

macaulay honors college



AT THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN



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**Scientists and Students Will Work around the Clock to Discover
Animals, Plants, and Other Species during Macaulay Honors College
BioBlitz at The New York Botanical Garden**

More than 400 Macaulay Students and 20 Scientists Join Forces in 24-Hour
Tally to Contribute to Catalog of NYBG Plant and Animal Life

New York, NY (July 30, 2014) – Hundreds of students from Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York will discover and catalog a richly varied array of animals, plants, fungi, and even microbes when they descend on The New York Botanical Garden for a 24-hour BioBlitz on September 6 and 7, 2014.

The 250-acre Botanical Garden was chosen as the location for Macaulay’s second annual BioBlitz in part because of its widely varied natural habitats, including the 50-acre Thain Family Forest—the largest remaining old-growth forest in New York City—wetlands, and the Bronx River. The Garden’s many habitats promise to contain an equally varied assortment of plants and animals for students and scientists to discover.

As part of this year’s BioBlitz, the students will continue their regional investigation of the bat population, which they began at Macaulay’s 2013 BioBlitz in Central Park. Last year, Macaulay students’ bat sightings and documentation noted the presence of many solitary tree-roosting bats, possibly occupying the niche formerly dominated by cave-roosting species that have been severely decimated by white nose syndrome, a fungal disease with devastating consequences for bats.

In addition to bats, the Garden’s sprawling grounds provide students with an outstanding opportunity to record hundreds of species and to potentially uncover species that have never been seen before at the Garden.

“The Garden will become an open-air classroom for 24-hours and an opportunity for our students to work side-by-side with some of the most accomplished scientists in the field,” said Dr. Mary Pearl, Provost at Macaulay Honors College and noted wildlife conservationist. “Experiential education and an emphasis on engaging students in scientific discovery and learning are important tenets of Macaulay’s educational philosophy,” she added.

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The data collected during the BioBlitz will be incorporated in an ongoing project to document for the first time the complete natural history of the Garden, including all of the plants, animals, insects, and other living things that call the Garden home. As the first part of that project, any new plant discoveries will become part of a published inventory of the Garden's spontaneous (that is, native or non-cultivated) plant life, the first such compilation in 114 years.

"The BioBlitz will be a great opportunity for all involved to take the time to look carefully at organisms in an urban setting and appreciate not just their structural complexity, striking shapes, and colors, but also their resilience in the face of an ever-changing environment," said Barbara M. Thiers, Ph.D., the Garden's Vice President for Science Administration and the Patricia K. Holmgren Director of the William and Lynda Streere Herbarium. "Everyone who participates will become a member of the select group of human beings who not only see the forest for the trees, but also for the insects, fungi, mosses, and microscopic organisms that inhabit and help maintain it."

Teams will observe, identify and count species, from turtles and lizards to mollusks, bees, spiders, flowering plants, mosses, fungi, and microbes. A comprehensive analysis will be undertaken during the remainder of the year, and preliminary results will be shared in the weeks following the BioBlitz.

Scientists from the Garden, CUNY, Hofstra University, the American Museum of Natural History, Columbia University, Fordham University, the University of Connecticut, Nyack College, North Carolina State University, SUNY, Rutgers University and New York City Audubon Society will be among the participants in the Macaulay BioBlitz. The Garden's lead scientist for the BioBlitz is Robert Naczi, Ph.D., Arthur J. Cronquist Curator of North American Botany. Kelly O'Donnell, Ph.D., an ecologist based at Macaulay, will direct the 24-hour blitz.

About Macaulay Honors College: Headed by Dean Ann Kirschner, Macaulay Honors College at The City University of New York offers exceptional students a personalized education with access to the vast resources of the nation's largest urban university and New York City. Selected for their top high school records and leadership potential, Macaulay students receive a full-tuition scholarship, a laptop and technology support, and an Opportunities Fund to pursue global learning, research and service opportunities. Macaulay students enroll in one of eight CUNY senior colleges (Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Hunter, John Jay, Lehman, Queens, and Staten Island). macaulay.cuny.edu.

About The New York Botanical Garden: The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants, an educational institution, and a scientific research organization. Founded in 1891, the Botanical Garden is one of the world's preeminent centers for studying plants at all levels, from the whole organism down to its DNA. Garden scientists conduct fundamental research on plants and fungi globally, as well as on the many relationships between plants and people. A National Historic Landmark, the Garden's 250-acre site is one of the greatest botanical gardens in the world and the largest in any city in the United States, distinguished by the beauty of its diverse landscape, its extensive collections and gardens, and the scope and excellence of its programs in horticulture, education, and science. Learn more: nybg.org

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