



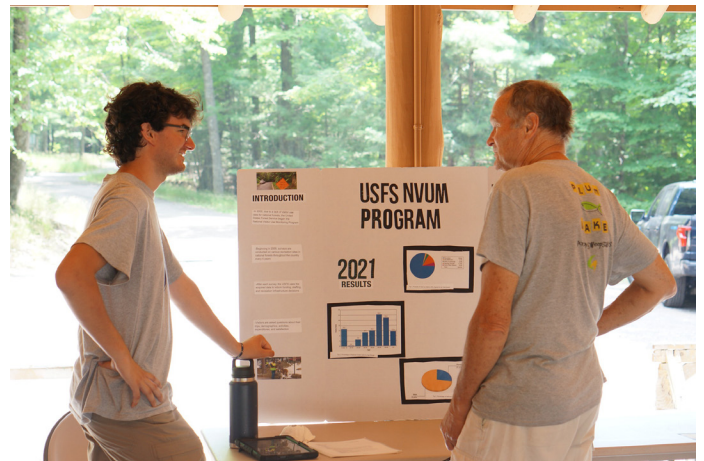
Kemp's Point

Volume 27, Number 2, Fall 2026

News from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Kemp Natural Resources Station

Kemp Station Debuts Field Day Event

More than 70 members of the community visited UW-Madison's Kemp Natural Resources Station on Friday, July 17, 2026, for a first-time event. The Kemp Field Day event ran from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm and featured the science of eight researchers staying at Kemp while working on projects in the area. Research exhibit topics included user surveys on Federal forest lands, stream mapping related to potential mining, aquatic invasive species, jack pine physiology and migration, freshwater mussels, the impact of waterfowl on wild rice populations, insect surveys, and atmospheric studies. Participating researchers were associated with a variety of universities and agencies, including UW-Madison, UW-Oshkosh, Michigan Tech University, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, and Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department. In addition to the research exhibits, visitors could participate in a property tour, featuring the historic log structures once used by the Kemp family, or ride the pontoon boat to see the Kemp property from Tomahawk Lake. We look forward to the 2027 Kemp Field Day! 🍷 (Photos by Nico Gitterle.)



Graduate students and student interns working out of Kemp Station this summer were on hand to share information about their research projects through posters, equipment and sample displays. Above Jonah Gesenberg, and below, Gracie Benstine, speak with Field Day attendees.



At left: A popular Field Day activity was a pontoon boat ride to view the shoreline of Kemp Station's property. Boat captains, Scott Craven and Gary Kellner, who each have a long history at Kemp Station, entertained visitors with stories about the land and the people that make Kemp special.



What I Did Last Summer

By Nicholas "Nico" Gitterle,
Kemp Station Communications Intern

Hi, my name is Nicholas Gitterle, and I was the Kemp Station outreach intern for the summer. If you kept up with our social media and wondered who was putting together those amazing posts, it was me. My time at Kemp was nothing short of amazing, and I was sad to leave. Summer seemed to fly by. One day I was picked up by Karla from the Rhinelander airport, and the next I was saying my goodbye's.

Let's go back to day one: I got off the airplane on a surprisingly hot afternoon, June 1st. Thankfully, Karla picked me up because my original plan was to take an Uber from the airport to Kemp Station, which I later found is not a thing in the Northwoods. As I am meeting Karla in person for the first time, she tells me we have a surprise guest in the car. No, it wasn't Bullet, her dog, who finally accepted me as his friend on my last day on the job, but an injured turtle that Karla saved trying to cross the road. As a result, our first stop was not Kemp but a wildlife rehab center. This was exciting for me because I already had a story to share and post on our social media on my first day on the job.

