58TH ANNUAL
# NYSOEA CONFERENCE
## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

### Conference Strands

**Creative Roots:** Nature-based Art Practices

**Mud and Movement:** Adventure Learning and Wild Play

**Eco-STEM:** Science for People and Place

**Nurturing Minds:** Sharing Stories and Practices

**Outdoors is for All:** Equity, Access, and Inclusion

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## Friday Workshop Descriptions

### Block A- 8:45-9:45AM

### Trail Blazing

Shae Paradise (He/They), *Volunteer Coordinator at NYS Parks- Thatcher State Park*
*Located at Field Building*

Mud and Movement

Learn the basic standards and practices of trail blazing, as outlined by NYNJ Trail Conference, to keep your local trails cohesively, and unambiguously marked. Proper trail blazing helps patrons stay on course, reduces desire paths, and speeds up emergency response. This workshop will cover the proper equipment and techniques to achieve a better understanding of how trail markers should be installed.

### Educator Metamorphosis

Hannah Young (She/Her), Josh Teeter (He/Him), *Environmental Educators at NYS Parks*
*Located at Gullen Lounge*

Nurturing Minds

Get a peek inside the minds of Hannah Young, a novice NYS Office of Parks educator, and Josh Teeter, NYSOEA President/ NYS Office of Parks educator of many years, while we talk about our combined experiences. Learn about our inspiration to become educators, the steps we took to get into the field, and how we educate ourselves as well as others. We will discuss how to navigate the EE world and explore our favorite ways to prepare and implement environmental education programs for everything from school groups to major events. Join us to hear about or share tricks of the trade, tools, and advice. Great for everyone from newbies to veteran educators!

### Watershed Walk: discover a watershed through exploration

Amélie Przedwiecki (She/Her), *Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator at Boquet River Association*
*Located at the North Field*

Eco-STEM

A watershed is more than water! It's a window into the ecology of a place. In this workshop, discover how to notice ecological patterns and differences across a landscape, build connections to place, and bring science into everyday conversations. Participants will explore strategies for leading meaningful discussions rooted in local ecology, with activities and approaches adaptable to any watershed or community.

## Block B- 10:00-11:00AM

### Slow the Flow: schools as community hubs for stormwater solutions

Ashley Eaton (She/Her), *Watershed and Lake Education Coordinator at the University of Vermont*
*Located at Field Building*

**Eco-STEM**

This hour-long session will include 2 parts: beginning with an overview of a model for stormwater education, the Vermont Green Schools Initiative. This program is a cutting-edge phosphorus reduction effort aimed at reducing stormwater runoff from K-12 campuses and utilizing schools as innovation centers for green stormwater infrastructure. The second half of the session will feature a hands-on demonstration and curriculum overview of the Lake Champlain Sea Grant Slow the Flow curricula. Participants will engage with tabletop models to learn how water moves across the landscape, how stormwater impacts water quality, and what green stormwater infrastructure best practices can be utilized to build more resilient storm-smart communities.

### Life Under a Lens

Matthew Nusstein (He/Him), *Environmental Educator at NYS Parks*
*Located at the North Field*

**Mud and Movement** **Eco-STEM**

Enter the world of all that is small as we explore species seldom seen. We will investigate tree bark, stumps, logs, rocks and everything in between! Bring a hand lens if you have one. Focus will be on appreciating the diversity of smaller scale life that often goes unnoticed.

### An Introduction to the 24 Small Seasons and Haiku traditions of Japan for Your Nature-Based Art

Alexis Agliano Sanborn (She/Her), *Director of Development at Christodora*
*Located at Gullen Lounge*

**Creative Roots**

Join author and artist Alexis Agliano Sanborn to learn about the 24 small seasons of Japan: from their luni-solar calendar origins to their role as important phenological and cultural markers in Japanese culture. We then explore the concept of seasonal words in haiku culture and how we might view time through their appearance in our lives. A blend of East-Meets-West, this workshop ultimately invites you to consider the seasons as smaller periods of time, alive with change, discovery, and renewal -- and to incorporate your observations into artistic practices.

