



FORCES

Friends of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship

Spring 2017 Newsletter

Vol. 2 Issue 1

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Oak Unit at Ganondagan State Historic Site. Photo credit: FORCES OPRHP.

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

Engaging our Communities

Tom Hughes, NRS Biologist
Central Region FORCES Program Manager

In prior issues of this newsletter I wrote about the importance of our Stewards, partners, and the public for the FORCES program. As I look at our calendar of *Upcoming Events* (page 3), I am reminded how significantly community engagement contributes to the success of our program. Over the past several years, FORCES has built an extensive network of community partners. The collaborations for projects and events that have emerged from this network have created so many meaningful opportunities for our FORCES students beyond our park boundaries.

For example, FORCES students, especially from SUNY ESF, have volunteered countless hours for both the annual Women in Nature (WIN) Outdoor Skills Workshop and Montezuma Audubon Center (MAC) Wildlife Festival. These events are both in their 11th year, and FORCES has not missed an event since we started 9 years ago! During that same time, numerous members of the Onondaga County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs (sponsoring organization for WIN) have donated many hours of their time for programs and events within our state parks. The MAC and Audubon New York are giving back too through our *Audubon in the Parks* initiative.



FORCES students, professors, and environmental educators gathered for a Youth Aquatic Resource Education (YARE) training at SUNY Morrisville on October 15, 2016. Instructors from NYS OPRHP and IWLA provided training for stream monitoring & ecology and basics of fishing.

Since 2014, FORCES students have organized and also been participant in several Youth Aquatic Resource Education (YARE) community workshops co-sponsored by OPRHP, NY Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, and the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA). Through these workshops, FORCES students have received professional training for teaching kids about stream & lake ecology, water quality monitoring, and sport fishing. A number of these workshops additionally provided certification in IWLA's Creek Freak's curriculum - www.creekfreaks.net

Learn more: Audubon in the Parks - <https://parks.ny.gov/environment/audubon-in-the-parks.aspx>

MAC Wildlife Festival - <http://www.visitrochester.com/event/11th-annual-wildlife-festival/61204/>

Women in Nature - http://www.federationofsportsmen.com/wp/?page_id=32

Central Region Update

Patricia Shulenburg, FORCES Program Specialist

Central Region started out the fall by hosting a program - *Connect to Conservation* at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Kaylyn Zipp educated zoo visitors about Chittenango ovate amber snails and other endangered species. SUNY Morrisville removed invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle at Lorenzo State Historic Site. Thank you Professor Hargrave and her class! Our education team hosted *Project Explore*, a winter break group from Exceptional Family Resources, and we explored animal tracking at Green Lakes State Park. Girl Scout Troop 20354 completed their Bronze Award by constructing a bluebird nest box trail at Herkimer Home. We also transplanted American hart's-tongue ferns grown in the lab at SUNY ESF to Clark Reservation State Park. Stewards have also been busy gearing up for piping plover monitoring season creating a leash lending program and outreach materials for Sandy Island Beach State Park.



Kaylyn educates zoo visitors about conservation of species at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. OPRHP.

Finger Lakes Region Update

Becky Sibner, Stewardship Project Coordinator



Stewards remove porcelainberry at Buttermilk Falls State Park. Photo credit: OPRHP.

Fall in New York really tests the stamina of our FORCES stewards, and our three fall stewards were as enthusiastic as ever, despite the varying weather conditions we encountered. We experimented with creating educational

materials using epoxy and invasive plants, and are still in the phase of learning from our mistakes. We also continued with our invasive plant mapping and removals, which included learning a species that is relatively new in this area, porcelainberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*). FORCES and the Strike Team tackled this species, and surveys were conducted to make sure the species had not spread into other areas. We also surveyed at Jennings Pond for hemlock woolly adelgid, and mapped the extremely light infestation in that park. The Finger Lakes Region is gearing up for spring and summer projects, as well as the arrival of four Student Conservation Association interns who will be living and working in the region as environmental educators.

Ganondagan Historic Site

Brigitte Wierzbicki, Lead Cons. Steward

Grassland restoration efforts don't stop with the nice weather. In fact, some work, such as cutting trees and shrubs is preferable to do in winter because the birds that utilize them for nesting during summer have all migrated south. The Environmental Field Team has been hard at work removing hedgerows and shrubs from the Oak Unit grassland to improve the habitat for grassland birds. And even though it's cold out in the grassland we can keep warm burning brush piles created during the removal process.

