

FORCES

Friends of Recreation, Conservation
and Environmental Stewardship



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

FORCES mission is to engage New York State college students to simultaneously improve OPRHP resources and enrich student academic, recreational, and career opportunities.

2021 FORCES STEWARDS: THE FORCE BEHIND FORCES



Avrey Baron
COAS Conservation Steward

Avrey majors in Conservation Biology at SUNY ESF. She is from Dexter, MI and likes to do art projects and read in her spare time. Avrey enjoys soaking up all the new information as she can! She has a personal interest in tropical ecology and coral reefs. Avrey would love to work with birds, mammals, or herptiles in her not-too-distant future. She also loves learning and applying new techniques for sampling and research. In the future, Avrey would love to own a large farm with a greenhouse where she can grow all her own food. Professionally, Avrey would love to be working somewhere in the Amazon or with a non-profit company. She wants to make a positive and lasting difference in the world in her professional life. She would also like working for a company that incorporates indigenous issues into their conservation plans.



Michael Bruch
Trail Management Steward

While attending Niagara County Community College, Michael majors in Recreation Studies. He grew up in Amherst, NY and he enjoys listening to music and playing soccer. Michael served as a Trail Management Steward in the Niagara Region. He would eventually like to find a career in a park environment.



Samantha Calus
Env. Field Team Steward

Originally from Penfield, NY, Samantha recently graduated from Penn State University where she studied Environmental Resource Management and minored in Watersheds and Water Resources. She's been involved in acting, singing, and dancing her whole life and Samantha is part of Penn State's show choir because of it. She enjoys paddle boarding, hiking, and swimming. In her free time, Samantha likes to read and watch Hallmark movies with friends.



Jordan Card
Interpretive Design Steward

After growing up in Manchester, NH, Jordan attended SUNY ESF, majoring in Environmental Education & Interpretation. Jordan is interested in interpretive design and writing, environmental education, anime, their rabbit Penelope, painting, and activism. Jordan's goals include creating and designing interpretive materials, have an environmental writing piece published, work in different parks across the country, own more pets, and educate, connect, and learn from a diverse set of people.



Diana Chaburka
Conservation Steward

Diana studies Environmental Geoscience at the University of Buffalo. Her hometown is North Tonawanda, NY and she is interested in climate change issues and conservation. Diana served as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region. She enjoys hiking, music, penny boarding, and making friendship bracelets. Diana's goal is to learn more about environmental preservation and to graduate on time with a satisfactory GPA.



Alexandra Chimiak
Invasive Sp. Mgmt. Steward

Alexandra grew up in Williamsville, NY and attends the University at Buffalo and majors in Environmental Studies. She served as an Invasive Species Management Steward in the Niagara Region. Alexandra's interests include plants, animals, sustainability, sight seeing, traveling, and yoga. Her goal is to help the environment while working in a job she loves!



Mack Conan
Piping Plover Steward

While attending SUNY ESF working towards his Master of Science in Landscape Architecture, Mack served as a Piping Plover Steward in the Central Region. He calls Syracuse, NY home and some of his hobbies include aerial photography and videography; he is working towards his FAA drone license! Professional interests include environmental/urban planning and Universal Design and how to integrate it into all public spaces. A personal goal of Mack's is to get better at field identifications of plants and birds. A professional goal is to design and create environmentally conscious and inclusive public outdoor spaces.



Richard Crescenzi
AHTF Conservation Steward

While enrolled at SUNY ESF, Richard majors in Forest Ecosystems Science. He is from White Plains, NY and in his spare time enjoys cycling and is a food enthusiast. During his time with Parks as an American Hart's-Tongue Fern Conservation Steward in the Central Region, Richard wanted to learn about northeastern forest ecosystems and their inhabitants so that he may eventually become a



Shannon Croft
COAS Conservation Steward

Shannon is working towards a BS in Wildlife Science at SUNY ESF. She grew up in New Woodstock, NY and her hobbies include hiking in the summer and ice fishing in the winter. Shannon also likes to do art and writing whenever she has extra time. She loves all sorts of animals and plants but has a soft spot for mustelids and salamanders. Shannon served as a Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail Conservation Steward in the Central Region. While with Parks, Shannon wanted to improve her interpretive skills and communication in addition to gaining valuable skills for the field.



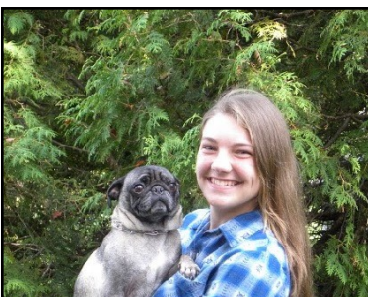
Nicole D'Aurizio
Chimney Bluffs Trail Steward

Nicole studies Environmental Science at Wells College. She served as a Chimney Bluffs Trail Steward in the Finger Lakes Region and calls Wolcott, NY home. Environmentally, Nicole is interested in light pollution and limnology and she'll be doing her thesis on light pollution at school. In her free time, Nicole enjoys comics and reading. Her goal is to do research in an environmental field. A bonus would be to work with a group of individuals who are all passionate about the work.



Brendan DeCoff
Conservation Steward

When Brendan is not busy studying Biology at Niagara University, he may be playing volleyball, hiking, field work and animals. He served as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region. Brendan's goal is to attend graduate school to do research on evolutionary biology and ecology.



Spring DeFranco
Piping Plover Steward

Spring is enrolled in the Wildlife Science program at SUNY ESF. She grew up in Ontario, NY and is interested in hiking, biking, kayaking, animal training and care, and horseback riding. Spring's goal is to obtain a DEC job, preferably as an ECO. She'd like to someday have a farmhouse in the country with lots of animals. Her back up plan is any sort of conservation job and to retire into running a wildlife rehab.



Nicholas DiNardo
Conservation Steward

Nicholas attends the University at Buffalo and studies Environmental Geoscience. Last summer, he served as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region. He calls Lewiston NY home and his interests include conservation, hiking, fishing, swimming, and keeping our planet clean. Nicholas' goal is to feel confident that he has made a difference in helping save the planet



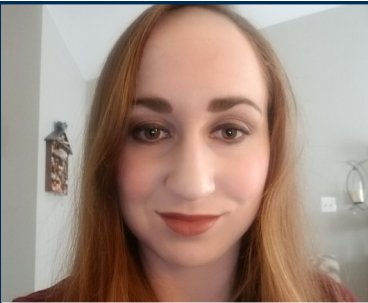
Jenna DeRario
Regional Planning Steward

Jenna is working towards her degree in Master of Regional Planning at Cornell University. Hailing from Wappingers Falls, NY, her research interests include rural economic development, farmland protection, and natural resource management. Outside of school, she enjoys hiking, knitting, and playing sports. Jenna hopes to work in Upstate NY on projects that collaborate with our region's farmers to tackle economic issues, climate change effects, and food insecurity.



Thomas DeVantier
Pollinator Steward

After growing up in North Tonawanda, NY, Thomas enrolled in the Environmental Science program at Niagara University. He has served as a Pollinator Steward for several semesters in the Niagara Region. He enjoys nature photography, plant–insect interactions, honey bees, and wildflowers. Thomas’ goal is to attend graduate school and become a research entomologist.