## Block A/B- 9:00-11:00AM

### Art in Nature- Pocket Paintings and Fall Watercolor Leaves

Lauren Eggleston (She/Her), Nicole Czarnecki (She/Her), Adele Wellman (She/Her), *Environmental Educators at NYS PARKS Allegany State Park*

*Located at Watson Arts Center*

**Creative Roots**

Ahh, Fall! The colorful leaves of NYS bring people to our parks. We love seeing all the beautiful hues of red, yellow and purple. But have you really looked at a leaf closely? Can you identify leaves by their shape or veins?  This program will bring the beauty of fall foliage right onto your paper with the use of watercolors. Learn a few beginner techniques to create your own unique watercolor leaf and tips to present an art program in your area. You bring your observation skills; we will bring the supplies.

### Capture (and use) the Sun

Rick Glatz (He/Him), *Retired Teacher and Naturalist*

*Located at the William Boyd Board Room*

**Eco-STEM**

Using the materials provided, the participants will design a container to capture the sun's heat energy, test it out, and then make design changes to "manage" the energy.  Discussion will ensue on how this applies to the energy needs of human society and how we can make renewable forms of energy more cost-efficient.

### Climate Standards & Using WET, WILD, and PLT for Climate Change Education

Sarah Conley (She/Her), *Environmental Educator at NYSDEC*

*Located at William Boyd Conference Room*

**Eco-STEM**

Join us for some hands-on ways you can incorporate PLT, WET, and WILD activities in climate change focused education. We will explore adaptable, nature-based activities that directly address local and global climate change impacts. Participants will leave with ready-to-use lesson plans focusing on ecosystem resilience, carbon cycles, and community engagement strategies, all rooted in established environmental education frameworks.

## Block C- 11:00AM-12:00PM

### The Watershed Detectives: Learning Beyond the Classroom (Student scientists tackling real problems on Lake Champlain through project-based learning)

Rebecca Hamilton (She/Her), Ken Alton (He/Him), Ashley Russel (She/Her)l, Bill Duffany (He/Him), Tracey Soulia (She/Her), Hannah LaFountain (She/Her), and Cherie Passno(She/Her), *7th Grade Education Team at Beekmantown Central School District*

*Located at William Boyd Conference Room*

**Eco-STEM**

Discover how our interdisciplinary teaching team engages students in authentic, hands-on learning through a month-long Project-Based Learning experience focused on the Lake Champlain watershed in partnership with Lake Champlain Sea Grant. Participants will explore how students become environmental investigators as they collect field data, study microplastics, assess stream health, and examine invasive species. Through partnerships with local organizations and immersive field experiences, students identify real watershed challenges, conduct research, and develop innovative solutions. This session will highlight project design, community connections, student outcomes, and practical strategies for bringing meaningful, place-based environmental learning into any classroom.

### Build Your Best Social Media

Conrad Baker (He/Him), *Environmental Educator at NYS Parks*

*Located at Gullen Lounge*

**Nurturing Minds**

AI slop...algorithms...internal communication struggles...burnout...there's not just hope, there's opportunity! Get the latest moves and tools for building authentic social media platforms. Connect your site's visitors with useful, strategic information to make life easier for your whole organization.

### Earth's Pantry: Mushrooms, Greenery, and Game

Jared Stauss (He/Him), *Outdoor Educator at the Ashokan Center*

Located at Willam Boyd Board Room

**Nurturing Minds**

If you've ever been curious as to what kinds of wild edible plants you can eat or how to prepare wild game, come check out my Earth's Pantry workshop! During this class, we will go over the ethics of harvesting wild edibles, the benefits of hunting and fishing on conservation, identification skills for local wild edibles found in the northeast, and a demonstration of the cleaning and processing of small wild game. At the end of the workshop there will be a wild food sampling and recipes exchanges for wild game and foraging favorites.

