SLELO PRISM

St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Invasive Species Management

"Teaming Up to Stop the Spread of Invasive Species"

2026 Spring Newsletter

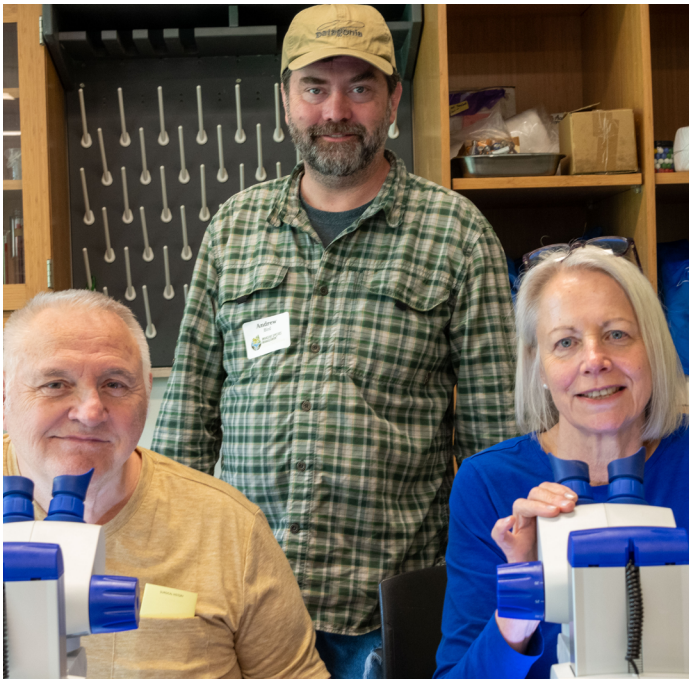
Celebrating Our Volunteers













About the Cover: Celebrating Our Volunteers and Inviting New Protectors to Join the Effort

Megan Pistolese-Shaw, SLELO PRISM

Across the SLELO region, volunteers play a vital role in safeguarding our lands and waters from the impacts of invasive species. Their dedication fuels early detection, supports rapid response, and strengthens the resilience of the ecosystems we all depend on. As we look ahead to another season of learning, exploration, and stewardship, we want to highlight the meaningful opportunities available through our Volunteer Surveillance Network (VSN) and express our deep gratitude to those who make this work possible.

The VSN offers two immersive pathways for involvement: the Water Protectors and Land Protectors programs. Each provides hands-on learning experiences that empower participants to identify, survey, and report invasive species while contributing directly to regional conservation efforts.

The Water Protectors Program is ideal for anyone who enjoys time on the water or owns waterfront property. Participants take part in the Aquatic Invasive Species Learning Experience (AISLE), a three-part training series that blends virtual and in-person learning. The 2026 series begin with a webinar on June 10, followed by an in-person workshop on July 10, and a guided survey paddle on August 14. After completing the training, Water Protectors adopt a waterbody to monitor at least once a year, helping us detect aquatic invasive species early when management is most effective. Learn more and register.

The Land Protectors Program offers a similarly rich experience for those who enjoy hiking, exploring forests, or caring for wooded property. This program includes a summer webinar on June 3rd, followed by field sessions throughout June and July, fall restoration plantings, and winter hemlock woolly adelgid learning opportunities. Participants gain the skills needed to identify, survey, and manage terrestrial invasive species while contributing valuable data that supports regional management strategies. Learn more and register.

Both programs rely on the passion and commitment of volunteers who care deeply about the health of our natural areas. Their contributions, whether through monitoring, reporting, or participating in restoration, make a measurable difference.

SLELO PRISM is sincerely grateful for the time, energy, and expertise volunteers bring to this work. To show our appreciation, we are planning a Volunteer Appreciation Event! To help us design a celebration that reflects the interests and acknowledges the impact of our volunteers, we're inviting anyone who has participated in our VSN programs, invasive species removal efforts, plantings or other volunteer events to participate in a brief survey.



In 2022, life brought me from Appalachian Tennessee to Oneida County, New York. I searched for home here the only way I knew how, by spending time in nature and finding familiarity among the trails. I fell in love with the region quickly, and a passion for community science and amateur mycology quickly formed.

In searching for opportunities to learn more and continue to connect with land, I found SLELO PRISM. My volunteer experience with them started with a training for the Volunteer Surveillance Network and joining a spotted lanternfly early detection initiative with iMapInvasives. Since then, I have joined SLELO in habitat restoration plantings and hemlock woolly adelgid surveys. I continue to use the knowledge and tools I have gained from these experiences every day, and it's one way I show gratitude towards the land that has done so much for me on my journey.

I look forward to continuing to volunteer with SLELO while learning and finding new places to fall in love with here. If you are considering getting involved with SLELO or your local PRISM, you will be joining a community of people who care about protecting our ecosystems and deepening your own connection to our land and waters.

~ Hope Teichroew, SLELO volunteer

Calling all Partners: Let's Make 2026 a Landmark Year for Collaboration!

Megan Pistolese-Shaw, SLELO PRISM

We're thrilled to share two exciting opportunities that invite partners across the region to come together, inspire local communities, and elevate our shared conservation goals. Your expertise, creativity, and passion are what make regional initiatives thrive, and we'd love to collaborate with you to make these efforts truly shine.

SLELO PRISM is interested in collaborating with partners to launch a region-wide BioBlitz this summer we've named NNYBioblitz26. This is a great opportunity to help create a powerful snapshot of biodiversity across the Eastern Lake Ontario St. Lawrence region.