Kristyn Ehleben
Env. Interpretation Steward

Originally from North Wales, PA, Kristyn attends SUNY ESF to study Conservation Biology. She served as an Environmental Interpretation Steward in the Central Region. In her spare time, Kristyn likes moderate hiking, going to the beach, and theater. Some of her goals include protecting endangered species, traveling more, to become a conservation biologist, and to be more environmentally conscious in her everyday life.



Alexandria Evans
Piping Plover Steward

Alexandria recently graduated with a BS in Conservation Biology from SUNY ESF. Laurens, NY is home and she is interested in becoming a knowledgeable and versatile biologist. Alexandria loves being in the mountains hiking and camping and she is working towards a career in wildlife management and conservation. A goal is to either get a job with the National Park Service working on pika conservation in Lassen National Park or work for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Another goal is to hike the Pacific Crest Trail and to travel to Switzerland, Iceland, and Ireland.



Dylan Feiden
Conservation Steward

Dylan is working towards his degree in Environmental Studies at the University at Buffalo. He is from Rockland, NY, and hiking with his dog, playing sports, and hanging out with friends are some of his interests. Dylan served as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region. His goal is to find a career in the environmental field.



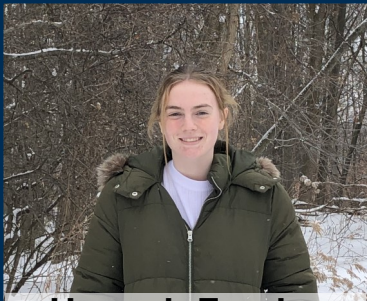
Julia Flowers
Trail Management Steward

Julia studies Medical Technology with a concentration in Environmental Science at the University at Buffalo. She grew up in West Seneca, NY and is interested in camping, snowboarding, and taking care of her dogs. One of Julia’s goals is to gain experience in nature and to become a clinical laboratory scientist after graduation.



Rachael Foote
Nat. Resource Mgmt. Steward

Rachael is enrolled at SUNY ESF where she studies Forest Health. She is from Arcade, NY, and enjoys hiking, forest foraging, bird watching, soccer, fishing, entomology, invasive species, plant diversity and adaptation, forest ecosystems, dogs, and environmental education. Rachael's goals include learning about forest ecosystems and instilling knowledge and passion for the environment in others.



Hannah Frasier
Regional Conservation Steward

Hannah is enrolled at Niagara University and is working on her degree in Environmental Studies. She is from Rochester, NY and has fun hiking, biking, and camping. Some of her professional interests are learning GPS/GIS systems, and learning about trail maintenance. She served as a Regional Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region. Hannah's goal is to find a career that merges business and environmental, possibly with the EPA or DEC.



Nora Gagnon
Pollinator Steward

Nora studies Conservation Biology at SUNY Cortland. She grew up in Greene, NY and likes to spend time thrifting/upcycling, wildlife photography, hiking, gardening, music, traveling, camping, insects, wildlife, and natural resource conservation, invasive species management, and stream ecology. She'd like to have the ability to identify birds by their song, to gain new field experience, get involved in conservation projects, and to pursue a career in plant/wildlife conservation.



Brigit Hagen
Invasive Sp. Mgmt. Steward

Brigit attends Ithaca College and studies Journalism. Originally from Cedarburg, WI, she enjoys birding, gardening, mycology, frogs, hiking, wildlife conservation, writing and reading. After college, Brigit wants to go to graduate school, and then would like to either work for an environmental news organization or for a conservation non-profit.



Jake Handerhan
Conservation Steward

Jake attends the University at Buffalo majoring in Environmental Studies. He comes from Schenectady, NY, and enjoys hiking, climbing, cycling, and anything outdoors. While working with Parks as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, Jake wanted to learn about the parks system and gain field experience.



Mary Hillebrand
Interpretive Design Steward

Mary majors in Environmental Education and Interpretation at SUNY ESF. Buffalo, NY is home and her professional interests include educational methods and accessibility and connecting people to nature for different reasons and learning how nature can help different people. She has been an equestrian for 16 years and it continues to be her favorite activity. Mary also enjoys bass fishing, walking outdoors and hiking, and embroidery. Her professional goals are to become an educator and interpreter who is able to deeply connect with her audience and inspire them to love and appreciate nature. She would like to work with a national or state park or local nature center where she can work with the public. Personally, she wants to connect herself with nature and continue to remember why she wants to teach people about the natural world.



Megan Holman
Conservation Steward

While attending Ithaca College, Megan studies Physics. She is from Spencer, NY and is interested in many outdoor activities, including soccer, skiing, canoeing, camping, and hiking. She also enjoys indoor activities like board games, reading, and watching The Great British Baking Show with her mom. Megan likes learning about planet formation and black holes. While serving as a Conservation Steward in the Finger Lakes Region, Megan wanted to learn about conservation and invasive species so that she can one day get a job as a park ranger. She would love to be a ranger in the Adirondacks so that she can also fulfill her goal of hiking all of the High Peaks in New York.



Bridget Jones
Env. Interpretation Steward

Bridget recently graduated with her Master's Degree in Environmental Health from SUNY ESF. She is from Wall, NJ, and loves hiking and exploring the natural spaces around Central New York. When outside, Bridget likes to bring binoculars for birdwatching and a sketch book. Some of other interests include reading, writing, and knitting. Bridget is currently an Environmental Educator at Baltimore Woods Nature Center in Marcellus, NY.



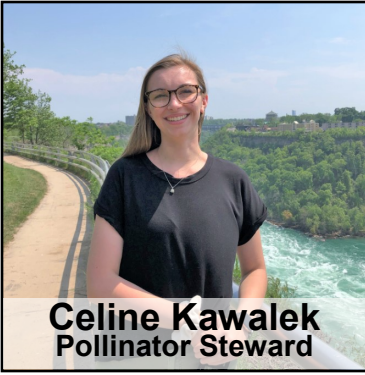
Noah Kacmarek
Conservation Steward

Noah majors in Environmental Science and History at Niagara University. While serving as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, Noah hoped to gain experience in the field and network. His hometown is Depew, NY and he enjoys hiking, fishing, cooking, football, and running. He would like to eventually go to school for Environmental Law.



Laura Kahle
Trail Management Steward

Laura majors in Environmental Studies at the University at Buffalo. She grew up in Pine Bush, NY and likes to spend time hiking (in the snow too!), road tripping, crafting, bird watching, and reading. She'd like to dedicate her work to environmental conservation and travel across the country.



Celine Kawalek
Pollinator Steward

Celine recently graduated from Canisius College where she earned her degree in Animal Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation. Her hometown is Colden, NY and she served as a Pollinator Steward in the Niagara Region. She loves hiking and backpacking, along with animals of all types! Celine would like to one day become either a park ranger, a conservation officer or a zookeeper.



Orchid Kinzie-Middleton
COAS Conservation Steward

Orchid studies Conservation Biology at SUNY ESF. She is from Cazenovia, NY and enjoys hiking, herping, painting, making jewelry, and spending time with her dog Cody. She hopes to always be an exceptional steward of the land by helping out her community and doing whatever she can to encourage others to love and appreciate nature in the same way. Orchid would also like to be involved with a research expedition to the Galapagos Islands to study tortoises or other endangered reptiles. She always strives to maintain a positive and professional reputation and to find many good networking opportunities.



