



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

# FORCES

Friends of Recreation, Conservation, and Environmental Stewardship

Summer 2020 Newsletter

Vol. 5 Issue 2

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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.

## FORCES of Nature

Tom Hughes, NRS Biologist  
Central Region FORCES Program Manager

Sometimes, our natural world presents us with enormous challenges, uncertainty and heartache. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has done exactly that. However, in NY State Parks and FORCES, as our Governor Cuomo states, “We are NY tough, smart, united, disciplined and loving.” In fact, it is this love for our environment, our parks and each other that motivates us to keep working hard during these most difficult times. While most of our FORCES Stewards and staff were at home this spring, we remained determined to get out in the field again and keep our FORCES momentum going strong. We masked up and are now getting the job done!



Central Region Environmental Field Team staff make an early season visit to Chittenango Falls State Park to check on our American hart’s-tongue ferns and Chittenango ovate amber snails. Pictured masked up from left to right— Tom Hughes, Mat Bilz and Mike Serviss. Photo: OPRHP



Prior to the pandemic and during mask-less times, Division of Environmental Stewardship & Planning staff recruited FORCES Stewards and seasonal staff at SUNY ESF’s annual Career Fair. Pictured from right to left— Matt Brincka, Invasive Species Biologist, Whitney Carleton, Finger Lakes Regional Biologist & Kate Noonan, SCA NYS Parks Corps Americorps. Photo: OPRHP

Speaking of getting the job done, in addition to NY Works state public funding, US Fish & Wildlife Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant funded conservation projects enabled us to bring on several returning and new FORCES members. Protected species include American hart’s tongue-fern, piping plovers and Chittenango ovate amber snails in the Central Region (see page 2). In addition, GLRI funding, including a Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) grant, will continue to support the Three Gorges Project (see pages 6 & 10). We are extremely grateful to be awarded these state and federal funds. I know that our FORCES Stewards and the parks and natural resources that they conserve and protect will benefit greatly, well into our post-pandemic natural world. Be safe everyone!



## Central Region Update

Mike Serviss, Regional Project Coordinator, Alivia Sheffield, Piping Plover Project Coordinator & Tom Hughes, Natural Resource Steward Biologist



Young American hart's-tongue ferns in their new home in the Winter Propagation House at Sonnenberg Gardens.  
Photo: OPRHP

COVID certainly did slow down our conservation projects, but it did not stop them completely! Propagation work for the American hart's-tongue fern (AHTF) reintroduction project continued as we practiced social distancing in the greenhouses at Sonnenberg Gardens. There are many exciting propagation developments to report, including that we were able to grow the ferns from old stipe bases using a basic tissue culture set up- the first time this has ever been done for the American variety of the species! Additionally, we saw bursts of growth from the ferns in their new home in the Winter Propagation House, which was modified for the ferns with new shade cloth. Visits to potential reintroduction sites began, including a trip to Three Falls Woods in Manlius, NY. New spore cultures were created for an upcoming research collaboration with SUNY Cortland and Cornell that will investigate the effects of invasive Asian jumping worms on early stages of the fern's development. A new crew started on the project in May, including four students from SUNY ESF. They assisted with



FORCES Steward Amanda Varhol records video for a virtual plant program at Clark Reservation State Park.  
Photo: OPRHP

the completion of a population census, invasive species management, data collection, and recorded and edited outreach videos at Clark Reservation in place of our in-person educational programs.

2020 marks the 5 year anniversary of the return of the Great Lakes Piping Plovers to eastern Lake Ontario, and the beginning of what is now the Great Lakes Piping Plover Project. January started an on-boarding of our Student Conservation Association, NYS Park Corps Piping Plover Steward, Kate Noonan. Kate spent her first few months getting used to the project, planning events, and putting out trail cams. Winter brought educational snowshoe hikes with school groups looking for birds, and talking all things migration! As March and April reared its head, the return of the piping plover was near which meant plans for the summer to protect the plovers, and educate the public the best we can. Our one chick from last year, Chewie, was seen many times in Clearwater, Florida throughout the winter. Although Covid-19 brought interesting challenges for us, it brought none for the piping plovers as they geared up to travel back to our parks, to hopefully successfully nest, once again! The project was handed over to Claire Nellis, our new Piping Plover Project Coordinator and great things are planned for this upcoming nesting season!

