SLELO PRISM

St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Invasive Species Management

"Teaming Up to Stop the Spread of Invasive Species"

2023 Autumn Newsletter

3,500 Plantings Help to Restore Native Habitat

Photo © OPRHP

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About the Cover: Plantings Help Restore Native Habitat

By: Maria Cipullo– 1000 Islands Regional Trails Coordinator, SCA Supervisor

Late summer 2023 brought a long-awaited and highly anticipated chapter to Wellesley Island State Park. On September 14th and 15th employees of NYS Parks' Plant Materials Program, Thousand Islands Region, and Statewide Environmental Division were joined by Student Conservation Association members as part of the latest chapter in *Phragmites* control and ecosystem restoration at the entrance and eastern side of the State Park. Over 3,500 individual plants were given new permanent homes among the resident cattails, sedges, button bush, and more.

Wellesley Island's shallow emergent marshes, red maple hardwood swamps, and shrub swamps are well-known Blanding's turtle habitat – a NYS threatened, IUCN endangered species. This species and countless other amphibians, fish, and insects rely on the open water channels that connect between aquatic plants for nesting, feeding, shelter, and rest. When *Phragmites* takes over, its' dense carpet of root mats creates a barrier impossible to pass through. So, NYS Parks created a plan of attack – control the invasive and restore with native plant species.

Beginning in 2019, the Thousand Islands NYS Parks Region has physically cut the *Phragmites* stalks in winter, using the ice to our advantage. This cutting revealed the active stalks over the growing season, which were then targeted and treated with an herbicide every fall to stunt the growth and cause dieback year after year. This method ensured that as little herbicide as possible was utilized. During year one, these stalks were an average of 9 feet tall and as of this year ,the average height is 4ft.

Simultaneously since 2019, the NYS Parks' Plant Materials Program has harvested a variety of native seeds from throughout the State Park and grown them in their nursery located in Sonnenburg Gardens. Collecting seeds locally ensures that their genetic makeup can survive in the north country's seasonality, specifically our harsh winters.

After 4 years of combined efforts, the patches have shrunk by roughly 40%, became less dense, and are physically stunted. This progress was needed to plant the nursery stock on site. Plantings were focused on 1.9 acres of successfully controlled previous-*Phragmites* sites. The 3500+ planting list included: tall flat-topped white aster, rough-leaved goldenrod, American bur-reed, New England aster, common fringed sedge, crested sedge, sallow sedge, fowl manna grass, sensitive fern, buttonbush, silky dogwood, common winterberry, and narrow-leaved meadowsweet. There was a palpable optimism in the air, and the work was light with so many helpful hands!

Protector's Activity

SLELO PRISM-Megan Pistolese-Shaw

Invasive plants outcompete native vegetation. Loss of native plants reduces available food sources and habitat for wildlife. Two invasive plants that you can find easily in the fall and winter are bittersweet and porcelain berry vines, both of which have distinctive berries that are present this time of year.

Invasive Bittersweet

Celastrus orbiculatus

Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) is a deciduous perennial woody vine in the Staff-tree family and is native to eastern Asia. Bittersweet outcompetes trees, shrubs, and other vegetation through climbing and shading. It may also kill trees by girdling them. **Where to Search:** Check your property for woody vines that have bright red berries surrounded by yellow capsules located along the vine. Search along yard edges and near the base and trunks of trees. **Spread:** Bittersweet reproduces by seed and through vegetative sprouting. Birds feed on and disperse the plant's fruits aiding in the spread of bittersweet. Discarded wreaths with bittersweet vines are also a pathway for spread as the seeds remain viable even after being dried and can germinate if the wreath is discarded outside. Bittersweet is widespread in the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario (SLELO) region.

Porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) is an invasive woody vine in the grape family and is native to northeast Asia. With the ability to climb over 15 feet in a growing season, porcelain berry easily creates mats of thick twining vines that smother native vegetation.

Porcelain Berry

Ampelopsis brevipedunculata

Where to Search:
Check your property for woody vines that may have a shrub-like appearance with clusters of purple to blue-colored speckled berries with a porcelain shiny look to them. **Spread:** Porcelain berry reproduces by seed and through vegetative sprouting. Birds feed on and disperse the plant's fruits aiding in its spread. Another common method in which porcelain berry is spread is by homeowners who intentionally plant it in their yards not knowing that the plant is invasive. Porcelain berry was confirmed present in St. Lawrence County, and the population was manually removed and is monitored by our early detection team annually. We need your help to keep an eye out for this plant to ensure it doesn't become widespread (**join survey efforts**).

Get management information and more details about these species by reading the full **Protector's Activity Blog**

Updates From NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

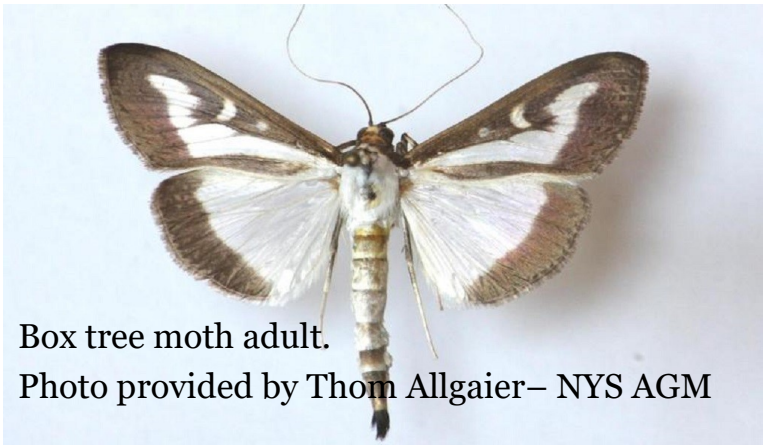
Thom Allgaier-Invasive Species Coordinator NYS AGM

