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

### DEC, What I See

Tom Hughes, NRS Biologist  
Central Region FORCES Program Manager



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

## FORCES

Friends of Recreation, Conservation  
and Environmental Stewardship



### We're Bringing Selfies Back!

One of the things we love about our FORCES program is when we can capture all of the fun and exciting projects, programs and events through our photos and yours! So, please share with us— see another reminder (and fun photo selfie) on Page 2.

Pictured above with me — NYS DEC Reynolds Game Farm Manager Evan Wills and our legendary FORCES program partner and Parks Commission member John Marsellus. Pictured below with me— SUNY ESF FORCES Club Officers—you will see them again on Page 8 in our FORCES club updates!

In our Spring 2022 FORCES Newsletter, we introduced you all to our collaborative efforts with the NYS DEC to create FORCES Steward opportunities within the agency. We are excited to report that, in addition to our partnership with Richard E. Reynolds Game Farm (Page 4), we now have FORCES Stewards working within NYS DEC Region 7. For more details about this pilot program within the DEC, check out Amy's "Coordinator's Corner" (Page 3). We are just getting started, but we have already had FORCES Stewards that have completed internships for both our agencies—congrats to SUNY ESF students Shawna Mulvihill and Gillian Smith! So, if you are seeking FORCES opportunities with either NYS Parks, NYS DEC or both, please reach out to Amy! Of course, we always have so much going on within our NYS Parks Regions, and this edition of our newsletter is packed full of past, present and future initiatives! Our 2022 *Who's Who* is just about to hit our website, but in the meantime you can check out our names listing of 2022 FORCES Stewards on Page 14.

FORCES Stewards, projects, programs and progress would not be possible without all the amazing people on our Team. It is with great "bittersweetness" (as Ally says) that we announce Allie Tillman will be moving on to another chapter of her professional and personal journey (see her story on Page 2). We will really miss you Allie, best of luck to you!



## A Farewell to FORCES.....

Allie Tillman, Park Ranger 2, Niagara Region (former FORCES Program Specialist, Niagara Region)



If you've ever attended one of my Professional Development talks, whether it be in the form of casual conversation or at a formal training event, you've heard me preach about all the different ways we can constantly be improving ourselves within our careers. That, no matter the stage we are at, we should always seek and be open to opportunities for growth and development. Constantly talking about how taking these big steps and embracing change is scary, bittersweet, intimidating, and exciting all at once. And I always ask, what's the worst thing that happens? You get lucky enough to have to decide between the comfort you know and the endless possibilities waiting for you?

I recently had to take my own advice and ask myself all the questions and prompts I often find myself coaching others through. Over the course of the holiday season, I chose to embrace a new opportunity and accepted the Park Ranger 2 position for the Niagara Region. And as I said before, these choices almost always have a bittersweetness to them, with this one being no exception. While I am so excited to begin this new chapter and have been chosen to develop our regional Park Ranger Program further, it does mean I will be parting ways with the FORCES Program that I know and love.

Coordinating FORCES in the Niagara Region for the past four years has been a highlight of my career. Thinking about all the great projects, programs, and people I have encountered in this role will forever bring a smile to my face. This program is one in a million and I am so happy to have played a part in it for as long as I have. The passion behind FORCES is unmatched, and I am eager to bring this approach with me to the Park Ranger program. So farewell FORCES- thank you for all the experiences, memories, and for being such an important part of my professional journey.

Stay tuned for more Niagara FORCES updates in the next newsletter!

For more information about our 2022 FORCES Stewards, see the FORCES *Who's Who* publication coming soon to our webpage!

# 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.

### 2022 FORCES STEWARDS: THE FORCE BEHIND FORCES



**Delia Ablard**  
Pollinator Garden Steward

Delia majors in Environmental Studies at Ithaca College. She is from Ithaca, NY and has fun swimming, paddle boarding, water coloring, cooking, and surfing. She enjoys working with kids, whether at swim lessons or summer camp, and she loves to be outdoors! Delia's personal goals are learning to play the piano and to complete a triathlon. Professionally, she'd like to work with kids and to master plant identification.



**Ana Maria Arroyo**  
Conservation Steward

While attending Ithaca College, Ana Maria majors in Environmental Studies. She grew up locally in Ithaca, NY and loves everything about wildlife! She enjoys wildlife tracking and taking long hikes with her dog, especially when they can discover new trails around Ithaca. When Ana Maria is not working in the woods, she de-stresses by painting, sewing or practicing guitar. She would like to pursue a career in wildlife conservation and environmental education and plans to continue her training in wildlife tracking. Julia would also like to learn more about using technology in wildlife studies and is especially interested in mustelids, particularly the fisher.



### Send us your Selfies!

We are always looking for great pics for our FORCES photo album. We know you are out there working hard, having fun, and taking some amazing shots of our beautiful State Parks. Please share them with us. It is through your collective lens that we see all of us together as a FORCES family.