Fiona Koye
Invasive Sp. Mgmt. Steward

While majoring in Natural Resource Management at SUNY ESF, Fiona served as an Invasive Species Management Steward in the Central Region. She is from Bethesda, MD and enjoys watercolors, sketching, performing songs, swimming, hiking on the Chesapeake Canal, stewardship, volunteering, working with kids, climate change, and plastic pollution activism. She hopes to spread awareness about the importance of nature as it serves the planet with its human and animal inhabitants as well as its beauty and intrinsic value that we must fight to preserve.



Marisa Kurmis
Plant Materials Pgm. Steward

At SUNY ESF, Marissa studies Environmental Science, with a focus on Health in the Environment. She grew up in Greece, NY and likes foraging, observing wildlife, and lake activities such as kayaking and paddle boarding. She is also interested in meeting like-minded people with similar environmental values and working with them to achieve an overall goal. Marissa wants to do her part in giving back to the earth and community by providing her support in environmental endeavors. She also hopes to expand her horizons in the professional environmental work field.



Adam Lampal
Conservation Steward

Adam attends Ithaca College and majors in Environmental Studies. He grew up in McLean, VA and likes to spend time hiking, camping, backpacking. He is especially interested in policy and climate change. While serving as a Conservation Steward in the Finger Lakes Region, Adam would like to learn more about invasive species and gain more field experience.



Margo Lee
Conservation Steward

Margo lives in Ithaca, NY and served as a Conservation Steward in the Finger Lakes Region. She has fun running, cooking, being outdoors and enjoys dogs, music, and learning about human sciences and cognitive development. She hopes to make a positive impact on people and the Earth.



Eian Loomis
Trail Management Steward

While attending the University at Buffalo, Eian studies Environmental Science. He grew up in Hanford, CA and likes hiking, hanging with friends and family. He served as a Trail Management Steward in the Niagara Region. After graduating, Eian would like to work in the parks conservation field or in the environmental field.



Katie Lovell
Conservation Steward

At the University of Buffalo, Katie studies Geology. She grew up in Rochester, NY and is interested in working in the field and studying climate change. Some of her hobbies include hiking, playing music, kayaking, and traveling. Katie would like to find a career working in water resource management or as a park ranger.



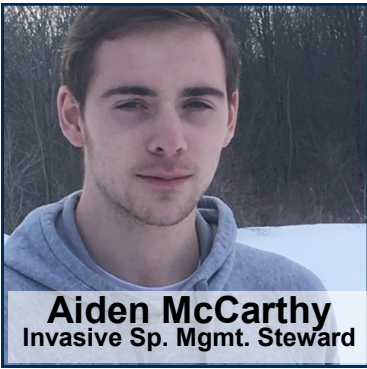
Jill Marianacci
Env. Field Team Steward

Jill is working towards her BS in Wildlife Science at SUNY ESF. She is from Canandagua, NY and served on the Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team. In her free time, her hobbies include traveling, snowboarding, mountain biking, and basically any activity outdoors. Professionally, Jill's interest include working to conserve endangered species as well as accessing changes in wildlife populations from anthropogenic climate change. Her goals include gaining enough experience in the field to advance her knowledge to work on becoming a wildlife biologist one day. Other goals are teaching wildlife conservation, and to volunteer in conservation work in Africa or other parts of the world.



Michael Malone
AHTF Conservation Steward

In addition to serving as an American Hart's-Tongue Fern Steward in the Central Region, Michael also held the Secretary position for the SUNY ESF FORCES Club. He studies Wildlife Science at SUNY ESF. He enjoys birding, invasive species removal, endangered species conservation, hiking, and building nest boxes. Michael would like to work with SHARP (Saltmarsh Habitat and Avian Research Program) to restore saltmarshes by increasing tidal resistance and removing invasive plants while assisting in conservation of Federally Endangered saltmarsh endemics.



Aiden McCarthy
Invasive Sp. Mgmt. Steward

Aiden attends SUNY ESF and is enrolled in the Environmental Health program. He grew up in Fabius, NY and he likes music, hunting, hiking, running, and GIS. For several seasons, Aiden served as an Invasive Species Management Steward in the Central Region. He'd like to learn as much as he can about the natural world around him.



Mikael Melfi
Le Moyne Club President

Mikey studies Environmental Science Systems at Le Moyne College. She served as the Le Moyne FORCES Club President for several semesters. Clayton, NY is home and Mikey enjoys hiking and swimming. After graduation, she'd like to obtain her Masters Degree in Ecosystem Science and Conservation.



Rebecca Miller
COAS Conservation Steward

Rebecca studies Conservation Biology at SUNY ESF. She grew up in Sandy Creek, NY and she's interested in agriculture, hiking, swimming, playing Dungeons and Dragons, reading fantasy, and playing videogames like Stardew Valley. Her goals consist of working on a big land management project, hopefully on a farm or state land.



Shawna Mulvihill
AHTF Conservation Steward

While attending SUNY ESF and studying Environmental Science with a focus in watershed science, Shawna served as an American Hart's-Tongue Fern Steward in the Central Region. She is from New Hartford, NY and working with plants, gardening and making herbal medicine, hiking with her dog, kayaking, and painting keep her busy. Shawna would like to be proficient in plant ecology and be able to identify a wide range of northeastern plant species. In the future she'd like work towards restoring and protecting native habitats and wetlands.



Emily O'Brien
Conservation Steward

Emily majors in Environmental Studies at Niagara University. She grew up in Fair Haven, NY and her hobbies include fishing, hiking, gardening, and playing with her cat, Mango. While serving as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, Emily would like to gain experience and confidence in her science, while networking and gaining an understanding of Parks' operations.



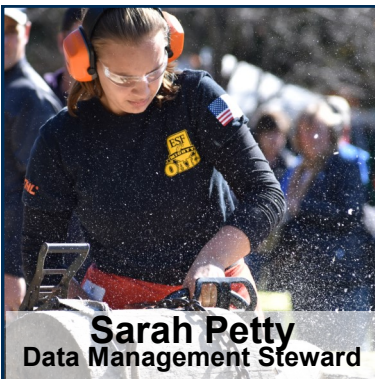
A native of Jamesville, NY, Caroline is working towards her Bachelor's of Science in Animal Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation from Canisius College. She served as a COAS Conservation/Invasive Species Management Steward in the Central Region. She enjoys volunteering at Helping Hounds Dog Rescue, spending time with friends and family, and traveling. In the future, Caroline would like to pursue a career in wildlife conservation.



Ben attends Binghamton University where he studies Environmental Science. He grew up in Syracuse, NY and enjoys playing soccer, tennis, manga, and playing with dogs. Ben is interested in biology and ecology and hopes to publish his own research soon and eventually become an environmental consultant.



Emily is enrolled in the Conservation Biology program at SUNY ESF. Her hometown is Owego, NY and she served as a Conservation Steward in the Central Region. Emily enjoys acrylic painting, interior design, ecology, and sustainability. Emily would like to find a job where she feels like she is making a difference and having a positive impact on her community and the environment.



Sarah graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Biology from SUNY ESF. Making her way from Wappingers Falls, NY, she held many Steward titles with State Parks. Sarah is interested in nature study, art, drawing, reading, music, hiking and camping. She'd like to pursue a career as a wildlife biologist and teach and show others how awesome nature and the environment are and spark an interest in others.