2023 has been a busy year for New York State Agriculture and Markets (AGM). Since first being detected Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) (*Lycorma delicatula)* has slowly spread out and is now confirmed in 17 states. Closer to home SLF can now be found in 23 of New York's 62 counties. The highest populations are in New York City, Westchester, and western Long Island. We continue to monitor the spread of SLF with the help of community scientists, the PRISM network, and our own staff as well as other state agencies. Outside of NYC, Nassau, and Westchester counties, we encourage the public to report SLF sightings. The best way to report SLF is the online reporting tool Spotted Lanternfly Public Report (arcgis.com).

Photo provided by Thom Allgaier– NYS AGM

Reports can also be submitted to iMapInvasives. The online reporting tool allows us to best direct efforts to diminish the impacts on agricultural production areas, such as orchards and vineyards. AGM and other stakeholders continue to survey, trap, vacuum, scrape, and chemically treat SLF populations across the state. SLF egg-laying is currently occurring. Be vigilant in your efforts to spot these life stages during your survey efforts and report them if you are north of Westchester.

Box Tree Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) is another invasive pest AGM is working to contain. In 2021 shortly after Box Tree Moth (BTM) was first detected in Niagara County, AGM put a quarantine in place. The quarantine was recently updated on September 20, 2023 to encompass all of Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, and Wayne counties. Since then, BTM has been detected in Cayuga and Oswego counties– this being the first time BTM has been found in the SLELO PRISM region. The quarantine will be revised again in the coming months to address these new detections. The primary and only observed host in North America is Boxwood. Often found at culturally important sites like cemeteries, libraries, and historic sites Boxwood is praised for being shade tolerant and resistant to deer browsing.



Box tree moth adult.
Photo provided by Thom Allgaier– NYS AGM

Resources:

- **Report SLF**
- **Report BTM**
- **NYS AGM BTM Webpage**

Birds as a Habitat Health Indicator

By: Neil Gifford– Conservation Director, Albany Pine Bush

At the recent New York State Invasive Species Expo I was asked why my staff and I were banding birds? After all, they aren't invasive. While all native wildlife has a story to tell about ecosystem health if we can hear them, birds are especially generous storytellers. So, we were at the Expo to demonstrate the science of listening to what the banded birds can tell us. In addition to being extraordinarily wonderful ambassadors for North American wildlife, as biological indicators birds are relatively quick to respond to changes in ecosystem composition, structure, and function; this includes those changes brought by both the invasion and management of invasive species.

Prairie warbler © Neil Gifford

While clearly a problem in itself, the successful large-scale invasion of plant and animal species is often only a symptom of a much bigger problem with ecosystem health. The causes for this are frequently the loss of essential ecosystem processes resulting from the compounding effects of systems being reduced in their size and extent, fragmented and less diverse. Without a highly functional reference community, it can be difficult to fully understand just how unhealthy a system may be, let alone if our actions to manage invasives and improve ecosystem health are really improving things at all. If you have never seen or quantified a healthy ecosystem that supports viable populations of species that are now rare, how do you know what condition you are managing for or what success looks like?

This was certainly the case for inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens (PPSOB) in New York, and likely, many other ecosystems. Clones of black locust (*Robina pseudoacacia*), a non-native invasive legume perfectly suited to thrive in its nutrient-poor loamy fine sand, had replaced more than 700 acres of barrens in Albany when conservation efforts began in 1991. Nearly 400 acres of locust have been removed since 2006. In its place stand native grasses, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs sufficient to support a high-frequency, low-severity fire regime. Removing these clones of invasives and thinning forests of oak, pine and maple, has increased the amount of PPSOB from roughly 400 acres in 1990 to nearly 1500 acres today. But just because it looks better to our human eyes, and supports manageable wildland fire, has ecosystem health really improved much? Time to listen to the birds!

Birds as a Habitat Health Indicator cont…

By: Neil Gifford– Conservation Director, Albany Pine Bush

Point Count surveys tell us that the distribution and abundance of breeding season PPSOB birds have improved, but source-sink dynamics are complicated in fragmented urban landscapes. By banding birds, we can now identify individuals and evaluate population dynamics. In 2012 we joined the Institute for Bird Population's MAPS program. MAPS, or Measuring Avian Productivity and Survivorship— a standardized system for capturing and banding birds to evaluate a local breeding bird population. MAPS and point count data reveal that we have a robust and growing population of some birds that are declining. Our data reveals large populations of the suite (or sweet if you like) six pine barrens indicators, Prairie Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Bluebird, and Field Sparrow.

Left to right: USGS data logger and bird band on Eastern Whip-poor-will. Photos © Neil Gifford.

Banding reveals the annual survival rate of Prairie Warbler is near 70 percent. Equipping some of these birds with GPS and Geolocators is also helping us understand breeding season habitat use, migratory timing, and wintering locations. This ultimately helps us quantify how our local actions to conserve the barrens are advancing bird conservation at large. Banding and GPS tagging Eastern Whip-poo-will, a previously extirpated species, has been especially helpful in understanding how removing non-native invasive, and overabundant native plants has improved ecosystem health. As scientists, bird banding is teaching us much about the health of the barrens and the benefits of our management actions.