## Coordinator's Corner

Amy Kochem, FORCES Program Coordinator

Our 7th Annual FORCES Membership Gathering was held on October 2, at Niagara Falls State Park. Students were treated to a morning tour of the Niagara Gorge lead by State Park Educator, Matt Nusstein. After lunch, we chose a comfortable spot to sit in the sun along the Niagara River as Josh Teeter concluded the event with a relaxing Restorative Nature workshop. It was a fun day celebrating our Stewards and their many accomplishments!

The pilot DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) FORCES program has taken off! This fall, Region 7 DEC staff hosted 7 Stewards in Fisheries Access, Ecosystems Health, and Public Land Steward positions. That makes a total of 10 DEC FORCES Stewards since last summer. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the DEC as they continue to host FORCES Stewards and provide a wide variety of project opportunities for students!

FORCES is gearing up for a busy spring season. We'll be hosting our 8th Annual FORCES Summit in April at the Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, stay tuned for more details!



FORCES Stewards and Staff at the 7th Annual FORCES Membership Gathering at Niagara Falls State Park. Photo: OPRHP

### Contact Us

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### Find us on Social Media

FORCES NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Use #forcesnys on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram accounts!



To subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter email: [forces@parks.ny.gov](mailto:forces@parks.ny.gov)

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University of Connecticut  
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University of Vermont  
Vassar College  
Wells College\*  
**\*Denotes active FORCES Clubs**

Honeoye/Middle High School  
Liverpool High School  
Orleans/Niagara BOCES  
Ossining High School  
Pittsford Mendon High School  
Pittsford Sutherland High School  
Sandy Creek High School  
Scarsdale High School

## Featured Project: FORCES and NYS DEC Pheasant Release

Carlin Wakefield, FORCES Program Specialist, Finger Lakes Region



Partner, John Marsellus, with FORCES Stewards and NYS Parks Staff at Reynold's Game Farm on day one of the event. Photo: OPRHP

On October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2022, NYS Parks FORCES and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) teamed up for a great event that brought together staff and Stewards from both agencies for a pheasant release. This event was an idea proposed by FORCES Program partner and NYS Parks Central Region Commission Member, John Marsellus, who was inspired after reading about the DEC Richard E. Reynolds Game Farm in last spring's newsletter issue. Reynolds Game Farm is responsible for rearing and releasing over 30,000 adult pheasants each year on public lands and is a site that provides internship opportunities for FORCES Stewards throughout the year.

The event began in Ithaca, NY with a tour of the 166-acre game farm facility. FORCES Stewards and staff from around the state gathered around farm manager, Evan Wills, and assistant manager, Aaron Swartwood, who guided the group on a tour of the facility. They educated participants about the function and operations of pheasant production, as well as about the rich history of the Pheasant Propagation Program at the 96-year old game farm. Participants then assisted in a pheasant round-up, guiding the birds into catch pens and skillfully scooping them up by hand. The birds were then transferred into large rectangular boxes in preparation for release. Day one ended with a celebratory luncheon where Stewards, staff, and partners networked, shared stories, and dined together. Honorary Pheasants Forever mugs were given to all those who participated as a token of the special event.

Day two began in Savannah, NY at the DEC Northern Montezuma (NoMo) Field Office where participants were given an introductory talk by Wildlife Technician, Frank Morlock, and Biologist, Christina Hoh. This office is situated within the Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area, located just north of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Together these properties which are managed by the NYS DEC, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and partner organizations, make up the 50,000 acre Montezuma Wetlands Complex (MWC). The MWC lies within one of the busiest bird migration corridors on the Atlantic Flyway and is an important bird conservation area for NYS. This site is stocked with pheasants annually as it provides excellent habitat and public access. Students and staff drove throughout the NoMo property releasing approximately 190 birds over several different locations. Stewards all took great joy seeing the birds fly away after working hard to round them up the day prior. After releasing most of the birds around NoMo, Stewards headed up to DEC's Lakeshore Marshes Wildlife Management Area in Wolcott, NY to release the rest of the collected pheasants.

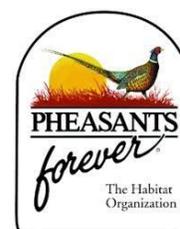


Staff and Stewards at the Northern Montezuma Field Office in Savannah, NY. Photo: OPRHP



NYS Parks staff members Christina Morrow and Kelly Punch releasing a box of Pheasants at the MWC. Photo: OPRHP

After two days filled with learning and fun, Stewards went home having participated in a unique and meaningful conservation opportunity. Thank you to our staff, partners, and sponsors who made this event possible. We look forward to hopefully continuing this event in years to come.



## Steward Spotlight: Mattix Lufrano

Conservation Steward, Finger Lakes Region



My name is Mattix Lufrano and I am a senior at Ithaca College studying Environmental Science. I was connected with FORCES during Spring 2022 in one of my classes where we did benthic macro invertebrate creek surveys and hemlock woolley adelgid surveys at Buttermilk Falls State Park. This type of work is directly in line with my interests so I was eager to reach out to my now internship coordinator, Carlin Wakefield, to discuss what else FORCES could offer me. Everything we talked about was interesting to me! I wanted to gain as much experience as possible, so FORCES was the perfect fit for me. Nearly every day we did something different, which I loved. I got to see so many new parks in the area and meet many new people.

