



Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen & Conservationists

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Katherine Brozell 2023 John Laudadio Conservation Leadership Award Recipient

Katherine Brozell, Union City, PA, was honored with the 2023 John Laudadio Conservation Leadership Award by the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen and Conservationists (PFSC) during PFSC's Spring Banquet in Harrisburg on March 25, 2023. The award, named in memory of Pennsylvania State Representative and former PFSC President John Laudadio, recognizes a young adult who has demonstrated a commitment to the conservation effort in Pennsylvania.



Katherine states, "I feel honored and elated to have been chosen as this year's recipient of the John Laudadio Conservation Leadership Award! Stewardship for and the conservation of Pennsylvania's environment and its species are the same principles that I have strived to uphold, integrating goals across my personal, professional, and academic lives that echo the dedications of Mr. John Laudadio."

With a major in Environmental science and Sustainability and a minor in Biology and Environmental Writing at Allegheny College, expected graduation date of May 13, 2023, her commitment to conservation extends beyond the classroom to many hands-on projects. Using her skills and familiarity with the outdoors, she jumps in wholeheartedly to any project or challenge set before her. Right out of the gate, she was presented with the chance to assist Professor Kelly Pearce with bat capture at Presque Isle State Park to assess species abundance.

This "all in" attitude made Katherine stand out in Professor Richard Bowden's Environmental Research Methods course, where he could see her fascination with field investigations. Partnered with the local French Creek Valley Conservancy (FCVC) to estimate deer browsing on conservancy properties, she helped to design the large study, collect the data, and analyze and summarize results. According to Professor Bowden, while she was the most knowledgeable student in the course on deer ecology, she was eager to learn more. Because of her interest and drive, Professor Bowden not only had her assist again in another research project, this time on soil and pollution, but also gave her the role of lab manager.

In another research setting, Katherine worked as a summer research student, again with Professor Pearce, working with a wildlife ecologist studying river otter habitats and populations in northwestern PA. This study challenged Katherine to combine her kayaking skills and field observation ability as she sought out river otter latrines along French Creek.

Her outdoor skills were again used in a project using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to develop a "story map" for a nature trail that previous Allegheny students developed at Wilderness Lodge. She helped to GPS the locations of the signs on the ski trails. Then she coupled it with previously collected information that will be uploaded to the Wilderness Lodge website for visitors to the ski center or website to learn more about the area.

Bringing knowledge to others on conservation is paramount for Katherine, and she has lectured groups on birds of prey with her own red-tailed hawk, Athena.

"While the battle is always ongoing, I hope to build on the work of others through shared passions for conservation and to inspire younger generations to find ways to make a positive impact in the realm of conservation," Katherine says. "I have seen firsthand how excited and engaged youth become when I share my passion for falconry. I hope to continue to show how best management practices are intrinsically intertwined with conservation."

She has built birdhouses for Eastern bluebirds, wood ducks and American Kestrels and has assisted at the Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation Center for several years. With this particular bend towards birds, it is no wonder her year-long thesis focused on American kestrels. Ever ambitious, her senior comprehensive project was aimed at supporting conservation for the species in decline. By assessing land cover using geographic information systems, she determined where nest boxes could be established for kestrels in NW PA. She will provide the locations as recommendations to Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center and the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Northwest Region to increase conservation efforts in the field.

Falconry had a huge part in teaching Katherine about wildlife conservation from a management standpoint. "Falconry combines an ancient form of hunting rooted in the protection of birds of prey with an understanding of the importance of predator-prey relationships. I want to be an integral contributor to this field to ensure these opportunities remain ethical and sustainable in the future," says Katie. She truly understands how different management practices go hand in hand with conservation as an avid hunter, archer, fisherwoman, trapper, and falconer. Beyond falconry and taking part in the hobbies of hunting, fishing and trapping, she interned with the Pennsylvania Game Commission in the summer of 2022.

Bob Schoenfeldt, President of the Crawford County Sportsmen's Council and a guest speaker in some of Professor Bowden's environmental courses, could see the idea of hunting, fishing, and trapping as conservation measures, playing critical roles in environmental stewardship and conservation, was foreign to many of the students, but not to Katherine. He states, "Katherine (Katie) Brozell is one of those exceptions, and I quickly realized her zest and knowledge for conservation measures and environmental stewardship after only a few minutes of talking with her. Over the next several years, her resume "strength" increased and confirmed her commitment to our outdoor heritage and showed her significant broad experience."

Katherine's list of accomplishments, varied as it is, is all due to her drive and commitment toward conservation. As stated by Bob, "The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen and Conservationists (PFSC) has a purpose and a responsibility to ensure the future of our outdoor heritage and to encourage youth to continue safeguarding our natural resources. Katie is the epitome and personification of a young adult working for our mission and core values. I am proud to honor her achievements and hope she continues to be active in future environmental stewardship efforts. She is well-deserving of the John Laudadio award."