When combined with how these compositional and structural changes have improved rare species populations and influenced the function of wildland fire, birds are giving us a clearer picture of what healthy inland pine barrens should look like. Bird banding has an even larger role in our conservation work. As so many professionals who visited our Expo demonstration observed, a bird in hand can be a powerful ambassador for the work that's needed to effectively conserve and restore what's left of the wild places. Looking into the eyes of an animal that travels on the wind for thousands of miles between continents is a powerful window into the natural world and a wonder-filled reason to protect it.

2023 Management Efforts Update:

Giant Hogweed Control:
- 37 total sites managed
- 19 sites with no germination
- 4 sites retired
- 5 sites root cut
- 12 sites herbicide treatment
- 1 site no permission to treat

Swallow-wort:
- 58 sites managed
- 12 PCAs
- 113.87 acres under management
- 27.51 acres of presence area

Invasive Knotweed:
- 11 Sites being managed
- 4 PCAs
- 19.80 Acres under management
- .78 acres of presence area

Phragmites:
- 8 sites
- 6 PCAs
- 17.40 acres under management
- 1.18 acres presence area

Invasive Bittersweet:
- 11 sites
- 3 PCAs
- 26.18 acres under management
- 7.96 acres presence area

Biocontrol Updates:

Emerald Ash Borer Biocontrol Updates:
This year was our second year participating in the USDA's EAB biocontrol release program at Rice Creek Field Station at SUNY Oswego. This program involves a two year release of three species of parasitoid wasps followed by an EAB biocontrol establishment survey conducted at least a year after the last release of the wasps, which for this site will be 2025. This will most likely involve using yellow pan traps. Total parasitoid wasps by species released:

Kamal Mohamed– Director of Rice Creek Field Station. © SLELO PRISM/TNC

- 2,347 *Spathius galinae*
- 5,652 *Tetrastichus planipennisi*
- 2,200 *Oobius galinae*

Swallow-wort Biocontrol:
This year, we completed another biocontrol release of *Hypena opulenta* moths at four cage sites; two located at Robert Whele State Park and two located at Grenadier Island. On June 6th, we received 40 pupae from the NYS Invasive Species Research Institute for each of our four cages. Unfortunately only 6 adults emerged, and those adults did not produce any larvae. I observed white fungal growth on most of the pupae. This was observed by other organizations around New York that received pupae from NYISRI. Some of the pupae were sent to the Dylan Parry Lab at SUNY ESF to determine the exact cause of the lack of emergence from these pupae.

We decided, like last year, to purchase additional Hypena to release in mid-summer. On July 24, we released 90 larvae, 20 adults and 12 pupae. Initial June 6th pupae release failed. We had moderate success at cage 1 at Whele and Grenadier Island.

Below is an overview of the caged releases of *H. opulenta* this year.

Robert Whele Cage Defoliation:

- Cage 1: 40%
- Cage 2: 5%

Grenadier Island Cage Defoliation:

- Cage 1: 40%
- Cage 2: 10%
- 90 larvae released 10 ft. from each cage.
  - 20 adults placed in each cage.
  - 12 pupae placed in each cage.
  - 40 pupae received from NYS Invasive Species Research Institute sourced from the Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insects Laboratory in NJ.

Trail Surveys were conducted this year at Robert Wehle State Park. From June through August, park Staff, the New York Parks Invasive Species Team, and SLELO PRISM each walked a third of the trail system to search for signs of overwintering *H. opulenta* moths. Residents of Grenadier Island were provided a training and conducted surveys on the island. Unfortunately, no signs of overwintering *Hypena* moths were found at Whele or Grenadier Island.

Defoliated swallow-wort from 2023 *H. opulenta* cage release. © SLELO PRISM/TNC

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Biocontrol Updates:

Since finding the first HWA site in 2021 at Oswego County Reforestation Area, SLELO PRISM and New York State Parks Staff have found seven sites with HWA (see above map). The sites, mostly located along the Eastern Lake Ontario shoreline, are listed below along any biocontrol agents that have been released at those sites.

- Battle Island
- Camp Hollis
- Noyes Bird Sanctuary
- Oswego County Reforestation Area
- Independence Park (*Laricobius nigrinus* beetles-fall 2023)
- Mexico Point State Park (*Laricobius nigrinus* beetles-fall 2022)
- Selkirk Shores State Park (Silver flies *Leucotaraxis piniperda*-spring 2023)

Map showing confirmed HWA presence in the SLELO region by year. ©TNC/SLELO

2023 Early Detection Efforts:

We are currently finishing up our Invasive Species Field Surveys. There were many Tier 3 and 4 species, such as swallowwort, phragmites, Japanese knotweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, European frogbit, and many others found at these PCAs, but no Tier 1 or Tier 2 species were found on any of the PCAs surveyed this year. Surveys are completed at the 8 PCAs listed below.

- Fish Creek WMA (aquatic/terrestrial)
- French Creek WMA (aquatic/terrestrial)
- Little John WMA (terrestrial)
- Mud Lake (aquatic)
- Tug Hill ISPZ (terrestrial)
- Whetstone Reservoir (aquatic)
- Limerick Cedars (terrestrial)
- Ontario Bay Initiative-Three Mile Creek (terrestrial)

2023 Restoration Updates:

We now have eight sites that we have selected to conduct restoration work.