Chris attends the University at Buffalo where he majors in Environmental Geosciences. He is from Long Island, NY and enjoys working out, playing sports, listening to music, hiking, biking, attending concerts, and hanging out with friends. Chris served as an Invasive Species Management Steward in the Niagara Region. After graduation, he would like to find a position with the DEC or EPA.



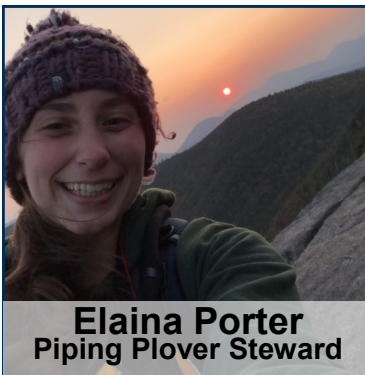
Emily Pinto
Env. Education Steward

Emily studies Environmental Studies & Psychology at the University at Buffalo. Her hometown is Horseheads, NY and she's interested in sustainability, climate change, social justice issues, and some of her hobbies include crocheting, knitting, and embroidery. Emily's goals include assisting in the fight for the protection of our natural environment and climate change and to make people around her smile everyday.



Haley Pond
Env. Interpretation Steward

Haley is working towards her Bachelor's Degree in Animal Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation from Canisius College. She is originally from Salamanca, NY and her interests include birding, kayaking, and community service. While serving as an Environmental Interpretation Steward in the Allegany Region, Haley wanted to engage more people to care about nature and environmental issues



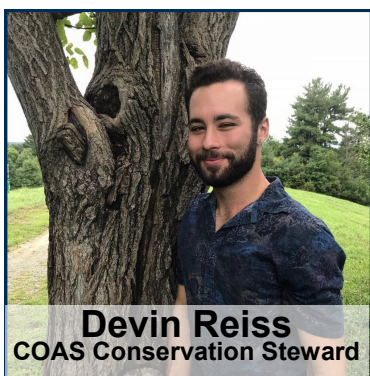
Elaina Porter
Piping Plover Steward

Elaina studies Environmental Science and Policy at Clarkson University. Her hometown is Gouverneur, NY and in her free time, she enjoys hiking, kayaking, and spending time in the outdoors. Elaina also has fun playing basketball at school. While serving as a Piping Plover Steward in the Central Region, her goal was to get a better understanding of the many careers in the environmental field and eventually work in an industry where conservation of the environment and education of the public is valued.



Magen Rant
Three Gorges Stewardship
Corps Member

Magen recently graduated from SUNY Cortland with her Bachelor's Degree in Biology. She grew up in Johnson City, NY and is interested in expanding her identification skills, watching birds, learning bird calls, arts and crafts, and antiques. While serving as a Conservation Steward and a Three Gorges Stewardship Corps Member, Megan wanted to learn more about the Finger Lakes Region, working closely on wildlife projects and applying academics in the field.



Devin Reiss
COAS Conservation Steward

Devin recently graduated from SUNY ESF with his Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Education and Interpretation. He grew up in Phoenicia, NY, and has fun bird watching, skateboarding, education, snowboarding, hiking, mushroom foraging, and tree identification. Devin hopes to pursue a career as either an environmental/outdoor educator or a NYS Forest Ranger.



Sophia Roemer
Conservation Steward

Sophia studies Conservation Biology at SUNY ESF. Her hometown is Vorhees, NJ and she is interested in wildlife care and management, fitness, cooking, nature, and hiking. Sophia served as a Conservation Steward in the Central Region. Her goals include working to conserve endangered species and traveling to see the natural world.



Elizabeth Rolon
AHTF Conservation Steward

Elizabeth served as an American Hart's-Tongue Conservation Steward in the Central Region. She studies Environmental Science with a focus in watershed science at SUNY ESF. Elizabeth is an avid hiker and traveler and has been to 7 countries and 9 National Parks so far! She also loves kayaking and horseback riding. She'd like to learn more about stewardship, invasive species, and trail maintenance during her time with Parks. Her goal is to become a national park ranger and she wants to learn about the history of each park and protect them for future generations. Elizabeth would also like to travel the US working the seasonal ranger jobs before obtaining a full time position.



Helen Sanders
Conservation Steward

Originally from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Helen came to SUNY ESF to enroll in the Environmental Studies program. Helen has many interests including hiking, watching films, environmental science, forestry, hydrology (with a preference for field work). Helen served as a Conservation and Piping Plover Steward in the Central Region. Her goal is to pursue a rewarding career in forestry or hydrological science working within either an academic or government setting.



Vanessa Shores
Piping Plover Steward

Vanessa studies Aquatics and Fisheries at SUNY ESF. She grew up in Buffalo, NY and wants to gain new field experiences and educate people on conservation as she served as a Piping Plover Steward in the Central Region. Vanessa likes running, SCUBA diving, hiking, and educating.



Grace Sinsebox
Plant Materials Prgm. Steward

Grace attends SUNY ESF and majors in Environmental Education and Interpretation. She is from Henrietta, NY and has always been passionate about the environment and the natural world. Grace is a big animal lover and enjoys plant care and art to relax and express herself. She also loves going to the Adirondacks, hiking, and kayaking. Aside from Grace's environmental interests, she has always been a soccer player and plays for SUNY ESF. Grace's goal is to learn as much as she can about the earth and what can be done to save it. A crucial part of preventing the degradation of the earth is educating the general public of their impact as well as what this beautiful place is all about. She aspires to make a career out of interpreting and educating those around her to make a difference in the world and how people view their interactions.



Jared studies Environmental & Sustainability Sciences, Entomology at SUNY Cortland. He is from Walworth, NY and served as a Trail Management Steward at Chimney Bluffs State Park in the Finger Lakes Region. He likes hiking, camping, strategy board games, video games, and any social activity that gets him thinking about a solving a problem in a fun or unique way. Jared wants to make sure that the world he leaves behind is cleaner, healthier, and better off for future generations. Jared would like to further pursue a job as a conservation biologist, wildlife researcher or a lab technician with a focus on the plant research field.



While attending the University of Vermont, Will studies Wildlife and Fisheries Biology. His hometown is Sleepy Hollow, NY and he has served as a Conservation Steward at Rockefeller State Park Preserve in the Taconic Region for several seasons. Upon graduation, Will hopes to continue to work with State Parks in some capacity, performing similar ecological stewardship work to which he performed with FORCES.



In addition to serving as SUNY ESF's FORCES Club President, Madison also served as a COAS Conservation Steward in the Central Region. She studies Recreation Resources and Protected Area Management at SUNY ESF and is from Orchard Park, NY. Madison enjoys wildlife photography, open water and Nitrox Computer Diving, and TimberSports. Madison hopes to graduate with a Bachelor of Science, receive Wildlife Biologist Certification from The Wildlife Society, eventually work in an outdoor recreation setting utilizing environmental education and interpretation.



Hailing from Cayuta, NY, Meagan studies Wildlife Science at SUNY ESF. She served as a Conservation Steward in the Finger Lakes Region. She enjoys camping, hiking, kayaking, skiing, snowboarding, exploring National Parks, and spending time with her dog. Professionally, she is interested in conducting research in the National Parks to learn how to better protect wildlife, environmental law, and working as an interpretive ranger. Meagan's goal is to learn how to better protect wildlife and ecosystems and to become a National Parks Ranger and to work in wildlife rehabilitation.



