

SUNY Potsdam Environmental Studies News



Greetings!

We hope this finds you and your loved ones well in these turbulent times. As we come to the end of a most unusual year, we pause to send you greetings.

Reflecting on the past year I am struck by the adaptability and resilience of our students and faculty:

- We were still able to welcome incoming freshman into our *Adirondack Experience* (FIG). Despite social distancing protocols, numerous field trips with Dr. Donald McNutt, Dr. Kate Cleary, and Dr. Glenn Johnson brought their classroom lessons vividly to life.
- Dr. Claudia Ford, Dr. Kate Cleary, and Dr. Jess Rogers created a new textbook: *Introduction to Environmental Studies* (Cognella Academic Publishing). Published this fall, it will serve as our new common text for all ENVR 110 classes.
- Student Allie Rivera became North Country Public Radio's first Korva Coleman intern. Hear her interviewed at [this link](#).
- Dr. Jess Rogers and administrative assistant Sarah Carr were both recognized with President's Awards.
- Dr. Claudia Ford and Dr. Matt LaVine were instrumental to *Days of Reflection*, and Dr. Ford moderated a panel during the month-long [North Country Art, Land, and Environment Summit](#) (see site for recordings of all of the amazing programs).
- And much more....as you will see in these pages.

We'd love to hear what you've been up to as well! Please drop us a line and stay in touch (see contact info request on p. 8).

May you be well,
Heather Sullivan-Catlin, Ph.D., Chair

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Meet the Faculty



Dr. Claudia J. Ford teaches Environmental Studies, Environmental Justice & Literature, Environmental and Business Ethics, and Global Business Economics. She is currently serving as the Interim Chief Diversity Officer at SUNY Potsdam. Dr. Ford has had a career in women's health and international development spanning three decades and all continents. Her research interests are in traditional ecological knowledge, agroecology, historical ethnobotany,

medicinal plants, and reproductive health justice. Dr. Ford is also a midwife, writer, and visual artist, and has shared the joys and adventures of her global travel with her four children.

Dr. Heather Sullivan-Catlin joined the Sociology Department in 2000 and has been active in the Environmental Studies program since its inception. Her primary areas of work in environmental sociology center on sustainable communities (especially cohousing and ecovillages) and community food security. She is actively engaged in applied learning and incorporates service-learning activities into many of her courses, involves students in community-based research projects, serves as sponsor for student interns, and leads travel courses abroad and field trips closer to home - all in an effort to provide students with important opportunities to develop into engaged global citizens. Putting these ideas into practice in her own life, Dr. Sullivan-Catlin has been active in local sustainability efforts, chiefly through her long involvement with GardenShare, a non-profit community food security organization for which she served as president from 2008-2013. She is currently an active member of the advisory board for Thrive Ecovillage Education Center (Ithaca, NY). In between teaching and marching, her favorite pastimes include reading eco-apocalyptic novels, canoe camping in the Adirondacks, hiking, biking, and having fun with her husband and two daughters.

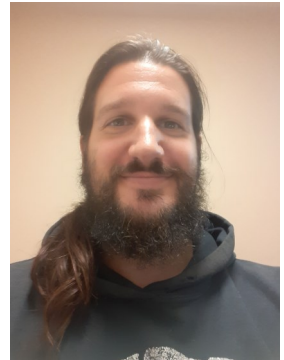


Dr. Jessica Rogers, a North Country native, has returned after receiving her undergraduate degree at Princeton University and her masters and PhD at Columbia University. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Biology and Environmental Studies at SUNY Potsdam. Her research interests look at landscape conservation: more traditionally through deforestation changes in protected areas using GIS (Geographic Information Systems), as well as examining practical methods of conservation in the North Country. More information about Dr. Roger's research and teaching can be found at drjessicarogers.weebly.com.

Dr. Kate Cleary is a conservation biologist with experience working in diverse ecosystems in the Rocky Mountain west, Latin America, and most recently, the Adirondacks. She holds a PhD in Ecology and Conservation Genetics from the University of Idaho, and an MSc in Conservation Biology from Colorado State University. In between earning these degrees, Cleary served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala from 2007-2010, and conducted research as a Fulbright Student Scholar in Costa Rica in 2013. Her current research interests are relevant in both the tropics and the North Country: she is interested in conservation on private lands, wildlife habitat connectivity, and sustainable and biodiversity-friendly agricultural systems. Cleary moved to the North Country four years ago and is very happy to have landed at SUNY Potsdam - she values the campus's small size, commitment to diversity, and appreciation for interdisciplinary teaching and research.



