

macaulay honors college



FreshkillsPark 

Macaulay Honors College Students Participate in Groundbreaking BioBlitz

(September 1, 2015 – New York, NY) Hundreds of students, nature lovers and scientists participated in the 2015 Macaulay Honors College Freshkills Park BioBlitz on August 29 and August 30. BioBlitz is a 24-hour biological inventory whose goal is to find as many species of organisms as possible. BioBlitz was held within Freshkills' North Park, once a landfill area that was capped in 1996. The 2015 BioBlitz was the first such survey ever on the site; the effort will contribute valuable baseline data for Freshkills Park so that future scientists and land managers can track the park's progress as species enter and leave this changing habitat.

New York City has been hard at work converting what was once the world's largest landfill and a heavily human-altered landscape into what eventually will be one of the city's largest public parks. The students, scientists and volunteers discovered and cataloged a richly varied array of animals, large and small, as well as plants and even microbes.

"Our goals were two-fold during BioBlitz: educating students about the science of ecology in the city and cataloguing as many species as possible in 24 hours," said Macaulay Provost Mary Pearl, who is also a wildlife expert. "Students got a transformational educational experience with real scientific data collection in a complex ecosystem and also contributed to the environmental monitoring efforts of New York City."

BioBlitz is one part of Macaulay's new Science Forward curriculum that gets students to practice their critical thinking and scientific skills, and this is the third such event organized by Macaulay Honors College. In 2013, in partnership with the Central Park Conservancy, Macaulay held a very successful BioBlitz in Central Park, where its students teamed up with about 40 scientists to find a total of 571 different species in the park, including a few that had never been seen there before. In 2014, Macaulay partnered with the New York Botanical Garden where students and scientists focused on the Thain Family Forest, which is the

largest area of old growth forest in New York City. At that BioBlitz, participants found 503 species not counting the microbial analysis that happened later. This year Macaulay expects to have similar success as students explore the unique landscape of Freshkills Park.

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