

Get Your Students Twittering: Social Networking in Ornithology Classes

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This is how we like
an ornithology class
to look





What if your
class
actually
looks like
this?

The Goal:

Give students an incentive, and a medium,
for engaging with the material out of the
classroom

Make
them

twitter™

“...a device-agnostic message routing system” (Translation: you can post to Twitter from anywhere, using any text-sending gadget or the web.)



Limited to 140 characters

- *shallow, but concise*

Social – individuals or groups can “follow” each other’s posts

- *potential for synergy, or chaos*
- *archiving facilitates grading, analysis*

The assignment:

- Post to Twitter at least 5 times
- Each post must say:
 - Where you are
 - What you are seeing among the birds around you
 - Relate what you see to course content
- Posts ungraded, except all elements had to be present

It worked!

51 out of 56 students fulfilled the assignment

20% posted more than required

Some are still posting

When asked, “*Has the requirement to post on Twitter for this class changed your day-to-day behavior in any way?*”

Students said it caused them:

“to notice birds everywhere”

“to think about what I learned in lecture”

“to remember the lectures better”

“to pay more attention to what is going on around me.”

One student admitted she hadn't posted, but said that knowing that she *was supposed to* caused her to notice birds and what they were doing.

Found Canada geese have different strategies for guarding nests with chicks or eggs that haven't yet hatched.

Chicks=silence, eggs=noise. [12:54 PM Apr 27th](#)

At a beach in Florida and for the first time I realized how little seagulls flap their wings by riding the breeze and their wing position [2:53 AM Mar 9th](#)

Evidence of a successful liberal arts education, in fewer than 140 characters:

Holden Caulfield once asked where the ducks go in the winter and never really got his answer. He should walk by Mirror Lake at Uconn today [2:13 PM Feb 10th](#)

Evidence that humans are changing
animal behavior, in fewer than 140
characters:

Taught a mockingbird the Jet whistle in
around 8 minutes [2:50 PM Apr 16th](#)