Luke is working towards his degree in Environmental Science at Jamestown Community College. He is from Hinsdale, NY and enjoys writing, playing music, field recording, and studying native biodiversity. While serving as an Environmental Interpretation Steward in the Allegany Region, Luke wanted to learn about invasive species management and promoting the health of native wildlife.



Kate Turri
Env. Interpretation Steward

Kate attends The University at Buffalo and majors in Environmental Studies. Her hometown is Williamsville, NY and her interests include drawing, painting, hanging out with friends, and new experiences. Kate served as an Environmental Interpretation Steward in the Niagara Region. She would like to become a local park ranger.



Foster Valle
Conservation Steward

Foster Studies Natural Resource Management with a minor in Water Resources at SUNY ESF. He is from Irondequoit, NY and served as a COAS Conservation Steward in the Central Region. He has a professional interest in watershed ecology and natural resource conservation. In his free time he is an avid hiker and musician. Post-graduation, Foster would like to work in the field doing watershed and wetland restoration, possibly working in consulting with the eventual move to getting a Master's Degree in Education to teach at a higher-level institution.



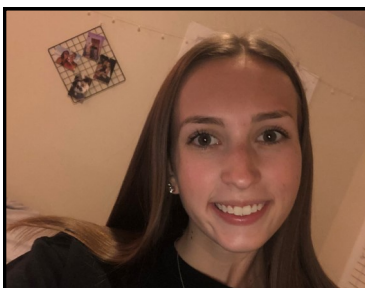
Madeline Was
Conservation Steward

Madeline is a student at Eckerd University in Florida and studies Marine Science with an Anthropology minor. Cheektowaga, NY is home and Madeline's hobbies include hiking, kayaking, SCUBA diving, and gaining field experience. She served as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region. Madeline's goal is to conduct research on sharks in polar ocean regions or to work at the National Park level.



Kaitlynn Webber
Conservation Steward

After growing up in Orchard Park, NY Kaitlynn decided to attend Medaille College to study Biology. Hiking, hanging out with friends, and cooking is what she likes to do and while serving as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, she wanted to gain more field experience and learn more about biology. Kaitlynn would like to someday become a microbiologist and work at an animal hospital.



Allison Winden
Env. Field Team Steward

Originally from Henrietta, NY, Allison majors in Biology at SUNY Cortland. While serving as an Environmental Field Team Member in the Finger Lakes Region, her goal was to get experience in this field and learn more about conservation biology. Allison loves traveling, spending time outside, and animals. Her interest in biology includes the study of animals in the environment and their behavior. Also, the conservation of species to keep them protected and the ecosystem running smoothly.



Tori Wright
COAS Conservation Steward

At SUNY ESF, Tori is enrolled in the Environmental Education and Interpretation program. She served as a COAS Conservation Steward in the Central Region and would love to work in animal care centers. Hands-on with animals has always been a dream of hers! Tori wants to spread her love for animals and looks forward to someday rehabilitating animals and educating the public about endangered animals and ways they can help.



Victoria Yargeau
Data Management Steward

Victoria holds degrees in Anthropology and Art History from Canisius College and GIS and Technology from the University of Southern California. Derby, NY is home and she likes camping, drawing, watching YouTube, and knitting. Victoria's professional interests are focused on GIS, ethnographies, data collection and CAD. While serving as a Conservation and Data Management Steward in the Niagara Region, Victoria's goals were to network and meet new people on similar career paths, and practicing to stay sharp in the field.



Haley Young
Conservation Steward

Haley majors in Environmental Studies at The University at Buffalo. Her hometown is Syracuse, NY and she enjoys nature walks, hiking, playing with her cats, all things fall and Halloween, and identifying plants. While serving as a Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, Haley hoped to gain more field experience as well as mapping with GIS programs.



Margo Zeitoun
Hartwick FORCES President

Margo attends Hartwick College and majors in Sustainability with a minor in Business. She is originally from Larchmont, NY and enjoys birding, gardening, mycology, frogs, hiking, wildlife conservation, writing, and reading. Margo would like to own a sustainability consulting business that promotes a sustainable economy. She would also like to live a completely self-sufficient lifestyle by growing her own food, producing her own energy, etc. Decreasing our own carbon footprint is a good way to help inspire others to do the same.



Siela Zembsch
COAS Conservation Steward

Siela majors in Landscape Architecture at SUNY ESF. Her hometown is Galway, NY and she enjoys drawing, backpacking, rock climbing, and writing. Professionally, she'd love to combine design and ecology to create beautiful and healthy landscapes. Siela's goal is to live abroad after college and see as much of the world as possible. Eventually, she'd love to open a used art supply store at some point.



Grace Ziehnert
Three Gorges Stewardship
Corps Member

Grace attends Ithaca College and majors in Environmental Studies. She is from Saratoga Springs, NY and in her free time enjoys hiking/backpacking, skiing, field hockey, working out, reading, and writing. One of Grace's goals is to become an avid naturalist with the ability to identify native and invasive species, and to use this skill to better understand and protect/restore ecosystem ecology. She would like to go to graduate school for Ecology and eventually make her mark on the scientific/conservation community through her research and practices. Grace hopes to travel the world, have a farm with many pigs, live in a tiny house next to a pond/lake, publish some books, and live a beautiful and whole life with the people and beings that she loves.

2021 FORCES STEWARDS: THE FORCE BEHIND FORCES

Chloe Dymek	SUNY Oneonta FORCES Club President	SUNY Oneonta
Oliver Knox	AHTF Conservation Steward	SUNY ESF
Madeline Scherff	COAS Steward	University of Connecticut
Angelica Termine	Conservation Steward	Volunteer
Clara Tyrel	Invasive Species Conservation Steward	SUNY ESF

2021 FORCES STEWARDS: Jr. Conservation Stewards

In addition to our base of FORCES collegiate students, FORCES has expanded its reach into local high schools to creatively engage more students. Our 'Junior Conservation Stewards' (high school participants) get the opportunity to work with our Park staff and their collegiate mentors.



Logan Fournier
Jr. Conservation Steward

Logan studies Conservation II at Orleans/Niagara BOCES Niagara Career & Technical Education Center. He is from Ransomville, NY and enjoys being outdoors, riding ATVs, hiking, camping, and gardening. While serving as a Jr. Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, Logan hoped to experience working in a greenhouse and network with Park agency staff.



Danielle Spyra
Jr. Conservation Steward

While growing up in Pittsford, NY, Danielle attends Pittsford Sutherland High School. She is interested in gaining insight and experience in the environmental field while also getting to work with her hands and see real-time progress. While serving as a Jr. Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, Danielle's goal was to learn about conservation and how she can properly care for plants and spread this knowledge to others.



Lawrence Shwarzmueller
Jr. Conservation Steward

Larry studies Conservation II at Orleans/Niagara BOCES Niagara Career & Technical Education Center. Home is Wilson, NY and he likes being outside, reading, and hanging out with friends and family. While serving as a Jr. Conservation Steward in the Niagara Region, he hoped to gain field experience.



Ellie VanHouten
Jr. Graphic Design Steward

Ellie grew up in Pittsford, NY and attends Pittsford Mendon High School and is currently enrolled at Cornell University. Her interests include beekeeping, hugging trees, research and writing, graphic design, reading, rowing, hiking, swimming, and collecting and filtering information to present in a way that's informative and comprehensible (either through writing or design). She served as a Jr. Graphic Design Steward in the Finger Lakes Region. Some of Ellie's goals include writing and designing in a way that draws attention to important issues, continuing to learn about sustainability in relation to other facets of society (e.g. social equity).