A BioBlitz is an energetic, hands-on event where scientists, naturalists, and community members team up to identify as many species as possible in a short period of time. It's fast-paced, educational, fun, and a great way to engage the public in real-world conservation science.

How Partners Can Collaborate

- Host your own BioBlitz anytime from June–August 2026. *If you're not up for hosting your own bioblitz, you can join one being held by SLELO on* June 13th *at Lakeveiw WMA in Henderson, NY.*
- Events held June 8th–14th are especially encouraged in honor of New York Invasive Species Awareness Week (NYISAW).
- Hold events within or bordering Oneida, Oswego, Jefferson, Lewis, or St. Lawrence counties.
- Canadian partners are warmly welcomed to host events within or bordering the upper St. Lawrence River region.
- Data will be recorded via the iNaturalist Project NNYBioblitz26.

This is a fantastic opportunity to highlight local habitats, engage volunteers, and contribute to a region-wide biodiversity dataset. Learn more and sign-up to participate.

#NYISAW
New York Invasive Species Awareness Week
June 8th-14th, 2026
nyis.info/nyisaw

New York Invasive Species Awareness Week returns June 8–14, 2026, and we're aiming for full regional participation. Our goal: at least one event in each of the five SLELO counties, and your involvement can make it happen. NYISAW is a statewide effort led by DEC and PRISM partners to raise awareness about invasive species and their impacts. Events are free, flexible, and can be tailored to your organization's strengths.

How You Can Participate:

- Host an event anytime during June 8–14, 2026.
- Create something new or include an event you already have planned.
- Any invasive species–related activity counts, including:
  - BioBlitzes
  - Removal or restoration efforts
  - Guided hikes or paddles
  - Exhibits or tabling events
  - Film screenings or art shows
  - Workshops, talks, and more

This is a wonderful way to spotlight your organization's work, connect with your community, and contribute to a statewide movement. Learn more and sign up to participate.

Both NNYBioBlitz26 and NYISAW offer meaningful, energizing ways to engage the public, celebrate local biodiversity, and strengthen regional conser-vation networks. We hope you'll join us in making these initiatives a success!

Yellow Legged Hornet: A New Pest in the US

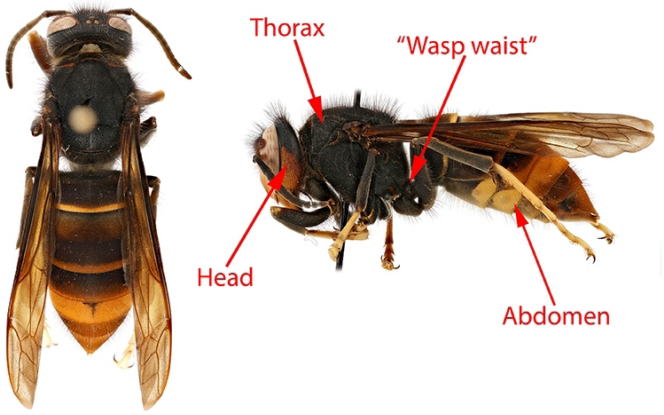
Thom Allgaier, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Yellow legged hornet (*Vespa velutina*) was detected in Georgia near the port of Savannah in August of 2023. In November of that same year, it was also detected a short distance away in South Carolina. Yellow Legged Hornet is primarily a pest of honeybees; however, it will feed on many insects. Its native range stretches from northern India southward through China, Taiwan, and down into Indonesia. This invasive species has established itself in Japan, South Korea, and much of Europe.

Georgia and South Carolina have established survey and management programs. So far this year, 22 of the smaller embryo nests have been destroyed and two queens have been trapped. As of August 2025, the state of Georgia has trapped 940 hornets and eradicated 18 nests. The traps use a lure composed of a mixture of brown sugar and grape juice in a modified bucket trap. There are two types of nests: the initial embryo nests are built in the spring by the queen, and the larger nest is developed by worker class hornets later in the season. Embro nests can be found in a range of places, much like European Hornets (Vespa crabro). The primary nests are found in tree canopies at a height of 80 to 90 feet high. The nests are typically 30 to 32 inches tall. They are paper-like and have a side entrance.



Yellow legged hornet nest. © University of Georgia.



Yellow legged hornet (Vespa vlutina). © NYSAGM.

Yellow legged hornets are closer in size to European honeybees and smaller than European Hornets. They are typically, one inch long, though the queens are slightly larger at one and a quarter inch long. The namesake legs are yellow; the lower front of the head is yellow/orange, and the upper head is chestnut brown. The banding pattern on the abdomen has alternating solid black and orange bands with crisp edges. The European hornet has telltale drips of black that bleed into the yellow bands.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (the Department) is concerned about the potential for human- assisted spread of yellow legged hornet in New York. Trapping for non-native wasps has been carried out at high-risk areas for the past five years by the Department. Survey and trapping efforts will be increased in 2026. One to two apiary inspectors will be assigned to the SLELO region. No specific trap or survey locations have been established yet, but 25 traps will be placed statewide. Community science can contribute by reporting suspected yellow legged hornets. There will be a link for reporting soon on the Department's Honeybee Health page. Reports can also be submitted to iMapInvasives.

