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Bioblitz' finds 661 species in Elmwood Park

May 28, 2003

MARK WEINER
ENVIRONMENT NOTEBOOK

There's no longer any doubt that Syracuse's Elmwood Park is an urban oasis for a diverse array of plants and wildlife.

The park was the site Friday and Saturday of what is believed to be the first "bioblitz" in Central New York, an effort to catalog every species of plant and animal that could be found in one place in 24 hours.

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About 50 scientists, graduate students and alumni from the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry took part in the effort. And their final tally was impressive.

The blitz uncovered 661 species in the 68-acre park, according to Neil Ringler, distinguished teaching professor and chair of the faculty of environmental and forest biology at SUNY-ESF.

"I would say 661 species is higher than I imagined," Ringler said. "The park is a unique region for Syracuse because it's right in the middle of the city and full of diversity."

The park, in Syracuse's southwest corner, impressed scientists with its broad array of life, from moss to birds. Here's a breakdown of the species counted during the bioblitz:

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237 species of trees, shrubs, grasses and plants.

48 mosses, lichens and ferns; and 45 species of fungi.

132 species of forest insects; and 86 species of soil invertebrates, including millipedes, pillbugs, centipedes and earthworms.

Six species of fish, including brook trout and brown trout; five species of amphibians, including salamanders and gray tree frogs; two species of reptiles and 37 species of aquatic invertebrates, including mayflies, caddis flies and scuds.

50 species of birds, including wild turkey.

13 species of mammals, including deer, short-tailed shrews, woodchucks, dogs, cats and humans.

One more winning design Last week, a Central New York land trust, Save the County, announced the winners of a competition to design a new nature center at the Old Fly Marsh in Pompey.

Among the winners in professional, college and high school categories was one omitted from a list in last week's notebook. Jim D'Angelo, of Red Creek, won the professional award for interpretive programming.

D'Angelo is a former program director at the Centers for Nature Education at Baltimore Woods. He is among those who attempted to design a "cutting edge" nature interpretive center. The winning designs were unveiled last week at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park.

Save the County's board members must now decide what suggestions to take from the designs. Bob Asanoma, the group's executive director, said no timetable has been set for making any construction plans.

The 45-acre marsh has varied water-based and forest ecosystems and a variety of resident birds and wildlife. Adirondack climbing ban The state has temporarily closed several Adirondack rock-climbing routes because they are near nesting sites for peregrine falcons, an endangered species.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation wants to prevent people from disturbing young peregrines in their nests.

DEC Commissioner Erin Crotty issued the ban on certain Adirondack cliffs, where the population of peregrines has grown since the late 1970s.

The birds have enjoyed a big boost from the DEC, which each year places young falcons raised in captivity at artificial nest sites. In 1999, 20 chicks fledged from nine nest sites in the Adirondacks.

The closed rock-climbing routes are on Chapel Pond, Moss Cliff (Wilmington Notch) and Poke-o-Moonshine in Essex County. They will remain closed until Aug. 15, or until the peregrine chicks have fledged. Mark Weiner covers environment and science issues for The Post-Standard. To reach him, call 470-2274 or send e-mail to citynews@syracuse.com.

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