Most of our 2020 Environmental Field Team was originally scheduled to start in early April, but instead did not come on board until end of May due to the pandemic. We brought back Shaina Johnson to the Piping Plover Project along with our new Project Coordinator Claire Nellis. We also welcomed Delaney Kalsman as our Chittenango ovate amber snail (COAS) Project Coordinator. Our regional invasive species management efforts got a big boost with the addition of James Boyd, Regional Invasives Technician and Peter Sterbak, Regional Field Technician (pollinator projects). In addition, Mark Roberts (AHTF Field Technician) and Elizabeth Padgett (AHTF Propagation Steward) are working with Mike advancing the fern project.

Our Piping Plover team is once again making the long trek via hiking and boating to our Protected Bird Nesting Area at Sandy Island SP. Photo right— Shaina Johnson, Piping Plover Project Technician. Not pictured— Claire Nellis, Piping Plover Project Coordinator & Kate Noonan, SCA NY Parks Corps. Photo: OPRHP



## Coordinator's Corner

Amy Kochem, FORCES Program Coordinator

The spring semester started with a charge of energy and enthusiasm that radiated from FORCES club members. I was able to attend the first meetings of many clubs as they shared ideas and events planned for the upcoming season. Outings and events occurred at the start of the semester and then of course, students were sent home for the remainder of the semester. I was very impressed with the diversity of project ideas, and my hope is that all of these creative ideas can be implemented when it is safe for clubs to do so again. I commend the efforts from the Stewards that were able to continue to safely work with us until the end of the semester. We appreciate your flexibility and patience as you adapted to the uncertainties of your working conditions.

As time went on, one by one, I erased things from the FORCES calendar including the 6th Annual FORCES Summit in April, the 6th Annual Trainapalooza in May, and the 3rd Annual Concert in the Park in June. It was hard to believe that these traditional FORCES events wouldn't happen this year. I found that I was very much missing the comradery that each of these events generated while spending quality time with our staff and Stewards.

This spring was also a time to say goodbye to several FORCES staff members as they took new positions to expand their horizons. Our SCA, NYS Parks AmeriCorps FORCES Program Specialist, Maya Thompson, took a position with Parks as a Watercraft Steward on Cayuga Lake. Chenga Drury, our former FORCES Program Specialist for the Three Gorges Project in the Finger Lakes, was awarded a Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) grant to continue the Three Gorges Project through 2021. She has accepted a new position as the Three Gorges Project Coordinator in the Finger Lakes Region. Alivia Sheffield, former Piping Plover Project Coordinator and long time FORCES member, accepted a position with the Department of Health in St. Lawrence County. Each of these ladies will be missed and we are grateful for their many contributions to FORCES. Page 14 contains parting words from each of them.

As our FORCES Staff and Stewards have transitioned out of their roles and into new positions within our Parks Agency and other organizations, many have kept in touch and have expressed how their real world, hands-on, FORCES experiences helped them succeed in their current jobs. We'd like to create an interactive FORCES Alumni Directory in which current Stewards can network with former FORCES Stewards. Alumni, we'd like to hear from you! Where are you now? Do you feel that your time with FORCES has provided you with the skills and qualifications needed to excel in your current position? Did you learn about your current position through networking with FORCES or other Park Staff? Please contact me at amy.kochem@parks.ny.gov and share your pathway to success!

### **Affiliated Institutions**

SUNY Alfred  
SUNY Binghamton  
SUNY Brockport  
SUNY Cobleskill  
SUNY Cortland  
SUNY ESF\*  
SUNY Geneseo\*  
SUNY Morrisville  
SUNY New Paltz  
SUNY Oneonta\*  
SUNY Oswego  
SUNY Purchase

Alfred University  
Cazenovia College  
Columbia College  
Cornell University  
Finger Lakes Community College  
Hartwick College\*  
Hobart & William Smith Colleges  
Houghton College  
Hudson Valley Community College  
Ithaca College  
Le Moyne College\*  
Mercyhurst University  
Niagara Community College  
Niagara University

Onondaga Community College  
Pace University  
Paul Smith's College  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
St. Bonaventure University  
St. John Fisher College  
Siena College  
Syracuse University  
University of Buffalo  
University of Rochester  
Vassar College  
Wells College\*

\*Denotes active FORCES Clubs

## Rising Star Award

Alexandra Tillman, FORCES Program Specialist, Niagara Region



Allie proudly displaying her Rising Star Award.  
Photo: OPRHP

This past February, the Niagara Region hosted an Employee Appreciation Luncheon for all the staff throughout the region's parks. This was a huge thank you for the outstanding work our colleagues do every day to keep our agency running. Part of the day was dedicated to raffles, a guest speaker, lunch and presenting awards to staff members. These were for years of service to Parks along with a handful of unique, specialty awards that recognized individuals that go above and beyond for the agency. I was very excited and proud to hear my name called for the Rising Star Award.