Every day I was learning something new, and I found that so valuable. I learned many practical skills that are beneficial for this field that I probably would have never learned in a classroom—some skills including networking and surveying (BMI, raptor, salamander, spotted lantern fly, native plants, trees, and invasive species). I loved being able to go all over the region to see parks I have never been to and become more familiar with them. Going into this position, I wanted to gain knowledge about what it is like to work for a state agency and if it was a career path that appealed to me. I also learned about many partner organizations and networked with people who work in the Finger Lakes Region as well as other regions. One of my favorite days was when we went to Mexico Point for the “Day in the Life of Lake Ontario” event hosted by New York State Sea Grant and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Carlin, fellow Conservation Steward, Jordan Weiss, and I camped there the night before the event, which was so fun! It was my first time ever camping and it was such an amazing experience. I am continuing my work with FORCES this spring, as well as interning with the FORCES DEC as a Fisheries Access Steward. I am very thankful for the FORCES program in aiding me in my career development and I am so excited to continue this work next semester!

## FORCES Roots Alumni Network: Kelly Punch

NYS Parks Corps, Student Conservation Association, FORCES Program Specialist



As a team, we are excited to announce the creation of the *FORCES Roots Alumni Network*! The FORCES Roots Alumni Network mission is multifold: preserve the legacy and connections of FORCES Alumni; connect past, present, and future FORCES Stewards; and provide professional development opportunities for those who share a passion for our New York State Parks—and the environment as a whole.

This LinkedIn group was created with the FORCES Family in mind. When we think of roots, we think of where we want to call home or the things that keep us stable. Our roots as an organization are our invaluable Stewards, supporters, and teams! Every hour of work gone into introducing others to environmental stewardship and action is just one piece of a puzzle that forms the beautiful, picturesque New York State Parks being cared for and loved by all. And the Stewards that go on to work in other agencies out of state (or out of the country!) carry their love and passion for environmental stewardship with them everywhere they go. Current and prospective Stewards recognize this passion, and when they can see themselves also working in New York and sharing their own passion for environmental stewardship, FORCES grows stronger.

We want the Roots Network to amplify the passions of our Stewards, share FORCES Family stories, and help each other grow personally and professionally in the field we care so much about. If you are interested, we encourage you to join the FORCES Roots Alumni Network group on LinkedIn and connect with fellow Stewards there. Share job opportunities, highlights from your current positions, and relevant events amongst good friends. Finally, thank you for finding a family in FORCES and laying down Roots with us!

## Finger Lakes Update

Carlin Wakefield, FORCES Program Specialist, Finger Lakes Region

The FORCES program stayed busy in the Finger Lakes Region this fall with two new Conservation Stewards from Ithaca College. Senior, Mattix Lufrano, volunteered with us Tuesday and Fridays, and junior, Jordan Weiss, worked with us Monday through Friday as an academic internship. Our three Student Conservation Association (SCA) Education Stewards, Hannah Smith, Zachary Young, and Nicholas Bachand continued their work assisting the FORCES Program this fall with projects and events.



FORCES and SCA Stewards assisting Plant Materials Program Staff with up-potting in the greenhouses at Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park. Photo: OPRHP

Stewards assisted with water quality assessments including testing of chemical water parameters at the 'Three Gorges' parks, Taughannock Falls, Robert H. Treman, and Buttermilk Falls State Parks. In addition to chemical water tests, Stewards conducted water quality analysis through benthic macroinvertebrate surveys using the Izaak Walton League protocol. Surveys were conducted at Stony Brook, Fillmore Glen, Watkins Glen, and Taughannock Falls State Parks. Comparable good quality water status was found at each of these parks leading to a better understanding of the health and biodiversity of our Finger Lakes streams. Additionally, Stewards conducted monitoring of our cover boards for Eastern red-backed salamanders, assisted with hemlock wooly adelgid phenology surveys, monitored spotted lanternfly (SLF) traps, and assisted with trail camera surveys.

Our Stewards worked hard at the Taughannock Falls Overlook pollinator gardens assisting Horticulture Technician, Max McCune. Many hours were spent assisting with planting, weeding, transplanting, collecting seeds, and prepping the garden for the winter. Stewards assisted the Finger Lakes Environmental Field Team (EFT) this fall with native planting and seeding at Chimney Bluffs State Park, as well as assisting with up-potting native wildflowers for the Plant Materials Program in the greenhouses at Sonnenberg Gardens State Park. In addition, FORCES and SCA Stewards assisted with the prescribed burn at Ganondagan State Historic Site by closing trails and helping direct traffic away from closed areas.



Conservation Steward, Mattix Lufrano, posing next to the prescribed burn at Ganondagan State Historic Site. Photo: OPRHP



Students from Mexico Middle School participate in "A Day in The Life of Lake Ontario" at Mexico Point Park, assisted by FORCES Stewards Jordan Weiss and Mattix Lufrano. Photo: OPRHP

Their help was much needed and appreciated as this year was the biggest prescribed burn yet, with approximately 130 acres of dried thatch and brush cleared. The ecological practice of burning has been used by Seneca people for generations and will help promote native grasses and provide habitat for birds and small mammals at Ganondagan in the years to come.