Sites/Invasives Treated:

- Deer Creek WMA (*Phragmites)*
- Lakeveiw WMA (yellow iris)
- Upper & Lower Lakes WMA (knotweed)
- Selkirk Fen (*Phragmites*)

This year, we will plant additional species at Deer Creek WMA, El Dorado Preserve, and Black Pond WMA. We selected species for these sites that matched the ecological community and were present in the region. These include Big Bluestem, Swamp Milkweed, Blue-flag Iris, Soft Rush, Swamp Rose Mallow, Eastern Red Cedar, Sensitive Fern, New England Aster, New York Aster, and Common Yarrow.

Stands of *Phragmites* treated at Selkirk Fen © SLELO PRISM/TNC.

Vegetation plots were also randomly selected and used a square meter quadrat. Data was recorded in each plot to include the percent of grasses, sedges/rushes, forbs, shrubs, and trees. As well as the species present within and around a 20 foot barrier of the treatment area.

Lakeveiw WMA South Colwell Pond restoration plots © SLELO PRISM/TNC.

Aquatic Restoration and Resiliency Initiatives

SLELO PRISM – Brittney Rogers

Our 2023 Watercraft Inspection Steward Program co-administered with TILT, concluded on October 28, and was yet another successful season engaging the public about AIS issues. This year we kept four stewards on into the fall, and during that time we were able to reach over 3,300 additional people and intercept aquatic hitchhikers on 100 occasions. During the extension into the fall, we reached new audiences working along the Salmon River with fishermen who traveled to the area from all over the globe.

Preliminary results of the 2023 WISP data:

- 10,700 Surveys
- 22% boats were considered "dirty"
- 1,400 AIS Interceptions
- 25,910 People Reached
- 99% Participation Rate
- Launch visitors from 43 states

We are currently reviewing data for the final report, coming soon to our website!

2023 WISP ©TILT/SLELO


Photo monitoring point at North Sandy Pond Restoration site displaying success of phragmites treatments. ©TNC/SLELO.

Following three years of work assessing the riparian areas of South Sandy Creek, managing invasive species — knotweed and *Phragmites*, and conducting extensive native species surveys, we have completed phase four of this exciting work, enhancing the biodiversity and resilience of this precious resource in Eastern Lake Ontario. This spring, 45 people contributed to over 660 total person hours, 25% of which were volunteer hours. Where 6,714 plants were placed in the ground throughout the riparian areas of South Sandy Creek spanning over nearly 30 acres within the Lakeview WMA. This does not include the additional 504 plants planted at select HPAs as mentioned in the updates above. We will continue to conduct photo monitoring (see images below), treatments and planting assessments in the upcoming years (learn more about this project on our website).

For more information on these projects or any other aquatic invasive species focused project, contact the Aquatic Restoration and Resiliency Coordinator, Brittney Rogers at **Brittney.Rogers@tnc.org**

Update on HWA eDNA Sampling

APIPP/SLELO PRISM- Zack Simek

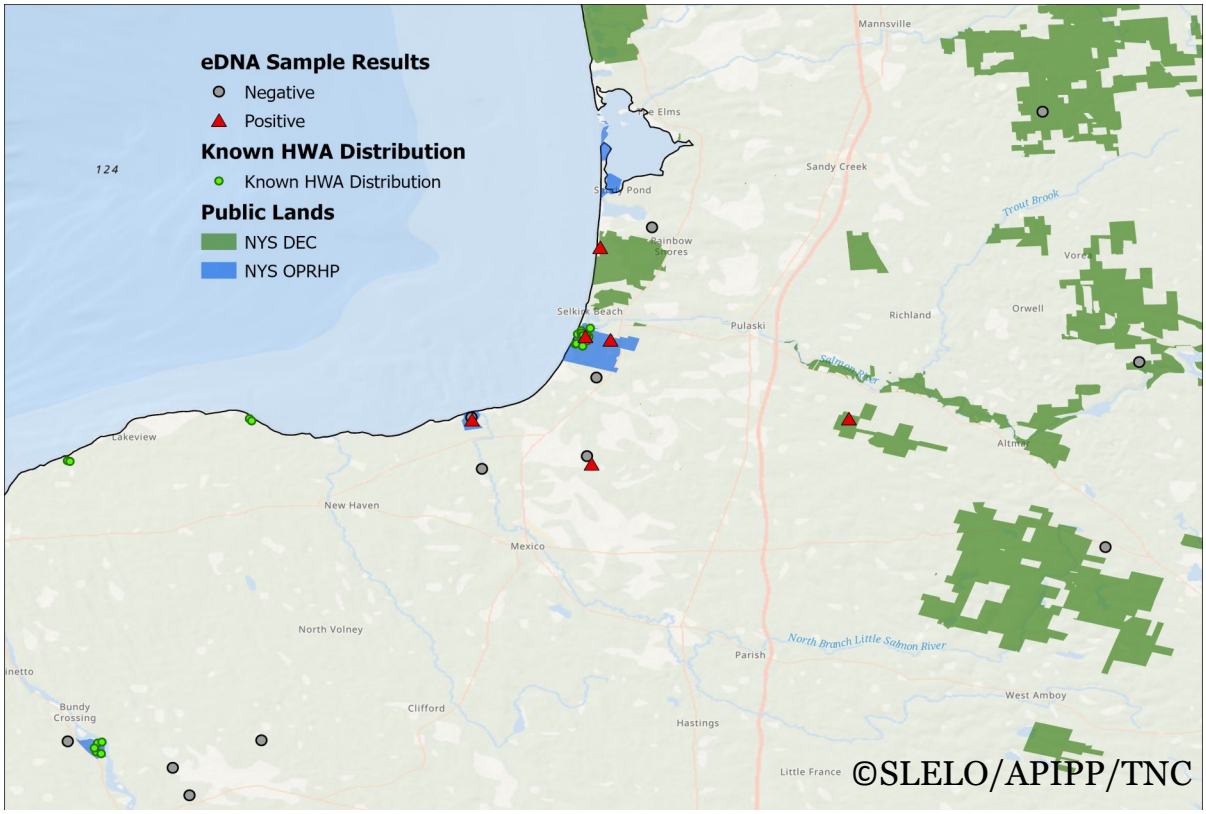
This spring, SLELO's Conservation and GIS Analyst collected hemlock branch samples from 18 locations in the PRISM to be analyzed by the New York State Hemlock Initiative (NYSHI) for the presence of eDNA. Sample sites were selected based on their proximity to known occurrences of HWA in the PRISM (within a 1, 2, 3, or 4-mile radius). In addition, four "early detection" sites were sampled, located greater than 4-miles from known occurrences from HWA. All "early detection" sites have been visually surveyed by SLELO staff for at least two seasons, providing a unique opportunity to compare the sensitivity of eDNA to boots on the ground surveys. Two "positive control" sites – where HWA is known to be present – were also sampled to validate the laboratory process.