After growing up in central New York (like all places he has lived, traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy—specifically, the Oneida Nation), **Dr. Matthew LaVine** earned a BA in Philosophy and Mathematics, as well as an MA in Mathematics, from SUNY Potsdam before earning an MA and PhD in Philosophy from the University at Buffalo. His interest in the environment was solidified by his experiences working on a small organic farm just outside of Utica, NY as a teenager. Since becoming a member of the Environmental Studies department, Matt has taught upper-division courses on Environmental Ethics and Environmental Justice, as well as a new critical thinking seminar on residential segregation. His approach to the environment is largely driven by the idea that we cannot hope to have a significant impact on the rampant environmental degradation all around us without our world moving in a more just direction and vice versa!



Other ES Faculty Include

- ◆ Glenn Johnson
Professor, Biology
- ◆ Donald McNutt
Associate Professor, English & Communication
- ◆ Timothy Messner
Associate Professor, Anthropology
- ◆ Michael Rygel
Chair/Professor, Geology
- ◆ Adam Wheeler
Coordinator, Wilderness Education

Faculty & Students Attend Youth Climate Summit



In November 2019, three Environmental Studies students joined Dr. Heather Sullivan-Catlin and Dr. Kate Cleary at the 2019 Adirondack Youth Climate Summit. Held at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake, NY, the two-day summit brought together 180 high school and college students, teachers, and faculty from 30 schools across Northern New York. With a combination of

informative plenary sessions and workshops, young people work towards a more sustainable future. Along with the SUNY Potsdam faculty, Nadya Diaz '21, Alana Castillo '23, and Kristina Martunis '23 heard researched based information about the economic and ecological consequences of climate change, learned climate resiliency strategies for their schools and communities, developed a Climate Action Plan to be implemented at SUNY Potsdam, and increased their climate literacy and leadership skills.

New Sustainability Minor



In Spring 2020, SUNY Potsdam approved a new Sustainability Minor housed in the depart-

ment of Environmental Studies. The new minor allow students from any area of study to explore sustainability in the environment, society, and the economy of our increasingly complex and interdependent world. It will prepare students for leadership roles in the transition toward a more resilient, sustainable society. The minor will draw from and supplement any major, enabling students to apply sustainability to their chosen field and enhance their career opportunities.

New Minor Spans Multiple Departments

Students who declare the minor will have the opportunity to take courses through multiple departments across campus including:

- ◆ Anthropology
- ◆ Biology
- ◆ English & Communication
- ◆ Economics
- ◆ Geology
- ◆ History
- ◆ Physics
- ◆ Politics
- ◆ Sociology
- ◆ Wilderness Education

Student Spotlight: LeighAnn Montaglione



When she wrapped up her final semester at SUNY Potsdam and looks to new horizons, LeighAnn Montaglione '20 will carry a keepsake with her. Her photo of the Adirondack mountains fills the 2018 cover of North Country Literary Magazine, and in three other inside pages of the student-run publication, her images are as quiet

and eternal as the woods and their deep, cool rock. Montaglione knew exactly what she wanted to study when she arrived at SUNY Potsdam, and she was quick to lay out her own trail in a place she chose because it is off the beaten path. She was immediately impressed with the interdisciplinary nature of the environmental studies major, which offers courses from 14 departments and emphasizes humanities and social sciences, natural sciences, skills and a capstone experience — a curriculum intended to connect students to the environment in a hands-on manner, while giving them a deep lens through which to view environmental policy.

“The program here is different,” she said. “You can test out the waters before you declare a major, which is amazing. I love being around Potsdam. It’s nice to be able to get away from the outside world and focus on my studies and photography.”

The Adirondack Experience first-year program really opened Montaglione’s eyes to her potential. Designed for students who share a concern for the environment, the program emphasizes the 6 million-acre park as a classroom, immersing students in their first year.

