

May 26-27, 2021

**ITEM 194-1603-R0521**

**Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Biology on John S. "Jack" Kirkley, The University of Montana - Western**

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**THAT**

Upon the occasion of the retirement of John S. "Jack" Kirkley from the faculty of The University of Montana - Western, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for his 36 years of dedicated and valued service to the University and to the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

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**EXPLANATION**

Dr. Kirkley earned his bachelors degree in pre-professional zoology at Ohio Wesleyan University in 1975, and his masters (1981) and doctoral (1985) degrees in biology-ecology at Utah State University. Immediately after earning his Ph.D., Jack began his teaching career, as an Assistant Professor of Biology at Western Montana College of the Montana University System (now The University of Montana-Western). He was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in 1990, was awarded tenure, and was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1995.

During his 36-year career at Western, Jack's teaching duties have spanned a wide variety of zoology courses including the Human Anatomy and Physiology sequence, Ornithology, Mammalogy, Vertebrate Zoology, Entomology, Environmental Field Studies, Survey of Montana Wildlife and Habitats, and Evolution. Students who have experienced the rigor of Jack's courses tend to appreciate the value of those academic challenges later in their lives, if not at the time they were confronting those challenges.

Early in his career, Jack recognized the unique academic needs of students with career goals in the health sciences. Recognizing this unfilled need, Jack designed the first Pre-professional Health Sciences degree at Western. Guided by that first degree and its successor degrees, many students at Western have successfully launched their careers in the areas of nursing, physical therapy, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science.

Taking advantage of a unique experiential teaching opportunity, for two summers Dr. Kirkley served as the lead instructor for his Rocky Mountain Raptor Ecology field course, which used Maverick Mountain ski lodge as their base camp, through which students earned college credit from the School for Field Studies of Beverly, MA. Also, at various times during his career, Jack has served as an international visiting professor, first in spring semester 1997 as an exchange professor teaching zoology and ecology courses at The University College of Belize in Belize City, and more recently teaching three times as a visiting lecturer for the ornithology classes at St Georges University in the island nation of Grenada. In collaboration with Professor of Geology Sheila Roberts, Jack helped design and teach an interdisciplinary course on Island Biology, which included organizing and leading their Western students on an international excursion to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands.

As a scientist, Dr. Kirkley is an ornithologist who specializes in the study of birds of prey. For more than a quarter century, Jack has conducted his studies on the ecology of Northern Goshawks, which breed in the old growth montane forests of southwestern Montana, focusing his investigations on their nesting habitats, as well as using radio telemetry to document the heretofore unrecognized importance of their use of open valley habitats as preferred overwintering areas. Since 1989, Jack has also pursued the

challenging and controversial issue of understanding the physiological ecology of long-distance migration in Swainson's Hawks, a species which travels each fall to Argentina. This question led him to pursue a fall semester sabbatical in 2003, plus two more October Blocks observing these hawks in coastal Chiapas, Mexico, to document the ways in which these long-distance migrants manage to continuously "refuel" their annual, round-trip, migration journeys.

During the three summers of 2011-2013, Dr. Kirkley was a collaborator in the Yellowstone Raptor Initiative, where he conducted raptor surveys along several major Yellowstone Park roadways, documenting and mapping raptor nesting territories, in comparison to the historical nesting data, which he'd mapped more than 30 years earlier, when he was a seasonal worker in Yellowstone. From 2014-18, Jack opportunistically added a new focal species to his repertoire, the Great-tailed Grackle, a sub-tropical species that had begun to expand its breeding range into Montana. In collaboration with a molecular biologist in Kansas, Jack documented the first DNA-confirmed case of the hybridization between the Great-tailed Grackle and Common Grackle. In multiple years, he also documented the very first instances of confirmed nesting by this rare species in Montana.

Jack's professional service has recently included more than a decade of leadership as the chair of the Faculty Association's Collective Bargaining Team. He has also served for many years as an officer in Western's faculty union, a position through which he has frequently provided assistance to many of his colleagues on personnel matters involving the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Jack's ability to help negotiate agreements and memoranda of understanding with management, as well as informally assisting administrators with CBA compliance questions, have comprised some of his most substantial and personally satisfying service achievements, in recent years... essentially serving as Western's "go to union guy". For many years, nearly every candidate for a faculty position has had "Jack's union talk" as part of their campus interview day.

Beyond his campus service, Jack's activities in the public/community sphere have included his service as a member on various natural resource citizen advisory committees organized by the local offices of federal land management agencies, including the BLM Resource Advisory Council, the East Pioneer Experimental Stewardship Committee and a BLM Section 8 Committee which examined issues regarding a grazing allotment's management decisions. Jack has also served in leadership roles in both the local and statewide Audubon organizations, as well as being an activist for the Montana Wilderness Association's conservation issues, serving as an MWA Council member and as a Wilderness Walks leader. In recognition of his conservation efforts, Jack received the Founders Award from the Montana Wilderness Association and the Lifetime Achievement Award from Montana Audubon. During his more than 3 decades as professional ornithologist, Jack has also organized and served as the compiler for Dillon's local Audubon Christmas Bird Count, and he has led a variety of natural history tours for Montana Audubon, to such international locations as western Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands.

In addition to helping his own sons and daughters on their various "science fair" projects, Jack has helped advise other kids on their science projects and has occasionally served as a judge at science fairs. Jack has frequently been invited to visit elementary schools to talk to the kids about birds and other animals, and for decades provided a water ecology unit for Dillon's fifth grade outdoor education camp. Over the years, Jack has been a featured speaker for many groups, including college classes at Montana Tech and Salish Kootenai College, various Audubon chapters and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks programs at places like Bannack State Park, Lewis and Clark Caverns, and the Helena Nature Center. In his retirement, Jack hopes to continue pursuing his research interests and his outreach and service to the community, as an emeritus

professor who will maintain a connection with the institution to which he dedicated his entire career, The University of Montana-Western.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

No Attachments