Notable FORCES events that Stewards participated in this fall included a collaboration with Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) after school program where students learned about local fish biology, our FORCES Pheasant release event (see article on Page 4) and "A Day in The Life" of Lake Ontario, a large partner collaboration led by SeaGrant and NYS

Department of Environmental Conservation. This event brought students together across the state along the shores of Lake Ontario in an effort to learn about lake hydrology and ecology (Continued on page 7).

## Finger Lakes Update (Cont'd)

Carlin Wakefield, FORCES Program Specialist, Finger Lakes Region



SUNY Cortland Conservation Biology students on the way to conduct a hemlock survey near the dam at Fillmore Glen State Park. Photo: OPRHP

Finger Lakes Stewards manned stations at the Mexico Point and Hamlin Beach State Park locations and taught hundreds of students about water temperature, turbidity, flow, chemical monitoring and biomonitoring. FORCES also had the opportunity to work with student groups from SUNY Cortland and Cornell University. Cornell Tradition Fellows came out for an invasive species removal at Taughannock Falls State Park, and SUNY Cortland Conservation Biology students assisted with a hemlock wooly adelgid survey at Fillmore Glen State Park.

Lastly, we would like to thank our 2022 SCA Education Stewards, Hannah, Zach and Nick for a great year and for their endless help and dedication assisting the FORCES Program. We will deeply miss you all and can't wait to see what comes next. Thanks to our Stewards, staff, and partners as always for helping make this program the family that it is! Happy New Year- we look forward to what 2023 brings!



Saturday, May 6th is *I Love My Park Day*  
Register to give your park some love at  
<https://www.ptny.org/events/i-love-my-park-day>

**SAVE-THE-DATE: 4/16/2023**  
**8th Annual FORCES Leadership Summit**  
**Museum of the Earth, Ithaca, NY**



New York State  
Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation

A full day of networking,  
discussions, food, and fun!  
Open to FORCES Club officers,  
future FORCES Club officers, and  
FORCES Stewards.

*"This experience will benefit my future professional opportunities because it gave me a lot of really good experiences with working in the field and learning other techniques. It also was an amazing opportunity to network with people inside the agencies and make some connections that might really help me in the future when I want to get a job with that particular agency."*

Gillian Smith, Regional Wildlife Steward, SUNY ESF

## SUNY ESF

Gillian Smith, Club President



Throughout the fall semester of 2022, ESF FORCES focused on spreading knowledge about internships and volunteering at various locations with the NYS PARKS and NYS DEC, as well as providing opportunities for members to interact and learn from various professionals. We

had a few guest speakers come in and talk about different topics. Alex Brown, NYS OPRHP Stewardship Specialist, came in and talked about her work experience and some tips for getting into State Agencies, while also promoting FORCES opportunities.

Our members helped with the Reynolds Game Farm loading and releasing of pheasants around the Syracuse area. Michael Chappell talked about his experience as a NYS Forest Ranger including what his duties are. He also promoted education classes and opportunities to enter that field.

We went to Green Lakes State Park and pruned the trees around the perimeter of the lake to improve viewing spots and maintain overgrowth on the trails.

Lastly Carlin Wakefield ended off the semester with a wonderful presentation of wildlife tracking and camera trap surveys.



SUNY ESF FORCES Club member assisting with the FORCES DEC Pheasant Release. Photo: SUNY ESF



SUNY ESF FORCES Club Officers, left to right: August Tsutsumishita, Alexis La Fever, Layla Blask, and Gillian Smith. Photo: SUNY ESF

## Hartwick College

Margarita Chistiakova, Club President



Hartwick's FORCES club has been working on building new memberships and organizing team-building activities. In the Fall of 2022, the club held a few major events and regular biweekly meetings.



Hartwick FORCES Club members at Mud Lake in Robert V. Riddell State Park. Photo: Hartwick College

The club started out the semester in September with a hike to Mud Lake in the Robert V. Riddell State Park, which gave us an opportunity to learn about trees, mushrooms, local geology, and the lake itself.



FORCES Club members with 20 bags of trash collected on campus. Photo: Hartwick College

We organized a campus clean-up event in October. During our biweekly meetings, in addition to movie nights, and trivia, the club organized a pumpkin and leaf painting for Halloween, and made ornaments for the holidays. Club members joined Parks for an HWA survey at RV Riddell in December. We are looking forward to more involvement at the local State Parks!



## Le Moyne College, Kaylyn Weits, Club President

Le Moyne FORCES will ramp up participation in both service and environmental education this semester. On April 15th, FORCES will participate in DIVE Day (Dolphins in Volunteer Efforts). We plan to send members to State Parks to participate in stewardship projects. We will also do a campus woods cleanup for Earth Week.

## Central Region Update

Delaney Kalsman, COAS Project Coordinator; Alex Brown, Stewardship Specialist; Mike Serviss, Regional Conservation Project Coordinator; Jordyn Dala, Piping Plover Project Crew Leader



Saturday of Service – SUNY ESF students lined up on the gorge trail bridge. 30 freshmen helped pick up litter throughout the park. Photo: OPRHP

With the field season winding down the Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail (COAS) Project focused on continual removals of European buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). During the fall season, the COAS Team removed 200 buckthorn stems. Removing buckthorn is essential to free habitat space for recruitment of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) which are important food species for COAS. Additionally, we continue to remove buckthorn from the area, which was once Chittenango Falls State Park's campground, now referred to as the old campground area.

