

Summer Experience Studying Insects on Farms

A Learnership / Student Internship

With the Farmscape Ecology Program, Hawthorne Valley Farm, Ghent, NY

Beginning April and May 2026 (3-6 months, exact dates flexible)

Interested in working with insects? Thinking of a career in conservation or agroecology? Enjoy working outside and on farms? If so, consider applying for a summer entomology experience with the Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program. During this three- to six-month position, you will get experience collecting and identifying insects while living on a farm in the mid-Hudson Valley of New York. You will also have the chance to be involved in public education and outreach around insects, farming, and their intersection. All we ask you to bring is a willingness to learn, an interest in the topic, an eagerness to help, and a good team spirit; we can train you in techniques. If you already have some entomological background, this position would offer you the chance to deepen your experience.

Who We Are: The Farmscape Ecology Program (FEP) is dedicated to exploring the human and natural dimensions of the landscape in and around Columbia County, NY through research and outreach. The Program is part of Hawthorne Valley Association, an educational not-for-profit, and is comprised of a wildlife ecologist, a botanist, a social scientist, two biologists, an entomology lab manager, a botany technician, and a staff dog.

Our interdisciplinary research explores the many dimensions of the historical, current, and potential future interactions of people with the land. An important part of our work is “applied farmscape ecology,” which involves documenting synergies between agricultural production and nature conservation as well as creating, managing, and monitoring experimental on-farm habitats for beneficial wildlife.

For 2026, we are seeking people who are excited about entomology to assist us in monitoring insect life on farms and other lands during our field season, which will run from April through late August or early September. The start and end dates are flexible: all successful candidates will be expected to start by late May or early June and stay through mid-August, but if available, one or more candidates may start as early as April, and there also may be opportunities to extend the position for up to an additional three months into the autumn in order to help us wrap up our fieldwork and allow learners/interns to complete an independent project (but that opportunity is not guaranteed).

We welcome inquiries from graduate students who feel their projects may fit our research objectives. We would also be glad to collaborate with undergraduate students whose universities offer the opportunity for them to earn independent credit.

Activities: Entomology learners/interns will participate in collecting and processing standardized insect samples as part of our applied farmscape ecology research. The work will involve collecting insects in the field using Malaise, vane, suction, and pitfall traps, sweep nets, and a vacuum sampler (g-vac) as well as extracting soil invertebrates using Tullgren funnels. It will be necessary to accurately identify and count both living insects in the field and preserved insects (with the aid of a stereo dissecting microscope) in the lab, as well as to mount select specimens on insect pins or microscope slides for detailed examination. We can train these skills. The selected applicants will be responsible for accurate record keeping, including data entry. In addition to helping with our standardized insect sampling, the interns/learners will occasionally assist with other aspects of our work, such as horticultural tasks (e.g., work in our native plant garden and nursery), on-farm habitat management (e.g., weeding in native wildflower plantings, removing invasive plants, and planting shrubs in hedgerows), ecological consulting work (e.g., surveying the fauna and/or flora of a property owned by a private individual or non-profit), bioacoustics research (e.g., using autonomous sound recorders to monitor bats, birds, frogs, and insects), and/or program outreach (e.g., giving tours of our butterfly house and native plant gardens, posting about ecological finds through our social media, or staffing an outreach table at community events). Optionally, the learners/interns also may have the opportunity to work with Hawthorne Valley's farmers and farm apprentices in their commercial vegetable fields for ½ day per week (depending on FEP and farm schedules).

Qualifications: We are looking for candidates with a strong interest in insects, their conservation, and their role in agriculture who also enjoy the outdoors and interacting with the public. Candidates should be comfortable living and working in a rural setting, be energetic, and thrive in the outdoors even when the going gets rough (think long, hot days in a field without shade!). While not extreme, fieldwork in the summer heat seems to be a common challenge. Given the work environment, it is important that candidates be sociable and communicative, able to interact with a diverse range of people of all ages and backgrounds, self-motivated, and have attention to detail. Most importantly, we are looking for people who are eager to learn. We expect candidates to have basic computer skills (Word, Excel, and Google Workspace). Some academic and/or professional experience in field biology, field ecology, natural history, entomology, environmental science, sustainable farming/gardening, environmental education, or related fields is a plus, but not a requirement. A valid driver's license would also be helpful, but again is not required.

Accessibility: We aim to make this position accessible to applicants from diverse backgrounds, and we encourage people who are under-resourced, BIPOC, or have non-traditional backgrounds to apply. If you have any concerns or questions about the accessibility of this learnership/student internship for your situation, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

General Conditions: The position is based at Hawthorne Valley Farm, a 500-acre organic and biodynamic diversified farm located in the heart of Columbia County, NY. Successful applicants will be expected to work 40–45 hours per week, which will occasionally include hours that are earlier or later than normal work hours and time on weekends.

Compensation: Entomology learners/interns will be provided with a stipend of \$1,750 per month plus housing (a small, private room with a shared kitchen and bathroom) in the Farmscape Ecology Program building. Learners/interns who choose to take the optional opportunity to work ½ day per week in Hawthorne Valley’s commercial vegetable fields are also given access to produce from the farm. We don’t want finances to be a barrier to taking this position, so upon acceptance, successful candidates will be given the opportunity to apply for a need-based scholarship providing up to an additional \$500 per month. Please refer to our scholarship description at <https://hvfarmscape.org/scholarship> to self-assess your eligibility for this additional funding.

COVID-19 Policy: We take COVID-19 seriously. Those living in the shared apartment will work with one another to determine a COVID protocol that they are all comfortable with. Both living and work spaces have portable HEPA air filters, and we make COVID tests and N95 masks freely available. We realize this is always a fluid situation, and thus we discuss and confirm office protocols with all staff and interns at the beginning of each field season. We are happy to describe our current approach during the application process.

Additional Information: Information about the Farmscape Ecology Program is available at <https://www.hvfarmscape.org>. To read the mission of our internship/learnership program, please see <https://hvfarmscape.org/internships>. For more information about Hawthorne Valley Association, our parent not-for-profit organization, please visit <https://hawthornevalley.org>.

Application Process: To apply, please send a résumé, a cover letter highlighting why you are interested in the position and any relevant experience you might bring, and contact information for three references to our entomology lab manager, Kendrick Fowler, at kfowler@hawthornevalley.org. We would prefer (but do not require) that you send these materials as a single PDF document with the filename “Ento2026_YourLastName” (replacing “YourLastName” with your last name).

Statement on Generative AI: The Farmscape Ecology Program values the creative power of the human mind and has decided as a program not to use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) to write the content that we produce. It is therefore important that candidates be capable of succeeding without the support of GenAI. We also believe in giving every application our thoughtful consideration and do not want to use our time to review materials that have not been prepared thoughtfully. For these reasons, please do not send us application materials written using GenAI.

Timeline: We will begin reviewing applications on 4 Feb 2026, and applications received later than that may not be considered. If you wish to apply after that date, please contact us to confirm whether positions are still available.

If you have any questions about the learnership/internship or how to submit your application, please contact us at kfowler@hawthornevalley.org or by phone at (518) 672-7994.