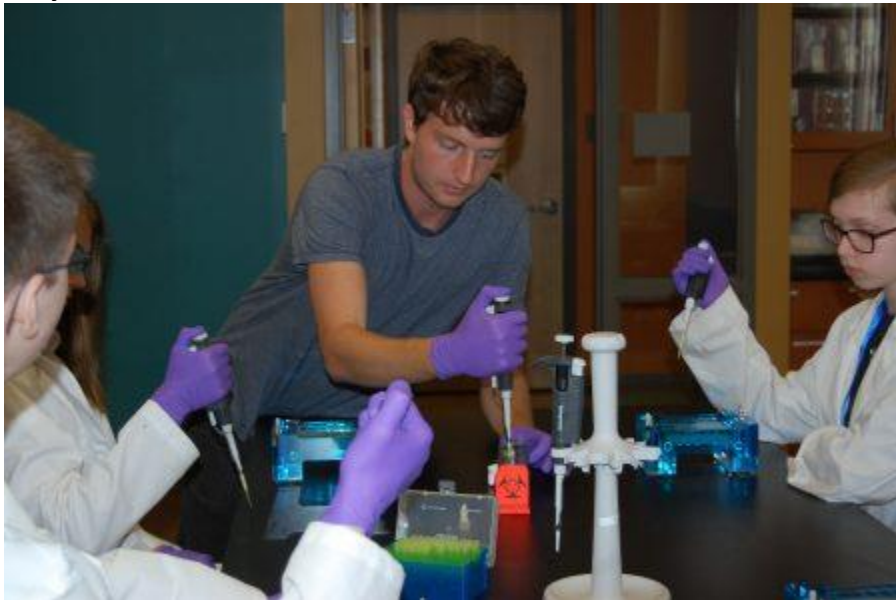




## Summer Research Students and Summer Gifted Camp Students Explore Tick Research Together

Summer 2018

Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) grant students worked with the 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> graders taking part in the West Virginia Wesleyan Summer Gifted Camp program in the Reemsnyder Science Center under the direction of Associate Professors of Biology Dr. Kim Bjorgo-Thorne and Dr. Melanie Sal. The purpose of the tick research program is to identify tick habitat in the local area as well as look for the incidence of *Borrelia* bacteria in the ticks that they collect.



The Wesleyan students are rising seniors Mason Benchoff of Gettysburg, PA, molecular biology, and Michael Winters of Martinsburg, WV, molecular biology, and junior Lukas Samargo of Buckhannon, biology.

The undergraduate researchers explained how they collect ticks for Wesleyan's tick research program, and also taught them how to identify the most common tick species using microscopes. They also demonstrated the use of advanced genetic techniques to scan the ticks for the microscopic agent that causes Lyme disease. The WVWC Tick research program is just getting started, and the summer gifted camp students will be the first K-12 students to see the project through all its steps.

"The WVWC Biology & Environmental Science program is actively engaged in ecology and microbiology research with our undergraduate students, and sharing with the summer gifted program was a natural opportunity for everyone," said Dr. Bjorgo-Thorne, SGP instructor and tick research co-advisor.