Yellow Floating Heart *(Nymphoides peltata)*

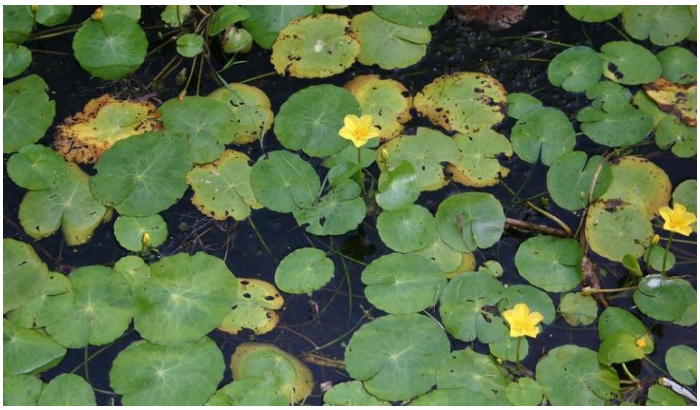
Adrien Owens, SLELO PRISM

Yellow floating heart (YFH) (*Nymphoides peltata*) is an invasive aquatic plant native to parts of Asia and Europe that has been introduced widely across North America. With its bright yellow flowers and floating heart-shaped leaves, this species is often mistaken for a harmless ornamental plant, but beneath the surface, it poses significant risks to freshwater ecosystems.

What Does It Look Like?

Yellow floating heart is a **rooted, perennial aquatic plant** that anchors itself in underwater sediment. Its **rounded, heart-shaped leaves** float on the water's surface and range from 3–12 cm in diameter, often appearing slightly wavy or scalloped along the edges. From June through September, the plant produces **showy, five-petaled yellow flowers** that rise just above the water surface on slender stalks.

While the flowers are eye-catching, they are not the most reliable feature for identification, as they are only present for part of the growing season. The floating leaves, root system, and growth habit provide more consistent clues.



Yellow floating heart. Photo credit. Leslie J. Mehrhoff University of Connecticut Bugwood.org.jpg

Why Is Yellow Floating Heart a Problem?

Despite its ornamental appeal, yellow floating heart can cause serious ecological impacts once established. The plant spreads aggressively, forming dense mats of floating vegetation that crowd out native aquatic plants, block sunlight, reduces water flow, loweres dissolved oxygen levels, and alters nutrient cycling within the waterbody.

Over time, these changes can degrade habitat quality for fish, invertebrates, and other aquatic wildlife, while also limiting recreational use of lakes, ponds, and wetlands.

How Does It Spread?

Yellow floating heart spreads efficiently through multiple reproductive pathways, making it particularly difficult to control:

- Rhizomes (spreading underground root systems)
- Stolons (horizontal stems that form new plants)
- Plant fragments, which can break off and re-root elsewhere
- Seeds, allowing long-distance dispersal

The plant thrives in slow-moving or still waters such as ponds, lakes, wetlands, and channels. It can grow in water depths of up to 12 feet and is resilient enough to persist even during periods of very low water.

Where Is It Found?

In New York State, yellow floating heart is prohibited to sell, though it may still be legally sold in some neighboring states—raising concerns about accidental introduction. Within the SLELO region, the species is currently classified as a Tier 1 invasive, meaning it is not yet known to be established in our region.

However, the risk is increasing. In 2024, yellow floating heart was detected nearby in the Finger Lakes PRISM region in Marcellus (Onondaga County). That population has been managed for the past two years through hand-pulling efforts, with additional management planned pending permitting for 2026.

What Can You Do?

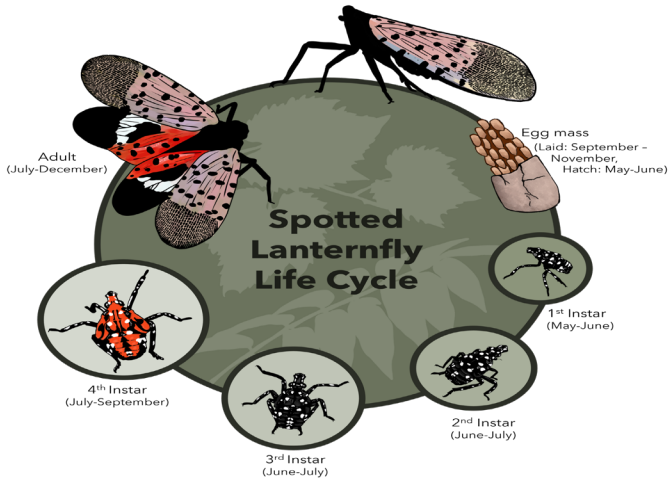
- Early detection and prevention are critical for keeping yellow floating heart out of the SLELO region.
- Learn to identify yellow floating heart and similar aquatic plants
- Avoid planting or transporting aquatic ornamentals
- Clean boats, gear, and equipment before moving between waterbodies
- Report suspected sightings to SLELO or your local PRISM

With increased awareness and community involvement, we can help prevent this invasive species from taking root close to home. Learn more about YFH on our website.

Spotted Lanternfly: Populations are expanding, be on the lookout!

Brian Eshenaur, NYSIPM Cornell Universtiy

The spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*, SLF) continues to expand its range across New York State and the eastern United States. It is both a significant nuisance pest and a serious long-term threat to grape production. First detected in eastern Pennsylvania in 2014 and in New York in 2020, SLF has now been confirmed in 30 of the state's 62 counties. While it has not yet been detected in the SLELO region, populations are increasing just to the south, in the Syracuse area. If you think you've seen SLF please submit your repors to the NYSAGM online form at, reportslf.com.