Preliminary laboratory results found eDNA present at 6 of 18 (33%) of sample sites.

The positive eDNA sites included:

- Two "positive control" locations
- One site in the 0-1 mile buffer near Pine Grove
- One site in the 2-3 mile buffer at Lakeview Wildlife Management Area
- One site in the 3-4 mile buffer near Mexico Point State Park
- One "early detection" site at Altmar State Forest

Positive samples contained <1 to 1,953 copies of DNA/unit (mean = 518 copies/unit). The strongest signal was observed at both positive control sites and the 0-1 mile buffer site at Pine Grove. The weakest signal was observed at Altmar State Forest, with only 0.72 copies of DNA quantified per unit. The map below showcases the sample site results and locations.



This article is a follow up to SLELO's Spring 2023 Newsletter that featured an article about using environmental DNA (eDNA) as a novel early detection tool for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA).

Species Spotlight: Stiltgrass

Allison Curl-2023 SLELO/TILT Watercraft Inspection Steward

Microstegium vimineum, commonly known as stiltgrass, is native to East Asia and the Caucasus mountains. The plant most likely came to the United States as packing materials from China, found in Tennessee in 1919 (1). For the past 100 years, it has been spreading across the eastern US to 24 states and territories. As of 2011, stiltgrass was found in 16 counties in New York, most heavily in the lower Hudson river area, but as far north as Oswego county (2).

Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Stiltgrass prefers to live in nitrogen rich, acidic to neutral soil. They can be found in a variety of ecosystems including woods, wetlands, and fields (2). Deer typically eat native grasses, but tend to shy away from stiltgrass aiding in the ability of the plant to spread (3). When introduced to an area, stiltgrass has the ability to take over, crowding out ecologically important species. It can also have an impact on nutrient cycling and forest health.

Stiltgrass has thin, pale green, lance-shaped leaves, about 3 inches in length with a stripe of silver hairs down the midvein. It's leaves are arranged alternately along a branched stalk which can grow three feet in height. Leaves are smooth, a trait that helps distinguish from native whitegrass which has a rough texture. Flowers are delicate and grow on spikes in late summer-fall. Each year one plant can produce up to 1000 seeds (2). The seeds can remain viable for multiple years waiting for proper conditions and can be spread to new areas by hitchhiking on shoe treads, vehicle tires or through water (4). Seeds germinate after a disturbance such as flooding or high amounts of soil movement caused by logging, tilling, mowing, or construction. Therefore, minimizing disturbance to land reduces their spread potential (3).

Stiltgrass can be managed in multiple ways. Due to their shallow root system, stiltgrass can be easily dug or hand-pulled. Mechanical cuttings should occur in late summer, after seeds have germinated but before new seeds have formed. Timing is crucial for mechanical and chemical methods; to avoid a second flush of germination, trimming/mowing should be delayed until June and be completed by August. When using chemical methods, grass herbicides have been shown to be effective, but timing is difficult. Effort to introduce or re-establish native plantings in treated areas, where deer browse is low, should also be considered.

