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# Central Park's Population Explosion

WRITTEN BY [GENE ROMAN](#) ON OCTOBER 2, 2013. POSTED IN [NEWS OUR TOWN](#), [NEWS WEST SIDE SPIRIT](#).

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## *Survey finds a sharp increase in animal diversity; cue the chipmunks and catfish*

The Central Park Conservancy recently discovered that if you care for the park by throwing out the garbage, the rats will leave, too.

That was one of the findings produced by the Conservancy's BioBlitz, which measured the park's biodiversity over a 24-hour period.

The elimination of trash cans, and the rats that followed them, has resulted in an unexpected resurgence in the population of the eastern chipmunk. "When the Conservancy decided to remove trash cans from the Park's woodlands in 2009, this removed an important food source from the competing, non-native rodent rat population," said Christina Colon, a study participant, ecologist and assistant professor of biology at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn.



In a joint effort with the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY and participating experts, over 500 students and scientists measured the park's biodiversity. The survey discovered a variety of plants, insects, fish, birds, turtles, mollusks and bats, said Dena Libner, spokeswoman for the Conservancy.

Among them: the bullhead catfish and black crappie, which were identified in Central Park's ponds for the first time. Experts involved in the bio-census found that the quality of the park's water bodies were similar to those found in upstate, remote areas thanks to the Conservancy's Soil & Water Lab, which is dedicated to the care of the park's lakes.

"The preliminary results confirm what we and many New Yorkers have observed for many years. The park is healthier and more biologically diverse as a result of the Conservancy's 33-year dedication to its restoration and maintenance," Libner added.

Upper West Siders Ariel Touger and Avi Siegel support Libner's conclusions.



As they dropped a blanket on the grass near 86th street and Central Park West to picnic with friends, they shared childhood memories on a clear, blue sunny afternoon.

"We come here because it's a clean place to eat and you don't see rodents," said Touger, 23, a Columbus Circle resident. "I love the park and cherish it."

Siegel, 24, a native of the Upper West Side, remembers his first visit to Central Park as a 10-year old with his family.

"I fed the ducks," he said. "Once I'm in the park during the day, I feel completely safe, but I wouldn't want to be in the park at night after it's legally

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http://nypress.com/central-parks-population-explosion/

Richard Luden, 82, and his wife are sitting on a bench at the opposite end of the park from Siegel and Touger, near the Children's Playground at East 86th Street. They have lived in a Lexington Avenue apartment on the Upper East Side for 40 years.

"I remember taking drawing and painting classes through the Arts Student League after I retired from the advertising business," recalls Luden. "We would sit and sketch near the Bethesda Fountain and I would compare the beauty of the area to the Fountain marked by graffiti and surrounded by garbage and rats during the fiscal crisis of the 1970's. Is the park in better shape now?" he asks rhetorically. "Oh, god, yes."

John Kolp, 63, relocated from New Orleans to the Upper West Side in 1975 to begin graduate studies in history at Columbia University.

"I walk through the park with some regularity," he wrote in an email. "In my opinion the park is certainly healthier than it was in 1975 when I moved to the city and first visited the park."

The final results produced by the BioBlitz will be completed by 2014, Libner said.

"The initial results are exciting," Libner said in a written statement. "They indicate that the Conservancy's long-time management has encouraged diversity in wildlife throughout Central Park."

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