Her first semester found Montaglione wading through bogs, sampling water, surveying species and recording field experiences. Some days she sat on big rocks and journaled about the new feelings the forest gave her as she exited her comfort zone.

Her photography improved. Montaglione’s computer is now full of images of plants, toads, turtles and beaver habitat. One of her favorites shows the Whiteface Mountain Field Station, where she observed the study of cloud-borne pollution. Environmental Studies Assistant Professor Dr. Jessica Rogers enriched the experience with “a wealth of knowledge about career paths” and her quickness to give one-on-one attention and help with individual research projects and internships, Montaglione said.

The Adirondacks stayed with Montaglione, turning her into a skier and avid hiker. But whispers of the ocean also remained in her consciousness. Her dream is to return after graduation to her home on Long Island and work there in marine conservation. She hopes to go back this April to engage in a citizen science project sponsored by the South Fork Natural History Museum and Nature Center to study the nesting and eating habits of horseshoe crabs. She is also working on an endeavor involving horseshoe crabs for her senior capstone project, one which examines the biological and social effects the crabs have on communities and how citizen science can protect them.

“I love horseshoe crabs,” she said. “I have ever since I was a little girl. I think they are misunderstood. Everyone thinks they are ugly; I think they’re adorable.”

The big takeaway for Montaglione when she leaves SUNY Potsdam? A sense of her own growth and confidence.

“My personality has changed; I’ve grown up a lot here,” she said. “Research has become a lot easier since I got here. I’ve also become a pretty good problem solver. The Adirondacks changed my life.”

Article by Bret Yager. Photos by Jason Hunter

and eternal as the woods and their deep, cool rock.

“I wanted them in black and white because it’s timeless and there is a beauty to it,” she said. “Color photos tell you what the photographer wants you to see, but black and white imagery allows you to have your own interpretation.”

Even without visual reminders, Montaglione will never forget how the mountains shaped her during the Adirondack Experience program and were a silent guide through the following years as she pursued a major in environmental studies. Her examination both of the environment and of photography are rooted in a deep passion for nature and a desire to protect it — motives that predate her ability to describe the feelings which moved her. A stranger to mountains, she spent entire childhood days on the beaches of her family home at the east end of Long Island.

“As I got older, I wanted to keep the memory of the beaches stronger so I started to photograph them,” she said. “It just kind of grew from there.”

The Southampton shoreline was also where Montaglione first witnessed the pollution and destructive development that drove her to pursue a major in environmental studies.

“I just wanted to make it stop,” she said. “I wanted to be able to come home and put an end to it. It’s getting better, but we still have a lot of work to do.”

Today, Montaglione uses her camera to help preserve nature. Citizen science — which has exploded in popularity in recent years — relies on images and observations of nature uploaded by just about anyone who wishes to engage, their work becoming part of vast databases which help scientists in everything from understanding and controlling invasive species to saving rare butterflies. Her photos also help to map what she has witnessed.

“You want to be able to photograph the landscape so you know what the setting was when you go back to study it,” she said. “You also want to be able to see species.”

Species like the carnivorous pitcher plants which grow in the Adirondack bogs and fill up with water to drown their prey.

“I always like to say when they are collecting water they are getting hungry,” she said. “With a photograph, I remember all of these details. Citizen science and photography go hand in hand.”

Dedicated Students Care for Critters on Campus

When the SUNY Potsdam campus closed in mid-March due to the COVID 19 pandemic two Environmental Studies majors became essential workers. Under the supervision of Biology Professor Dr. Glenn Johnson, Amber Rudolph '20 (right) and Morgan Gregg '20 (left) became responsible for caring for, feeding and giving companionship to a mottled cadre of turtles, aquarium fish, geckos, bearded dragons and snakes. A job that had previously been shared by 12-15 people prior to the pandemic. This was a huge undertaking with tanks and terrariums to be cleaned, fish to be fed, turtle salads and gecko hors d'oeuvres to be made, and several scaly backs to be stroked just so their owners know someone is out there.

Delivered to the Biology Department over several years, many of the creatures have transcended trauma or neglect, were brought in hurt, or were confiscated from their last abode by the Department of Environmental Conservation. (Photos by Jason Hunter)



“Keeping them social is always good,” Rudolph observed. “Especially the snakes, so they don’t get snippy.”

