Through the biology curriculum at Longwood University, students learn to apply their knowledge of biological concepts to contemporary issues in society. It is incredibly important to be able to use biology in a relevant way. The more research that is done on contemporary issues, the more we can positively change the world. Through Biology 288: Sophomore Seminar and Biology 371: Ornithology, I was able to connect contemporary environmental issues to my semester long research.

In Biology 288, we were tasked with choosing a topic to write a general audience paper and scientific research paper on. Due to my love of marine biology and sea turtles, I chose to do both papers about the species. Climate change has dramatically affected the wellbeing of sea turtles in a negative way. Some of these outcomes include loss of nesting sites, female dominance, and increased mortality. For the general audience paper, I had to convey these scientific findings in a way that a non-science-based audience could understand. Instead of using technical terms that were hard to understand, I used everyday topics to relay the information. I also used fun subheadings to catch the attention of my audience. By adding these little nuances, my hope was to have my paper be relatable, understandable, and easy to understand, all while stating factual evidence. For the scientific research paper, I was able to use technical terms, statistics from different papers, and complex figures in order to get my points across. Climate change is something we deal with every day and it’s crucial to relate our studies in school to contemporary issues like that as much as possible. The more relatable our work is in classes, the more informed we’ll be as adults entering the “real world.”

In Biology 371, we spent lots of time outside bird watching. We were able to identify different species based on sound, flight, and morphological factors. While keeping detailed bird journals, we also had to choose a bird related topic and create a research paper based on our topic. My paper discusses the causes of avian extinction. Nowadays, many birds have gone extinct or been added to the endangered list due to interference from humans. These interferences include over hunting, deforestation, recreational use, and the inability to adapt. I was able to research species such as the passenger pigeon, ivory-billed woodpecker, and Carolina parakeet and get a better idea of extinction patters that could potentially carry through to common species now. Once again, extinction is something species continue to face every day and leads to a lot of contemporary research. This paper also helped me to realize how negatively humans really impact the species around us. Deforestation is caused by human industrialization, hunting is caused by human selfishness, and recreational use comes from human entitlement. My eyes were opened from this paper as to how relevant extinctions from many years ago can relate to issues in modern times.

By taking these classes and completing these assignments, I believe I will be well off in graduate school when learning about conservation and ecology. I have been exposed to contemporary issues in society throughout my undergraduate experience and will use it moving forward to make a change and continue learning.