As we were driving to Kemp, I heard stories from Karla about what past interns did in this position. Then I was told that summer residents at the Mead Residence Hall had a history of not being very "group social," but last year the outreach intern formed a good relationship with everyone and created a nice group. Karla said that it had been the first time she had seen such a camaraderie among residents at Mead. When I met Greta, who

had already been at Kemp for a while, working for the Wisconsin DNR on wild rice, I got her take on the social situation. She mentioned that most of the people seemed to keep to themselves. I could not let this go! Socializing with people is key to my well-being, so I decided to organize a get-to-know-each-other event

at Mead. I created flyers and hung them around Mead -- the event started at 6 pm.

As the hour approached 6 pm, more people started to show up. I scrambled to think of something to do; my plan had not gone beyond getting people to show up. I proposed playing a game while we all introduced ourselves -- it ended with an

intense game of Spoons. This game was what finally broke the ice. Everyone shared more and plans were made for future activities. This was the beginning of the Mead friend group. As the weeks passed, our friendships strengthened -- we held family dinners on Mondays, movie nights on Wednesdays, and on the weekend, we sometimes went to Happy's Bar in Woodruff. Most importantly, we had our daily fishing trips in the small Kemp boat, where we never caught the big musky or pike that we were chasing.

While all of this was happening, I was shadowing researchers visiting Kemp, going into the field with them and learning firsthand what they do and why. It entailed a lot of picture-taking and detailed note-writing, but most importantly, being an extra pair of hands out in the field. After shadowing, I went back to the office to create a social media post about what I learned and tried to explain it to you, our viewers. I hope that you were able to come out a bit more knowledgeable, as I did when I shadowed those incredible people. The best part of all of this was that every day was different. I was able to expand my knowledge of things I never fully knew existed, all while expanding my networking system and, to top it off, being able to stay at Kemp, in my

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Touring a lumber mill (above) and fishing (left) were just two of many activities that filled the summer days and nights at Kemp Station.



Summer (Continued from Page 2)

opinion, the prettiest property owned by the University of Wisconsin.

Another component of my Kemp internship was a personal project and a talk. The personal project was very interesting. Karla and I went back and forth on ideas for it. I enjoy creating videos, which lead us to decide to make a video about Kemp, specifically on its history and buildings. As you are reading this, the video should be posted on the Kemp website; if not, it's because of the captions.



Presenting on his spring 2026 study abroad experience.

On August 3rd, I gave a talk as part of Kemp Station's outreach efforts. It was the first time I gave a talk about my spring study abroad semester spent in Kenya. The presentation focused on conservation methods in Kenya and how those methods could be adopted in the States. Was I nervous? A bit. But then I remembered some wisdom from Kiringe, one of my study abroad teachers: "You are the expert here; act like it." That was the confidence I needed to give the talk. I tried to make it in some way like a TED Talk — it did feel like one. In hindsight, I probably should have worn all black and a turtleneck to make it more official.

During one of the last weeks at Kemp, I had an interesting experience with the Coverts Program, a workshop for landowners, which was at Kemp for the weekend. Something nice about that was getting to see two of my former professors, David Drake and Jamie Nack. But more interesting is that the concept of the workshop is one of the ideas I spoke about during my Kenya presentation, about implementing community conservation methods in the States.



Participants of the Wisconsin Coverts Project tour the private property of landowners who manage for game bird hunting.

It was fascinating to make connections between the ideas from Kenya and how they are using the same foundations to implement them in Wisconsin. The best part was that we were able to visit a huge private property that incorporated all the key ideas from both the workshop and my study abroad presentation. The landowners, Terry and JoAnn Ides, actively manage the forest while incorporating the touristic or recreational side into the plan. They use grouse and woodcock hunting as a source of revenue to continue managing their forest while conserving key habitats. Seeing this in action was extraordinary, and it's a great example of the theory in action.