SLF life cycle. © NYSIPM Cornell University.

Although spotted Lanternflies are not picky eaters and move from plant to plant through the growing season they do have their favorites. Among the trees where we are most likely to find spotted lanternfly are black walnut, silver and red maples, willows, and their absolute favorite, the tree of heaven. The weedy, invasive tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima)* is native to the native range of SLF and, conveniently for SLF, is now widespread in North America. One group of plants in which they can't successfully feed upon are conifers. So, our spruce, pine and fir trees are safe from SLF feeding.

Populations of SLF are not going unchecked as native predators are beginning to exploit them as a food source. Songbirds, spiders, and insects such as wheel bugs and praying mantises have all been observed feeding on SLF. In addition, fungal pathogens, including *Beauveria* and *Batkoa* species, have been associated with SLF mortality under favorable environmental conditions and are being explored as



SLF nymphs. © NYSIPM Cornell University.

potential management tools. The beneficial parasitoid wasp *Dryinus sinicus* is being evaluated as a promising long-term biological control agent for SLF. Native to Asia, this species has shown an ability to effectively parasitize spotted lanternfly. For the last few years, it has undergone extensive host-specificity testing to ensure it poses minimal risk to native insects and other non-target species. Following evaluation, an application for its release in the United States has recently been submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture for review. If approved, this natural enemy could become an important tool in reducing spotted lanternfly populations over time, complementing existing management strategies and helping to lessen reliance on insecticidal controls.

After repeated public observations of SLF dying after feeding on milkweed plants, Researchers at Penn State tested common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and found that indeed, 60-80% of SLF nymphs and adults die within 24 hours of feeding on milkweed. They are now looking to see which milkweed species might be the most effective, and how the tactic of milkweed plantings could be utilized by vineyard managers and possibly in landscape settings. Learn more about SLF on the Cornell NYSIPM website

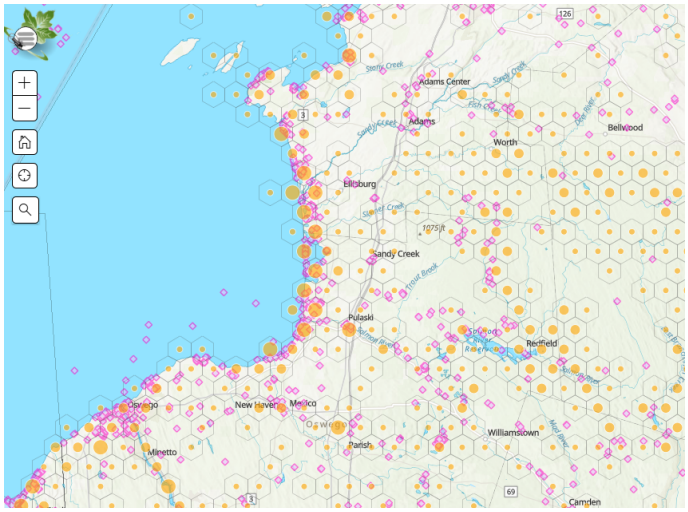
Ensure Your Invasive Species Data Reaches the Experts

Douglas Knoph, New York Natural Heritage Program

iMapInvasives (iMap) is designated as the official invasive species database for New York State, used by state agencies, professionals and volunteer organizations to collect data on invasive species locations and management. Our team at the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) is always working to connect existing data sources to iMap to provide the best possible picture of species distribution and abundance throughout the state. One of the most common questions we get comes from users of iNaturalist, who want to ensure invasive species data submitted to iNaturalist can still be utilized by professionals over in the iMap network.

The simple answer to this question is yes, it is possible to have your iNaturalist data represented in iMap. To capitalize on the expansive network of community scientists contributing data to iNaturalist, we have set up a system to automatically bring high-quality data from their platform directly into iMap on a weekly basis, once it meets the following criteria:

1. **Your iNaturalist record is a tracked invasive species:** We track 634 species in New York using iMapInvasives, with other states tracking additional species as well. If you collect a record for any of these species on iNaturalist, it is eligible to be brought over into iMap (with a few exceptions).
2. **Your record in iNaturalist is research-grad:** Once a species identification on an iNaturalist record has been agreed upon by 66% of people, it is considered 'Research Grade,' allowing the record to be picked up in our crosswalk. Note: this can take time, some records linger for years before reaching Research Grade.
3. **Your iNaturalist account has data-sharing enabled in licensing:** iNaturalist users have the option to choose how others can use the information in their records, which includes moving them into other databases, such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). In your iNaturalist account settings, you can change your data licensing under the 'Content & Display' tab. Any license type that is tagged as GBIF-eligible will also allow iMap to pick it up.



iNaturalist (pink) and iMapInvasives (orange) data for confirmed species as seen on the iMapInvasives live map viewer. © NYNHP/iMapInvasives.

If all three of these criteria are met, your iNaturalist record will be crosswalked over into iMap and placed in a separate data layer. This layer can be viewed by anyone logged into an iMap account, and each record links back to the original iNaturalist Record. These records are also utilized in the various annual data analyses that are run on iMap data to support our prioritization tools, such as the invasive species tiers. You can learn more about how iMap and iNaturalist interact from our recent webinar on the topic.

Reporting directly to iMapInvasives is still the best way to make your observation immediately visible to the invasive species network (PRISMs, etc.). Furthermore, iMap provides options for delineating polygons and reporting multi-species records, non-detections, and treatment records.

