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Date: April 20, 2006  
Contact: Eric Matanyi  
Phone: (708) 534-4044  
Fax: (708) 534-8399  
Email: [e-matanyi@govst.edu](mailto:e-matanyi@govst.edu)

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## Governors State University biology faculty and students to study raptors in northern Michigan

University Park, Illinois, April 20, 2006 – According to the National Audubon Society, the Great Lakes area is one of the world's most significant ecological systems on which the region's birds depend. Dr. John Yunger, Associate Professor of Biology at Governors State University has known that fact for years. Driven by his background as an educator and as an ecologist, Yunger and his colleagues in the university's biology program have responded to bird watching's increasing popularity by creating unique additions to the curriculum.

The Biology faculty at Governors State University have developed several ornithology related courses, one of which will take students to upper-Michigan to study raptors, or large birds of prey. The course, entitled "The Natural History of Raptors" is a special two-credit workshop that will be offered from May 4 to May 7.

Traveling to the northern tip of Lake Superior, Yunger and his students hope to catch glimpses of some of the most magnificent raptors including eagles, falcons, and hawks. "This course offers a unique chance to see a number of different species in their natural habitats," said Yunger. "We're lucky to have one of the greatest ecosystems in our backyard, although most people don't realize it."

The Keweenaw peninsula of upper-Michigan is known as one of the Midwest's top bird watching spots. Students will study raptor identification and migration patterns under Yunger's trained eye.

The Michigan trip is coincides with the Keweenaw region's first International Migratory Bird Day Festival. Designed to raise appreciate and concern for migratory birds, the festival will feature lectures, guided tours, and social activities.

This course is one of several at GSU that deal with bird-related topics. "We're currently in the process of developing a unique, professional certificate program at the university," Yunger noted. Once approved, students will be able to earn a Certificate in the Natural History of Birds. "The certificate will appeal to wildlife and biology professionals, educators and students alike. We're hoping to draw students from throughout the region, as the certificate will be one-of-a-kind."

For additional information on birding courses or the proposed Certificate in the Natural History of Birds, contact John Yunger at (708) 534-4524.