We are hopefully in the next year or two, to create a propagation garden in the area, that will contain all necessary tree species to properly feed the snails currently being raised at SUNY ESF's lab. Currently, leaves are hand collected in a handful of locations, and sorted by species and decomposition stage. The best leaf collection occurs in early spring, after the leaf litter has sat under snowpack for several months. Having multiple species (including, black cherry, sugar maple, American pawpaw, hickory, and ash) will reduce the

time spent collecting leaves. Additionally, during the fall season the COAS project planted 75 saplings of native American bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*) in the old campground. The bladdernut saplings were planted in three locations in the area, where buckthorn had previously been removed. This was done in an effort to help reduce erosion long term.

The start of fall and SUNY ESF fall semester, means the annual Saturday of Service. This year, 30 freshmen students from SUNY ESF participated in a hike around Chittenango Falls State Park. During this hike, students collected 10 gallons of litter from around the park. Students also spent time learning basic identification of native flora in the area. This is the third consecutive year that ESF freshmen have helped out at Saturday of Service in Chittenango Falls State Park.

~Delaney

### Sentinel Red Oak Project @ Green Lakes State Park (GLSP)

EFT staff and Stewards carried out sentinel oak surveys in GLSP through October 1<sup>st</sup>. The sentinel oak plots at GLSP were implemented in May, 2022. EFT staff and Stewards transplanted 120 red oak seedlings in GLSP, as a part of the GLSP Deer Management Plan monitoring program. Seedlings were planted in 6 different plots, distributed between 3 locations in the park. For each location there are two - 15m X 15m plots, one plot enclosed with 8ft deer fencing as the control, and one plot left open as the variable.

During the 2022 growing season, the closed plots grew on average 1 inch taller than the open plots. Rodent browse occurrences were the same in both open and closed plots with a total of 31 browse incidences recorded in both across the board. Only open plots were affected by deer browse, with a total of 22 incidences recorded across all open plots. There were 0 observations of deer browse made in all closed plots.

Due to card errors with the trail cameras being used on the project, we were not able to collect a quantifiable number of deer captured within each open plot. From the images we were successful in capturing, only does and fawns were seen within the plots.

Currently there is no hunting permitted to the general public within the main park boundary of GLSP, but deer culls in participation with the Village of Fayetteville's Deer Management Plan are still taking place within the park each winter. In years to come, expanding additional plots into eastern Green Lakes would allow us to further examine deer impacts in areas with different management approaches (Continued on page 10).

## Central Region Update (cont'd)

Delaney Kalsman, COAS Project Coordinator; Alex Brown, Stewardship Specialist; Mike Serviss, Regional Conservation Project Coordinator; Jordyn Dala, Piping Plover Project Crew Leader

Expanding transplanted vegetation diversity within the plots will also create the opportunity to observe the differences in browse across other species.

### **Salamander Coverboard Monitoring @ Selkirk Shores and Riddell State Parks**



Red-backed salamander and yellow spotted salamander found side by side in the untreated plot at Selkirk Shores State Park. Photo: OPRHP

Central EFT staff continued salamander coverboard surveys at both Selkirk Shores and Robert V. Riddell State Parks through mid-November. This project was implemented in the Central Region in the spring of 2022, as an effort to monitor potential non-target effects of pesticide use on eastern red-backed salamanders. Selkirk Shores and Robert V. Riddell State Parks were chosen because both parks have been chemically treated for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). Coverboards were placed in both treated and nontreated areas within each park.

Overall, untreated plots in both parks yielded a higher abundance of salamanders and worms. At the Selkirk coverboard location the untreated plot had a considerably more amount of yellow spotted salamanders and worms than in the treated plot. This could have been due to more saturated soil conditions in the untreated plot. Long term monitoring of species

like the eastern red-backed salamander can help identify changes to an ecosystems health and provide insight to how our management techniques influence other natural communities. Therefore, it is urged that these surveys continue each year. Expanding the number of coverboard plots within both Riddell and Selkirk or into other parks being chemically treated is encouraged.

### **Deer Check Station @ Green Lakes State Park (GLSP)**

This fall Central EFT staff and Stewards collaborated with Region 7 NYSDEC along with coordinating with parks staff, to open a deer check and weigh station at Green Lakes State Park. The deer check station was implemented in GLSP as an effort to get an idea of the number of deer being harvested by hunters from GLSP, to assess overall health and wellbeing of the deer harvested, provide Parks staff with the opportunity to get to know the hunters that are utilizing the hunting area, as well as support the NYSDEC in their annual deer harvest data collection. Courtney LaMere, Wildlife Biologist with R7 NYSDEC trained deer check staff and Stewards on how to correctly age deer by categorizing them by young of year and adults and also how to correctly complete the NYSDEC deer check slip. The deer check and weigh station was open to all hunters on weekends from October 15<sup>th</sup> – November 19<sup>th</sup>.