However, iNaturalist is a very popular platform with increasingly valuable data, and we embrace that to compile the most complete invasive species dataset for New York State.

Transforming Relationsips with the Environment

Lee Willbanks, Talking Rivers

Talking Rivers is a pioneering non-profit organization dedicated to transforming our relationship with the environment by advocating for the legal recognition of the rights of nature. Based in northern New York and Haudenosaunee Territory, the group works to shift the cultural narrative from viewing rivers as mere commodities to recognizing them as living entities with the inherent right to exist, flow, and thrive. Through three newly developed projects they've combined ecocentric storytelling, community science, and legal advocacy to protect vital watersheds in the region.

The Legal Action for Bioregions (LAB) initiative is a collaborative circle of legal experts and organizers working to "hack" the current legal system to find legal pathways to provide rights for nature. While the a movement to support rights of nature has gained global momentum, successful litigation remains elusive in U.S. courts due to a lack of practical legal strategies. Through 2027, LAB will bridge this gap by developing a formal guide that provides actionable steps for practitioners to defend the rights of "other-than-human" beings under New York State law and beyond. By combining Indigenous-led wisdom and modern law, this initiative empowers local communities to become active guardians of the waters that sustain them, ensuring a vibrant, healthy future for both people and the planet.

Talking Rivers also launched an effort to spotlight the plight of the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata)*(Kiawerón:ko in Mohawk). Once a thriving and vital part of the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario ecosystems, eel are almost entirely gone due to habitat loss, overfishing and the massive turbines in dams on the river. While young "yellow eels" continue to be stocked above the dams, many are killed when they try to follow the river currents to bring life to the next generation. Of significant concern is the increasing number of eels found to be infected by an invasive nematode parasite (*Anguillicoides crassus)*. This parasite infects the eel's swim bladder, vital to vertical movement, negatively impacting their ability to migrate to their spawning grounds in the Sargasso Sea, even if they successfully pass through the dams. On behalf of the American eel, we're developing a blueprint law to recognize the rights of the eel as part of the Legal Action for Bioregions. We're also asking people to sign a resolution Supporting the Rights of American Eel acknowledging our responsibility to ensure these rights are recognized, respected, and defended.



Anguillicola crassus extracted from the swim bladder of a young eel. © Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs. Source.

Additionally, Talking Rivers is very excited about a new project aimed to look at the world through the Through the Eyes of Rivers. Over the course of a year, we will share the voice of three rivers and watersheds, all located on what is the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation. These rivers are: Nikentsà:ke (Grasse River), Ahná:wate (Raquette River), and Ahkwesásne (St. Regis River). Through the Eyes of Rivers aims to catalyze storytelling and science to map the needs of these rivers and explore the current environmental crisis from the rivers' perspective. The first stage of this project will be to conduct water sampling and bring together the work of researchers from across the region. The research and data will be compiled on an interactive map of the watersheds. Next the research will be translated into illustrated stories told from the perspective of the watersheds and their other-than-human inhabitants. The final step will be to host storytelling circles across the watersheds to discuss how to meet the needs and rights of the river.

By centering the voices of our watershed Talking Rivers is building a future where our legal and cultural systems finally reflect our ecological reality. Their initiatives are more than just environmental projects; they are a call to action for all community members to move beyond the role of a consumer and step into the role of a guardian. Whether through signing the American Eel resolution, participating in storytelling circles, or utilizing the LAB legal guides, your involvement helps ensure that our "other-than-human" neighbors have a seat at the table. Together, we can rewrite the rules of our region to honor the life-giving waters that sustain us all.

Root of Renewal: Biodiversity Habitat Enhancement

Isaac Matlock, Jefferson County Cornell Cooperative Extension

The "Roots of Renewal: Biodiversity and Habitat Enhancement (BHE) Project" represents a new effort to strengthen ecological resilience across Northern New York. This regional initiative is designed to restore native biodiversity, improve habitat quality, and promote sustainable, climate-resilient landscapes, particularly in urban and community settings.

At its core, the BHE Project addresses two intertwined environmental challenges: the spread of invasive species and the decline of native plant communities. Invasive species often outcompete native vegetation, reducing habitat value for pollinators and wildlife while disrupting ecosystem balance. By contrast, native plants play a critical role in supporting local food webs, stabilizing soils, and enhancing long-term ecological health.

A central feature of the initiative is the establishment of five demonstration garden sites located throughout the region. These sites are designed to serve as living examples of what successful habitat restoration can look like in practice. Community members will be able to visit these gardens to observe native plantings firsthand, learn about species selection, and gain inspiration for their own restoration efforts. By showcasing tangible outcomes, the project aims to translate ecological concepts into replicable models.

Equally important is the project's emphasis on public education and engagement. To support this, organizers are offering free educational webinars that provide both foundational knowledge and practical guidance. The first session, "Cultivating Biodiversity & Habitat," will be led by Cierra Williams of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County. This webinar introduces participants to the goals of the BHE Project while highlighting native plant species that can be incorporated into residential and community landscapes to support pollinators and wildlife.

The second webinar, "Invasive Species 101: Empowering Gardeners," will be presented by Megan Pistolese-Shaw of St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management. This session focuses on identifying and managing common invasive species, offering practical control strategies and introducing participants to community science tools such as iMapInvasives, iNaturalist, and Seek. These tools enable individuals to contribute to regional monitoring efforts, reinforcing the project's collaborative approach.