Why is removing shrubs and hedgerows important to improving the habitat? Hedgerows and shrubs in grassland areas can act as habitat for nest predators. Nest predators raid the nests of grassland birds or even parasitize them by laying their own eggs in the nest, as in the case of brown-headed cow birds. In response to this, grassland birds have evolved the behavior of nesting away from these edges, sometimes up to 100 meters! The next step will be planting the grassland this spring with local ecotype seed collected earlier in the season.

Ganondagan State Historic Site Staff 2017
Whitney Carleton, Stewardship Specialist
Alexis VanWinkle, Supervising Steward
Kyle Webster, Supervising Cons. Steward
Brigitte Wierzbicki, Lead Cons. Steward



Kyle Webster cleans up after fall's fieldwork season by burning woody invasive species brush piles. Photo credit: FORCES OPRHP.

Upcoming Events

- 3/28/17 Coyote Lecture
Dr. Jacqueline Frair
SUNY ESF, Gateway
- 3/31/17 Project Feederwatch
Letchworth State Park
- 4/1/17 Stop the Invasion!
Clark Reservation State Park
- 4/9/17 3rd Annual FORCES Summit
Wells College
- 4/9/17 Spring Fling
Green Lakes State Park
- 4/23/17 YARE Workshop
Onondaga Lake
- 4/29/17 Women in Nature
Camillus Sportsmen's Club
- 5/6/17 I Love My Park Day
- 5/6/17 Montezuma Wildlife Festival

For more information email
Amy.Kochem@parks.ny.gov
or visit www.nysparks.com/events

"I feel like this hands-on experience will help me to be more competitive in a job market, especially when it comes to applying for jobs pertaining to natural resource management."

- Jake Barney

Coordinator's Corner

Amy Kochem, FORCES Program Coordinator

As FORCES continues to make waves in the Finger Lakes and Central Regions, word of the program's success is swelling and other regions would like to get on board. FORCES has reignited its momentum in the Niagara Region with the recent hire of Jillian Harris, the region's FORCES Program Specialist.



FORCES will be out in force again in all our Regions during the 6th annual / Love My Park Day on May 6th. Last year, about 7,500 people volunteered at 110 parks & historic sites throughout the state.

In her short time with FORCES, Jillian has already established and fortified relationships with local institutions and is supervising an Environmental Education Steward. In the Allegany Region, several staff including Biologist Aaron Heminway and Stewardship Specialist Camron Zerbian have integrated the FORCES model into their Resource Management Department. They anticipate bringing on 7-8 collegiate interns this summer of 2017, and plan to title these positions as *FORCES Stewards*.

The Taconic Region continues its expansion at Rockefeller State Park Preserve through the leadership of Park Manager Susan Antenen. She, along with Natural Resource Specialist Steve DiFalco, maintain FORCES partnerships with students, faculty and staff at Pace University, SUNY Purchase and Columbia University. In 2017, the team will expand with the addition of a *Conservation Communicator* and a *Natural Resource Steward*.

Affiliated Institutions

Cazenovia College
Columbia University
Cornell University
Finger Lakes Community College
Hartwick College*
Hobart & William Smith Colleges
Ithaca College
Le Moyne College*
Niagara County Com. College
Niagara University

Onondaga Community College
Pace University
Rochester Institute of Technology
SUNY Binghamton
SUNY Brockport
SUNY Cobleskill
SUNY Cortland
SUNY ESF*
SUNY Geneseo*
SUNY Morrisville
SUNY Oneonta*

SUNY Oswego
SUNY Plattsburgh
SUNY Purchase
St. John Fisher College
Syracuse University
Tompkins Cortland
Community College
University of Rochester
Wells College*

*Denotes active FORCES Clubs

Niagara Region Update

Jillian Harris, FORCES Program Specialist

One late summer afternoon, I was checking on the recently installed monarch butterfly garden at Wilson-Tuscarora State Park. The swamp milkweed had begun to bloom a month earlier and although it had been a dry season, they had grown to somewhere around 3 feet in height. Not too long after I arrived, I saw a monarch with its recognizable orange and black pattern. Then I started noticing other insects; bees, lacewings, wasps, and another type of butterfly species unknown to me. It was amazing to see how something so small, could host so many different species. What was more amazing was being able to witness a monarch lay her eggs under a milkweed leaf.

Since the success of the garden at Wilson-Tuscarora State Park, more plans for gardens have popped up throughout the region, including gardens at Beaver Island State Park and Evangola State Park. Budd Termin, a professor at Niagara County Community College, began this idea of a butterfly garden and has since wanted to make a list, or storyboard, of all the pollinator gardens within the state. There have been many positive responses toward the storyboard and we hope to have a draft done by March.

