**Field experience in AP Biology**

**Please note: this is a work in progress.**

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| *First: inspiring words I first read in* [*Last Child In the Woods*](http://www.workman.com/products/9781565126053/)*:*  Superficially, the world has become small and known.  Poor little globe of earth, the tourists trot round you as easily as they trot round the Bois or round Central Park.  There is no mystery left, we’ve been there, we’ve seen it, we know all about it.  We’ve done the globe and the globe is done.  This is quite true, superficially.  On the superficies, horizontally, we’ve been everywhere and done everything, we know all about it.  Yet the more we know, superficially, the less we penetrate, vertically.  It’s all very well skimming across the surface of the ocean and saying you know all about the sea…  **As a matter of fact, our great-grand[parents], who never went anywhere, in actuality had more experience of the world than we have, who have seen everything.**  When they listened to a lecture with lantern-slides, they really held their breath before the unknown, as they sat at the village school-room.  We, bowling along in a rickshaw in [Sri Lanka], say to ourselves: “It’s very much what you’d expect.” We really know it all.  We are mistaken.  **The know-it-all state of mind is just the result of being outside the… paper wrapping of civilization.  Underneath is everything we don’t know and are afraid of knowing.** ~ [D.H. Lawrence](http://www.unz.org/Pub/McDonaldEdward-1936)  Most children have a bug period, and I never outgrew mine.   Hands-on experience at the critical time, not systematic knowledge, is what counts for the making of a naturalist. **Better to be an untutored savage for a while, not to know the names or anatomical detail.  Better to spend long stretches of time just searching and dreaming.** ~ [E.O. Wilson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._O._Wilson) |

Contemporary biological research involves three major ways in which knowledge is generated.  The first two, laboratory experimentation and *in silico* work (computer modeling and bioinformatics), are explicitly built into the College Board’s AP Biology curriculum.  The third is field work: collecting, measuring, or designing experiments that take place in an actual ecosystem.  **The field experience component of this course is designed to make sure you leave our class with experience in all three.**  You’ll be developing an eye for detail -- and a nose and ear, too -- as well as your skills in recordkeeping, critical reasoning, and questioning.

Here’s how it works: you’ll select a place in an ecosystem to sit (your **“field site**  or **sit spot”**) and visit that place to sit ten times over the span of nine months outside of class.  Each visit will last approximately half an hour (but you can stay longer!), and the documentation you’ll need to complete of your visit should take an additional hour, tops.  **Documentation is due at 11:59 PM on the due date, but you have the whole assignment window to complete the assignment.**  Prompts are linked at the end of this document each month.

**What kind of “field” are we talking about here?**  A lot of people think you need to go deep into an unpopulated area to see nature, but I’m hoping you’ll pick something a little closer to home.

* **It should be a place you can get to in under ten minutes by your usual methods of transportation.**
* **It should be yours and yours alone.**
  + In later assignments, you’ll have the opportunity to invite a companion along.  Don’t pick the same spot as your neighbor, sister, or friend.
* **It should be a relatively safe place for you**, and you should be able to bring a phone along.
  + No hiking down a terrific but terrifying gorge, please.
* **It MUST have one deciduous tree (with leaves, not needles), but it does not need to be anything fancy.**
  + The best sit spots are often pretty empty lots, the ditch across the street from your friend’s house, Cooter’s Pond, or Autauga Creek.
  + And, listen, I want you to do this assignment.  Seriously, your backyard is an *awesome* sit spot. You’ll be surprised how much there is to learn there. But many of you might have more fun in a *very accessible* place that is somewhat less familiar.
* My sit spot this year (2017-2018) will be on the Alabama River on County Road 29.

**What are we going to do there?**  Prompts will be listed on m website on a monthly basis.