Unfortunately, no hunters utilized the check station, but the Steward's efforts did not go undetected. There were many inquiries from non-hunting park patrons that were interested in learning more about the project and provided Stewards with a great opportunity to educate patrons about the deer management efforts in GLSP. We were also able to connect our Stewards with R7 NYSDEC wildlife staff, which allowed for the Stewards to get hands on experience checking deer at local processing shops with them. The experience and relationships gained throughout this project can provide Stewards with a steppingstone to their next professional adventure.

~Alex

*"I was able to gain a good experience that I will be able to use for future jobs. That would include learning how to communicate with the general public, learning the regulations the DEC enforce, and also learning how a fish hatchery runs."*

Stesha Grossman, DEC Fisheries Access Steward, SUNY ESF

## Central Region Update (cont'd)

Delaney Kalsman, COAS Project Coordinator; Alex Brown, Stewardship Specialist;  
Mike Serviss, Regional Conservation Project Coordinator; Jordyn Dala, Piping Plover Project Crew Leader



Grace Sinsebox (left) and Steph Minarik (right) winterize AHTF raised beds at Sonnenberg Gardens.  
Photo: OPRHP

We made a lot of preparations and took some big steps forward on our American hart's-tongue fern (AHTF) conservation and hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) management projects this fall.

Ferns first! We welcomed Asmamaw Damtie to our team in October as a Greenhouse Technician working on AHTF propagation with the Plant Materials Program at Sonnenberg Gardens. Asmamaw brings an enormous amount of plant propagation experience to the project and hit the ground running as we prepared our AHTF for the winter season by mulching our raised beds.

Our AHTF Field Crew Leader, Stephanie Minarik, helped me transplant native shrubs in invasive species management areas near AHTF populations in the fall as well. We said goodbye and good luck to Stephanie in November after two successful seasons leading our field

team. Her ambition and cheery personality will be missed!

Switching gears to our HWA management projects- we had some big "firsts" this past fall. We partnered with the New York State Hemlock Initiative at Cornell University to perform our first two HWA biocontrol releases in the Central Region in October! About 1,000 predator beetles (*Laricobius osakensis*) were released at Robert V. Riddell State Park and about 2,000 beetles (*Laricobius nigrinus*) were released at Mexico Point State Park. Media coverage of the Mexico Point release can be found here: [7 News](#), [Spectrum News 1](#). Additionally, we coordinated basal bark applications to protect nearly 200 trees (3,230 DBH inches) at Clark Reservation and Chenango Valley State Parks.

~Mike



Staff from Parks, NYS Hemlock Initiative, SLELO PRISM, and Oswego County SWCD gather for the HWA biocontrol release at Mexico Point.  
Photo: OPRHP

This fall, our Piping Plover Project Team cleaned up the beach one last time and removed all of NYS Parks fencing and equipment from the Protecting Bird Nesting Area (PBNA). We hosted several students from Jefferson County Community College for a field trip to the PBNA where they learned about piping plovers and the type of work that we do, including how to use our spotting and monitoring equipment. The students also participated in an activity where we posted illustrations/photos of piping plovers on trees near the parking lot, and they had to identify the unique band combinations in the field like we do on the beach for the actual birds we observe.

Our Piping Plover Project Team also assisted in multiple bird, raptor, and owl surveys at Green Lakes State Park this fall. Of course, once our field work ended for the season, we worked on all our data summaries, observation record keeping, equipment maintenance and annual reporting.

~Jordyn

## Alumni Spotlight: Jake Handerhan

Mt. Van Hoevenberg Olympic Site, Outdoor Recreation & Education Staff Member



**Q: Jake, please tell us about yourself.**

A: Hello! My name is Jake Handerhan, and I am a Fall '21 FORCES alum. I graduated with a degree in Environmental Studies from the University at Buffalo. I'm someone who is always up for an adventure and found myself seeking a career path that matched those interests. Upon graduation, I accepted an offer to move to Lake Placid, NY and work at the Mt. Van Hoevenberg Olympic Site as part of the Outdoor Recreation & Education staff and have been working there since.

**Q: What are your work duties in your current position? Have you been able to learn any new skills or work in a unique situation?**

A: I have been fortunate to work for the same employer since moving but have worked on a wide range of tasks and jobs. My main responsibility is being the Foreman of Mt. Van Hoevenberg's Experience Staff. Those direct duties include running & route setting the climbing wall, teaching climbing lessons, waxing skis & teaching ski lessons, maintaining mountain bikes & teaching mountain biking lessons. I also work with a wide range of groups and unique events- from educating local school groups about biathlons & hiking trails,

all the way to staffing world class events like the World University Games and World Cup Ski Jumping. I am lucky to be in a rather rare position that allows me to dabble in a lot of moving parts within the organization, while gaining new skills & certifications along the way.

