwear, turtleneck top, wool sweater, windbreaker or some other windproof layer, long underwear bottoms, wool pants, 2 pairs of wool socks, insulated boots, ski gloves or wool mittens with leather choppers. In your daypack might be a warmer jacket and/or down vest and/or additional wool sweater. (Do not go out and buy a parka just for this course. As long as you can bundle up in lots of layers, almost any winter overcoat will do.)

Each evening you will have to work towards drying clothes so that they can be used again.

**Daypack** Day trips and research days will typically require us to be outdoors all day. Your daypack should be large enough to carry extra clothing, field guides, a clipboard, 2 quart-size water bottles, a flashlight, and lunch.

## Suggested Packing List

(NOTE You do not need all items to attend - READ CAREFULLY!)

- Sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow to put on bed in lodge - make sure they are warm!
- Wool or fleece hat or balaclava
- Neck gaiter/scarf – wool or fleece is best
- Wool or other heavy duty mittens - at least 2 pairs
- Leather or nylon overmitts - to keep wool ones dry
- 2 wool or fleece sweaters
- Long-sleeved wool or polypropylene shirts
- Wool or polypropylene long underwear - TOPS AND BOTTOMS – recommend 2 sets
- Wool socks - at least 4 pairs
- Liner socks\* - lightweight wool, silk, polypropylene,
- Vest – down, fleece, or polarguard
- Winter jacket, parka or shell
- Gaiters - a must to keep snow out of boots and socks
- Good winter boots with removable wool/felt liner - essential! SOREL boots are the best, but there are many less expensive copies which work well too. These are boots with rubber bottoms and leather uppers.
- Extra pair of wool/felt liners for boots\*
- Good raingear - jacket and pants - good for wind protection; should be durable in cold.
- Sunglasses or ski/snow goggles
- Bathing suit for the saunas at Solbakken and Camp Du Nord
- Wool pants - 2 pairs - one heavy and one light OR one pair of wool and one pair of ski/snow pants. Wool pants are available at Army/Navy surplus stores at very reasonable prices (looks may not be great, but warmth is terrific!)
- Down or Polarguard booties\* (optional for lodge use)
- Large daypack - a must for carrying gear and extra clothing on day trips
- Pocketknife
- Headlamp (plus spare bulbs/batteries) – good for late work since it gets dark around 4:30 p.m. in the winter
- Binoculars\*
- Notebook/pens/pencils (pencils work best in winter conditions)
- Compass - or orienteering style with 2 degree increments Silva Polaris
- GPS unit\*
- Laptop computer (**highly recommended** for homework and class emails)
- 2 heavy duty large garbage bags to line your daypack
- Large freezer Ziploc bags to cover notebooks and field guides
- Quart size steel thermos\* - so your water doesn't freeze
- 2 quart-size water bottles
- Cross country skis/boots/poles/waxes – optional, but do bring your own if you have them
- Snowshoes - optional - we have some you can use
- Personal toiletries and medical items (prescription meds, lotion, lipbalm, toothpaste/brush, soap, bandaids, moleskin, aspirin, coughdrops, tampons, GoGirl, etc)
- Washcloth and towels
- Ace bandages/braces if you need to use. We will be in rugged country, so be prepared if knee/ankle problems are weak areas
- Laundry soap

\*Optional, yet highly recommended items. Call or email for more information if you have any questions.

**Be sure to bring sufficient comfortable clothing for the evenings and inside. Include slippers/moccasins, robe, underwear, pajamas, jeans, etc. The above packing list relates to the outdoor activities.**

# Syllabus

**Course Title** *Wolves and Northwoods Carnivores Predator Ecology*  
**Number of Credits** 3 semester credits – recommended by instructor  
**Semester Offered** January Interim, January 4-18, 2026  
**Instructor's Name** Bryan Wood  
**Contact Phone** 320.245.2648  
**Email** wood@ospreywilds.org or frontdesk@ospreywilds.org

## Catalog Description

This course covers a broad range of topics related to wildlife. The focus will be the gray wolf, lynx, the white-tailed deer, and other MN predators and prey, but all animals directly or indirectly associated with or affected by these predators or prey may be included. The course is field-oriented and includes opportunities for backcountry travel, wildlife observation and tracking, as well as an introduction to habitats, how wildlife respond to natural and artificial disturbance, and human factors. Additional topics include wildlife research techniques, data acquisition and analysis, as well as management practices.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to

1. Describe animal adaptations to a winter environment.
2. Identify and describe various wolf behaviors.
3. Identify and describe wolf field signs.
4. Identify habitat types and individual woody browse plants important to ungulates in the Border Lakes region.
5. Describe wildlife research techniques and their application.
6. Demonstrate the ability to use a map and compass for backcountry navigation.
7. Describe and demonstrate safe field techniques.
8. Identify and describe ecological factors related to lynx research.
9. Identify and describe lynx field signs.
10. Describe Minnesota predators and their habitat, prey, and lifestyle.

## Student Assessment Methods

1. Field Journal
2. Research Paper
3. Oral and written quizzes
4. Discussion of assigned readings
5. Instructor assessment of student participation and competency
6. Instructor assessment of practical skill demonstration and competency
7. Reflection Paper
8. Final exam



## **Outline of Major Course Content**

Wolf Ecology  
Northern Predator Species  
Northern Prey Species  
Predator-Prey Relationships  
Predator and Endangered Species Issues and Management  
Backcountry Navigation  
Wildlife Habitats  
Wildlife Research Techniques  
Winter Field Techniques and Safety

## **Attendance Policy**

Students must participate in all class activities unless prearranged with class instructor, in which case make-up assignments may be arranged.

## **Grading Policies and Evaluation Procedures**

Participation	35% of total grade
Journal	30% of total grade
Research Project	15% of total grade
Final Exam	15% of total grade
Reflection Paper	5% of total grade

## **Final Grade is based upon % of Total Points**

90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, 60-69% = D, Below 60% = F

## **Course Accommodations**

For any accommodations needed during this course, please let Janette ([frontdesk@ospreywilds.org](mailto:frontdesk@ospreywilds.org)) or Bryan ([wood@ospreywilds.org](mailto:wood@ospreywilds.org)) know by December 12, 2025.

## **Course Location**

The first half of the course will be based out of Osprey Wilds, and the second half will be split between Ely, MN and the North Shore of Lake Superior.

## **Academic Integrity Statement**

Students are expected to abide by academic integrity standards in this class. Student unethical practices, such as cheating on examinations or misrepresenting authorship on class assignments, will not be tolerated.