

# SUMMER NEWSLETTER

July 2026



## NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to present the summer 2026 Newsletter to our HRES members and friends. After recovering from a knee replacement (the procedure de jour for my age group), I'm looking forward to getting back to enjoying the outdoor activities that the Hudson Valley offers.

We've had a busy year so far. Our 2026 Awards Dinner honoring Amanda Higgs (NYSDEC/Cornell) and James Lodge (HRF) was well attended in February. This event gives people the opportunity to relax and enjoy the company of fellow attendees. We awarded McKeon Research Grants to two Hudson Valley students in 2026: Giulia Capobianco from Mercy University and Silas Cabinte of Riverdale Country School. Lastly, we have scheduled our annual symposium, "State of Citizen and Community Based Science & Monitoring" for October 28, 2026 at the Cary Institute for Ecological Studies.

My family wishes you all a safe and happy summer.

Jim Morrison - HRES President

**HRES Membership:** Our 2026 Membership renewal period is now active at

<https://HRES2026Membership.eventbrite.com>

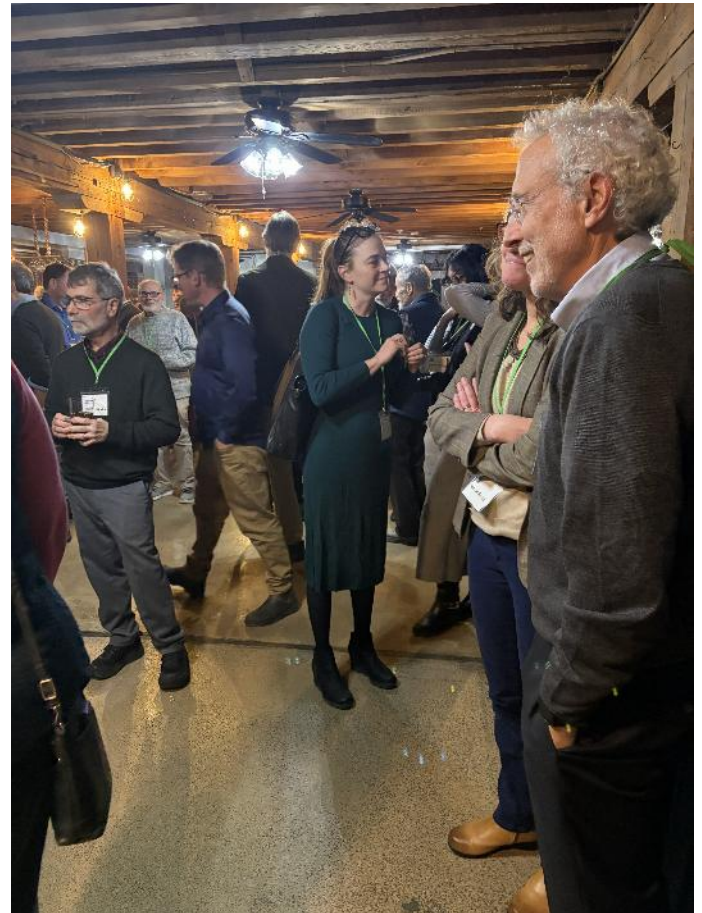
The memberships of people who signed up at our October 2025 symposium are valid until October 2026. To avoid the Eventbrite fees, you can print out the application online at [www.hres.org](http://www.hres.org) and mail with your check to: HRES, PO Box 279, Marlboro, New York 12542.

## HRES HONORS 2026 AWARD WINNERS

On February 12, 2026 at Mahoney's Irish Pub & Steakhouse in Poughkeepsie, HRES honored **Amanda Higgs**, NYSDEC/Cornell, and **James Lodge**, Hudson River Foundation, for their dedication and leadership to gather the information needed to protect and manage the natural resources of the Hudson River estuary. Amanda received the **Outstanding Environmental Researcher Award** for monitoring the status, trends, and movements of the Atlantic Sturgeon population in the Hudson River Estuary. Jim received the **Outstanding Practitioner Award** for his leadership in developing the Hudson River Lower Food Web Monitoring Program currently being implemented by Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.



*Amanda Higgs receiving the 2026 Outstanding Environmental Researcher Award from HRES Vice President Chuck Nieder.*



**Left:** Jim Lodge 2026 Outstanding Environmental Researcher Award with HRES Vice President Chuck Nieder. **Right:** Guests enjoying pre dinner conversations at Mahoney's Irish Pub & Steakhouse.