**Q: Are there any takeaways from your time in FORCES that you have carried with you into your career?**

A: FORCES was very influential on the job I have now. My internship provided me with a front row seat to people working in a professional setting that took place largely outside, where they were working with their hands as well as applying technical skills. Before that, my only outdoor work experience was in a summer camp setting, so it was great to see other hands-on options as well. Tasks such as invasive species mapping and trail maintenance were so much fun and fulfilling, and I kept thinking to myself "This is a job? This is a type of job I could have?"

**Q: Seasonal work-based careers can often be intimidating to commit to. Have you ever felt the pressures of this type of work and if so, how have you dealt with them?**

A: I have not, I am very lucky that my post-grad career began at an organization with programming year-round. I do have many friends that go back and forth with seasonal jobs, and it seems that building those connections in the outdoor community is a sure-fire way to always have another opportunity waiting. A lot of people in my area tend to have 2 seasonal jobs, one in the Summer/Fall seasons & another in Winter/Spring; and they stay with these companies for many years on this rotation. This helps them build a dependable relationship with their employers and creates job security in a non-permanent capacity.

**Q: What is your favorite part of this career style you have selected? Are there any downsides that people considering these types of jobs should be prepared for?**

A: My favorite part is the access it provides. I get to spend my days teaching people the sports and activities I love, and then just continue to adventure doing the same things once work is over! I am so lucky to get paid to do the things I love (Continued on page 13)!

## Alumni Spotlight: Jake Handerhan (cont'd)

Mt. Van Hoevenberg Olympic Site, Outdoor Recreation & Education Staff Member

Something I don't think people realize about working at Recreation Facilities/Events is that there are sometimes week-long events, with an average day being ~12 hours long- and you must be available and working during that time. But there are also seasons where we are less busy, giving us the chance to have more free time. All seasonal jobs have these ebbs & flows in their schedules, the key is finding the right one for you.

### **Q: Which has been more valuable in your career, your education, or your experience?**

A: My experience has been more valuable by far than my schooling. The experiences I have had guiding, working in a climbing gym, with FORCES, and accumulated so far in my career here have been the most influential in how I work productively at my job. I appreciate the time I spent in school but have utilized those hands-on experiences almost exclusively in my career.

### **Q: What advice would you give someone considering this type of non-traditional career?**

A: The two biggest pieces of advice I can think of- don't be afraid to move locations and say yes! I moved following a desire to be in the mountains, and I've never looked back. There's always somewhere, sometime that you can find work doing what you love. Don't let the fear of an unfamiliar place hold you back. And once you're there say yes! Since moving I have picked up handfuls of new adventure sports & activities that I enjoy, all because I met someone randomly that invited me out for a bike ride one day. By doing this I discovered a community full of amazing, friendly people that share the same passions as me, all because I decided to say yes. Now I always have a friend to go on a fun adventure with!

### **Q: Are there any organizations or associations that you would recommend a young professional in this field join? Any best ways you've found to network in this field?**

A: Definitely! The first step is finding a location you want to work in. Most recreation-focused areas have groups on social media you can join that post about available opportunities. "Basecamp: Outdoor Jobs & More" on Facebook is a great one that posts available jobs located all over the country & abroad, ranging from base level seasonal work to higher paying salaried positions. If someone is interested in guiding specifically, I recommend getting involved with KNOLLS and/or gaining certifications through AMGA to build up your resume. The absolute best way to meet the right people is to get outside! Some of my most important contacts have been made while simply doing the activities I love and have become beneficial influences in both my professional and personal life.

### **Q: Where do you see yourself in 15 years?**

A: I see myself doing a lot of what I do now. Hopefully a little better, and I'm sure a little safer! My dream is to open a co-op bouldering gym in Saranac Lake, NY with a guide service based out of it. There is so much room for growth in my field, and I can't wait to continue to be a part of that positive change for many years to come. The northeast is an amazing space for adventure sports, outdoor experiences, and education. I want to see this place grow into something more than its Olympic Legacy & amazing history and be known for the amazing things happening right now.

### **Q: Anything else you want to add or share?**

A: Throughout college I dreaded the idea that I would trade a classroom for an office and be stuck at a desk for the next 50 years. So far, I have not worked a single day where I spent more than half of it sitting, and only a handful spent totally inside. I took a chance and moved to a small mountain town, had a few dollars in the bank, and only had a futon, and homemade coffee table to my name. And it's the best decision I have ever made. If you follow what you love, everything else will work out. Say yes and try scary things- that's what it's all about.

## 2022 FORCES Stewards

### **Canisius College**

Ian Holway (Graduate), Conservation Steward  
Jillian Smith (Graduate), Water Quality Steward

### **Cazenovia College**

Michaela Germain, COAS Conservation Steward

### **Colgate University**

Jack Bennink, Chimney Bluffs Trail Steward

### **Hartwick College**

Margarita Chistiakova, FORCES Club President  
Will May, FORCES Club Co-President  
John Relyea, FORCES Club Co-President

### **Ithaca College**

Delia Ablard, Pollinator Garden Steward  
Ana Maria Arroyo, Conservation Steward  
Bethany Holland, Conservation Steward  
Mattix Lufano, Conservation Steward  
Jordan Weiss, Conservation Steward