### Colors in Nature

Ryleigh Scales (She/Her), *Environmental Educator at NYSDEC*

Located at Watson Arts Center

**Creative Roots**

Have you ever noticed that some plants leave stains while others do not? Many things in nature have pigments that we can use to make paints and dyes. In this hands-on workshop participants will learn how to use various natural items to make their own watercolor-style paints. Be prepared for a hands-on and possibly messy activity where you will  experiment with different materials to make colors.

### Mindful Nature Journaling: Printmaking

Melissa Papalcure (She/They), *Environmental Educator at Jones Beach Energy & Nature Center, NYS Parks*

*Located at the North Field*

**Creative Roots**

This hands-on workshop blends art, mindfulness, and environmental awareness, offering an opportunity to deepen one's connection to nature while experimenting with creative printmaking processes. Using natural materials and textures as inspiration, participants will create unique prints through cyanotype sun printing, clay stamp transfers, and charcoal transfer techniques. These printmaking techniques are mindful nature journaling practices that encourage curiosity, reflection, and close observation.

### Nuts About Squirrels

Sunny Corrao (She/Her), *NYC Parks Wildlife Unit*

*Located at Field Building*

**Eco-STEM**

Found in almost any habitat from rural to urban, how much do you really know about this common species? Squirrels can be used as a gateway to integrate STEM based lessons. Learn about their biology, behavior and cultural significance while participating in activities you can incorporate in your own lessons, and programs. Let’s go nuts.

## Block D- 3:30-4:30PM

### Beyond the Binary: Gender Identity & The Pursuit of Environmental Careers

Samantha Beck (She/Her), *Planning Technician at the Town of Plattsburgh*

*Located at Gullen Lounge*

**Outdoors is for All**

Explore the intersection of gender identity and environmental engagement grounded in research findings from a master’s thesis. Delving into students’ perceptions and emotions about the environment, this session uncovers key motivations and barriers for women and gender diverse individuals considering careers in environmental fields. Participants will gain an understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities these groups face, and discover evidence based strategies to inspire and support their professional journeys.

### Sit Spot String Journals and Found Poetry

Julie Bastedo (She/Her), *English Teacher at Orchard Park High School*

*Located at William Boyd Board Room*

**Creative Roots**

At this workshop, participants will create a series of lessons / activities that examine how a sense of place contributes to both observational skills and creative writing. Participants will work on how to help young learners shift from field notes to observational journaling and use those journals to create found poetry.

### Trailhead Hiker Education Program: A Data-Driven Approach in New York State's Adirondack Forest Preserve

Dr. Kendra Ormerod (She/Her) and Nicole Revai (She/Her), *Public Participation Specialist at NYSDEC and Environmental Program Specialist at NYSDEC*
*Located at William Boyd Conference Room*

**Outdoors is for All** **Nurturing Minds**

Environmental education can't just rely on good intentions or our own assumptions about what hikers need to know. Join DEC Public Outreach Specialists to learn about our hiker education model and how we're using data to drive our programming. NYS DEC Forest Rangers conduct hundreds of search and rescue operations each year, mostly in the Adirondacks. We hope to reduce that number through our hiker education program by adapting our outreach based on data collected from our 2025 hiker survey pilot study, from an ongoing 2026-2027 study, and from partner work around the region.

### Invasive Innovations

Adam Rettus-Sissler (He/Him), *Education Manager at Hudson Highlands Nature Center*
*Located at Watson Arts Center*

**Creative Roots**

Learn different ways to utilize specific aggressively opportunistic (Invasive) plants, through hands-on activities, crafts, and recipes. See how the use of these plants can not only increase biodiversity on your property but can be a fun and engaging project.