## 2026 Symposium – Call for Abstracts

The Hudson River Environmental Society is soliciting abstracts for contributed talks and posters for the **2026 Hudson River Symposium**, to be held October 28 at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Systems, in Millbrook, New York. This year's Symposium theme is **"The State of Community and Citizen Based Science in the Hudson River Estuary and Watershed"** - we welcome submissions for contributed talks on all aspects of community science in the Hudson River and watershed, including monitoring and evaluation of water quality, vegetation, biota, habitat alterations, climate and other environmental measurements by volunteer/advocacy groups, municipal efforts/projects and student monitoring programs. HRES also seeks posters on citizen and community-based science or posters on the following topic areas: climate change impacts & programs, biogeochemistry, landscape ecology, land use impacts, ecosystem function & dynamics, ecology & natural science, fisheries & wildlife biology, non-indigenous species, water quality, society & environmental history.

Abstracts for talks and posters must be submitted by Friday August 14, 2026 – visit the HRES website for more information on the abstract submission process and presentation formats.

[Events – Hudson River Environmental Society](#)



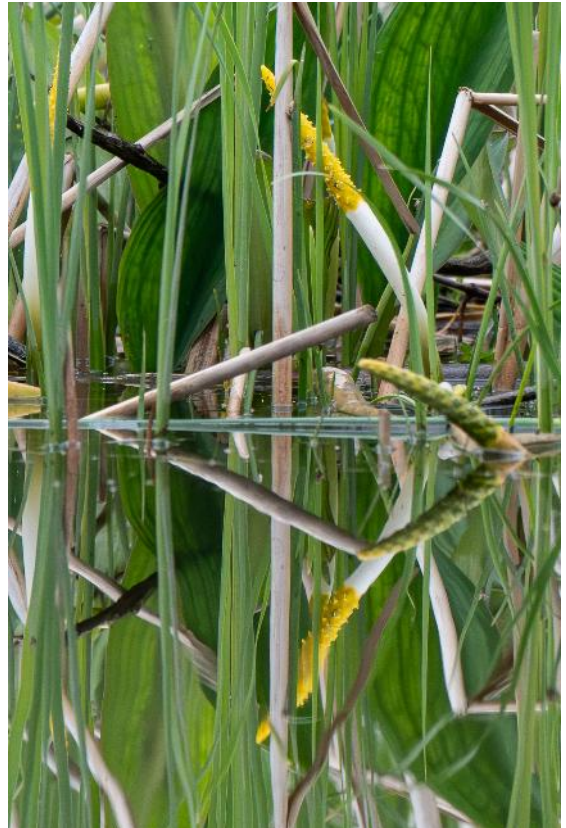
# 2026 MCKEON STUDENT RESEARCH GRANT AWARDS

HRES is excited to announce two awards for our 2026 McKeon Student Research Grant Program: **Giulia Capobianco** from Mercy University for her study on wild bees in the Hudson Valley and **Silas Cabinte** from the Riverdale Country School for his research on Amphibians of the Hudson Highlands. Each student will receive a grant of \$1,000 to support their research.

## Wild bee diversity in the Hudson Valley

Tidal marshes and wetlands are highly productive yet fragile ecosystems that support diverse biological communities. Many wild bee species depend on these habitats to provide essential ecosystem services, such as pollination and nutrient cycling. However, these environments are increasingly threatened by pesticide exposure, habitat loss, landscape fragmentation, shoreline hardening, and invasive species. Given the growing concern for the resilience of pollinator communities under environmental stress, identifying the drivers of wild bee diversity is critical to mitigating their decline. Notably, there is a paucity of baseline pollinator data in the Hudson Valley, specifically with respect to the tidal marshes and wetlands of the Hudson River. The aim of the proposed project is to characterize and compare wild bee diversity across various habitats within the Hudson River watershed, and to investigate which ecological factors potentially influence their abundance and richness.

The study addresses three primary research questions: (1) What is the overall distribution and abundance of wild bees in this region? (2) Which environmental factors most significantly influence their abundance and richness? (3) Which plant species best support wild bee diversity? To address these questions, Giulia will sample pollinator communities at four distinct Hudson Valley habitat types: (1) tidal marsh, (2) meadow, (3) woodland, and (4) cultivated garden. Given the limited research on wild bees in the Hudson Valley, this study will establish critical baseline data for New York State on the role of tidal marshes in supporting pollinator communities and provide insights into how native plants and other environmental factors influence their distribution.



*Golden Club photographed on the Hudson near Stockport Flats by HRES Vice President Chuck Nieder.*

## Amphibians of the Hudson Highlands: Pathogen Surveillance and Habitat Preference

Large portions of North American amphibian populations are in decline, a function of the increasing influences of climate change and disease (Grant et al., 2016). The synergistic effect of these two factors poses a threat to amphibians, leading to potential extinction. To investigate these impacts, it is necessary to identify suitable study sites based on relevant abiotic factors as well as the abundance of target species. The goal of this study is to assess the combined effects of climate change and disease on amphibians by using salamanders in the Black Rock Forest (BRF) region of the Hudson River Valley as an indicator species for amphibian health. Salamanders are a well-

suited model organism to monitor the health of amphibians. Adult salamanders vary from aquatic to terrestrial, thus lending us insight into the health status of both habitat types (Council of the European Union, 2024).