In addition to virtual learning opportunities, the BHE Project includes five hands-on public planting events scheduled across the five locations where individuals can register to assist in planting the native demonstration gardens. These events provide an opportunity for participants to directly contribute to habitat restoration efforts while gaining practical experience in planting techniques and site preparation. No prior experience is required, making these events accessible to a broad audience, from beginners to seasoned gardeners.

The project is a collaborative effort between Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County and St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management, organizations with established track records in education, outreach, and environmental stewardship. Together, they bring scientific expertise, regional coordination, and community connections necessary for large-scale impact.

Ultimately, the Roots of Renewal BHE Project is more than a restoration initiative; it is a model for community-driven environmental stewardship. By integrating education, demonstration, and direct action, the project empowers individuals to play an active role in rebuilding healthier ecosystems. Through these combined efforts, the initiative aims to foster lasting ecological benefits and a stronger culture of conservation throughout the region. To learn more about the BHE project, view a full event schedule, and to register to attend please visit the SLELO PRISM events page.

The Process Behind the Specialist Predators

Matt Del Buono, New York Hemlock Initiative

Across the eastern United States, eastern hemlock forests continue to decline under pressure from hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), a tiny insect introduced on nursey stock from Japan. Hemlocks are a foundation species that shape forest structure, regulate temperature and moisture, and support unique plant and wildlife communities. Their loss alters entire ecosystems and protecting them requires management strategies that work at the scale of forests, not just individual trees.

A recent paper led by New York State Hemlock Initiative Research Technician Elizabeth D'Auria, published in the Journal of Insect Science, documents an important step forward in biological control of HWA. The study presents refined methods for collecting and rearing three specialist predators that cooccur naturally in the adelgid's native western range: two silver flies, Leucotaraxis argenticollis and Leucotaraxis piniperda, and the predatory beetle *Laricobius nigrinus*. Together, these insects feed on HWA across multiple life stages and offer the potential for sustained population suppression.

Biological control depends on timing as much as it does on species selection. For predators to be effective, they must be released when HWA is producing eggs in late winter and spring. In the West, this timing occurs naturally. Recreating it in eastern North America requires reliable methods for sourcing predators and coordinating their development with adelgid phenology.

The approach described in this study blends field collection with controlled rearing. Each year, NYSHI staff collect HWA infested western hemlock branches from the Pacific Northwest and transport them to a USDA certified quarantine greenhouse in Ithaca, New York. Greenhouse temperatures are managed to accelerate predator emergence so that adults are available when eastern adelgid populations are most vulnerable. The facility ensures that only approved predator species proceed through the rearing process.

Inside the greenhouse, technicians rely on predator behavior to guide daily collections. Adult silver flies move upward toward light, while Laricobius larvae drop from foliage to pupate in soil. These predictable patterns allow insects to be collected efficiently and gently, then grouped by species, site, and date. The team refers to this combined field and laboratory approach as composite rearing.



Elizabeth D'Auria, Research Technician at the Cornell University's Sarkaria Arthropod Research Laboratory (SARL). © Cornell University.

Over years of study, patterns began to emerge. Collections made from March through May produced the highest numbers of all three predators, particularly the silver flies. Laricobius nigrinus larvae peaked in March, when adelgid egg production is highest. As methods were refined over time, beetle survival from larva to adult increased substantially, reaching nearly 70 percent in recent years.

Crucially, the study shows that all three predator species can be collected from the same sites during the same season without reducing abundance. By documenting these techniques, the NYSHI team provides a practical roadmap for producing predators predictably and at the right time of year. These methods now support field releases, ongoing research, and collaborations with partners in Virginia and Canada, strengthening long-term hemlock conservation efforts across the region. Learn more about the New York State Hemlock Initiative.



Laricobius nigrinus pictured from a release done at Independance Park in Mexico, NY. © Robert Smith SLELO PRISM/TNC.

Terrestrial Restoration & Resiliency Initatives

Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM

Updates on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid: This year, SLELO PRISM surveyed 14 sites for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). Eleven of these were completed by the early detection team with some help from volunteers, while three were volunteer surveys led by Megan Pistolese-Shaw. Of these 14 sites, two were found to have HWA present. These were Derby Hill Bird Observatory and Three Mile Bay WMA, both in Oswego County. In addition to these sites, a member of SLELO PRISM's Volunteer Surveilliance Network, Hope Teichroew, found HWA at Hamilton College in Oneida County. This brings the total sites in SLELO PRISM to 13. So far, all of these sites are either along the Lake Ontario shoreline in Oswego County or along the southern regions of Oswego and Oneida Counties. We will continue to provide updates as HWA moves to new portions in our region.

Winter HWA mortality surveys were conducted on April 3rd at Independence Park in Oswego County, NY. These surveys are part of a collaboration between SLELO and the New York State Hemlock Initiative (NYSHI) and have been conducted annually since 2022. As part of the survey, two HWA infested twigs from four hemlock trees for a total of eight were collected and examined using a microscope to determine the percentage of HWA that were dead or alive. The count determines the HWA winter mortality percentage which varies each year depending on the winter temperatures. This year, the winter mortality was 90.5%. Past winter mortality percentage at Independence Park were as follows: 2022: 89.7%, 2023: 97.3%, 2025: 60.5%. HWA Survey Summary Reports can be viewed on the SLELO PRISM Field Reports Webpage.





Left:Volunteer, Frank Williams, joins SLELO staff on HWA Survey. Right: HWA under microscope. © Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM/TNC.