I am nothing short of grateful for the opportunity to work in such a beautiful place and, most importantly, with such a caring and fun group of people, in and out of the office. I dedicate this last part to Karla, who has been such an amazing boss and friend. I have learned so much because of her and the opportunity she offered me. I also cannot forget to thank Matt, who made sure everything was in tip-top shape, especially during our field day, and for everything else he does, which doesn't go unnoticed. Janet was another key person at Kemp; her stories were amazing, but more importantly, she kept our office and residence hall squeaky clean. Lastly, I thank Scott for introducing me to the world of forestry and lumber production; on top of his kindness, he gave off an amazing presence. There is no place like Kemp Station; some might say it is the jewel of the north, and I say it is — Kemp truly stands alone. 🐾



Kemp Profile: Naia Fulton-Jones

Hometown: Lockhart, Texas, 40 minutes south from the infamous Austin, Texas.

Educational background: Bachelors in Aquatic Biology with a minor in Animal Science from Texas State University in 2025.

What project did you work on this summer?

I worked on a native freshwater mussel (unionid) protocol project. These understudied organisms are extremely important to the health of aquatic ecosystems and are known as the “Livers of the Rivers” due to the many ecosystem services they provide. Freshwater mussels provide habitat for other species, filter out harmful contaminants, provide stability to stream beds, and are an important indicator of overall stream health. They are, however, one of the most imperiled groups of organisms in North America. To date, the USDA Forest Service has lacked the capacity and a standardized toolkit to assess unionid distributions and health, and limited surveys conducted by State and University partners have used a variety of approaches. This left a deficit of knowledge with respect to the health and condition of freshwater mussels, as well as the connectivity of specific populations on National Forests in the Great Lakes Basin. Thus, this project was developed by the USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station in partnership with the National Forest System to address this knowledge and tools gap. I had the privilege of being part of the first season of fieldwork for this project – testing and tweaking the new proposed protocol, exploring the Great Lakes Region’s amazing mussel assemblage across four National Forests, and collecting genetic samples from specific species for future analyses. The tools and information generated by this work will allow National Forest managers to more effectively and efficiently assess areas for future management activities including prescribed burns, vegetation management, and recreational development; help prioritize reintroduction and restoration efforts including dam removal and culvert updating, a specific current focus of multiple federal and state natural resource agencies; and assess how management actions affect this group of animals critical



*Naia with a black sandshell, Ligumia recta.
(Photo credit Shay Keretz.)*

to maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems across the Great Lakes region.

How is this project funded? This project is funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), with supplemental funding from USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station and the University of Georgia. It includes many partners including USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service National Forest System, University of Georgia, as well as the Wisconsin DNR, Michigan DNR, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and National Park Service.

Describe a typical day of field work: A typical field day started at 8:00 AM. Every day was a little different. Throughout the summer the field crew surveyed freshwater mussels in the Ottawa, Hiawatha, Huron-Manistee, and Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. We usually hit two sites a day. For most sites, we did not have previous mussel species data so we did not know what might be there. Once we arrived at the site, we assessed the area and looked for any trace of freshwater mussels and worked to identify the habitat most likely to contain mussels. This could look like shells in the stream or river, shell middens on the bank, or live mussels found in the water. Shell middens are piles of mussel shells left on the bank,

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Kemp Profile (Continued from Page 4)

usually by a critter snacking on freshwater mussels (think of a pile of candy wrappers on Halloween night). The most exciting part was finding mussels. We then took specific habitat data about the stream prior to getting in the water and surveying for mussels. Next, we set up transects in the stream in the area with the best mussel habitat and then we started surveying! Depending on the type of stream, we would grab our masks and snorkels and search for live mussels in our specific transect from one stream bank to the other. If the stream was not so clear, we would adhere to a method I like to call racooning or grubbing. This method requires getting on your hands and knees and feeling for mussels, relying on touch more than sight (a method I am well acquainted with coming from Texas). If we found any live mussels, we collected them in a mesh bag for later processing.