When I graduated college in 2016, I did what every person in the same boat does and applied to about 10 jobs in my field a week. And every week I would get more and more hopeless that I would never find something; much less something I would enjoy that showcases not only my education, but all my skills. I did this for 2 full years, working random jobs and still applying like a mad woman. Then in the Spring of 2018, I got a tip from a friend about an opening at State Parks, so I jumped at it.

I started my career with NYSOPRHP in the Horticulture Department at Niagara Falls State Park. There, I met many great people that supported me with every opportunity available to grow and enhance my future career with Parks. This ranged from going to all sorts of training classes, interviews for Parks positions across the state, and even allowing me to coordinate a 400-person AmeriCorps volunteer event as a seasonal staff member! Without such a supportive and encouraging base, I am not sure if I would have found a career path so soon into starting with the agency.

After almost a year at Niagara Falls, I applied to become the FORCES Program Specialist for the region. Deep down I knew, immediately after leaving my interview, that I would thrive in this position if given the chance. I started in May of 2019, with Summer Stewards loaded up and ready to begin their internships. Right out of the gate I went into training and facilitating projects for them and knew I had found my niche.

Since then, the program has doubled in size, there are positions available for students that have never been offered before, and there are constantly new relationships forming between colleges and high school classes alike. I have been asked to join statewide committees and I volunteer for special events throughout the region as well; getting the word out about FORCES and showing what a great asset it can be to the agency. The program, and my career path, is moving at a rapid pace and I don't intend to slow down!

After being in the position for a full year, I think I have really found my stride. I guess the saying is true that if you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life. I am honored to have been nominated by my peers throughout the region for this award, and I am very eager to continue my career with this program and the New York State Parks agency.



Allie (yellow shirt) and her Wildlife Management Stewards setting up our AVID (Assessing Vegetation Impacted by Deer) plots at Knox Farm State Park. Photo: OPRHP

## Niagara Region Update

Alexandra Tillman, FORCES Program Specialist, Niagara Region

The spring 2020 season definitely presented us all with new obstacles and challenges to face. At the beginning of this whirlwind of a time, we were hoping that our FORCES Stewards could continue working and complete their projects within the program. However, due to the intensity and fast paced changes during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, our Stewards all had to cut their internships short. When we first started in February, we had 7 Stewards total- 3 Trail, 2 Bird Conservation, 1 Greenhouse, and for the first time ever in our region, 1 Data Management Steward.



Trail Stewards TJ Clark, Tanner Holthouse, and Nate Pavlick at Four Mile Creek State Park at the eroding shoreline of Lake Ontario. Photo: OPRHP

Tanner Holthouse, Nathan Pavlick, and TJ Clark served as our Trail Stewards this past season. They continued with the upkeep and trail work the Fall Stewards completed at Buckhorn Island and Joseph Davis State Parks along with adding Fort Niagara and Wilson-Tuscarora State Park's large trail systems to their list. One very notable aspect of this group of young men was that they managed to work, in some combination within the three of them, every day from the first day of their internship to their last. They achieved a lot during their time with FORCES including some bonus invasive species work! They stepped up to the plate when our staff needed help with a very time sensitive *Phragmites* cutting project. It was very hard work, and even on a few 10 degree days, they helped with smiles across their faces!

Bird surveys and habitat conservation work is in high demand within the Niagara Region due to the unique environments provided within our parks. Jason Kappan and Garrett Kilcer stepped right up to the challenge as our Bird Conservation Stewards. They went to every park in the region to help us collect as much data as possible, and to submit that data into this year's Breeding Bird Atlas. They made a great pair, Jason being an avid birder and Garrett being a statistics major at the University at Buffalo. I think they both learned a lot from each other, covering all the different aspects that go into surveying and then data processing.