2023 Steward, Allison, showing handful of removed stiltgrass. © Brittney Rogers, TNC.

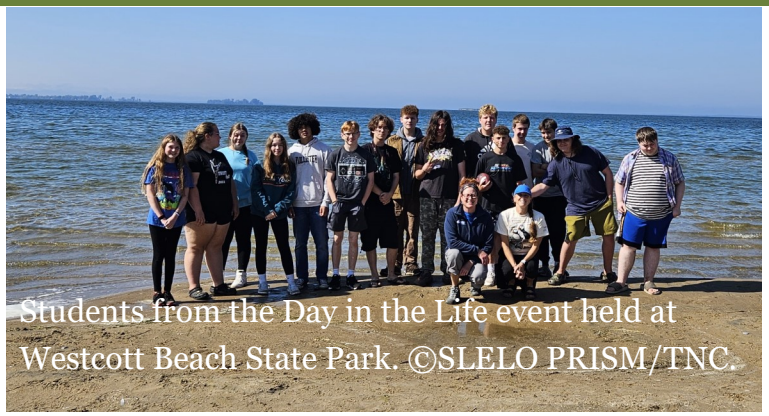
Partner Spotlight

Emily Fell– Eastern Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator NYS DEC/Cornell University

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos recently announced the successful completion of the 'Day in the Life' of the Lake Ontario- St. Lawrence River Watershed project, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The project has been undertaken in partnership with New York Sea Grant (NYSG), the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Eastern Lake Ontario region, Rice Creek Field Station at State University of New York at Oswego, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Niagara River Greenway Commission, the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario (SLELO) Partnership for Invasive Species Management (PRISM), and other partners within the **Great Lakes Ecosystem Education Exchange** network, in support of engaging middle school students in environmental monitoring during the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic years.

More than 600 middle school students in districts from Jefferson, Oswego, Monroe, and Niagara counties participated in both classroom and hands-on educational experiences focused on monitoring water quality and habitats in the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River watersheds. Participating schools included Wilson Central School, Lewiston-Porter Central School, Anna Murray Douglas Academy, The Harley School, Mexico Middle School, Pulaski Middle School, Belleville Henderson Central School, and South Jefferson Central School.

In advance of student summit events, teachers and partners were trained to conduct the Day in the Life sampling activities with students during workshops at Webster Park and Wescott Beach



Students from the Day in the Life event held at Westcott Beach State Park. ©SLELO PRISM/TNC.

State Park. DEC and NYSG provided teachers with classroom resources and equipment kits and offered assistance with planning for the student summit events, and OPRHP provided planning assistance, host sites, and staff to lead the lessons. SLELO PRISM lead a land assessment lesson that included invasive species information at the Day in the Life event held at Westcott Beach (pictured above).

As a direct result of this project experience, these teachers and partners now possess the resources and information to independently continue the annual field trip events with future classes, and share their environmental monitoring data with DEC. Information from the Day in the Life project, including planning resources, curriculum, student activities, and data collected, is available on **DEC's Great Lakes Program webpage**. The data collected by students through 'Day in the Life' can be compared with data collected via **DEC's 2020 Lake Ontario Rotating Integrated Basin Studies program**, DEC's primary monitoring program to assess water quality throughout the state on a routine basis and may be used as screening data to help target future monitoring. This project was made possible with support from a $150,000 grant from the EPA Great Lakes National Program Office to support environmental literacy and stewardship in the Great Lakes.

Watertown Gearing up For Fall Tree Plantings

By: Emily Fell, ***Eastern Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator NYS DEC/Cornell University***

On **Saturday, November 4th 2023 at 9:00am** Tree Watertown, The City of Watertown, and Watertown School District will be hosting a volunteer tree planting event at Case Middle School and Watertown High School. Volunteers are invited to help plant trees that will benefit students, residents of the City of Watertown, and wildlife that depend on healthy trees for habitat. Those interested in assisting the planting can simply show up the day of the event. No experience is needed as the day will kick off with a planting demonstration and tools will be provided.

Tree plantings throughout the City help diversify the Urban Forest, making trees more resilient to risks including invasive species and climate change.

The tree plantings also aim to replace ash trees that are being removed to prevent impacts from Emerald Ash Borer.

The City continues to strategically manage the Ash trees in response to the invasion of this forest pest in accordance with their Urban Forest Management Plan, and with support from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservations Urban and Community Forestry Grant program, and the Northern New York Community Foundation.

Learn more about the **Watertown Urban Forestry Program**. Get involved with Tree Watertown on **Facebook**.

Volunteers helped plant trees to replace ash trees on Massey Street, in celebration of Arbor Day on April 29th, 2023. Photo ©Emily Fell.

Virtual Hike Challenge

SLELO PRISM will hold our annual Virtual Hike Challenge (VHC) happening November 2023, through March 2024. This challenge encourages community members to get outdoors and provides simple instructions to help you keep an eye out for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). HWA is an invasive forest pest that is confirmed to be present in Oswego County and is spreading along the Eastern Lake Ontario shoreline. Participating in the VHC is easy, all you have to do is **sign-up**, visit your favorite hiking trail, look for HWA, report your observations to iMapInvasives, and share your experience on social media! Not only will you have an excuse to get outside this winter, but you'll be protecting your forests and will win a prize for your efforts!

Volunteer Experience Showcase

Over the summer I had the joy of volunteering with SLELO PRISM. I spent some time in nature (my favorite place to be) to help dig out some invasive yellow iris that had grown widespread at the Lakeview WMA Montario Point Boat Launch on South Colwell Pond in Henderson, NY. I heard about the event from my friend and learned it was in observance of New York Invasive Species Awareness Week, which was new to me. I was told there would be snacks and sunshine, so of course I couldn't resist and joined the event. I met some great new people, put some elbow grease in and soaked up the sunshine! I even got to join a short paddle to the beach to view piping plovers (an endangered species I hadn't known about). I also attended SLELO's Walk, Talk, Art event and was a featured artist in the art show where I submitted a photo documentary creating spotted lanternfly body art on myself. This experience helped me learn about the impacts of this invasive insect and how to identify and report it.

I'd suggest volunteering with SLELO PRISM, it's a lot of fun and you'll learn something new for sure!