Surveying a stream in the Ottawa National Forest. (Photo credit Rachel Toczydlowski)

Once we were done surveying the stream, we went bag by bag identifying, measuring, and capturing pictures of every native mussel that we found. For a subset of the species, we would either gather foot swabs (like a cheek swab for humans) or mantle clips (a very thin slice of tissue that does not harm the mussel) from specific mussels for later genetic analysis. Once we were done, we carefully placed all the mussels back into the stream bed in the general area they had been found. Some days we might not see any mussels; some days we might find 500 in total in just a 20-meter section of a stream! Some days we would encounter other wildlife such as fish, turtles, other macroinvertebrates, and, once, even a

bobcat! Once we got back to Kemp, we would sit and swap stories from the day with other Mead residents. Over the summer we found and measured 2,184 mussels, traveled over 8,000 miles, and surveyed over 100 sites across the Great Lakes region!



A native freshwater mussel in the streambed found while surveying. This mussel is siphoning, which is how freshwater mussels feed and filter water. They bring particles in through their incurrent siphon, uptake the particles, then push out clean water through their excurrent siphon. A single mussel can filter up to 8 gallons of water a day! Remember, when you are enjoying a clean and pristine waterbody – thank a native freshwater mussel! (Photo credit Kyle Reynolds.)

What challenges did you face working on this project? In previous positions, I worked mostly with established survey protocols and had been given general knowledge on what we might find in the field. The whole goal of the first year of this project was to get a baseline for the mussel assemblage within each of the four National Forests and to ground test the proposed survey protocol. I would say the most challenging part (and the most exciting part) about this project was going into places never surveyed before and asking questions and solving those questions about the protocol as they arose while in the field. We were doing something no one else had done before, oftentimes in places where no one had previously looked for native mussels, using any survey method.

What have you enjoyed most working on this project? I think the most enjoyable part about this project was learning and exploring the amazing Great Lakes basin and working with such a

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Blowing Down the Barrier: A Retreat for Artist-Scientists

By Ana Kilgore, Anu Kramer, Anastasia Kirilyuk, Philipp Maleko, and Mary Campbell, UW-Madison

In September, a collection of graduate students from the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences (Forest and Wildlife Ecology students, primarily) gathered at Kemp Natural Resources Station for something a little different: an art and science retreat. The retreat brought together scientists from across the artistic spectrum — from those who identify as artists to those who have never considered themselves creative — to collaborate, experiment, and build community as artist-scientists.

The weekend retreat was designed to provide participants with basic training in new artistic skills, give participants time to work on collaborative projects, and provide independent work time for participants on individual projects. The workshop portion of the retreat began with a group “sketch and pass” activity to spark inspiration and build community (*photo, below*). Each person drew on a piece of paper for one minute before passing their piece to the next person, rotating through each member of the group. After this creativity-sparking activity, participants were primed for other peer-led sessions which introduced skills in basic sketching, clay molding, and stamp making which encouraged exploration in new mediums.



Amongst the many artistic endeavors at the retreat, one was the design and construction of a semi-permanent natural sculpture by the Connor Forestry Center. Anu Kramer (a Staff Scientist in the department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology)



chose a deer as the subject, to embody both wildlife and one of the research subjects at Kemp. Sticks gathered on Kemp property were secured to 4 rebar stakes and bound together utilizing natural forks in the wood and biodegradable twine (*photo, above*). There is considerable speculation as to how long the sculpture will remain standing, so be sure to check it out the next time you visit Kemp!

Another workshop used fish freshly caught from Lake Tomahawk for printmaking. Gyotaku, the traditional Japanese



art of fish printing, brings art and science together through close observation of nature. During the retreat, Philipp Maleko and Anastasia Kirilyuk (*photo, above*) caught three bluegills and used non-toxic paints to create their print. Capturing the delicate details of a fish is much more difficult than it appears, and the process encouraged participants to examine the anatomy, textures, and unique features of the bluegills more carefully, transforming scientific observation into artistic expression. Beyond documenting the fish, Gyotaku became a way to honor its life. Rooted in Japanese traditions of appreciating nature, this practice resonates with the idea of *mottainai*—respecting resources and avoiding waste. After making the print, Philipp cooked and shared the fish,

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wonderful team of people. This team truly cares about what they are doing and the contributions they are making to the freshwater mussel community! I also really enjoyed teaching so many people about native freshwater mussels during the two outreach events held at Kemp Station this summer. Most people don't know about native mussels, and being able to share with people about how amazing and important they are really made me excited about the future of freshwater mussels. 🐚

*At left: The core 2026 field crew at the end of the season.
(Photo credit Shay Keretz)*

Blowing Down (Continued from Page 6)

allowing it to become both a source of nourishment and a lasting memory.