Morgan Gere was our Data Management Steward from Niagara University. Morgan was extremely helpful with backlogging tons of data our Environmental Team had collected, while also processing new data that the other groups of Stewards collected. There were many projects and tasks Morgan helped our team with however, I think the most impressive task would be helping us create a digital water quality survey for the summer. Morgan made it so our summer Stewards could easily take a tablet in the field with them and use Survey123 to log their data in real time. This is going to save us hours of data input in the future, and really streamlines the daily process of testing the beaches in the parks.

Cameron Haberl from Medaille College was scheduled to be our Greenhouse Steward for the spring but unfortunately the pandemic hit before she could even get started. Thankfully, Cameron was available to move her internship with us to the summer and is currently enjoying her time at the Western District Nursery at Knox Farms State Park.

Even though our spring season was cut short, the Niagara Region's FORCES crew still made a great impact on our parks and found success within their projects. I look forward to continuing the work they started into the summer season.

## Finger Lakes Region Environmental Field Team Update

Carlin Wakefield, FORCES Program Specialist, Finger Lakes Region



The Environmental Field Team would like to welcome Andrea Centola, Finger Lake's new Invasive Species Technician! The acres of survey that Andrea completes this growing season will allow her to generate abbreviated control plans for invasive populations. Finger Lakes FORCES stewards will be key in assisting Andrea in control efforts.



Mike Serviss and Elizabeth Padgett in front of the Winter Propagation House at Sonnenberg Mansions Historic Site. Photo: OPRHP

Three Gorges Project Coordinator, Chenga Drury, was awarded a Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) grant to continue the Three Gorges Project through 2021. The project will continue to control invasive species populations and restore the riparian corridor at Taughannock Falls, Buttermilk Falls, and Robert H. Treman State Parks. Stewardship Project Coordinator and botanist, Kyle Webster, continued local rarity and native plant surveys for the Three Gorges Project. Identifying local rare plants in addition to state and global rarities directly informs the project's invasive species management practices.



*Solidago* and *Carex* species from the Plant Materials Program planted in the Oak-Hickory Savanna. Photo: OPRHP

Plant Materials Program (PMP) staff Dave Rutherford and Caroline D'Aprix shifted gears during Covid isolation and planted many species of seeds at home before safely moving them to their Sonnenberg Gardens greenhouses in Canandaigua, NY. Their efforts provide plant material for restoration projects like Three Gorges. Planting species in restoration areas with the same local genetics provides an extra sense of security that the plants will be well adapted to survive. FORCES' own Mike Serviss and PMP's Elizabeth Padgett moved all their American hart's-tongue ferns inside and applied new shade cloth to the exterior of the Winter Propagation House.



Mink tracks found at Dean's Cove State Park. Photo: OPRHP

PMP also provided approximately 2,500 plugs of native forb, sedge and grass species for an Oak-Hickory Savanna restoration planting, as well two hundred pounds of seed that was dispersed throughout the Oak Management Unit at Ganondagan State Historic Site, coordinated by Lead Stewardship Project Technician, Lydia Martin. Stewardship Project Coordinator, Kira Broz, found mink prints while surveying for Japanese knotweed at Dean's Cove State Park on Cayuga Lake.



Right to left: Kira Broz, Lydia Martin, Carlin Wakefield, and Kyle Webster dispersing native seed in the Oak Management Unit at Ganondagan SHS. Photo: OPRHP

## FORCES Staff Highlight: Joshua DiPaola

Natural Resource Specialist, Taconic Region



Joshua holding the carapace of a snapping turtle shell found at RSPP. Photo: OPRHP

My name is Joshua DiPaola and I am the new Natural Resource Specialist at Rockefeller State Park Preserve (RSPP). I would say that I have a bit of an unusual career trajectory compared to many others in my field. After obtaining my Bachelor's in Finance and Economics from Fordham University, I spent nearly a decade working at an investment bank.

My lifelong aspirations, however, were to contribute to a field which supported goals that aligned with wildlife and ecological conservation. Thus, later in life, I made the decision to obtain my Master's in Animal Behavior and Conservation from Hunter College. Since then, I've accumulated experience working at a zoo, supporting field-ecology research on mammals, volunteering at a wildlife rehabilitation center, as well as performing behavioral research on critically endangered mammals known as pangolins.

Though I am still fairly new as an employee at Rockefeller State Park Preserve, I have been coming to the preserve for several years, valuing the diversity of its habitats and wildlife. While you may see me collaborating with my colleagues across various disciplines at RSPP, my primary focus will be on wildlife conservation and management within the preserve. My specific goals will include protecting the habitat for many of our native fauna, as well as supporting research initiatives which will help us to better understand their behavioral ecology. It's my great pleasure and honor to become a formal member of this community and to contribute wherever needed.