Photos: OPRHP

FORCES

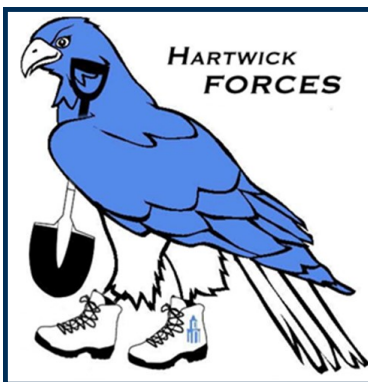
Friends of Recreation, Conservation
and Environmental Stewardship



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

FORCES mission is to engage New York State college students to simultaneously improve OPRHP resources and enrich student academic, recreational, and career opportunities.

2021 FORCES CLUB OFFICERS



Spring 2021

Tarrah Smith, President

Fall 2021

Margot Zeitoun, President
Emily Edmunds, Vice President
Will May, Treasurer
John Relyea, Secretary
Gretchen Ogden, Public Relations

Faculty Advisor: Zsuzsanna Balogh-Brunstad, Department of Chemistry



Spring 2021

Haley Synan, Co-President
Luke Giunta, Co-President

Fall 2021

Mikey Melfi, President
Jacob Stewart, Vice President
Gen Kikukawa, Treasurer
Brandon Rawson, Secretary
Marie Stewart, Social Media

Faculty Advisor: Jason Luscier, Department of Biological Sciences



Spring 2021

Emily Link, President
Jessica Castellan, Vice President
James Farrell, Treasurer
Madison Stevens, Secretary
Maggie O'Brien, Social Media
Jordan Jessamy, USA Representative

Fall 2021

Madison Stevens, President
Jessica Castellan, Vice President
Maggie O'Brien, Treasurer
Michael Malone, Secretary
Fiona Koye, Social Media

Club Advisor: Tom Hughes, NYS OPRHP Regional Stewardship Biologist



Spring 2021

Jenny Bartholomay, President
Claudia Steblen, Vice President
Allison Menendez, Treasurer

Fall 2021

Covid pause

Faculty Advisor: Jim Kernan, Associate Professor, Geography Department



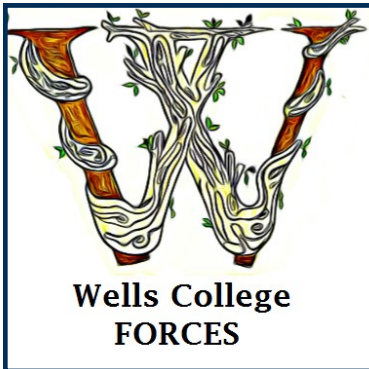
Spring 2021

Sophie Millar, President
Samantha Pepe, Vice President

Fall 2021

Chloe Dymek, President

Faculty Advisor: Donna Vogler, Department of Biology



Spring 2021

Dan Popp, President
Brenon Weed, Vice President
Poony Rizal, Treasurer
Eh Tha Yooi Lee, Secretary

Fall 2021

Covid pause

Faculty Advisor: Jackie Schnurr, Department of Biology

2021 FORCES Team

Currently, FORCES has a programmatic presence in seven regions across the state, including Central, Finger Lakes, Niagara, Genesee, Allegany, Saratoga/Capital, and Taconic. Within these regions, several OPRHP staff directly supervise FORCES Stewards, volunteers, clubs and their projects. In addition, this dedicated team works hard to maintain and grow FORCES relationships with our collegiate, agency and other partners.



Tom Hughes
Natural Resource Steward Biologist, Central Region
Central Region FORCES Program Manager

Tom holds a BS in Natural Resources from Cornell University, a MS in Biological Sciences from SUNY College at Brockport, and a Master's of Professional Studies in Environmental Interpretation from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. He has worked as a biologist for NYS OPRHP for nearly 14 years. Prior to his work in the NYS Parks system, Tom worked for SUNY ESF, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, and Cornell University. He has also served as a Professor for Limnology at Wells College. Tom grew up in the western Finger Lakes region in the small town of Rush, NY.



Amy Kochem
FORCES Program Coordinator

Amy received her AAS in Ecology and Environmental Technology from Paul Smith's College, her BS in Biological Science from SUNY Brockport, and her MS in Environmental Education and Outdoor Recreation from SUNY Cortland. Amy has served as the FORCES Program Coordinator for over 8 years. Prior to holding this position, she was an environmental educator for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation at Rogers Environmental Education Center. She enjoys music, gardening, interior decorating, and alpine/cross country skiing.



Joshua DiPaola
Natural Resource Specialist, Taconic Region

After obtaining his Bachelor's in Finance and Economics from Fordham University and a Master's Degree in Animal Behavior and Conservation from Hunter College. Josh has worked at a zoo, supported field-ecology research on mammals, volunteered at a wildlife rehabilitation center, as well as performing behavioral research on critically endangered pangolins. Josh's primary focus at Rockefeller State Park Preserve is wildlife conservation and management within the preserve.



Thomas LeBlanc
Naturalist, Allegany Region

Tom has been with the Allegany Region since 1998 and has moved around between departments over the years. He spent most of his time working with the Resource Management Department before being transferred back to the Environmental Education Department in the fall of 2016. Tom studied Media/Wildlife through SUNY Empire State College. He is a well-rounded naturalist but he is most known for his work with bird banding, butterflies, and promoting "Birds R Cool."



Emily Purce
SCA NYS Parks Corps AmeriCorps
FORCES Program Specialist/Environmental Education Steward

Emily received her Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Studies: Policy, Planning, and Law from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. She is from Oswego, NY and her interests include environmental justice, environmental education, invasive species work, and advocating for the remaining natural environments in New York State. Professional goals are to inspire kids to work in the environmental field and to make a difference in both environmental education and policy.



Josh Teeter
Environmental Educator, Finger Lakes Region
Finger Lakes Region FORCES Program Manager

For the last several years, Josh has been the Environmental Educator for the Finger Lakes Region. He received a BS in Psychology from Binghamton University and a MS in Management of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure from SUNY Cortland. Josh also spent a year studying primitive and survival skills at Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall, Washington. Prior to working for NYS Parks, he taught classes in the Outdoor Purists Department at Binghamton University and was a program director at a nature center. He lives in the Ithaca area.



Alexandra 'Allie' Tillman
FORCES Program Specialist, Niagara Region

Allie earned her BS in Geology with an Environmental Science Concentration from SUNY Cortland. She's worked for State Parks for almost 3 years now, starting in the Horticulture Department at Niagara Falls State Park and moving into the FORCES Program Specialist position for the Niagara Region in the spring of 2019. She volunteers as a judge for the Niagara/Orleans County Envirothon and the Western New York Science and Engineering Fair. She serves on the Advisory Committee for the Niagara Career and Technical Center Natural Resource Program. When she's not working, Allie is usually playing rugby, hiking, camping, or playing with her dog Fae.



