

My name is Dr. Melanie Massey and I am postdoctoral fellow seeking the help of 2-4 ecology graduate students living near London, ON, who study freshwater animals and/or aquatic invasive species, for an outreach opportunity. The event is the **Children's Water Festival**, working with public schools and the local community to bring together 2000-3000 participants to learn about water ecology, sustainability, and ecosystem services. In 2026, the CWF will take place in the **Fanshawe Conservation Area** (near London) **from May 12-15**.

Last year, we ran a successful booth where children/community members learned about invasive species through interactive activities and models.

This year, I will not be able to attend in person as I have a conflict (CSEE conference), but would love to support and help organize a booth if I can find some grads who are interested in running the in-person portion of this opportunity. What I can provide is:

1. Mentorship and resources to help update, design, and train grads to make a booth workshop/activity. I have the existing program and materials from last year (all focused on aquatic invasive species), but would be happy to assist with the co-creation of activities that are more suitable to the graduate students' interests!
 - I will be able to purchase/provide all materials such as posters, models, etc. Last year, we had some 3D printed and real-life invasive species models that the kids loved. We also had informational posters, coloring pages, and a turbidity demonstration.
2. I will be able to provide honoraria for the mentors in the amount of \$50 per day each and a \$50 reimbursement for gas costs per vehicle.
3. I will also have one organizer on-site to help (retired teacher Bryan Smith, who is part of our partner organization, the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice). He will also be able to get 2 high school volunteers to assist you.
4. You will be provided with a very nice lunch each day from the festival organizers.
5. You will get the opportunity to network with other water-related practitioners, including conservation authorities, scientists, wastewater treatment managers, and more.
6. This looks great on a CV given the large number (2000+) of participants. Your collaboration on this project would be alongside two EDI-focused organizations,

including the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice and Diversity of Nature Youth Outreach, as well as a collaboration with us, the Mandrak Lab at UTSC.

Some information about the time requirements for the opportunity:

- ~3 virtual 1-hr meetings where we can co-create the booth/materials and discuss how to do the activity
- 1-2 hours of prep/practice beforehand on your own time, or virtually with me
- Onsite demonstration will be required from May 12-15.
 - The hours are 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM with a break for lunch, but the last day is a 1/2 day (9:00AM-12:00PM).
 - One of the 4 days is optional - it is "French Day" and we will only run the booth if we have a bilingual volunteer
 - There is an optional 2-3 hour "Parent night" where the whole community attends.
- The work is quite laborious/fast-paced so I would suggest having 2 teams who take 2 days each.
- Must be comfortable working with (i.e. managing) children, ages 7-12. You will be visited by rotating groups of ~6 students with one parent/teacher to help supervise, but we found we had to do a little "classroom management" last year!
- Driver's license and access to vehicle (or carpool) would be helpful to get onsite

If you are interested or have any questions please get in touch with me! We had a blast last year at the CWF and the organizers are very enthused about having real scientists onsite :) My email is melanie.massey@utoronto.ca .

Best wishes,

Melanie

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