2026 Early Detection Surveys: SLELO staff will be conducting surveys at 11 Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) this summer. Five sites are terrestrial and six are aquatic. As usual, the focus will be on tier 1 and 2 species, but we will also report tier 3 and 4 species, some of which are already being managed. Some native species will also be reported to help us select the best species to plant at the restoration areas. The five terrestrial PCAs are listed below, aquatic sites are on page 13.

Terrestrial Sites:

- Black Pond WMA
- Brasher State Forest
- Chaumont BarrensPreserve
- Deer Creek WMA
- El Dorado Preserve



Deer Creek WMA. ©SLELO PRISM/TNC

2026 Invasive Species Control Work: SLELO is changing our contract herbicide applicator from Miller's Turf to Invasive Plant Control, Inc. out of Nashville, Tennessee this year. The Adirondack PRISM has been working with this contractor for several years and they have agreed to do invasive species management in both PRISMs this year. Due to the contractor working in both PRISMs, we will have them for a more limited amount of time. This means that we will be carefully plotting the routes to maximize the number of sites treated. The potential treatment sites this year will occur on 15 PCAs with breakdown by species of 82 sites with swallowwort, 29 sites with phragmites, 21 sites with invasive knotweed, 9 sites of invasive bittersweet, and 6 sites of yellow iris.

Terrestrial Restoration & Resiliency Initatives

Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM

2026 Restoration Areas: We are now up to eight restoration areas. At two of the sites, El Dorado Preserve and Black Pond WMA, we will be conducting 5th year inventories. Our goal is that the restoration area will have at least 80% of the species richness of the area directly surrounding the sites. At five of the sites, we will be monitoring for reductions in the invasive species and increases in native species. We also have a new site at Battle Hill State Forest where we plan to conduct a first year inventory. This is our first restoration area on state forest land and in the Tug Hill ISPZ. As with last year, we plan to plant additional native species in the Fall that are appropriate for each restoration site.

Biological Controls for Invasive Species Suppression: We are continuing to use biocontrols, when possible, as an invasive species management tool. Starting with pale swallowwort, our use of *Hypena opulenta* moths has ceased due to no evidence of establishment. We will continue physical and chemical treatments until another biocontrol is available. We hope that *Chrysochus asclepiadeus*, a beetle which feeds on the leaves and roots of swallowwort will be approved within a few years.

We released emerald ash borer biocontrol in 2022 and 2023, with establishment surveys in 2024 and 2025. We were able to find Spathius galinae and *Tetrastichus planipennisi* two years in a row, which shows that it is likely establishing, but only found *Oobius agrili* during the first year. The staff at Rice Creek Field Station and volunteers from the previous years decided to continue surveying for *Oobius agrili* with SLELO PRISM in an advisory role. Sign up to volunteer for this effort!

The biocontrols for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid have been released at several locations in SLELO PRISM. As of now, there are no plans for additional releases, but the New York State Hemlock Initiative does plan to set up traps at Independence Park to determine if the biocontrol, *Laricobius nigrinus,* is establishing a population at the park. Lastly, biocontrols for spotted knapweed were released along the dunes at Deer Creek WMA last year (*Larinus minutus, L. obtusus, Cyphocleonus Achates*). We are requesting more of these biocontrols this year from the Montana Biocontrol Coordination Project. These will be released in July and August.



Knapweed biocontrol, *Larinus minutus*, at Deer creek WMA. © Brittney Rogers,SLELO PRISM/ TNC.

2026 Giant Hogweed Management: The giant hogweed management season will start in May. We are responsible for a total of 147 sites. We started managing the giant hogweed in Oneida County last year, which greatly increased our number of sites. This large number required us to prioritize our sites according to several factors including ecological importance and presence on or near public lands. This year, we will only be able to conduct root cut management, which will decrease the number of sites that we can complete to 67. Hopefully, we'll be able to apply herbicides next year.



Giant hogweed. ©Brittney Rogers,SLELO PRISM/ TNC.

Aquatic Restoration & Resiliency Initiatives

Adrien Owens, SLELO PRISM

Preparing for the 2026 Field Season

SLELO's Aquatic Restoration and Resiliency program is gearing up for the 2026 field season with continued focus on early detection, invasive species management, education, and exciting new advances in native plant restoration. Together, these approaches address the multifaceted approach of aquatic invasive species management.

Early Detection & Rapid Response Surveys

Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) surveys will take place at several priority locations this season, including Lakeview WMA (Lakeview Pond), Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, Whetstone Reservoir WMA, Wilson Hill, and the Three Rivers Intersection. These sites were selected due to their ecological value, vulnerability to invasive species introduction, as well as habitat connectivity value within the Adirondack to Algonquin Corridor (A2A) and Tug Hill to the Adirondacks. Continued surveillance of waterbodies across our region allows for quicker management action and helps prevent the spread of new infestations, while recognizing the importance of our native freshwater plants.

AISLE & Water Protectors Program

Education remains a key prevention tool. The Aquatic Invasive Species Learning Experience (AISLE) and Water Protectors Program will return for its third year this season, engaging community members and water users in hands-on learning. These programs build identification skills, increase awareness of invasive species pathways, and promote stewardship practices that support early detection beyond staff-led surveys.

Water Chestnut Pulls

Seasonal water chestnut pulls will continue at active infestation sites including the Oswegatchie River, Lakeview WMA, and Guffin Bay. Water chestnut forms dense surface mats that crowd out native plants, reduce oxygen levels, and interfere with recreation. Ongoing hand-pull efforts help reduce seed production, slow spread, and support long-term management goals. If you are interested in participating in a water chestnut pull near you, please refer to our events webpage for the latest information on how you can get involved.