### Editorial Note:



Thank you to Budd Termin, Assistant Professor and Recreation Studies Coordinator at Niagara County Community College (NCCC) for bringing an issue to our attention. In the FORCES Spring Newsletter, we did not give the well-deserved acknowledgment to Budd and his NCCC Recreation Studies Program students for their efforts in constructing and maintaining the pollinator garden at Wilson-Tuscarora State Park from which we used the Monarch Waystation photo.

Budd received a grant from MonarchWatch.org for all the plant stock that was used to create this garden and after it was created, had it registered. Join their Twitter feed for the garden - @Mission\_Monarch

### Contact Us

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# Student Conservation Association, NYS Parks AmeriCorps Update

Maya Thompson, FORCES Program Specialist (SCA)



Patrons warm by the fire at Selkirk Shores State Park's Annual Candlelight Hike in February. Photo: OPRHP

During my time with FORCES, I got to be a part of a lot of cool experiences. Early on in the season, I traveled around some of the Central Region Parks and was introduced to different types of projects that FORCES Stewards can take on for the summer ranging from invasive species removal to providing environmental education to trail maintenance! I also participated in some awesome events at Selkirk Shores State Park such as the annual Candlelight Hike in February where everyone snowshoed on a trail completely lit by candles!

In late February and early March, I completed a bluebird nest box revamping project. I traveled throughout the Central Region, stopping at seven parks and historic sites, in an effort to clean out and repair the boxes. Eastern bluebirds are abundant around New York State nowadays due to the construction of artificial nest boxes. These boxes provide critical habitat and a safe space for our state bird to nest! By cleaning out and repairing any damage to these boxes, the bluebirds in our parks can hopefully lead healthy lives. Next time you head to a park, keep a look out for bluebird boxes!



Male eastern bluebird atop a nest box at Glimmerglass State Park. Photo: OPRHP



Tree swallows are slightly smaller than a bluebird and are able to use any cavity that the bluebird can, thus a competitor of the bluebird for nesting location. Photo: OPRHP

Likewise, I attended several SCA sponsored training events. I became Wilderness First Aid Certified, as well as underwent the National Association for Interpretation's Certified Interpretive Guide training. During these trainings I not only gained knowledge about how to become certified in these programs, but I also got to explore different areas around NYS!



## Steward Spotlight: Christian Kirbach

Conservation Steward, Saratoga/Capital Region



Christian at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site.  
Photo: OPRHP

Hi, my name is Christian Kirbach. I was a Senior at Siena College for Environmental Studies when I reached out to my professor about internship possibilities, who then put me in contact with Philip Corney & Andy Damon from NY State Parks. Phil sat down with me and asked about my goals and interests to which he gave me a variety of opportunities that I could take on for an internship, which led me to accepting and gaining an internship through the FORCES program with the Saratoga Capital Region for NY State Parks.

I began my FORCES Internship in the spring of 2020 with a drive to learn, motivation to move forward with my career path, and an excitement to spend time with NY State Parks. My main and first internship responsibility was surveying for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) at John Boyd Thacher and Grafton Lakes State Parks. I was trained among statewide parks staff who put on a training for HWA surveying right at Thacher State Park.

Working both alone and with others including park staff, SCA interns, and volunteers, I surveyed dozens of stands of hemlock trees throughout Thacher State Park, filling out data sheets and uploading my findings to iMap Invasives. In addition to Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) surveys, I had the opportunity to assist Phil with trail planning, surveying and management efforts for the upcoming projects this year. I surveyed several trails at Thacher State Park on my own and assisted with larger trail project planning with Phil. I also spent a full day helping out Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site with some brush clearing and management of one of the aqueducts.

The experience I gained, the people I got a chance to work with, and the opportunities I was given were amazing. After my FORCES internship concluded in May, I graduated and I began looking for summer jobs when Phil reached out about seasonal positions for NY State Parks, to which I applied. I am now serving as Regional Trail Crew Member for the Saratoga/Capital Region.

