

Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture

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The Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department offers graduate education leading to the Master of Science in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture with emphases in wildlife ecology and management, fisheries ecology and management, and aquaculture.

A Ph.D. degree is offered in Forest Resources with a concentration in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture. A limited number of graduate research assistantships and fellowships are available. For additional information write to the Graduate Coordinator (kevin.hunt@msstate.edu).

Admission Criteria

The applicant for a master's degree must hold a bachelor's degree and must be sponsored by an extramurally funded research project. The applicant for the Ph.D. degree must hold a master's degree and also is usually sponsored by an extramurally funded research project. It is strongly encouraged for the applicant to personally contact a professor within the department to discuss potential research opportunities. An applicant cannot be admitted to the department until a faculty member agrees to serve as a major professor. The applicant for the master's program must have taken the general Graduate Record Examination (GRE), and a) have a minimum GPA of 3.00 out of 4.00 for the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate academic work, or b) have an overall undergraduate GPA above 3.00 and achieved a GPA greater than 2.75 out of 4.00 for the last 60 semesters hours of undergraduate academic work. An applicant for the Ph.D. program must have an M.S. degree, a minimum GPA of 3.20 out of 4.00 on all prior graduate studies (excluding research or thesis credits), and must have taken the general GRE. Official transcripts of undergraduate and graduate work, GRE, and TOEFL or IELTS scores (if appropriate) should be sent to the MSU Office of the Graduate School.

Provisional Admission

An applicant who has not fully met the GPA requirement stipulated by the University may be admitted on a provisional basis. A student entering on a provisional basis (available only for master's students) is required to take three graduate courses (minimum of 9 hours) in the first regular fall or spring semester and make a grade of B or higher in each of these courses. These courses will be selected by the departmental Graduate Program Advisory Committee (GPAC) and will include ST 8114 or equivalent, but may not include special problem courses, directed individual study courses, or thesis research hours. No provisional probation courses can be scheduled with the student's major professor. Failure to meet the grade requirement will result in dismissal and loss of eligibility for readmission to this department's graduate program. Students on provisional probation are not eligible for an assistantship and must cover their own tuition but may be paid wages equivalent to a base stipend..

Academic Performance

Students must maintain a cumulative 3.00 GPA on all courses after admission to the graduate program. If a master's student falls below a 3.00 cumulative GPA, he/she will be placed on probation for the next fall or spring semester. Probation courses will be selected by the GPAC and will include two 8000-level courses and one 6000 course if available. No special topics courses, directed individual study courses, or thesis research hours can be used toward probation. No probation courses can be scheduled with the student's major professor. A master's student admitted under normal circumstances (not provisional) will be allowed only one probationary semester. If a student is admitted on a provisional basis, he/she will be allowed one probationary semester beyond that point. If grades do not meet the required B or better in each course taken, the student will be dismissed from the program. The department has an appeal process in the event the student wishes to file an appeal. A doctoral student falling below a 3.00 cumulative average after admission to the program will be immediately dismissed from the program unless the student's committee justifies an exception which is reviewed by the departmental GPAC and then approved by the department head.

Unsatisfactory Performance

All graduate students are expected to know and comply with University, departmental, and subject-area requirements. Failure to comply satisfactorily with all requirements may seriously affect the student and, in some cases, may lead to termination of assistantships or dismissal from the graduate program in this department.

Program of Study/Completion Requirements

Prior to submitting the formal program of study to the graduate coordinator, the student's graduate committee and major professor will be selected and officially appointed in consultation with the student. A Committee Request Form must be completed by the student with committee members' signatures and submitted to the graduate coordinator within the first 12 months of enrollment. If, during the course of a student's tenure, his/her research direction changes, it may be necessary to change the members of the graduate committee or the student's advisor. Such changes must be submitted on a change of committee request form.

Master of Science graduate committees must include at least three members of the graduate faculty, including the major professor and a minor professor if required.

A Ph.D. student's committee will include the major professor as chairperson, who must be from the department and hold a Level 1 graduate faculty appointment, at least three committee members from the student's major field of interest, and a minor committee member if required.

The graduate committee and the master's student will meet during the student's first 12 months of work to prepare the program of study. This is followed by a mandatory seminar regarding the proposed research plan. The graduate committee and the Ph.D. student will meet during the student's first 12 months to prepare the program of study. Students must complete this form with the help of his/her major professor and concurrence of his/her graduate committee. A doctoral student's program of study is required in the Office of the Graduate School when the preliminary/comprehensive examination is scheduled. The program of study will be kept in the department head's office and forwarded to the Graduate School during the student's last semester of coursework. The Committee Request Form, Program of Study, and Proposal for both master's and Ph.D. students must be signed and submitted to the graduate coordinator within the first 12 months of work, or a departmental hold will be placed on the student's account.

The Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture allows graduate students outside of the graduate program in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture to obtain a minor at either the master's or doctoral level. The minor may be in one of three subject areas: aquaculture, fisheries, or wildlife. If a minor is chosen, the student's graduate committee must include a representative from the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture to serve as the minor professor, approve all coursework (B or better in 9 hours graduate-level coursework the M.S.; B or better in 12 hours graduate-level hours for the Ph.D.) that is applied towards the minor, and administer the minor examination. Once minor coursework is approved by the graduate committee it must be reviewed and approved by the WFA graduate coordinator. The minor exam (written, oral, or both) will be administered by the WFA minor committee member in combination with and using the same procedure as the major exam. The minor committee member will work with the student's instructors to determine appropriate subject areas for the exam. The minor professor is responsible for ensuring that the student demonstrates knowledge and understanding commensurate with a M.S. or Ph.D. minor in addition to fulfilling the usual duties of a committee member. For more information on obtaining a graduate minor in WFA, please contact the WFA graduate coordinator.

Master of Science in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture

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| 8000-level coursework | | 12 |
| Graduate-level coursework | | 9 |
| Graduate-level statistics course | | 3-4 |
| WFA 8000 | Thesis Research/ Thesis in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture | 6 |
| Total Hours | | 30-31 |

A research proposal seminar, thesis defense and comprehensive oral examination are required.

Doctor of Philosophy in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture

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| WFA 9000 | Dissertation Research /Dissertation in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture | 20 |
| Doctoral committee approved coursework, 12 hours of which must be at the 8000 level ¹ | | 34 |
| Total Hours | | 54 |

The Ph.D. student is required to complete 54 hours past the bachelor's degree. Of the 54 hours, 20 hours must be WFA 9000 Dissertation Research hours. The remaining 34 hours are determined by the student's committee and are usually a combination of previously take graduate courses and courses taken during the PhD. program. At least 12 of the 34 hours must be 8000-level or higher courses and must includes a graduate-level statistics course. The remaining 10 hours can be earned with coursework credits, dissertation credits, or a combination of both.

The Ph.D. also requires a proposal defense, oral and written comprehensive preliminary examinations, a dissertation and oral defense of the dissertation.