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## Saturday Workshop Descriptions

### Block E- 8:45-9:45AM

### Exploring Environmental (In)Justice Through Visual Storytelling

Ilana Weinstein (She/Her), *Youth Programs Manager at Wave Hill Public Garden & Cultural Center*
*Collaborator: Jennifer M. Pipitone, PhD, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Mount Saint Vincent*
*Located at Field Building*

**Eco-STEM**

Wave Hill Public Garden & Cultural Center in the Bronx featured a photovoice exhibition showcasing the work of Woodland Ecology Research Mentorship (WERM) Interns in collaboration with Dr. Jennifer M. Pipitone from the University of Mount Saint Vincent. The New York City high school students explored issues related to climate change, environmental (in)justice, and visions for the city's future through

photography, writing, and group dialogue. Join us to learn more about this program that promotes personal and collective engagement with place and community. Participate in a hands-on activity to explore visual storytelling and gain ideas on how to explore this approach in your environmental education.

### Puzzles, Ponderings, and Predicaments

George Steele (He/Him), *Independent Educator*
*Located at William Boyd Board Room*

**Nurturing Minds**

A cornucopia of games, activities and challenges that can be used for ice breakers, team building, problem solving and time fillers.

### Source Water Relay and the Power of Play

Emmett Goodman-Boyd (He/Him), *Environmental Educator at NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program*
*Located at the North Field*

**Mud and Movement**

This workshop centers around how gamifying and play can be beneficial to learning and connecting with nature. It does this by having participants take part in an activity where they move water from its source to a water treatment plant and finally to its usage end points. This is a physical activity that explains where we get our water from and the journey it takes to reach us.

## Block F- 10:00-11:00AM

### Program Longevity: Rising to meet today's challenges

Jennifer Rubbo (She/Her) & Lindsay Dalton, *Director and Education Program Manager at the Vassar Environmental Cooperative*
*Located at William Boyd Conference Room*

**Nurturing Minds**

In 1982, Exploring Science at the Vassar Preserve began as a way to expose elementary-school children to natural history and hands-on science. Since its inception the program has remained a free program for local school districts, currently partnering with the Poughkeepsie City School District. The program is a collaboration between multiple departments at Vassar College and we'll discuss the important role that college students have played in the success of the program. We will facilitate discussions about program longevity, and overcoming common obstacles and barriers to program implementation. We hope to engage other organizations with long running programs to join the discussion and share lessons learned. Topics for discussion may include: fostering partnerships, staffing and volunteers, funding, assessments, and adapting curriculum and pedagogies in a technological world.

### Your Sensitivity is Your Superpower: Using emotional awareness to write better grants

Lilly Worthley (She/Her), *Lead Strategist and Grant Writer at Juniper Grant Consulting*
*Located at Gullen Lounge*

**Nurturing Minds**

What if the feelings you bring to your work, and the frustration, the grief, the anger at what isn't funded, were actually your sharpest professional tools? This workshop explores the emotional intelligence underneath effective grant writing and advocacy at large. Through a brief breathing practice, reflection, and small group discussion, participants build capacity to stay present to what's hard without burning out — and learn how that presence translates into more honest, compelling communication. Whether you've written dozens of grants or never heard the term "needs statement," you'll leave with a concrete practice and a framework for turning what you feel into proposals that land.

## Block E/F- 8:45-10:45AM

### Botanical Illustration: A tool for conservation and connecting to nature

Bella Osborn (She/Her), *Public Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator at Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park*
*Located at William Boyd Board Room*

**Creative Roots**

Botanical illustration is a practice with deep roots, spanning thousands of years. It lies at the crossroads of art and science, historically used for careful observation, documentation, and discovery. It remains a powerful tool today for conservation and environmental understanding. In this hands-on workshop, participants will explore the history and purpose of botanical illustration while learning how to facilitate a connection to nature within their students. Guided step by step, participants will create their own botanical drawing of the wild blue lupine (Lupinus perennis), an iconic native species for the endangered Karner blue butterfly (Lycaeides melissa samuelis).