The goal of these gardens and the storyboard is to increase pollinator population sizes, habitat acreage, and environmental education on the various pollinators, such as the honey bee and the monarch butterfly, that call New York State home.

Look out for Pollinator Week in June to help take care of the many gardens, meadows, and species that utilize them that are found in our parks! Also, feel free to check out the twitter feed @Mission_Monarch to explore how this initiative is growing!

FORCES in the Niagara Region is resuming this year since its initiation in 2015. We are already working with an intern from Niagara County Community College to create environmental story boards, and a possible combined FORCES event between the FORCES club at SUNY Geneseo and Niagara University is being explored. Stay tuned for more to come from Niagara FORCES!

“What I gained from this internship is not only the experience of recognition and management of invasive plants in central New York, but also a broader comprehension of working in touch with nature and different people.” - Haixu Zhao

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#forcesnysparks on Facebook,
Twitter, and Instagram accounts!

To subscribe or unsubscribe to the
newsletter email: forces@parks.ny.gov



Nature study garden at Bear Mountain State Park. Photo credit: OPRHP.

Steward Spotlight

Shannon Fabiani, Environmental Education Steward

This past summer I worked as a FORCES Conservation Steward on the American hart's-tongue fern (AHTF) Conservation Project primarily out of Clark Reservation State Park. My time was split between fieldwork and education and outreach focused projects. In the field, I worked with an awesome FORCES crew managing invasive species that threaten the AHTF. I also helped with a few AHTF transplant censuses to support research efforts to conserve this special fern.

The goal of the education and outreach projects I worked on were to communicate and share with the public various conservation projects going on in NYS Parks and the FORCES program, hopefully inspiring them to become involved! These projects manifested themselves in many different ways. With other FORCES stewards I worked with visiting summer camp groups leading educational programs and coordinating volunteer and outreach events. Working with a range of groups and ages was a super exciting and rewarding experience.

At one outreach event at Chittenango Falls State Park, I ran an interpretive game of "pale swallow-wort tag" for a family reunion at the park that became so intense grandma and grandpa were diving over the finish line to beat the grandkids! I believe that a reason why this family was so engaged in the game is because when giving the introduction to the game, sharing with them the threats of invasive species, I incorporated principles of interpretation. Instead of reciting facts like a verbal textbook, sharing information in a way that makes it relevant to your audience and keeps them actively involved increases the likelihood that they will become and remain engaged in what you are saying. For example, relating wind-dispersal of pale swallow-wort seeds to making a wish blowing on a dandelion is something all generations at the family reunion had experienced.

Through FORCES, I was able to incorporate interpretive principles in person at programs and in creating outreach materials like brochures, tri-folds, and promotional flyers. There are so many amazing and important conservation projects happening with NYS Parks and FORCES that deserve to be shared with the public. I am glad I have been able to help raise awareness for some of them and plan to continue doing so! After my internship this summer, I continued working part-time on creating interpretive



Shannon Fabiani holds a Mildred Faust Trail interpretive panel at Clark Reservation State Park. Shannon designed the project from start to finish working with the environmental education team. OPRHP.

panels for Clark Reservation. Since graduating from SUNY ESF with my MPS in December, I am now working a seasonal Parks position focused on educational and interpretive projects.

FORCES has and continues to provide me with invaluable experiences from meeting exceptional people, to helping me fulfill my Master's degree requirements, to teaching me how to properly hammer (thank you bluebird nest boxes), and leading me to a position post-grad. Thank you FORCES!

For more information about 2016 FORCES Stewards see the *Who's Who* publication on our website.

FORCES

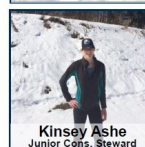
Friends of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship

new york 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.

2016 FORCES STEWARDS: THE FORCE BEHIND FORCES



Levi received his bachelor's degree in outdoor recreation and natural resources management from SUNY Cortland. He is from Oneonta, NY and loves to hunt, fish, hike, and trail run. He hopes to plan meaningful education programs, events, and interpretive hikes through his involvement in the FORCES program.



Kinsey is a Junior Conservation Steward at Ganondagan State Historic Site. She has a passion for environmental conservation and works on projects including the Cultural Garden. Kinsey plans to continue working in conservation at Ganondagan.

Hartwick College

Caitlin Hawley, Club President

Hartwick FORCES had a very successful Fall semester regarding volunteer work with the state parks, as well as on campus activities!



Glimmerglass State Park trail maintenance. Photo credit: FORCES Hartwick College.

