



**News from**  
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**FIRST-TIME BIO BLITZ TO DOCUMENT JAMAICA BAY AREA**

***-- 24-Hour Study of Urban Park's Thousands of Acres Will Record Its Biodiversity;***

***Public Invited to Participate in September 7-8 Activities --***

FLUSHING, NEW YORK, August 27, 2007 -- Equipped with nets, notebooks, and insect repellent, Queens College researchers will descend on the wildest reaches of New York City on the afternoon of Friday, September 7, and they won't emerge for 24 hours. They're not filming an episode of *Survivor*; they're staging the first BioBlitz—a round-the-clock tally of flora and fauna—of the Jamaica Bay area. Queens College is the lead institution for the event, sponsored by the college, the Jamaica Bay Institute, the Gateway National Recreation Area of the National Park Service, the CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities, and the North Atlantic Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit.

Organized by Queens College biology professor John Waldman and assistant earth and environmental sciences professor Gillian Stewart, the BioBlitz targets thousands of acres within the federally protected Gateway National Recreation Area, which straddles New York and New Jersey. Despite its urban location, Jamaica Bay is rich in wildlife, from red foxes and horseshoe crabs to invasive species, like Western jackrabbits. It also serves as a major flyover for hundreds of migrating visitors, such as hawks, ospreys, and monarch butterflies.

To document this biodiversity, “we’re going to take a team of scientists with different specialties in plants and animals, and survey the hell out of a plot of land,” says Waldman. “It’s a quick and dirty look at what’s there, giving us a baseline for the future.”

Planners hope that the event will also meet the goals of educating the public and celebrating biodiversity. “There will be a festival atmosphere,” says Stewart, who notes that the excitement will begin on September 7 at 3 pm with the ringing of a bell at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge visitor center, the BioBlitz base camp. New York City Councilmember James Gennaro, chair of the Council’s Committee on Environmental Protection, will speak. Author of many progressive environmental bills, Gennaro spearheaded efforts to protect and restore Jamaica Bay, and takes great pride in the role he has played in preserving the city’s water supply. Barry Sullivan, general superintendent of the Gateway National Recreation Area and Kim Tripp, director/research coordinator of the Jamaica Bay Institute, will also address the participants.

The schedule of free activities on Friday evening and Saturday morning will include guided field walks, a workshop on sketching plants and animals in the wild, and a junior BioBlitz for children. Meanwhile, professional naturalists will be staking out parts of the park in four-hour

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shifts, returning to the wildlife center to file regular reports. The final species count, and other interesting findings, will be announced at closing ceremonies on September 8 at 3 pm, when Congressman Anthony Weiner will say a few words. A member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce—and its energy and air quality subcommittee—Weiner has made Gateway one of his top priorities, securing nearly \$66 million for the park since he was elected in 1998.

A limited number of positions on field teams are open to volunteers, who will be expected to bring their own water and snacks; camping will be permitted at Floyd Bennett Field, but no bedding will be provided. To learn more about the BioBlitz or register as a volunteer, visit the project's Web site at <http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/jamaicabay/bioblitz/BioBlitz.html>.