*“This internship was the first real experience I had in the job related field and it really helped me understand how things happen in the natural world.”*

~Morgan Gere, Niagara University



Christian surveying a hemlock tree for HWA in Thacher State Park. Photo: OPRHP

# Finger Lakes Region Update

Carlin Wakefield, FORCES Program Specialist

Spring 2020, along with the rest of the world, brought big changes and challenges to the normal schedule of the FORCES Program. Savana Lenker, a student from Ithaca College, and Clare Maloney from SUNY Cortland, were Spring Conservation Education Stewards. Kit Atanasoff, from Ithaca College was an Invasive Species Management Steward. Although we were only together as a group for two weeks before universities shut down and each student went home to isolate, we were able to make the best of the unusual season.

All three stewards assisted the Finger Lake's Hemlock Preservation Program with post-treatment monitoring of eastern hemlock's new growth and hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) abundance at Robert H. Treman State Park. They also assisted SUNY Cortland Professor and researcher, Andrea Dávalos, to count and record data about pale swallowwort seed demography for a research project collaboration between SUNY Cortland, Wells College, and SUNY ESF. The project will assess the *Hypena opulenta* moth as biocontrol for pale swallowwort. In the Finger Lakes Region, a study site is located at Long Point State Park.



Clare Maloney monitoring hemlocks at Robert H. Treman State Park. Photo: OPRHP

Kit Atanasoff replaced broken bluebird nest boxes at Taughannock Falls State Park, surveyed for invasive species in assistance to The Three Gorges Project, and post-isolation, completed research about a new invasive species on our radar here in the Finger Lakes, black jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*). Savanna Lenker and Clare Maloney both remotely worked on education program outlines for Cayuga Lake State Park.



Kit Atanasoff replacing old nest boxes at Taughannock Falls State Park. Photo: OPRHP

Now that field work is starting to get into full swing, the Finger Lakes FORCES Program and all Steward interns and volunteers are engaging safely with group work, wearing masks, and physically distancing when possible. We look forward to the future when universities open back up and our Wells College club can continue their important work in our region, as well as hosting community events and engaging our patrons through education and outreach. Thank you to all our staff and partners for your continued support!



Andrea Dávalos, intern Caleb, and Three Gorges crew prepare for a worm survey at Taughannock Falls State Park. Photo: OPRHP

*"I can't think of a better more hands-on way to learn about the environment than this internship. The advice that I would give to future stewards would be that you get out of this what you put into it. Listen to the team and really apply yourself and you will not only learn a lot but you will have a great time while doing it."*

~Tanner Holthouse, Niagara University

## Partner Highlight: Pace University

Josh DiPaola, Natural Resource Specialist, Taconic Region

For over a century, Pace has been providing education to students across a diverse range of disciplines. In particular, Pace has developed a strong educational foundation in the liberal arts and sciences, fostering a generation of professionals which have made vast contributions to both community and the environment. In 2020, Pace continued its commitment to uphold its values despite the social and economic constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, Pace has developed and offered what is known as New York Recovery Internships, to provide undergraduate students with both exceptional and paid opportunities to further their careers in the midst of record levels of unemployment.

It is to this end that FORCES (Friends of Recreation, Conservation, and Environmental Stewardship), would like to acknowledge Pace for partnering with Rockefeller State Park Preserve (RSPP) to connect students with environmental interests to opportunities in the field. Not only does this partnership encourage students to further their aspirations in environmental science, but it connects them with a broad network of individuals within New York State Parks that will help them explore multiple avenues of future careers and exposure to various professional disciplines.



Jonah Kamen sifting through milkweed looking for monarch butterfly eggs as part of an initiative to preserve pollinator habitat. Photo: OPRHP



Will Starkey in Swan Lake looking for prospective areas for our upcoming turtle study. Photo: OPRHP

Through the FORCES program, Pace Stewards will aim to work alongside RSPP Fauna and Flora Stewards to restore, maintain, and preserve the biodiversity of the ecosystems within RSPP. In terms of floral stewardship, particular focus will be applied to removing invasive vegetation and planting native species of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. Managing invasive and restoring native autotrophs to the preserve establishes a balanced and functional ecosystem from the bottom-up, which provides beneficial cascades through the broader food chain. Fauna stewardship initiatives will focus on documenting and assessing the health of its native wildlife species, using both behavioral and ecological approaches to do so. Upcoming projects intend to look at the biodiversity of aquatic turtles in our freshwater systems and surveying the abundance of keystone meso-predator species. Both flora and fauna initiatives will aim to work directly with Pace faculty to develop research methods that provide scientific approaches to achieve their respective conservation goals.