### Sourced from the Soil: Foraging Your Art Supplies

Carlin Shew (She/Her), *NYS OPRHP FORCES Program Specialist*
*Located at Watson Arts Center*

**Creative Roots**

Gathering locally abundant wild resources for your art projects reduces reliance on industrialized supply chains, lowering your carbon footprint. Get creative with the plants in your own backyard to deepen your connection to nature and the art you create through it. Learn about foraging basics and explore three hands-on, beautifully messy artistic expressions with earth's materials including wild inks, sun-printing, and wreath weaving.

### SEEDS: A Daily Sprout of Nature-Based Learning

Kyra Stephenson (She/Her), *Nature-Based Learning Coach at RCSD and Nature Mind Solutions*
*Located at the North Field*

**Nurturing Minds**

SEEDS: A Daily Sprout of Nature-Based Learning introduces simple, meaningful routines that help educators weave nature connection into everyday learning. Rooted in the framework of Sense, Explore, Engage, Discover, and Share, this interactive workshop offers accessible strategies that support

curiosity, regulation, creativity, and community building across grade levels and settings. Participants will experience quick “nature sprouts” that can be used indoors, outdoors, or as transitions throughout the day to foster observation, reflection, and hands-on inquiry. Designed for educators, counselors, and outdoor learning practitioners, this session provides practical tools to nurture ecological literacy, holistic wellness, and deeper relationships with the natural world through consistent daily practice.

## Block G- 11:00AM-12:00PM

### Queer Ecology and Education

Tori Mirian (They/Them), *Environmental Educator at NYS Parks*
*Located at William Boyd Board Room*

**Outdoors is for All**

We know of over 1500 species that display queer behavior, including many species in New York! Learn about the field of Queer Ecology and its applications in environmental education. We'll discuss species in New York that exhibit queer behavior or defy binary definitions of sex and gender, and how to use queer nature to explore identity and culture as the basis for LGBTQ+ programming.

### Nature Journaling for Outdoor and Environmental Education

Jennifer Ford (She/Her), *Science teacher at Guilderland Central School District* & Kat Fitzpatrick, *Independent writer/creativity teacher*
*Located at Watson Arts Center*

**Creative Roots**

Come and explore an exquisite and accessible intersection of art and science—nature journaling! In this session, middle-grade science teacher Jennifer Ford and writer/creativity teacher Kat Fitzpatrick will lead you through hands-on activities that will allow you to experience the joy of nature journaling, equip you to teach/lead others in similar place-based activities, and inspire you to make nature journaling a regular part of your instruction. No previous experience necessary. The artistic and written components of nature journaling are entirely for one’s own enjoyment and learning; the focus is on engagement, not presentation. If you have your own nature journal and/or art supplies, please feel free to bring them.

### Casting Connections: Connecting Learners to Nature Through Fishing

Miranda Harrington (Any/All), *Environmental Educator at NYS Parks*
*Located at Field Building*

**Mud and Movement**

Fishing can be more than recreation. It is a way to get people outside, engaged with their environment, and interested in learning about the natural world. This workshop will demonstrate how fishing can serve as an engaging tool for environmental education, even for educators with little to no fishing experience. Participants will explore how fishing naturally connects to topics such as aquatic ecology, water quality, riparian habitats, aquatic stewardship, fish biology, and entomology through programs such as Match the Hatch. Participants will learn ways to make fishing programs more accessible and approachable for beginners and individuals of varying abilities. By meeting learners where their

interests lie, fishing can serve as an entry point to science, conservation, and place-based learning while providing opportunities for hands-on exploration and observation.

