

BI328
CONSERVATION BIOLOGY
Fall 2020

GUIDELINES ARTICLE DISCUSSION CASE STUDY

GENERAL FORMAT WRITTEN CASE STUDY

The written case studies should be an approximately 750-word summary (no less than 600 words, no more than 1,000 word). This case study should be submitted by the agreed upon deadline as a word document through Canvas. Double space and use a legible font (Times new Roman/Cambria, Arial/Calibri) and font size (11 - 12pts). Name your file BI328_lastname_case-study-X.docx. Create a header or footer with your Name, Page number, and course designation/semester. Give your case study a precise, descriptive title. Be sure to properly reference your summary as needed and include a reference section at the end of the document (does not count toward word count). In general, in the natural sciences we do not use word-for-word citations. Being able to effectively summarize research in your own words is an important skill. You do not need to include figures (summarize key results instead). Make sure you are using “formal”, written English, replace “don’t”, “isn’t” etc. with “do not”, “is not” etc. Use a spell checker and take time to remove grammatical errors. Do not rely on spell checkers. Like autocorrect they have a will of their own (or it is a global conspiracy to make us look foolish? The jury is still out), i.e. some words may be spelled correctly but still not be the word you actually wanted to use.

SPECIFICS FOR CASE STUDY FOCUSED ON SINGLE RESEARCH ARTICLE

There should be no need to reference other papers, so you **do not** need to include a reference list unless you are referencing papers other than the article you are summarizing. In general, in the natural sciences we do not use word-for-word citations. Being able to effectively summarize research in your own words is an important skill. You should be paraphrasing the contents of the papers: **do not include word-for-word citations**. Do not include figures from the paper; you should be summarizing the key results in your summary/discussion.

An **article summary** should always answer these four questions:

- 1) What is the central question being asked (or hypothesis being tested)?
- 2) How was this question answered (methods)?
- 3) What were the central results?
- 4) What were the major conclusions?

Your **article discussion** should answer these questions but **additionally** you should add a brief discussion of the results that explores the choice of methods, the interpretation of the results, and discusses how the study furthers our understanding of the subject. You can mention points of discussion from the paper itself but should add some of your own insights. Questions you should ask yourself as you write the discussion are for example

- What is the author trying to convince you of?

- Do you agree with the conclusions?
- Were the methods appropriate for the hypotheses being tested (e.g. did they include a control? Was sampling error accounted for?)
- Is there an alternative explanation for the results?
- Does the author acknowledge alternate explanations/caveats of the study?
- In many cases your discussion will come to the conclusion that the author(s) of the paper have adequately discussed their results and alternative conclusions.

Your **case study** should have an outline similar to the following description:

Start with an **introductory paragraph** which lists the central question/hypothesis, why that question is being asked, how they attempted to solve it and what the key result(s) & conclusions were, e.g. *"In the paper [...], the authors pose the central question [...]. They used (methods) to determine [...] and found that [...]. Their results indicate [...]."* This paragraph can be comparatively short (4-5 sentences).

This should be followed by several **summary paragraphs** (you do not necessarily need a paragraph per bullet point below!):

- Explain the background (why are they asking this question, what are central terms/concepts, what is known so far?)
- Briefly summarize the methods.
- List the key results.
- Indicate what conclusions the researches came to – where they clear-cut? Was there several alternative explanations? What are implications of this study?

Follow this with a paragraph (or two) that focuses on a **discussion** of the results. Since you are presenting this paper as a case study for conservation biology you want to make sure that assess the study presented in the article in terms of how contributes to conservation biology. Depending on the paper this could include things like whether or not they were able to successfully implement conservation/management strategies that contributed to the success of conserving that species, whether they are able to make specific recommendations for conservation/management and how practical these are. Essentially you are arguing why this paper is important and how it contributes to the field of conservation biology overall.

Conclude with a paragraph that re-states the hypothesis/central question and the key conclusion(s) from the paper and also a 1-2 sentences summary of your overall evaluation of the article.