Salamanders are among the most common amphibians in Northeastern America where red-backed salamanders are the most abundant terrestrial vertebrates. North America contains five times the species diversity of amphibians in Europe, making any amphibian disease particularly detrimental for salamander species richness. Amphibians across North America are threatened by the presence of Bd (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*), an invasive aquatic fungus native to East and South Asia. An additional pathogenic fungus, Bsal (*Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*) has recently emerged, and is propagating across Asia and Europe, causing localized extinctions of over 200 species. This would pose a major threat if introduced to North America.

In order to monitor the spread of Bd and scan for the presence of Bsal, we partnered with the Student Network for Amphibian Pathogen Surveillance (SNAPS). After collecting swabs of amphibian skin/mucus, we transfer samples to SNAPS Laboratories for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing. This specifically amplifies chytrid fungal DNA that, if present, confirms the presence of Bd or Bsal pathogens. SNAPS also collects and publishes PCR surveillance data collected worldwide in an open-source database. This global initiative helps monitor and control the spread of infectious chytrid fungi worldwide, allowing the data we collect locally in the Hudson Highlands to contribute not only to our community but also to broader global conservation efforts. In partnership with SNAPS, we carried out a pilot study at Black Rock Forest, near Cornwall, New York. To create suitable habitat sites, we constructed and deployed six artificial cover boards (ACOs). These shelters create moist microhabitats that attract salamanders and help us locate and sample in a non-destructive way. To monitor pathogens, we collected swabs from 17 salamanders representing five distinct species and sent swabs to the SNAPS laboratories. Based on preliminary PCR results there were no cases of Bd or Bsal detected among the pilot samples that we collected. Our preliminary research demonstrates that a small group of student researchers was able to monitor for the presence of Bd and Bsal across 6 acres of the forest. These efforts will be expanded upon in the proposed study. Our preliminary work also established a Meter ATMOS weather station in the Black Rock Forest. In addition to measuring precipitation, temperature and wind, the weather station collects information on the subterranean microclimate, such as soil hydration and soil matric pressure data, which are crucial to determining the suitability for salamander occupancy. Data generated by the weather station will help investigate correlations between water availability and amphibian biodiversity, aiding our understanding of amphibian stress, spread of disease and potential impact of climate change-induced biotic factors on local salamander populations. This effort will also be expanded upon in the proposed study, which establishes a second weather monitoring station. We will increase the number and durability of ACOs across a large portion of the forest that encompasses a wider range and variation of abiotic factors. We will continue testing salamanders (and other amphibians if encountered) according to SNAPS protocols, storing, labeling and sending samples for PCR testing. Previously, our efforts were limited to constructing and deploying ACOs, searching for salamanders, and installing a weather station over a limited four-day period. This year, with greater experience and more time in the field, we expect improved efficiency and productivity. The addition of a second weather station will allow comparison between varied habitats enabling assessment of abiotic influences on salamander distribution. Additionally, by employing maps we created last year, we can improve the productivity of current citizen science efforts by inviting others to contribute to a more consistent amphibian monitoring network. This will also supplement existing educational programming supported by the Black Rock Forest Consortium, as it will consolidate the efforts of a diverse set of citizen scientists to progress toward a shared research goal.

**To learn more about HRES's annual McKeon Student Research Grant program, visit the HRES website at [www.hres.org](http://www.hres.org).**



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## WELCOME HRES NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

Please join us in welcoming HRES's newest board members **Cate Collinson** and **Isabelle Stinnette**. We are excited to have both of these fantastic practitioners as part of our board and to help us in setting our agenda and accomplishing our mission into the future.

**Cate Collinson** is an ecologist and Professional Biologist (ASPB) with over a decade of experience in ecological restoration, permitting, regulatory compliance, and interdisciplinary project management across the U.S. and Canada. Her work focuses on advancing nature-based solutions and complex restoration projects including design, permitting, installation, and long-term monitoring. Cate serves as Associate Director of Restoration Projects at Billion Oyster Project, where she leads a team of project managers, ecologists, engineers to design and permit large-scale oyster reef restoration projects to support organization's estuary-wide oyster restoration plan and regulatory strategy in New York Harbor. She holds a BA in Environmental Studies and Geography from Bishop's University, a Post-Graduate Certificate in Ecosystem Restoration from Niagara College, and an MSc in Environment and Management from Royal Roads University.