### Managing and Maximizing a Program Animal Collection

Kerry Gallagher (She/Her), *NYSOPRHP Supervisor at Trailside Museums and Zoo*
*Located at Gullen Lounge*

**Nurturing Minds**

Ambassador animals are an exciting way to connect people to nature through face-to-face interactions during structured programs or through static displays. Living creatures instantly invoke curiosity that can be transformed into empathy and conservation action. But how are we managing the selection of animals, care, transport, enrichment, and messaging of program animals? This workshop presents science based, practical methods for managing a program animal collection including animal handling training documents, best and worst program animals, determining capacity and feasibility of animal selection, and the messaging that can be associated with different program animals.

### Healthy Headwaters: Collaboration for Conservation & Education

Claudia Nusstein (She/Her) and Jerry Krajna, *Conservation Education Program Coordinator at Genesee County Park & Forest and Genesee Valley BOCES*
*Located at William Boyd Conference Room*

**Eco-STEM**

Collaboration is the key to making hands-on projects possible! In 2026, with a team including the Soil & Water Conservation District and Genesee Valley BOCES, the Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center led a project to restore riparian habitat along Black Creek. Students in grades 4 – 12 were involved in every step of the process including water quality monitoring, habitat assessment, and installing native plants. This workshop will explore how environmental educators, career/technical educators, and classroom teachers can work together to provide an impactful student experience. Topics including grant writing, project management, and student internships will be discussed.

## Block H- 3:00-4:00PM

### Lesson Clinic: Incorporating the SEPs & CCCs for 3-D Learning

Dr. Nancy Price (She/Her), *Associate Professor of Geology at SUNY Plattsburgh*
*Located at Gullen Lounge*

**Nurturing Minds**

Have you been trying to shift your lesson plans to better meet the New York State Science Learning Standards?  Have you been asking yourself: "What are some ways that I can more authentically incorporate the Crosscutting Concepts (CCCs) and Science & Engineering Practices (SEPs) into my lessons?"  If you have answered "yes", then this workshop is for you! This workshop will start with a few examples of lesson ideas that incorporate three-dimensional learning as a way to get the creative juices flowing. Then, we will shift over to reviewing your lesson plans and discuss ways to tweak a lesson

to better incorporate the SEPs and CCCs. Come prepared with a lesson plan or two so we can all learn from each other.

### Designing Programs with Accessibility in Mind

Elijah Kruger (He/Him), Environmental *Educator at NYS Parks*
*Located at William Boyd Conference Room*

**Outdoors is for All**

Outdoors is for ALL! This workshop shares best practices and tips for designing and leading more accessible outdoor education programs. With experience working with the Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park, several years of co-leading Black Birders Week programming, and this year becoming a Certified Access Birding Outing Leader, Elijah is excited to share insights to help you make your programming more inclusive.

### Hatching Our Next Generation of Ornithologists

George Steele (He/Him), *Independent Educator*
*Located at Watson Arts Center*

**Nurturing Minds**

A conversation on bringing birding and bird exploration to kids, starting with my experiences with teaching about birds and sharing ideas and successes.

### Trail Running: Getting Started

Josh Teeter (He/Him), *Environmental Educator at NYS Parks*
*Located at the North Field*

**Mud and Movement**

This session will cover some of the basics of trail running. Trail running has numerous health and wellness benefits. Whether you are thinking about a possible 5K or 50K there will be something for everyone. Topics to be covered will be running form, building endurance, cross training, gear, nutrition, and sticking to a training regiment that works for you.

### STEM-based Activities for Young Ecologists

Dorothea Panayotou (She/Her), *Educational Consultant*
*Located at Field Building*

**Eco-STEM**

Discover empowering activities for students to use their STEM skills to learn more about how people's activities impact the natural environment and ways to work toward a healthy planet. Raise environmental literacy while simulating carrying capacity in a wildlife habitat, engaging in an interactive story on a community's use of a local river, and modeling global land use. Receive lessons and background materials for use in the classroom or environmental education center. All activities are aligned to NYS P-12 Learning Standards for several disciplines.