

## **Macaulay Honors College Students to Study Marine Ecology of Cuba**

**(December 23, 2015, New York, NY)** – Students from Macaulay Honors College at CUNY, along with Baruch College associate professor David Gruber, will take part in a unique experience in Cuba—studying tropical ecology at the Peninsula de Zapata National Park. The site is one of the Caribbean’s most important wetland areas, and at nearly 700,000 acres, one of the largest biosphere reserves in Cuba. The students will explore the diversity of flora and fauna in this remote part of the country in a trip that will run from January 8-22, 2016. Co-teaching the course will be two noted ornithologists from the University of Havana, Drs. Lourdes Mugica Valdes and Martin Acosta Cruz. It will be a rare chance for the students and scientists to explore a site that is relatively untouched by coastal development.

“I am very excited for our students to experience a site that has been exposed to few toxicants and is nearly pristine, making it rich for biological discovery,” said Dr. Mary Pearl, Provost of Macaulay, who is also a wildlife expert and has done much work in Cuba. “My hope is that the trip will lead to a greater relationship between CUNY and the University of Havana for other areas of study. We are grateful that this trip has been made possible through funds from the Chancellor’s Strategic Investments.”

The Macaulay students are making the trip as part of a study abroad course called Cuban Tropical Forests and Reefs. Over the three-week period, they will conduct marine and terrestrial fieldwork by collecting data, analyzing it and then presenting their results and conclusions.