

BIOLOGY NEWSLETTER

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LAUREN CONNER & BIOSWALES OF NEW HAVEN

In May of 2023, Lauren Conner worked alongside Dr. Kelsey Fisher at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) on a new project focusing on insect biodiversity in bioswales, guided by her faculty mentor Dr. Neeta Connally. She mentions surveying bioswales by analyzing vegetation and percent cover, along with using sweeping techniques were used to collect insects. "Samples were brought back to the CAES where I sorted the insects, identified them by order, pinned them, and labeled them for identification."

Conner reminisces on her experience, stating "This project allowed me to succeed in all aspects of the Applied Stewardship learning outcomes. I was able to work in a professional setting at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, which resulted in the production of several maps and figures using a handful of databases to summarize the data that I collected. I was also able to establish long term and short-term goals, which will allow this project to continue beyond my work this semester. Overall, I gained project management and collaboration skills that I will definitely take with me as I move forward professionally."



SKYE ZELENSKI & BLACKLEGGED TICKS

Working with the WCSU Tickborne Disease Prevention Lab, Skye Zelenski sought to elucidate trends in a 13-year nymphal blacklegged tick dataset to explore how tick biodiversity impacts human disease risk. Under the guidance of her faculty mentor, Dr. Neeta Connally, Zelenski reflects on her project stating "I improved my data and project management skills, and communication with stakeholders. Also, not only was I introduced to new aspects of biology, but I was exposed to the exciting world of entomology. I also learned that data management and research are time consuming and require patience. I acquired a newfound respect for statisticians and professionals who manage data files of this magnitude on a regular basis. I also learned that although it was challenging at times, I liked organizing the data as well as presenting my findings to the team. It was very rewarding each week discussing the data with the Tick Lab and seeing their enthusiasm when their decades (plus) work was finally shown through something tangible like a graph."

With graduation in sight, Zelenski leaves her final notes expressing her gratitude for the stewardship opportunity. "I can confidently say that my stewardship proposal was more than fulfilled. This experience has exceeded my expectations and provided me with not only technical skills to add to my resume, but expanded my view on the possibilities of science and what I may do as a biologist."