Carlin Wakefield

FORCES Program Specialist, Finger Lakes Region

Carlin was born and raised in Buffalo, NY and received a BS in Environmental Studies with a focus in communication from SUNY ESF. In the summer of 2017, she interned with NYS DEC and Hudson River Sloop Clearwater as an Aquatic Invasive Species Technician assisting with education events, tabling at festivals, and educating along the Hudson Estuary. In the summer of 2018, Carlin started working for NYS OPRHP as the Lead Steward for the Three Gorges Project Stewardship Corps. She surveyed, mapped, and removed invasive species within Taughannock Falls, Robert H. Treman, and Buttermilk Falls State Parks. In the summer 2019 she started as a FORCES Program Specialist.



Adele Wellman

Environmental Educator, Allegany Region

Adele has been with Allegany State Park for 20 years, 17 as a Seasonal Naturalist and most recently, as the Environmental Educator for all the Allegany Region which includes Long Point and Lake Erie State Parks, to name a few. She has a degree in Biology and a minor in Horticulture from Tennessee Technological University. Although her specialties include trees, edible plants and insects, she is a wealth of information on many things in the park. Adele enjoys mountain biking, paddle boarding, telemark skiing, and snowboarding.

2021 FORCES Support Staff

In addition to our FORCES Team, our extended family of regional Environmental Field Teams work with FORCES Stewards and program partners to support environmental and park improvement projects throughout our NYS Parks. Many of these OPRHP staff from the Central, Finger Lakes, and Niagara Regions are listed here, but the number of agency staff supporting the FORCES program extends well beyond.



Mat Bilz

Regional Stewardship Manager, Central Region Central Region Environmental Field Team

Mat holds an AAS in Environmental and Natural Resource Conservation from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Ranger School. He also has a BA in Geography, concentrated on watersheds and ecosystems, from State University College at Buffalo. Mat has worked for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, WNY Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management, as well as climbing for a tree care company. From hunting/fishing to snowboarding, Mat spends most of his time outdoors enjoying the many forms of recreation.



James Boyd,

Bird Conservation Area Project Coordinator, Central Region Central Region Environmental Field Team

James graduated from SUNY ESF with a Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Science. He has worked for Parks as a Forest Health Specialist for western NY and as an Invasive Species Technician for the Central Region. James loves to run, backpack, ski, and rock and tree climb. He's always looking forward to his next trip to the Adirondacks and Catskills. James hopes to travel more to the White Mountains, learn more rock and tree climbing techniques, and run a marathon.



Alex Brown
Stewardship Specialist, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Alex received a Bachelor of Science Degree from Paul Smith's College in 2013, with a concentration in Fish and Wildlife Management. After graduating, her career took on many forms between 2013-2015; Veterinary Assistant, Conservation Corps Steward, and Zipline Tour Guide. For 6 years, Alex worked with the Region 7 DEC as a Wildlife Tech focusing on big game management. She loves exploring with her son, wining and dining with her husband, going for walks with their dogs, gardening, downhill skiing and singing the wrong words to all her favorite songs.



Kira Broz,
Stewardship Project Coordinator, Finger Lakes Region
Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team

Kira focuses her work on wildlife surveys and habitat enhancement. She has worked with State Parks since 2016, mapping invasive species and restoring riparian corridors at Ganondagan State Historic Site. She earned her MS in Environmental Science and Ecology from SUNY Brockport, and holds a BS in Environmental Public Policy from SUNY Albany, as well as an AS in Veterinary Science Technology from SUNY Canton. Kira has a passion for herps, fuzzy moths and mammals, cats, and cycling.



Whitney Carleton
Natural Resource Steward Biologist, Finger Lakes Region
Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team

Whitney has worked for NY State Parks since 2013 including time as a NY Works Project Coordinator & Stewardship Specialist. Prior to working for State Parks, Whitney worked for the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources as a Wetland Assessor. She earned her BS in Plant Biology and Environmental Science, minoring in Spanish from Minnesota State University, Mankato, and a MS in Watershed and Wetland Resources from SUNY ESF. Whitney is also a Certified Professional Wetland Scientist.



Sarah Forestiere
SCA NYS Parks Corps AmeriCorps
Piping Plover Steward, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Sarah earned her A.S. in Environmental Studies from Finger Lakes Community College and her B.S. in Wildlife Management from Unity College. She grew up in Watertown, NY and has interests in natural resources conservation, fisheries management, endangered and threatened species, and sustainability practices. Sarah enjoys reading, crocheting, hiking, rafting, gardening, and photography.



Cara Gannon
Environmental Educator Assistant, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Cara received a Bachelor of Science from Coastal Carolina University majoring in Recreation and Sport Management. After college, she served two terms with the Student Conservation Association and AmeriCorps working as an Environmental Educator. She began a permanent position working as an Environmental Educator Assistant for the Central Region in November 2021. Cara loves her job because she gets the opportunity to teach others about the world around us! Some of her passions include hiking, camping, traveling, coaching tumbling, and spending time outdoors trying new things!



Aaron Heminway
Regional Biologist, Niagara & Genesee Regions

Aaron is the Regional Biologist for the Genesee and Niagara Regions, starting his career with Parks as the Biologist in the Allegany Region in 2016. He received a combined BS (Terrestrial Ecology) and MS (Wetland Ecology) in Environmental Science and Biology from SUNY Brockport. Before his current role in Parks, Aaron worked for environmental consulting firms as a Biologist and Project Manager.



Evyn Iacovitti
Environmental Analyst, Niagara Region

Evyn holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Studies from the University at Buffalo and began working for State Parks in 2004 as a Beach Water Quality Sampler. Since that time, she has been involved with various natural resource stewardship projects in the Niagara Region and has served as an Environmental Analyst for the region since 2017. She was born and raised in Western New York where she still lives with her husband and their family.



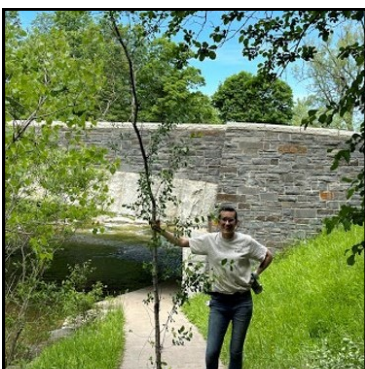
Charlie Ippolito
Invasive Species Technician, Finger Lakes Region
Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team

Charlie graduated from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in 2021 with a Bachelor's Degree in Conservation Biology. He has been a part of the Environmental Field Team since 2017 and focuses his energy managing and restoring ecologically important areas within New York State Parks. He is from Victor, NY and spends most of his free time outdoors, fishing, skateboarding, birding, botany/bryology/entomology, and hiking the Adirondack mountains. His current goals are to continue refining his botany and bryology identification skills and to document rare pollinator insects.



Kanika Jackmola
Bird Conservation Area Invasive Species Technician, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Kanika graduated from SUNY ESF with a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Science with a Minor in Environmental Writing and Rhetoric. She is from Centreville, Virginia, 30 minutes outside of D.C. She enjoys wildlife photography, hiking, reading in a hammock, and going on long car rides. Kanika would like to become a certified Wildlife Biologist through the Wildlife Society, get her Master's Degree in some form of wildlife physiology, and become either a biologist or an educator.



Delaney Kalsman
COAS Project Coordinator, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Delaney received her Bachelor's of Science Degree from SUNY ESF where she studied Environmental Biology. Before holding her current position, Delaney was very active with FORCES as an Environmental Education Steward for several semesters. Delaney grew up in Olean, NY and she enjoys reading science fiction novels, sewing and knitting. She also enjoys hiking and identifying plant and bird species. Delaney would like to continue her education in invasive management and forestry as she enjoys land management and protecting native plant diversity.



