

CENTRAL PARK



EMBARGOED UNTIL: August 26, 2013 at 2:00 PM
PR 32-2013

Scientists to Count Bats, Birds, Bugs and More in Central Park Hundreds Will Work Around the Clock to Tally Species in 24 Hours

Hundreds of students and scientists will discover hundreds of species in a marathon census of plants, insects, fish, birds, turtles, mollusks, bats, and more when the Central Park Conservancy and Macaulay Honors College launch a 24-hour BioBlitz to measure the Park's biodiversity.

The last full wildlife survey of Central Park was conducted in 2003 by the Central Park Conservancy and the Explorers Club. Over the past decade, the Park has been carefully sustained and managed by the Central Park Conservancy; as a result, its landscapes and water bodies are believed to be healthier than ever before.

At the same time, the Park has faced severe weather events and encroachment by invasive species. A key question for natural scientists and the Conservancy is: how has wildlife diversity in Central Park changed over the past 10 years?

"We know that 40 million people enjoy Central Park every year, but how many turtles? How many bats? How many fish?" said **Doug Blonsky, President & CEO of the Central Park Conservancy**. "The Conservancy's dedication to the health of Central Park doesn't just mean that millions of people get to enjoy the outdoors in the heart of Manhattan; it means that countless species have a place to call home. As a result of our work over the next 24 hours, we're going to have a better idea of just how many different species call Central Park home, and an idea of how much more diverse an environment the Park is compared to 10 years ago."

"In the course of their studies, our students engage New York City as their laboratory, their campus, and their home," said **Macaulay Honors College University Dean Ann Kirschner**. "The Central Park BioBlitz is a perfect example of how Macaulay's hands-on educational model encourages our students to acquire knowledge in unique and interesting ways, while also providing a service to our great city."

Scientists from the American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn College, City College, Columbia University, Hofstra University, Kingsborough Community College, The New York Botanical Garden, New York City Audubon Society, Queens College, SUNY Stony Brook, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico and the Wildlife Conservation Society will lead more than 400 Macaulay Honors College students in a survey of the Park's wildlife, including flowering plants, moss, spiders, fish, birds, reptiles, bats and mammals.

Teams will observe, identify, and count species from 3:00 PM Monday, August 26 to 3:00 PM Tuesday, August 27. A comprehensive analysis of the collected data will take months to complete, but preliminary data will be released in the weeks following the BioBlitz.

The Central Park Conservancy and Macaulay Honors College plan to create educational and academic programs based on the information collected, giving the public and students a richer understanding and appreciation of the Park's diversity and importance of the Conservancy's commitment to its health and maintenance.

About the Central Park Conservancy: The mission of the Central Park Conservancy is to restore, manage and enhance Central Park in partnership with the public, for the enjoyment of present and future generations. A private, not-for-profit organization founded in 1980, the Conservancy provides the majority of Central Park's \$46 million park-wide expense budget and is responsible for all basic care of the Park. For more information on the Conservancy, please visit centralparknyc.org.

About Macaulay Honors College: Macaulay Honors College at The City University of New York offers exceptional students a uniquely personalized education with access to the vast resources of the nation's largest urban university and New York City itself. Selected for their top high school records and leadership potential, Macaulay students receive a full-tuition scholarship, a laptop and technology support, and a \$7,500 Opportunities Fund to pursue global learning and service opportunities. A Cultural Passport provides access to museums, libraries, and other treasures around New York City. Macaulay students enroll in one of eight CUNY senior colleges (Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Hunter, John Jay, Lehman, Queens and Staten Island). For more information, see macaulay.cuny.edu.

Central Park Conservancy Media Contact: Dena Libner
212.310.6638 | 347.582.0381
dlibner@centralparknyc.org

Macaulay Honors College Media Contact: Lisa Dierbeck
917.364.0755
ldierbeck@earthlink.net

###