

Keene State College and the Harris Center Year in Review 2022

The Harris Center for Conservation Education

supports undergraduate field experiences in environmental studies and related disciplines at Keene State College through internships, community science initiatives, and partnering with students and faculty on capstone research projects. We also offer public educational programs on campus, with a focus on nature and conservation science.



▲ **Forest Inventory** The 2023 KSC conservation internship team (left to right: Jessica Lawton, Mallory Roof, Tate Fairbank, Veronica Kroha, and Taylor Jackson) with some of the tools used for forest community inventory. © Will Wrobel / Keene State College

Conservation Internships



In the ninth season of the Harris Center-Keene State College **conservation internship program**, five hard-working interns explored many facets of the Harris Center's conservation, education, and stewardship work during a two-month paid summer internship experience. Under the guidance of Harris Center staff and KSC faculty mentor Karen Seaver, the internship team surveyed for vernal pools, conducted forest community inventory, documented trail conditions as part of a new accessibility initiative, monitored backcountry campsites for trash and safety hazards, pulled invasive plants, assisted with Harris Center educational programs, and more.

◀ **Spoonwood Pond Portage** Long days of trailwork, forest inventory, and invasive plant management were rewarded with several field trips to monitor the Harris Center's remote campsites on Spoonwood Pond — which is canoe-access only — for trash, illegal firepits, and safety hazards.

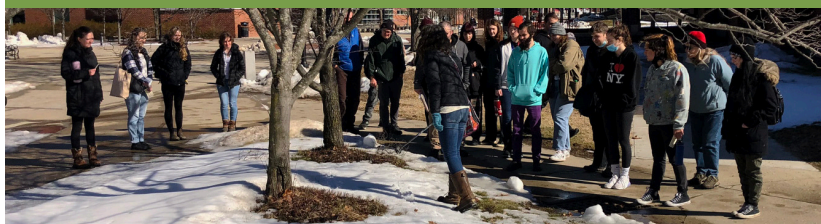
© Karen Seaver

"The most eye-opening thing from this internship is doing real fieldwork. I had done some of the basics... in classes that I've taken at KSC, but the real thing feels so much different." — TATE FAIRBANK, '24

Undergraduate Research

From spring through fall, as part of a two-semester **capstone research experience**, one KSC student team conducted trail camera surveys of wildlife on Harris Center-conserved land, and another consulted with Harris Center naturalists to develop an environmental education lesson plan focused on aquatic macroinvertebrates. In the fall, two additional students planned capstone projects in partnership with the Harris Center: one aimed at surveying bird-window collisions on the KSC campus, and another to analyze amphibian migration data associated with the Salamander Crossing Brigades. Fieldwork and data analysis for both of those projects will take place in the winter and spring of 2023.

Discovering Nature on Campus



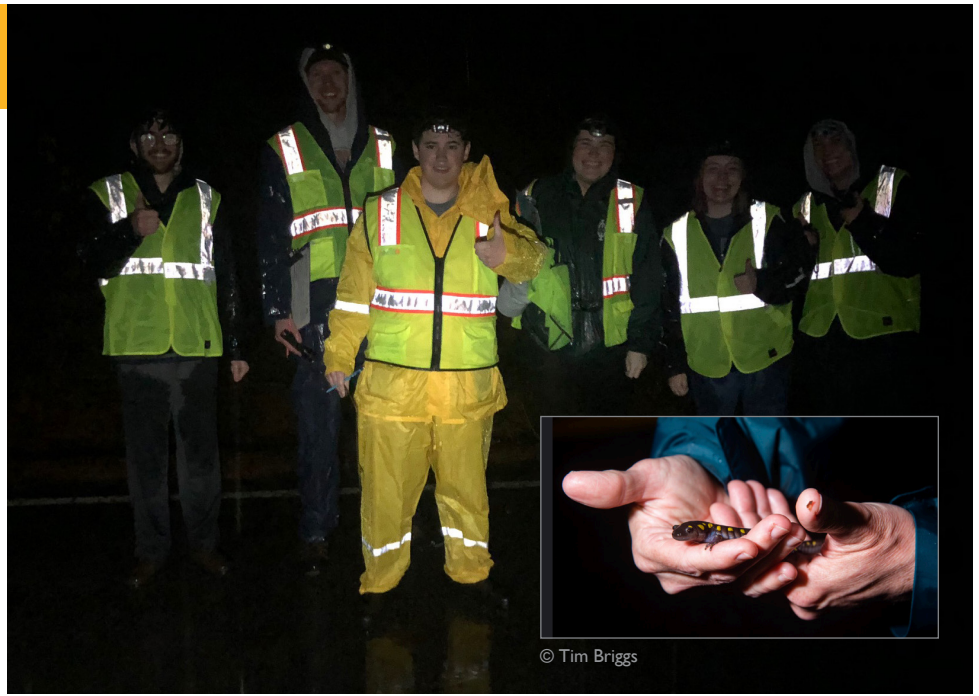
▲ **Winter Tracking** KSC students join Harris Center naturalist Susie Spikol for a tracking expedition on the KSC campus. © Karen Seaver