Lydia Martin
Lead Stewardship Technician, Finger Lakes Region
Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team

Lydia received her BS in Biology from SUNY Geneseo as well as a BS in Wildlife Science from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. She loves anything and everything outdoors including hiking, camping, kayaking, and especially birding. After growing up in Naples, NY, Lydia has fun traveling and discovering new places. In her free time, she likes playing games such as Frisbee, foosball, and Euchre and also enjoys the challenge of learning how to identify species of plants, animals, and fungi. For the next few years, Lydia wants to learn as much as she can about habitat restoration, ecological communities, and wildlife and plant ecology.



Carley McMullen
Restoration Project Manager, Niagara Region

Carley started volunteering with FORCES in 2018 after she graduated from Niagara University. She earned her BS in Biology, focused in Environmental Studies. Afterwards, she served as an Invasive Species Management Steward and it became clear that this was her passion. Carley joined the Student Conservation Association in 2019, and was lucky enough to stay on as an Environmental Stewardship Technician with Parks; continuing her love for the outdoors. Carley earned her most recent title of Restoration Project Manager with Parks in the fall of 2021 where she manages a wetland enhancement project at Woodlawn Beach State Park. Her other interests include reading, cooking, and spending time with her friends and family.



Stephanie Minarik
American Hart's-Tongue Fern Technician, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Stephanie is a Wells College Graduate with a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies. She grew up in Rochester, NY and her interests range from home improvement projects to playing Dungeons and Dragons with friends around the country, to traveling back home to hike the trails at a favorite nature preserve. Stephanie is always trying to expand her professional networks and building up her resume in order to obtain a permanent position with New York State Parks.



Christina Morrow
Three Gorges Project Stewardship Corps Lead, Finger Lakes Region
Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team

Christina earned her Bachelor's of Science Degree in Geography from SUNY Geneseo where she served as the SUNY Geneseo FORCES Club President for several semesters. Christina has held many titles with Parks including FORCES Conservation Steward and most recently, as the Three Gorges Project Stewardship Corps Lead in the Finger Lakes Region. She is from Fredonia, NY and enjoys walking, hiking, biking, collaging, reading, making kombucha, and composting.



Katie Mulverhill
Environmental Educator, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Katie enjoys being outside and introducing people to the nature that surrounds us. She earned her degree in Environmental and Forest Biology with a concentration in Nature Interpretation from SUNY ESF. She loves her job because every day she does something different! Some of Katie's favorite outdoor pastimes include snowshoeing, hiking, kayaking, birding, and camping. She travels to many of our parks throughout the Central Region for environmental education programs. Katie looks forward to working together soon!



Claire Nellis
Piping Plover Project Coordinator, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Claire grew up in Pulaski, NY and graduated with a Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences Degree from Paul Smith's College in 2015. She enjoys horseback riding, hiking, board and card games, playing volley ball, and soccer. At work, Claire enjoys observing the behavior and life cycle of the animals around her and those that she works to conserve and getting the public excited about nature! Her professional goal is to increase public understanding and support for the plovers, add to her technicians (and her own) resume so that they are better equipped to pursue their careers. Claire also wants to instill in them confidence and passion for wildlife conservation work.



Elizabeth Padgett
Endangered Plant Conservation Steward
Central and Finger Lakes Environmental Field Teams

Elizabeth has a degree in Natural Resources Conservation and Horticulture from Finger Lakes Community College. She grew up in Webster, NY and enjoys botanizing, birding, gardening, crafting, music, photography, and considering how we (living organisms) can equitably share the planet. Elizabeth is always working on improving her identification skills, particularly grasses, sedges, raptors, and insects. A recent whim is to someday plant a garden organized taxonomically rather than aesthetically.



David Rutherford
Plant Materials Program Lead Technician, Finger Lakes Region
Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team

Dave received his BS in Biotechnology at SUNY ESF and worked in the pharmaceutical industry for 7 years before changing careers to his true passion, conservation. As the field technician for the Plant Materials Program, Dave spends most of his time collecting local, native seeds for restoration and enhancement projects throughout New York State. In his spare time, he enjoys woodworking, backpacking, camping, hunting, and Wegmans.



Mike Serviss
Regional Conservation Project Coordinator, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Mike is a researcher and a field biologist specializing in rare and threatened plant conservation but also moonlights in environmental interpretation, cartography (GIS), and ecology. He earned an AS in Liberal Arts at Mohawk Valley Community College and BS and MS degrees in Conservation Biology from SUNY ESF. He coordinates all projects related to AHTF conservation in OPRHP, including propagation, reintroduction, invasive species and habitat management, education and outreach, and collaboration with our state and federal partners. Mike also helps coordinate Regional stewardship and conservation projects. He grew up in New Hartford where he enjoyed skateboarding and eating the best pizza on Earth. Mike currently resides in Syracuse, NY and loves to play soccer, craft, travel, and explore nature.



Peter Sterbak
Field Technician, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Peter received an AS degree in Fine Arts, a BS in Psychology, a Juris Doctorate, and a MS in Education. He enjoys bicycling, pencil sketches, pen and inks, oil paintings, photography, and writing short stories. Peter and his wife also enjoy camping and a lifetime moment for him was at waking up at 3:00 am with his wife, atop Mt Mahogany in Death Valley seeing a satellite crease across the light-pollution free sky.



Billy Sullivan
Trails Coordinator, Central Region
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Billy recently graduated from SUNY ESF with a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Environmental Biology and started his position with Park in 2021. He'd like to hike all 46 high peaks in the Adirondacks and become a 46er before age 40 and to eventually work in a National Park thoroughly studying bird populations. Raptorial birds in particular are his favorite to learn about but he also finds songbirds fascinating. Helping preserve and maintain wildlife is an overall professional goal of his.



Kennedy Sullivan
Piping Plover Field Technician
Central Region Environmental Field Team

Kennedy obtained her Associate in Applied Science in Zoo Technology from Jefferson Community College in Watertown. She served as a Piping Plover Technician with Parks in the summer of 2021 and enjoys bird watching and educating children of all ages about science.



Kyle Webster
Stewardship Project Coordinator
Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team

Kyle manages ecological restoration projects and conducts vegetation monitoring and floristic assessments throughout the Finger Lakes Region. He started working for Parks in 2014, when he interned as a FORCES Conservation Steward. Kyle received two Associates Degrees in Horticulture and Sciences from Finger Lakes Community College and a BS in Conservation Biology from SUNY ESF where he focused on plant diversity and ecology. While at ESF, Kyle served as the FORCES Club President. In his free time, you can find him woodworking, exploring natural areas, botanizing, camping, and working in herbaria.



Brigitte Wierzbicki
Plant Materials Program Coordinator
Plant Materials Program at Sonnenberg Gardens & Mansion State Historic Park

Brigitte manages a program that provides native, regionally appropriate seed and plants for environmental stewardship projects. She's been involved with State Parks since 2014, when she began interning with the Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team. In 2016, she graduated with her BS in Environmental Biology from SUNY ESF, where she also served as ESF FORCES Vice President. Brigitte has been collecting seeds, propagating, and planting native plants for NYS Parks ever since getting involved with ESF FORCES. In her spare time, she enjoys attending NY Flora field trips and volunteers in the Rochester Academy of Sciences Herbarium.