Hartwick FORCES club was awarded “Club of the Month” this October for our outstanding work for on and off-campus events. We had several students come out to a variety of trips including the Kaaterskills Waterfall trip, and Glimmerglass invasive species pull of multiflora rose, and pumpkin painting for Bat Week in October. Many students, and even faculty attended our Henderson trail cleanup in Robert V. Riddell State Park and rock climbing event at Pine Lake in September. In the future, we plan to do an invasive species pull at Gilbert Lake, take a trip to Ithaca and hike Buttermilk Falls and Robert Treman State Parks, as well as Greek Life removal hike at Pine Lake, potluck picnic with SUNY Oneonta FORCES, and our annual leaf survey with Oneonta High School students. We continue to expand the program and hope to get students more involved with the local state parks in Oneonta and other areas!



Hartwick College FORCES Club hike the gorge at Kaaterskills State Park. Photo credit: FORCES Hartwick College.

Le Moyne College

Erica Mackey, Club President

We began the fall semester by going to the New York State Fair and helping to build birdhouses and bird feeders with the public. Everyone enjoyed volunteering their time and spending their time at the fair. We also had a group of members go with a biology professor from Le Moyne to a local rehabilitation center to help clean perches and build new ones. Everyone had a lot of fun and enjoyed seeing the birds that were there. We also attended Wicked Woods at Green Lakes State Park. Members enjoyed helping out with mini golf, crafts, handing out candy, and helping with the bounce houses. We also had our first club camping trip to Letchworth State Park for two days. Members enjoyed the views of the park, and we also helped collect native seeds. We hope to make the camping trip an annual event in the future. We are looking forward to growing our membership in the spring and having more events in the state parks and on campus!



Le Moyne College FORCES Club helps collect native seeds at Letchworth State Park and enjoys the many hiking trails the state park has to offer. Photo credit: FORCES Le Moyne College.

“There was never a day that I didn’t learn new information. The amount of information and skills I acquired from this internship are invaluable. I have a much improved education of the overall health of this region, as well as a detailed knowledge base of countless key plants, animals, and field skills.” - Alexis Pike

SUNY Geneseo

Ryan Colling, Club President



SUNY Geneseo FORCES Club works to remove invasive species *Vinca* from Wolf Creek at Letchworth State Park. Photo credit: FORCES SUNY Geneseo.

The fall semester was a big success at SUNY Geneseo. We had a total of 88 people participate in at least one event, for a total of 637 volunteer hours and 775 recreation hours. We put on a diversity of volunteer, recreational, and educational events throughout the semester. Our main volunteering focus was on an ongoing ecological restoration of the Wolf Creek area at Letchworth State Park. We did four events at wolf creek in which we removed *Vinca* from the stream bank and planted native replacements, such as bloodroot. We continued our meaningful relationship with *The Bridge*, an after school program for underprivileged kids.

We took the kids on a hike at Letchworth, to an educational



program at the new nature center, and made s'mores with them. Some of our other volunteer events included a stone wall restoration at Stony Brook, invasive species removal at Seneca Lake, and a cleanup of the trout pond at Letchworth. In addition to the volunteer events, we had an environmental career advancement lecture, continued with the tradition of our camping trip at Letchworth, hosted potlucks, and organized hiking trips.



Photo credit: FORCES SUNY Geneseo.

SUNY ESF

Samantha Hollister, Club President



SUNY ESF FORCES Club monitors for hemlock woolly adelgid and hikes the trails at Clark Reservation State Park. Photo credit FORCES SUNY ESF.

The highlight of our semester was a weekend camping trip at Green Lakes State Park in September.

Along with roasting hot dogs on the fire, we collected native milkweed and dogwood seeds for planting at Ganondagan State Historic Site.



Some ESF FORCES members took advantage of an opportunity through the Izaak Walton League of America to become "Creek Freaks" certified to teach students about stream macroinvertebrate ID, water quality, and hydrology, among other topics. We also partnered with the Cornell Cooperative Extension to learn how to conduct Hemlock Woolly Adelgid surveys. Thank you Jessi Lyons for taking time to work with us.

We are looking forward to putting our new skills to use this coming spring semester. We already have many events in the works, and we are looking forward to another great semester to come!

Hello FORCES Friends!

ESF FORCES had an exciting fall semester, in spite of our crazy busy schedules. We welcomed many new members this semester, and quickly got involved with volunteering and attending FORCES events.