~Jessica Duger-
SLELO VOLUNTEER

Enhancing Early Detection

SLELO/APIPP-Zack Simek

Early detection of invasive species greatly increases the opportunity for successful management. Since 2016, SLELO has coordinated a Volunteer Surveillance Network (VSN) to enhance early detection efforts for priority invasive species that are in low abundance or not present in but approaching the PRISM. The VSN is a community science initiative that provides participants with training on how to identify priority species and report their findings using iMapInvasives. As a component of the VSN, online maps are used to show the location of suggested survey sites for each focal species.

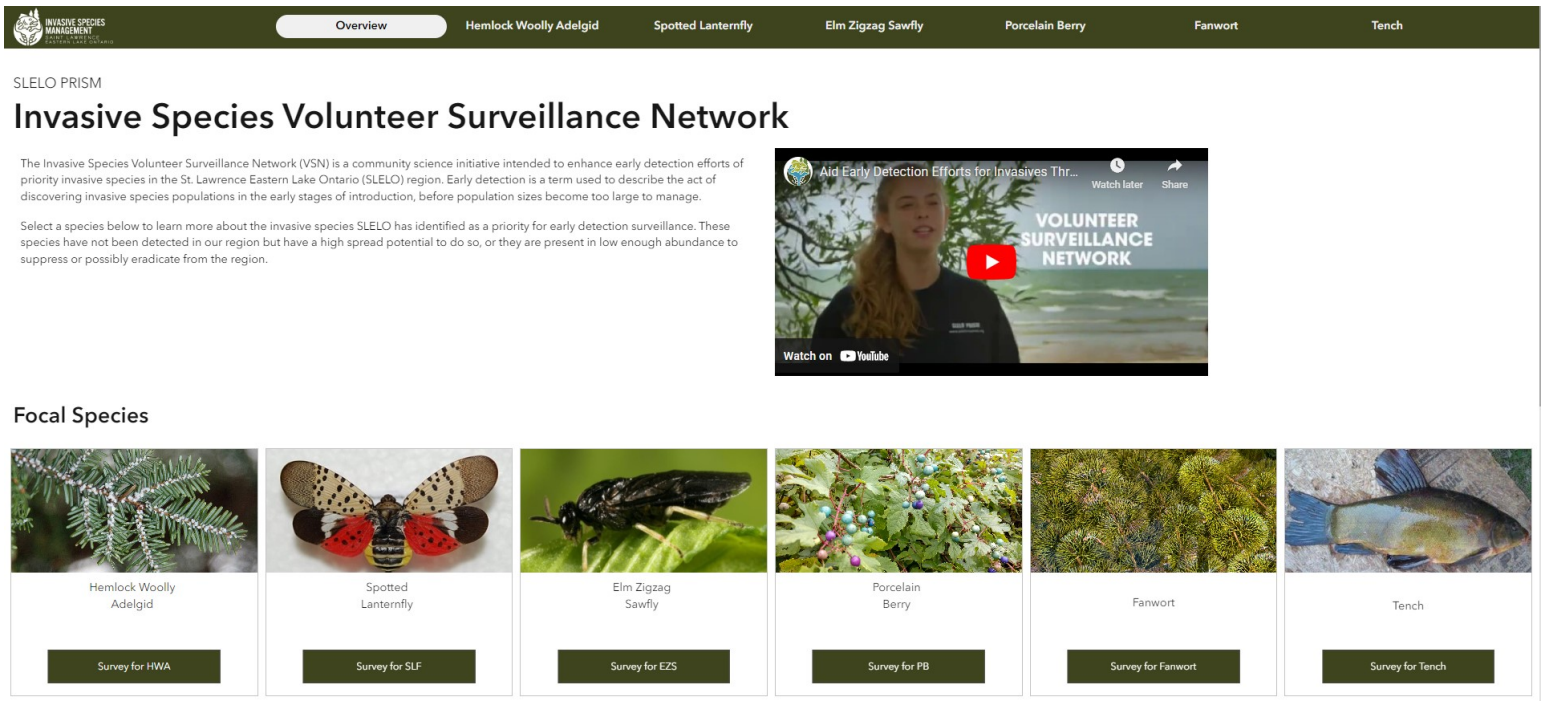
Recently, SLELO PRISM updated its VSN webpage with a more modern, user friendly web mapping experience. The new application provides species identification information and suggested survey sites for six focal species: hemlock woolly adelgid, spotted lanternfly, elm zigzag sawfly, porcelain berry, fanwort, and tench.

Users can navigate species-specific pages to find a suite of information about the target invasives.