**Isabelle Stinnette** is an ecologist with over a decade of experience in ecological research, restoration, and project management across diverse ecosystems. Currently serving as Senior Scientist for Ecological Restoration with the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program at the Hudson River Foundation, Isabelle leads strategic initiatives in habitat restoration, including the innovative Aquatic Connectivity Through Climate-Ready Infrastructure project, coordinates inter-agency workgroups, and conducts environmental assessments such as the State of the Estuary Report. With an MS from Stony Brook University, Isabelle is dedicated to advancing resilient ecosystems through research, collaborative outreach, and data-driven environmental practices. Her goal for working with HRES is to help communicate all the great research that's going on in our watershed to the people who live here. Outside of work, Isabelle is an avid hiker and has vague dreams to summit the Catskill high peaks.



# PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE HUDSON VALLEY

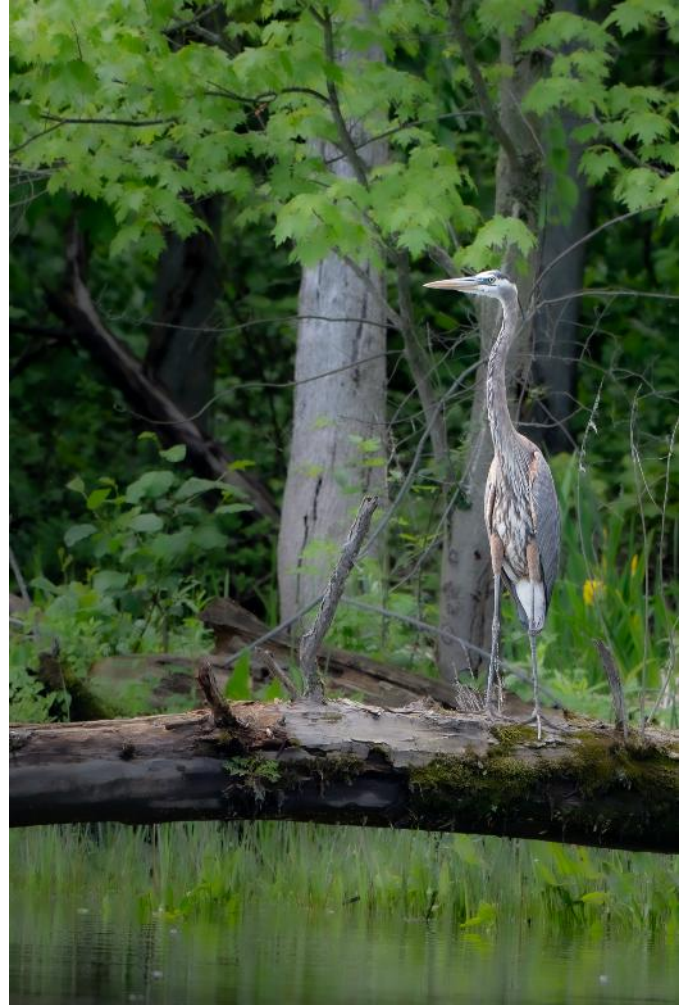
More stunning photography from **HRES Vice President Chuck Nieder...**



**Top:** Bald eagle nest at Ramshorn-Livingston Marsh Sanctuary (Greene County). **Bottom:** Osprey in flight from Rodgers Island (Columbia County).







***Left:*** Green Heron and ***Right:*** Great Blue Heron both photographed on the Hudson near Stockport Flats.

If you have photos of Hudson River Valley scenes that you would like us to consider for future newsletters, please email them to [david.davis@hdrinc.com](mailto:david.davis@hdrinc.com)

**HRES Executive  
Committee**

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*Chuck Nieder (Vice President)*  
*David S. Davis (Treasurer)*  
*Lucy Johnson (Secretary)*  
*Emilie Hauser (Ex Officio)*

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*Karin Limburg, Ph.D.*  
*Mark McLean*  
*Richard Pendleton*  
*Isabelle Stinnette*  
*Margie Turrin*  
*David Yozzo, Ph.D.*

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*We need your help. Interested in  
volunteering your time to  
support the HRES mission?*

*Contact an HRES Board Member  
today!*

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*Founded in 1970, the Hudson River Environmental Society is a nonprofit, non-advocacy organization that delivers the science behind Hudson Valley issues to citizens, scientists, and decision makers. We enable objective discussions, provide forums for rigorous science, connect disparate views, and showcase the region's natural heritage. We are academic researchers, government officials, nonprofit scientists, private consultants, teachers, students, and interested residents who find real solutions.*