ES Professor Fights Invasive Purple Loosestrife



By Brett Yager

Purple loosestrife — chances are you've seen it growing along the roads, and you may even have thought its purple spires were a thing of beauty. SUNY Potsdam Professor Dr. Jessica Rogers is passionate about the flower — but not in the way you might think.

Rogers has spent the past three years getting to know this invasive species, documenting hundreds of areas in Northern New York infest-

ed by the weed, which can swallow wetlands and drive out the species that depend on them. She has introduced thousands of beetles which dine on loosestrife foliage, and now, Rogers thinks she understands enough about the plant to offer a two-pronged solution involving the beetles and altered mowing practices.

This week, Rogers and her team used a drone for the first time to document just how far the weed is reaching into the Wilson Hill Wildlife Management Area near the St. Lawrence River, adding to three years of work trudging and surveying more than 200 miles of North Country roadways. The news so far, across 700 infestation sites from Massena to South Colton and east to Alexandria Bay, has been sobering.

“Ultimately, it will flood through here and take over everything, replacing these cattails,” Rogers said. “If we do nothing, in 10 years this won't be a wetland; it will be a dry loosestrife field. Goodbye wetlands, and goodbye all of the animals living in the wetlands — which is my biggest concern.”



Rogers has found that increased levels of loosestrife — a Eurasian native — coincides with frequent road-side mowing. In the not-too-distant future, she expects to have a study which could well inform policy surrounding state and municipal mowing. Her recommendation may be simple enough. Instead of spreading the seeds with machines, “mow before the blooms are up,” she said.

Besides creating ecologically barren areas, a loosestrife takeover and loss of wetlands would pose huge problems for birds using the region as a stopover on their migration routes. Rogers plans to learn more about the spreading threat, using new data from the drones, gathered with the help of intern and geology student Angus Armstrong '21 and technical support from SUNY Potsdam Assistant Professor of Geology Adam Pearson. The summer's work has been supported by the T. Urling and Mabel Walker Research Fellowship Program.

Preventing human-aided spread of the invasive would complement Rogers' plan to use her survey data to locate the most important places for releasing more beetles, *galerucella calamerensis*, also a Eurasian species that keeps loosestrife in check in its native region. In three years, she has used an increasing number of the insects as biocontrol at a growing number of sites. The beetles have shown encouraging willingness to make salad out of purple loosestrife.

“The beetles are only about half the size of a pinky fingernail,” Rogers said. “My interns laugh at me when I call them my babies.”

Rogers released in 2018 a supply of 1,100 of the beetles, given to her by the New York State Department of Environmental Control. Last summer, she set up a beetle hatchery and propagated 5,000 more of the insects for further distribution in the weediest areas.

“Now we are seeing larvae on the tops of the plants, which we never saw before,” Rogers said. “In areas where we released the beetles two years ago, they're eating up the plants like crazy.”



SUNY Potsdam Assistant Professor Jessica Rogers and intern Angus Armstrong use a drone to survey wetland areas near Massena, NY, where invasive purple loosestrife is spreading.

Where Are They Now?

We Want to Hear From You!

Do you have exciting news to share? The Environmental Studies Department wants to celebrate all of your professional and personal achievements! We would love to hear about your most memorable moments from your time at SUNY Potsdam and possibly feature your story in an upcoming edition of the department newsletter. Please feel free to share any updates with the department by posting on our Facebook page at facebook.com/sunypotsdamenvironmentalstudies or by emailing Sarah Carr, department secretary, at carrsl@potsdam.edu.

In December, 2016, Alycia Lynch graduated from SUNY Potsdam with a major in Environmental Studies and minor in Geology. She is happily engaged and will be getting married in the fall of 2020. Alycia lives in Canton, NY, on a small hobby farm, raising chickens, ducks, goats, horses, and, hopefully, Dexter cattle (very soon). In January 2017, she was hired as a District Technician for Franklin County Soil and Water where her duties include every thing from erosion assessments and hydroseeding, to stream re-stabilization and culvert surveying, from agricultural work, to permit and grant writing.