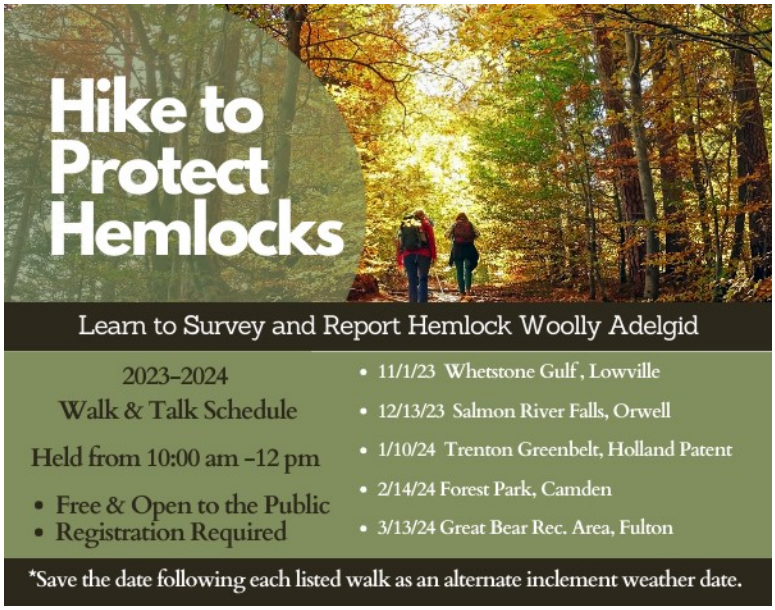
One new feature of the web mapping application is a convenient online survey form that can be used to report survey efforts. By selecting a suggested survey site from the map, VSN participants can indicate whether they found the focal species, whether they reported data to iMapInvasives, and the total time spent surveying the location.

In a future update of the VSN web mapping application, we will feature a data dashboard that summarizes the survey efforts of all VSN participants. Additionally, each user will be able to compare their individual contributions against collective survey efforts. Users who submit the most observations will rise up the list and can claim bragging rights as SLELO's top surveyor!

To view the new VSN web mapping application, **Click Here**. You can also **become a VSN member**.



EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



REGISTER

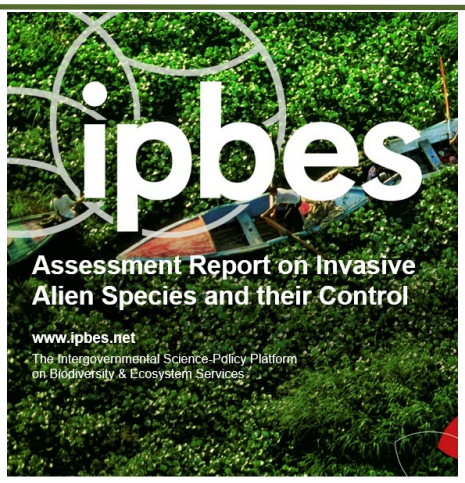
Get Details

- November 4th 9 AM Tree Planting at Watertown Case Jr. Middle School
- December 13th, 10 AM– 12 PM: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey Training @ Salmon River Falls
- Volunteer Opportunities
- November 13th: 2023 Northeast Integrated Pest Management Research Update Conference
- November 16th 9 AM– 4:30 PM: *Crosswalking Water Resources for Climate Smart Communities*
- November 29th PRISM Speaker Series : An Update on Canadian Biocontrol Projects
- December 1: NYS IPM First Friday Webinar Houseplant IPM | Firewood pests
- December 17th: NAISMA Virtual Weed Biocontrol Summit
- January 30th-31st International Invasive Species & Climate Change Conference
- View PRISM upcoming events: ADK PRISM; Capital Region; Catskill; Finger Lakes; Long Island; Lower Hudson; SLELO; WNY

<<Notable Announcements>>

TAKE THE PLEDGE

LEARN MORE



LEARN MORE

From Our Director

Measuring Our Work Plan Success Rate

This year, Team SLELO developed a robust Annual Work Plan that was separated into two parts. First was a special initiatives section which consisted of 9 initiatives and the remainder consisted of 85 activities, or tasks, that support all aspects of our Strategic Plan. Special initiatives targeted for the 2023 calendar year included: Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes Restoration, South Sandy Creek Restoration, restoration of multiple terrestrial Priority Conservation Areas, a Watercraft Inspection and Stewardship Program, an Environmental DNA effort, a Pledge-To-Protect Marketing Initiative: our Eastern Lake Ontario Invasive Species Symposium, distribution of our Urban Forest Sustainability Guide and participation with the New York State Invasive Species Expo.

I am humbled to note that, as of the issuance of this newsletter, we have a 100% special initiative completion rate.

As to the remaining 85 specific activities/tasks that were outlined in our Annual Work Plan, and given that we still have several weeks remaining on the calendar year, I am happy to report an anticipated 93% completion rate. So what about the remaining 7%? These are activities that are either fluid in their design or that are dependent on other, external influences. In summary, a 100% completion rate on special initiatives combined with an anticipated 93% completion rate on specific tasks, isn't too shabby!

Let's all tip our hats to Team SLELO, our partners, volunteers, and community supporters for working collaboratively towards meeting our annual objectives and oh yes.....all that overtime!

Thank you!

~ Rob Williams

SLELO PRISM Partner List

- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- The Nature Conservancy in New York
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Offices
- NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
- NYS Department of Transportation
- NY Natural Heritage Program
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Fort Drum Military Installation
- CNY Regional Planning & Development Board
- NY Power Authority
- Tug Hill Commission
- Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
- Thousand Islands Land Trust
- Indian River Lakes Conservancy
- Save The River
- NY Sea Grant
- Ducks Unlimited
- Onondaga Audubon
- US Coast Guard Auxiliary
- St. Regis Mohawk Tribe-Environmental Unit
- Algonquin to Adirondack Collaborative

Acknowledgements:

NYS Invasive Species Council
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
The NYS Environmental Protection Fund

Edits completed by SLELO PRISM Staff
Articles contributed by SLELO partners

SLELO PRISM

The Nature Conservancy — *SLELO PRISM Host Organization*

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Department of Environmental Conservation

Eastern Lake Ontario Swallow-wort collaborative