Will Starkey assisting in a survey of amphibians. Will is using proper restraint techniques to hold the American bullfrog depicted. Photo: OPRHP

While the historical relationship between RSPP and Pace has been both a proud and successful bond, it exists with the primary goal to benefit the student interns which it sponsors. As Pace continues to facilitate the education of capable students, New York State Parks is pleased to provide these students with opportunities to apply their academic knowledge in the field. Pace's New York Recovery Internships is evidence of their commitment to facilitate the careers of their students, and FORCES is proud to both highlight and accommodate this educational initiative.

## Wells College

Shannon Simmons, Club President



Wells FORCES had plans to help out at Long Point State Park with trail maintenance, Fillmore Glen State Park with invasive species removal and some informational activities on campus. Due to the pandemic we were sadly unable to proceed with these plans. Next semester we will accomplish our plans from this spring semester.



## Le Moyne College

Haley Synan, Club President



This spring at Le Moyne FORCES, we were able to do a collaborative event with the Outings Club, and go snowshoeing at Green Lakes State Park. We loved getting our members out in the park while

also showing other students who may not have ever been there before how beautiful the park is. We also hosted an environmental trivia night at Le Moyne, open to all students. Not only were there our club members, but many nonmembers as well! It was great for us to expose nonmembers to some environmental issues (e.g., specific invasive species in CNY) that they may not have known about before! Several of our events were not able to happen, due to the pandemic, but next fall we plan on teaching as many students at Le Moyne how to properly recycle and the rules surrounding what can be recycled and what can't and getting out in the NY State Parks!

## SUNY Geneseo

Christina Morrow, Club President

## SUNY ESF

Emily Link, Club President



Though the ESF FORCES spring semester was cut short, the club was still able to make strides. The officers held a networking event in which they passed out cookies on campus and discussed FORCES with ESF students. This event spread awareness about the club and

educated students on the importance of volunteering at state parks and around the community. It also led to the highest attended ESF FORCES meeting in recent years. The club also welcomed Tom Hughes and Amy Kochem as speakers at a meeting, which was enjoyed and appreciated among club members. ESF FORCES is also happy to announce that officers were elected for 2020-2021. Good luck to Jessica Castellano (vice president), Madison Stevens (secretary), James Farrell (treasurer), and Maggie O'Brien (social media coordinator) in the coming year.

SUNY Geneseo FORCES made the most of our short time together this past year. Most of our events



this spring were recreation focused. We hiked various trails, including at Mendon Ponds, Sonyea State Forest, and Canadice Lake. We attended a bonfire event celebrating the Genesee Valley Conservancy's anniversary. After classes switched to online, two e-board members who stayed behind were able to help clear a trail at the Indian Fort Nature Preserve, and plant native trees and shrubs at multiple preserves.



## SUNY Oneonta

Tom Hughes, Central Region FORCES Program Manager

As Amy mentioned in her Coordinator's Corner (page 3), we had to sadly and reluctantly postpone our 6th Annual FORCES Leadership Summit. The Summit was scheduled to take place in April at the SUNY Oneonta Biological Field Station in Cooperstown. We were further disappointed that the Field Station and FORCES of Oneonta were not able to host this FORCES event. However, we will reach out to FORCES of Oneonta with the hopes that maybe we can have some version of our Leadership Summit this fall on campus or at the Field Station. We miss you Oneonta!



## Hartwick College

Zsuzsanna Balogh-Brunstad, Club Advisor



The spring semester started with renewed energy. The club planned a full slate of events and activities during the kick-off event of the semester where our officers were able to meet new and old members. In February, we held an environmentally themed Trivia Night with lots of fun, snacks, and prizes for the highest-scoring participants. A smaller group of club members participated in the Leap Day Candlelight Hike at the Glimmerglass State Park. Temperatures below freezing did not deter dedicated members as the event also supported the local SPCA. Cleaning Up Table Rock

Hike on our campus has become a tradition and organized each semester to keep our hiking trails clean and maintained. The event had a great turnout and we removed several bags of trash from the trails. Unfortunately, our face-to-face semester was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent college shut-down, but we were able to connect via Zoom a few times. We hope for and look forward to in-person meetings this coming year.