Vallisneria americana. © 2026 Donald Cameron, Go botany.

Aquatic Plant Restoration Pilot Project

SLELO is launching an Aquatic Plant Restoration Pilot Project in partnership with SUNY Oswego, focusing on *Vallisneria americana* (eel grass). Over the years SLELO has been building our restoration program to close the loop in invasive species management to replenish self-sustaining habitats. Now we are working on incorporating an aquatic restoration perspective to account for native plant diversity following water chestnut removal. Once invasive species are removed, filling the space with native vegetation helps reach our priorities of safeguarding native ecosystems from the impacts of invasive species. This project will include identifying *Vallinseria* plant beds for sustainable collection, in addition to propagation, overwintering, and preparation for future aquatic restoration efforts, supporting native habitat recovery alongside invasive species management. While in the early stages, we are excited to explore this up-and-coming missing link to replenishing native aquatic vegetation within our region's waterbodies.



Volunteer at water chestnut pull.
© Megan Shaw, SLELO PRISM/TNC.

Events



Get Details & Register



Get Details & Register



Learn More

- 5/11-5/19: Roots of Renewal: Biodiversity & Habitat Enhancement plantings
- 5/7: 7-8 PM: Less Lawn More Life Challenge Kick-off Webinar, 12-week program with expert tips from Robin Wall Kimmerer & Doug Tallamy
- 5/9: 8 AM-2 PM: Onondaga Audubon Bird Festival, Derbil Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, NY
- 5/17-23: EAB Awareness Week & Webinar Series
- 5/19: 10 AM- 12 PM: Yellow Iris Pull at Chppewa Bay Preserve
- 5/28: 6:30-8 PM : Roots of Renewal: Biodiversity & Habitat Enhancement final webinar
- 6/3: 1-2 :30 PM: Learning Experience Kick-off Webinar; field sessions held June-July
- 6/3: THC Black River Watershed conference
- 6/5: 8:30 AM- 4:30 PM: IRLC Water Quality Conference
- 6/10: 10 AM- 12 PM: Aquatic Invasive Species Learning Experience Kick-off Webinar; field sessions held June-August
- 6/13: 9:30 AM- 1 PM: SLELO PRISM Bioblitz26 at Lakeview WMA, Pierrepoint Pl., Henderson, NY
- 7/17: 10 AM- 3 PM: Oswegatchie River Water Chestnut Pull

Notable Announcements

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets job openings in SLELO region (apiary and horticultural inspector)
- NYS DEC Job Openings in Dexter, NY (Fish & Wildlife Technician 1 & 2)
- Oswego County SWCD Agricultural Resource Specialist
- Assist EAB biocontrol monitoring with SUNY Oswego Rice Creek Field Station

PLANT Baby PLANT

A new grassroots movement led by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

Learn More



A challenge to restore nature in your backyard.

Join the Challenge



Explore hiking trails in the Tug Hill Region.

Learn More

Request to feature your invasive species related articles, events, job and volunteer opportunities on our website, social media, or newsletters.

From the Director's Desk

Brittney Rogers, SLELO PRISM



© NASA

Spring is finally making its grand entrance and I could not be more delighted. After what felt like an endless winter marked by record snowfall and cold days, I am thrilled that I can once again sit outside in the morning, coffee in hand, listening to birds sing instead of the loud hum of the snowplows.

With spring comes a renewed sense of energy, optimism, and if we're honest, a long to-do list that seems to grow faster than garlic mustard in May. By now, many of you have heard that HWA is on the move in our region. While that's never news we enjoy sharing, I'm encouraged by the way efforts are ramping up across the state to refine best management practices and by the continued hope and promise of biocontrol success. That said, we still need vigilant volunteers, especially during the winter months, to keep their eyes peeled. Early detection remains one of our strongest tools.

Behind the scenes here at SLELO PRISM, spring also means we've been deep in planning for the upcoming field season, which is approaching far more quickly than we prefer. We have an exciting year ahead: collaborating with Jefferson County CCE on a biodiversity and habitat enhancement project that will include multiple demonstration sites, our work with Oneida County SWCD through the CLAW program, numerous other collaborations with partners, conducting extensive field surveys, offering numerous volunteer opportunities, and laying the groundwork for restoration plantings this fall. It's shaping up to be a robust and fulfilling season.

In the midst of all this planning and preparation, I recently found myself inspired by something a bit farther from home, about 250,000 miles farther… Following the Artemis II mission, astronaut Christina Koch shared a powerful reflection about teamwork, reminding us that a crew is bonded by shared purpose, accountability, sacrifice, and grace. When she spoke about seeing Earth surrounded by complete darkness, a tiny lifeboat suspended in the vastness of space, it was a striking reminder that we are all connected.

"Planet Earth," she said, "you are a crew." And she's right. Whether we're managing invasive species, restoring habitats, or simply showing up to help where we can, we are in this together. I look forward to seeing you all out in nature in the coming months - boots on, eyes open, and spirits high.

~Brittney Rogers

SLELO PRISM is hosted by The Nature Conservancy. Funding for SLELO PRISM's activities is provided by the New York State Environmental Protection fund as administered by the Department of Enviornmental Conservation. SLELO is one of eight PRISMs in New York, learn more about the PRISM Network at NYIS.info.