Currently, Alycia is the head of the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program, which is a voluntary, completely free, confidential program through Soil and Water Conservation Districts that help farmers meet business objectives while protecting and conserving the state's natural resources.

Within the AEM program, she has the ability to conduct on-site farm visits, work with the Amish and Mennonite community, host workshops to educate farmers, as well as create new programs to aid the farming and general community.

Alycia is also currently working to create a Pollinator Program and



with the help of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Agricultural Division, in 2020 Franklin County Soil and Water will host a workshop for the community to learn about pollinators and their importance to rural and farming landscapes.

Alycia also serves as the head of the Invasive Species monitoring program. They are currently assessing Japanese knotweed plants throughout the southern part of the county, mainly Tupper Lake and Saranac Lake. She GPS the location of a plant or infestation and collects data on its size and density of it. The public is then educated on various invasive species, their environmental and economic impact, dangers to human health, and ways to eradicate them.



Where Are They Now?



“There is no doubt that SUNY Potsdam helped me land where I am today! I am so thankful for the people I met, the experiences I had and the knowledge I gained to make a career out of something that has had a place in my heart my entire life, the outdoors!”

Mark Sudak graduated from SUNY Potsdam in 2015 with a major in Environmental Studies and a double minor in Biology and Wilderness Education. Since then, he has pursued a career in outdoor education. Mark accepted a seasonal position at YMCA Camp Mason in New Jersey in the fall of 2015 teaching outdoor education to students ranging in age from elementary school to college. The programs he ran included orienteering, survival and canoeing, as well as several ecology courses focused on waterways, forests, wetlands and wildlife. In addition, several high adventure programs including rock climbing, teambuilding and an extensive high ropes course were offered. Mark spent his winters working at a rock climbing gym near his hometown in Westchester, NY.

In the winter of 2018, Mark became the Outdoor Education Program Coordinator at New York’s YMCA Camp near Port Jervis, NY. The full-time year-round position allows him to teach in the field with a high adventure program. Located an hour from the heart of the Hudson Valley, two hours from the Catskills, and four hours from the high peaks of the Adirondacks, he has tremendous recreational opportunities to both work and play outside.

Give to the Environmental Studies Department

SUNY Potsdam's Department of Environmental Studies offers many programs and experiences for students that would not be possible without your support. From field experiences to scholarships, your generosity provides opportunities for students to excel as scholars and citizens of the world. YOU can make a difference in the lives of our students!

- **Give online!** Visit SUNY Potsdam's giving form at potsdam.edu/give. To restrict your gift, select "Other" in the designation field and type "Department of Environmental Studies."
- **Send a check!** Mail your check, made out to "Potsdam College Foundation," to the College Advancement Office with the giving form provided below.
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- **Establish an endowed fund** to impact environmental studies students for generations.

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Thank you for joining with other alumni and friends to ensure the continued growth of our department and our students!



Make your gift to support Environmental Studies today!



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2019-2020 Academic Achievements



- * **Kappa Alpha Omicron Honor Society Inductees:**
Nolan Rishe, Caitlin Murney, Ryan Potter
- * **Environmental Studies Department Scholar**
Kayleigh Stonier
- * **Omohundro Environmental Studies Scholarship**
Nicholas Joslin
- * **Environmental Studies Award**
Samantha Marill, Caitlin Murney, Nolan Rishe, Amber Rudolph

Please Keep in Touch!

We would love to know what you're up to after graduating from SUNY Potsdam!

Visit potsdam.edu/alumni/services/update to update the Alumni Association about yourself, and your contact information.

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facebook.com/SUNYPotsdamEnvironmentalStudies

A Trip to the Farm

From left, **Mardra Alvarenga '21** walks with **Dr. Kate Cleary**, an assistant professor of environmental studies, during a visit to Martin's Farm in Potsdam in August. Alvarenga is worked as an intern this summer to create videos for Cleary's Sustainable Agriculture class being offered this fall. With the pre-recorded content from local farms, students will be able to virtually visit local farms, and take a closer look at sustainable agriculture practices in the North Country. Biology Instructor Ray Bowdish will be teaching the course with Cleary this fall.

Photo by Jason Hunter



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