Ultimately, the practice of *mottainai* describes the motivating force driving the retreat as participants had an opportunity to honor their study systems and each other through creation of art. This experience also echoes values found in many Indigenous North American traditions, particularly gratitude toward animals and respect for the lives that sustain us. Although these traditions are culturally distinct from *Gyotaku*, they share an understanding that our relationship with nature involves not only observation and use, but also responsibility and appreciation. In this way, *Gyotaku* connects art, science, and gratitude: we study the fish, preserve its image, and honor its life.

The retreat was sponsored by a Badger Arts Sponsorship from the Division of the Arts, obtained through an effort led by Ana Kilgore, a PhD student in the department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology and reflects a growing movement in the Forest and Wildlife Ecology Department to integrate art and science. This call is not new — see the Aldo Leopold quote below. The need for art-science integration may be more urgent than ever. At a time when ecological challenges are intensifying and public understanding of science is increasingly vital, reconnecting these disciplines offers a powerful way to cultivate curiosity, wonder, and engagement with the natural world. Artistic practices offer accessible ways to communicate research and build emotional connections with broader



audiences — ones that do not even require literacy as a prerequisite. For students, these experiences also provide tools for processing the emotional dimensions of their work.

Along with the establishment of an annual art show last spring, bringing together multiple departments in Russell Labs, this retreat is one more example of the way graduate students in CALS are taking steps to lower the barrier between disciplines, fostering creativity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and new approaches to scientific dialogue. 🐚

"But what about the creation and exercise of wonder, of respect for workmanship in nature? ... Is it not a little pathetic that poets and musicians must paw over shopworn mythologies and folklores as media for art, and ignore the dramas of ecology and evolution? There are straws which may indicate that this senseless barrier between science and art may one day blow away, and that wildlife ecology, if not wildlife management, may help do the blowing."
-Aldo Leopold, 1940



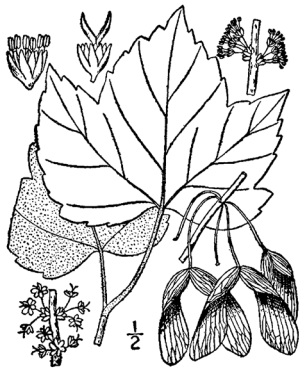
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Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)

The sugar maple may be all the rage in spring, when the sap is flowing and we reap the sweet rewards in the form of maple syrup, but in the fall, the red maple steals the show. One of the first trees to start showing off its fall foliage, the red maple may boast nearly every color of the rainbow on a single tree, from its summer green to a deep scarlet. If your timing is right with a visit to the northwoods, these trees alone will take your breath away with their fall beauty. According to the USDA Forest Service, red maple is one of the most widely distributed trees in eastern North America due in large part to the fact that it does well on a wider range of soil types, textures, moisture regimes, and pH than does any other forest species in North America. In Wisconsin, it is the second most abundant tree species by volume with 2.7 billion cubic feet of live trees. In the sawmill industry, red maple is called soft maple. Despite its name, soft maple is still relatively hard and dense, but less dense than sugar maple. Soft maple has a diffuse porous cell structure like hard maple and looks very similar in appearance. Soft maple is a less expensive substitute for hard maple lumber and is also used for kitchen cabinets, usually in painted applications. While red maple may not be a leader in the maple syrup industry, more producers are using red maple. A survey done by Tim Wilmot, a University of Vermont extension maple specialist, showed that sugar content of red maple sap was lower by only a couple tenths of a degree brix. And those using red maple sap combined with sugar maple sap received reports of consumers liking the “more maple” and “more caramel” flavor. Go Red!

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