### **Jamestown Community College**

Luke Thompson, Natural Resource Mngmt. Steward

### **Le Moyne College**

Brandon Bardin, FORCES Club Co-President  
Genevieve Kikukawa, FORCES Club Co-President  
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Jennifer Loiacono, Horticulture Steward  
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### **Paul Smith's College**

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Anna Purtell, Environmental Field Team Steward

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Zoe Dobo, Conservation Steward  
Max Franklin, Trail Management Steward  
Cassidy Jimenez, Conservation Steward  
Dephil "Casper" Jones, Conservation Steward  
Zachary Skowronski, Landscape Architecture Steward  
Brandon Tomasik, Conservation Steward  
Allyson Williams, Engineering Steward

### **SUNY Cobleskill**

Jack MacMullen, AHTF Conservation Steward

### **SUNY Cortland**

Emily Miller, Conservation Steward

### **SUNY ESF**

Nadezhda Atanasova, DEC Ecosystems Health & Habitat Protection Steward

Julia Baumann, Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Layla Blask, COAS Conservation Steward  
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Brandon Chartrand, DEC Salmon River Hatchery Steward  
Silas Cochran, Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Megan Couell, Piping Plover Conservation Steward  
Tyler Folts, COAS Conservation Steward  
& Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Brian Gantley, Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Emily Gelardi, Piping Plover Conservation Steward  
Rebecca Geneus, Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Sam Giraldo, COAS Conservation Steward

### **SUNY ESF (Cont'd)**

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Trevor Hanson, Piping Plover Conservation Steward  
Gabby Hood, Piping Plover Conservation Steward  
Leanne Hughes, COAS Conservation Steward  
Connor Jacobs, DEC Lands and Forest Steward  
Megan Joyce, Chimney Bluffs Trail Steward  
& Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Orchid Kinzie-Middleton, COAS Conservation Steward  
Emily Kuhlkin, Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Quinn Laczkowski, Regional Wildlife Steward  
Raquel Mennella, Chimney Bluffs Trail Steward  
& Wildlife Tech Steward  
Emily Meyers, Regional Wildlife Steward  
Shawna Mulvihill, DEC Ecosystems Health & Habitat Protection Steward  
Jack Murtagh, AHTF Conservation Steward  
Austin Nino, Piping Plover Conservation Steward  
Zoey Obert, Environmental Ed Center Host Steward  
Sarah Olney, DEC Ecosystems Health & Habitat Protection Steward

Aaron Otis, DEC Fisheries Access Steward  
Hunter Parise, DEC Salmon River Hatchery Steward  
Aaron Pierce, DEC Lands and Forest Steward  
Noah Roche, Regional Wildlife Steward  
Conor Sarasin, COAS Conservation Steward  
Gillian Smith, Regional Wildlife Steward  
& FORCES Club President  
& DEC Public Lands Steward  
Jennifer Sorrell, Invasive Species Management Steward  
Ryan Steinhauer, Invasive Species Management Steward  
Madison Stevens, FORCES Club President  
& Environmental Ed Center Host Steward

Abby Thomas, Piping Plover Conservation Steward  
Matthew Trease, COAS Conservation Steward  
Spencer Van Epps, Regional Wildlife Steward  
FaithAnn Vanderwalker, Regional Wildlife Steward

### **SUNY Geneseo**

Nicholas Deya, Environmental Communication Steward

### **SUNY Morrisville**

Alyssa Derr, Invasive Species Management Steward

### **SUNY Oneonta**

Chloe Dymek, FORCES Club President

### **SUNY Oswego**

Michael Brown, Piping Plover Conservation Steward

### **University of Vermont**

Maya Curle, Invasive Species Management Steward  
& Environmental Ed Center Host Steward

## **JR. CONSERVATION STEWARDS**

### **Honeoye Middle/High School**

Jewel Olsen

### **Liverpool High School**

Nandika Rajaram

### **Sandy Creek High School**

Perle Convey

### **Orleans/Niagara BOCES**

Ethan Gmerek  
Allison Lang  
Raven Rybak



# The Force Behind FORCES Picture Page



Finger Lakes Conservation Steward, Jordan Weiss, assisting Horticulture Technician, Max McCune, transplant a chestnut tree at the Taughannock Falls Overlook.



FORCES Stewards, NYS Parks, and DEC Reynold's Game Farm Staff including Manager Evan Wills and Aaron Smartwood on day two of the FORCES NYS DEC Pheasant Release.

Photos: OPRHP



Hartwick FORCES Club members hiking to Mud Lake in Robert V. Riddell State Park. Photo: Hartwick College FORCES



Cornell Tradition Fellows volunteering with removal of invasive slender false brome on the Gorge Trail at Taughannock Falls State Park.



Park's Environmental Educator, Matt Nusstein, gives a tour of Niagara Falls State Park during the FORCES Gathering in September.



Hartwick College FORCES Club members painting pumpkins. Photo: Hartwick College FORCES



Left to right: FL SCA Hannah Smith, FORCES FL Program Specialist, Carlin Wakefield, FL SCA Nick Bachand.



FORCES Conservation Stewards, Mattix Lufrano and Jordan Weiss, pose at Taughannock Falls before conducting a benthic macroinvertebrate water quality survey.



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Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation**

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