As part of our new **Discover Nature on Campus** series, KSC students, staff, faculty, and other community members joined Harris Center naturalists for seven outings — ranging from insect safaris to tree treks, spring birding to winter tracking — to explore the natural world just outside their classroom doors in 2022.

Community Science

In the spring of 2022, dozens of KSC students, faculty, and staff participated in the Harris Center's **Salamander Crossing Brigades** — a longstanding community science effort focused on reducing amphibian road mortality during the spring amphibian migration. Together with other community volunteers, the KSC crew provided safe passage for more than 4,000 individual amphibians over the course of nine nights at two Keene sites. In addition, two alumni of our conservation internship program undertook independent study projects centered on the Salamander Crossing Brigades in 2022.

Project Nighthawk volunteers have helped keep track of nesting Common Nighthawks, a state-endangered bird species, for more than 15 years. For the last several summers, the only known nighthawk nest in the Monadnock Region had been on the KSC campus, and KSC staff and students joined community volunteers to monitor the rare birds. Sadly, for the first



© Tim Briggs

▲ **Thumb's Up for the Salamander Crossing Brigades** A team of KSC students smiles during a “Big Night” at the North Lincoln Street amphibian crossing site in Keene. All together, the KSC community helped provide safe passage for more than 4,000 migrating amphibians in 2022. © Karen Seaver

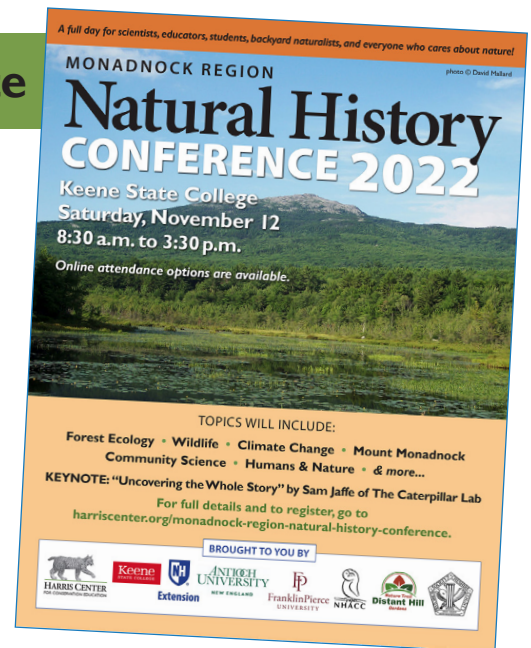
time in more than a decade, our team could not find evidence of nesting nighthawks anywhere in Keene in 2022, but the search will continue — with help from the KSC community — in 2023.

Monadnock Region Natural History Conference



▲ **Franklin Pierce University** researcher **Nolan Oppelt** shares findings from his invasive plant study. © Miki Clements-Collier

In November, the Harris Center partnered with KSC, Antioch University New England, Franklin Pierce University, UNH Cooperative Extension, the NH Association of Conservation Commissions, Distant Hill Gardens & Nature Trail, and the Historical Society of Cheshire County to host the **Monadnock Region Natural History Conference** at KSC. This full-day conference featured 16 talks and 7 poster presentations on a diversity of natural history topics, from loons and climate change to forest carbon to Thoreau's Monadnock — including a presentation by KSC student Clara Mbasisa titled, “Building Better Relationships with Nature.” You can find more details, including recordings of each talk, at harriscenter.org/monadnock-region-natural-history-conference.



Questions?

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