Faculty Spotlight: Jaclyn Schnurr

Professor of Biology and Environmental Science, Wells College

New York State Parks have always been important to me. Some of my earliest memories are from the NYS Parks found on Long Island, where I grew up. As a child my family would picnic at Robert Moses State Park or hike at Heckscher State Park. This love of NYS parks has been consistent throughout my life, and



Dr. Jaclyn Schnurr
Wells College

helped me to become a Plant Ecologist, which ultimately led to my position as a Professor of Biology and Environmental Science at Wells College, located on the shores of Cayuga Lake in Aurora, NY.

Wells College is located within an hour's drive of many of the State Parks in the Finger Lakes Region, including Fillmore Glen, Long Point, and Buttermilk Falls, among others. This proximity to State Parks made Wells a logical choice to house a FORCES club, and with the help of Heather Hiltbrand '16, a student club was approved by Wells in 2013. That year the Wells College FORCES Club won an award for the best new student club, and since that time FORCES has been a popular club on campus – this year we have about 20 student members (out of about 600 total students).

The FORCES club has been extremely active in the past several years. Last semester alone the club volunteered at the New York State Fair helping people build bluebird houses, performed invasive species removals both on campus and at Fillmore Glen, raked leaves at Long Point State Park, and helped with trail maintenance on campus. In the past the club has performed maintenance tasks at the local parks, helped with research projects at Buttermilk Falls and Robert Treman parks in Ithaca, and participated in *I Love My Park* days throughout the Finger Lakes Region.

The Wells College FORCES club allows our students to get involved in the local community while allowing them to learn new skills that will be useful to their future. At Wells, students are required to do two experiential learning opportunities to graduate, and involvement in the FORCES club allows our students to become familiar with internship and post-graduate

opportunities that are available at NYS Parks. Participation in the FORCES club is a valuable aspect of our students' environmental education, and will benefit them now and for the future. The future of our public lands depends on the education of our youth, and the FORCES club is an invaluable experience to allow students to appreciate the amazing complexity of the natural world first-hand.



The Wells College FORCES Club poses for a group picture at the 2016 FORCES Gathering at Chenango Valley State Park. Photo credit: FORCES Wells College.

"This experience has reinforced my interest in pursuing a career in environmental education and to work on honing my skills in order to become a more effective educator." - Wendy Burgess



SAVE-THE-DATE: 4/9/2017

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

FORCES
Friends of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship

A full day of networking, discussions, strategic planning, food and fun! Open to FORCES Club officers, future FORCES Club officers, and FORCES Ambassadors.
Location: Wells College, Aurora, NY

The Force Behind FORCES Picture Page



Left: Augmenting American hart's-tongue fern populations at Clark Reservation State Park. Above: Tanner Slutzky and Becky Sibner identify animal skulls and skins with students at Environmental Field Days at Green Lakes State Park.

Above: SUNY Morrisville removes woody invasive species at Lorenzo State Historic Site. Right: Stewards forage for Joe-pye weed leaves to feed hungry Chittenango ovate amber snails.



Above: Paule Merkle and Jake Barney test water samples. Left: Patricia Shulenburg helps build a blue bird nest box trail at Herkimer Home with Girl Scout Troop 20354 to complete their bronze project.



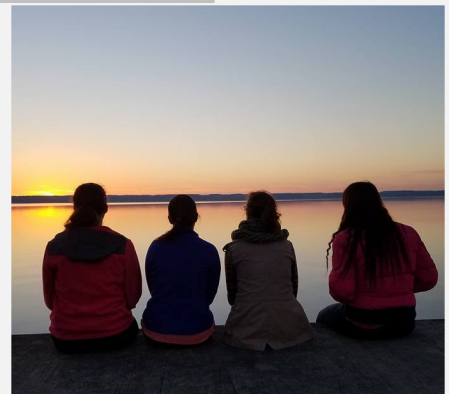
Photo credits:
FORCES
NYS OPRHP



Above: Kathryn Meyer is interviewed about native seed collection at Green Lakes State Park.



Above: Emily Verbeck collects macroinvertebrates at the Creek Freaks workshop held at SUNY Morrisville. Left: Hartwick College FORCES Club paints pumpkins at Glimmerglass State Park.



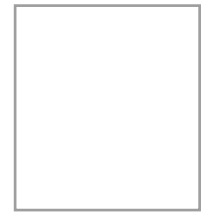
Above: Wells College takes in a sunset at Long Point State Park.



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

FORCES

Friends of Recreation, Conservation
and Environmental Stewardship



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FORCES Newsletter
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2nd Annual FORCES Gathering Chenango Valley State Park. Photo Credit: FORCES OPRHP

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