## FORCES Club at SUNY Cortland - Pausing our Momentum

Alexandra Tillman, FORCES Program Specialist, Niagara Region



Our last update on our possible newest FORCES Club left you all wondering how our visits to SUNY Cortland classes and the interest meeting went? Well we are pleased to announce that the in-class club pitches seemed to go very well. We had many students sign up to get more information on the club and the FORCES program as a whole. Unfortunately, that same sentiment was not reflected at the interest meeting. A few eager individuals attended, but we were really hoping for a larger turnout after the successful classroom visits. Overall, the meeting went well and our staff felt confident that the students that did show interest would make great additions to the future FORCES club.

After the interest meeting, we regrouped as a staff. We discussed possible reasons for the low numbers and brainstormed new ways to approach the club. We decided that repeating our past on-campus efforts, with more time between classes, as a possible next step. We also decided to postpone our "tester trip" to Robert H. Treman State Park due to the lower than anticipated numbers and poor weather conditions. Our plan was to reboot the idea once the weather became nicer in the spring. However, due to the unprecedented and unexpected COVID-19 crisis, we have chosen to pause our efforts at SUNY Cortland until the students are back on campus. We are looking forward to continuing our momentum and providing unique opportunities for Cortland students!

## So Long for Now

Chenga Drury, Alivia Sheffield & Maya Thompson

### ~Chenga Drury



I'm looking back at the last two years and thinking about the amazing work that Finger Lakes FORCES stewards have accomplished to make the Three Gorges Project a success! With their help, we've planted over 2,000 shrubs, plugs, and seeds, surveyed hundreds of acres for target invasive species (Japanese knotweed, porcelainberry, pale swallow-wort, *Phragmites*, and hemlock woolly adelgid), and manually removed at least 96 acres of pale swallowwort each year. It has been amazing to work with such energized, dedicated, and professional Stewards over these last two years! I want to thank all the staff and Stewards that made the Three Gorges Project possible! I am saddened to leave my role as a FORCES Program Specialist, but excited to be continuing to work with FORCES as a partner!

### ~Alivia Sheffield

I have been a part of FORCES and the Piping Plover Project since my first couple months in Syracuse in 2015. I had just finished my first field job working with Atlantic Coast piping plovers, which coincided with the first summer we saw Great Lakes piping plovers back on the eastern Lake Ontario shoreline. Through SUNY ESF, I was a Federal Work-Study FORCES Steward for two school years, a FORCES Dune Restoration Steward for a season, and then the Piping Plover Project Coordinator for two years. My experience with Parks and with the project helped me grow as a person, biologist, and educator. The project saw its first piping plover chicks, increased education on and off the beach, and hopefully a change in views from the public. The FORCES Stewards I worked with over the years were passionate, and dedicated; spending their summer weekends protecting a species and a rare ecosystem. It was so hard for me to walk away from a project I have loved so dearly. FORCES is the foundation of this project, and I know it is in good hands and will continue to grow on the backs of dedicated students and staff. Thank you for the many years of laughs, sun tans, cute chicks, and unbelievable growth!



### ~Maya Thompson



I will really miss the environment that FORCES offers. It is very refreshing to work with others that share a similar mindset and want to be conscious environmental stewards. Though I am leaving this position, I will still be in the area and working for NYS Parks as a Watercraft Steward on Cayuga Lake. I look forward to seeing all the amazing things that happen with FORCES this summer!

### **\*Attention FORCES Alumni\***

What is your legacy? We want to hear your stories and learn what you are now up to. Please send us an update! Contact: [Amy.Kochem@parks.ny.gov](mailto:Amy.Kochem@parks.ny.gov)

# The Force Behind FORCES Picture Page



Photos: OPRHP



OPRHP and NYS DEC's 11th Annual Ice Fishing Clinic at Canadarago Lake on February 19.



SUNY ESF's Ecological Restoration Club at Chittenango Falls after surveying for hemlock woolly adelgid.



Members of the FORCES Team at Hartwick College's Pine Lake Environmental Campus in January.



FORCES Steward Bill Wolff collects data for research on common buckthorn at Clark Reservation State Park.



Trail Stewards TJ Clark and Tanner Holthouse cutting down a *Phragmites* patch at Four Mile State Park.



Trail Stewards using a hand saw to cut down a large fallen branch along the trails at Wilson-Tuscarora State Park.



Charlie Ippolito and Kyle Webster planting in the Oak-Hickory savanna restoration area at Ganondagan SHS.



Friends of Recreation, Conservation  
and Environmental Stewardship

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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.**

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