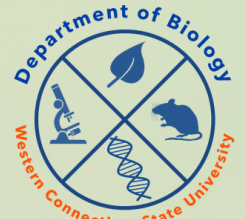


WSCU BIOLOGY

Applied Stewardship Newsletter

Spring 2026 / Summer 2026 Issue



ANNABELLE BORK

SPRING '26



This spring, **Annabelle Bork** spent the semester in Long Island, New York, helping rehabilitate 25 wild, juvenile Kemp's ridley sea turtles with the Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMSEAS). These endangered turtles had become cold-stunned due to sudden drops in water temperature and required rehabilitation before they could be safely returned to the ocean. Through her work with AMSEAS, Annabelle gained hands-on experience providing daily animal care and monitoring the turtles as their health and activity improved. She also trained and assisted with necropsies of several sea turtle and cetacean species, learning the importance of determining causes of death and collecting data to support marine conservation efforts. "Seeing the increase in activity and liveliness of these animals over the weeks as their health improved was the highlight of my week," Annabelle shared. She is grateful to the staff at AMSEAS, especially Kim Durham, as well as Dr. Pinou, the Integrative Biological Diversity program, and her peers for their support in making this experience possible. "This was an integral project in my learning, and I'm excited to see what I can do next!"

JAM HAYTON

SPRING '26

This spring, **Jam Hayton** developed a GIS-based mapping and assessment framework for two dam impoundment sites in Connecticut: Factory Pond in Redding and Bray's Buckle Dam in Waterbury. The project organized existing site data and mapped trace-metal concentrations in relation to sediment-quality guidelines to support future sediment and habitat assessments. Both sites have long industrial histories and known contamination concerns, including metals such as arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, and zinc. Jam's project explored how GIS can help visualize environmental risk, identify areas of concern, and guide future sampling and management efforts. The experience allowed Jam to connect GIS, environmental chemistry, and conservation planning with real-world environmental decision-making. It also highlighted the importance of site history, stakeholder needs, sampling logistics, and clear communication when developing projects that can be useful beyond the classroom. Overall, the project strengthened Jam's skills in GIS and environmental assessment while supporting his broader interests in sediment quality, contaminant transport, and dam-impoundment management in Connecticut.



Laura Eagle's applied stewardship project took an unexpected path from her original interest in promoting ethical wildlife viewing to developing educational resources for the Peabody Museum. After volunteering at the museum and working with Dr. Weinbaum, Laura recognized an opportunity to create materials that would allow high school students to independently explore the museum's paleontology collections. Originally envisioning a tour guide-style resource, Laura shifted her approach after speaking with a high school biology teacher and learning that teachers would benefit more from activities students could complete on their own. Her project now focuses on creating an educational workbook that connects museum exhibits with engaging, student-centered activities. Through the project, Laura gained valuable experience researching paleontology, developing educational materials, and adapting her ideas based on the needs of educators and museum staff. She also discovered a new interest in science education and outreach. Inspired by the experience, Laura has applied to teach an adult enrichment course at Hamden Adult Education and hopes to continue supporting educational programming at the Peabody Museum.



During Summer 2026, **Zeanna Graves** worked with the Terrapin Tracking Team (The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, CT DEEP, and WCSU) to support community outreach. She worked with the citizen science volunteer program that tracks diamondback terrapin population distribution and trends across the state. She created online platforms for data collection to streamline data management and entry. Additionally, she interviewed volunteers involved in the program individually to gain insight into demographic information as well as obtain feedback about the program to improve materials and organization for future years. She gave a general public talk about terrapin biology and conservation and created educational materials. Zeanna also was interviewed and shot a video about terrapin research in the state to be used for education in the Connecticut school system. This stewardship project has fostered her scientific communication skills. She got to connect with the community and create resources for volunteers and CT schools. This project has expanded her network and helped her to become a more well-rounded scientist. She hopes to maintain her connections and continue working with this project. Zeanna is very thankful for this opportunity and Bridget Cervero at The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk for her support and guidance on this project!

CHRISTA PICCORELLI

SUMMER '26

This summer, **Christa Piccorelli** worked to improve trail safety, accessibility, and community engagement at WCSU's Westside Nature Preserve. Through weeks of hiking and observation, she documented improvements throughout the preserve, including new trail markers, cleared pathways, and upgraded kiosks and benches. She also developed a community engagement plan to encourage future student and volunteer involvement in maintaining and improving the preserve. The project provided valuable experience in land management, standardized documentation, and environmental stewardship. Learning about the preserve's history and its importance to WCSU deepened Christa's appreciation for the responsibility of caring for the land and making it accessible to others. She hopes to continue contributing to the preserve and helping create a safe, welcoming environment where students and community members can connect with nature.



BRYAN LEHNER

SUMMER '26

This summer, **Bryan Lehner** studied birch seedling and sapling regrowth rates in tree-fall gaps at the Mianus River Gorge in Bedford, NY. These gaps, created when trees fall and open the forest canopy, provide valuable opportunities to study forest regeneration and ecological change. Working with research scientist Dr. Chris Nagy, Bryan examined preliminary trends in a large dataset to better understand birch regrowth across different areas of the preserve. This project provided his first experience with field research and large-scale ecological data analysis while strengthening his skills in Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint. The experience also increased Bryan's confidence in pursuing graduate school and provided valuable mentorship in ecological research. He plans to continue contributing to the tree-fall gap study in the coming spring and summer, with the goal of supporting findings that may eventually be published in a scientific journal.