

For Immediate Release

Connecticut State BioBlitz identifies 1,715 species in Greater Hartford

Hartford, CT. – The internationally recognized Connecticut State BioBlitz—part contest, part festival, and part educational event—held this year in the Greater Hartford area, documented 1,715 different species of plant and animal life. It brought together scientists, college students, and school children from a number of universities and scientific institutions in a race against time to see how many species they could find in a 24-hour biological survey. This was the 10th anniversary of the Connecticut State BioBlitz and included a return to Keney Park, site of the state's first BioBlitz in 1999. Goodwin College's Riverside Drive Campus in East Hartford served as the "base camp" and the hub of public activity.

Over the course of one day the scientists were able to identify 1,715 different plants and animals from Hartford's Keney Park, and the areas surrounding Goodwin College, including adjacent reaches of the Connecticut River. Recorded species included numerous mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, fish, plants, mosses and lichens, algae, parasites, insects, spiders, and fungi. This year's total exceeded that of the inaugural 1999 BioBlitz by nearly 350 species. The Connecticut State BioBlitz still holds the one-day world record for species counted with 2,519 species identified in 2001 from Tarrywile Park in Danbury.

Interesting and noteworthy finds include a breeding pair of bald eagles and a peregrine falcon. Several pregnant little brown bats mist-netted at Keney Park suggested the population there was healthy, in marked contrast to many of the state's populations which are suffering from white-nose syndrome (WNS), a mysterious fungal disease. Notable reptiles include a spotted turtle, wood turtle, and a whopping 19-pound snapping turtle from Keney Cove that was used to host a National Geographic Crittercam. An eighteen-pound northern pike attracted considerable attention among those censusing the Connecticut River fish. A marvelous array of fungi—close to three times the number found at Keney in 1999—was collected by the Connecticut Valley Mycological Society. The BioBlitz yielded one new state record—a rare moth. According to David Wagner, Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Co-director of the Center for Conservation and Biodiversity at UConn, and the BioBlitz organizer, seven of caterpillars the rare moth (*Ufeus*) were found along the trunk of a majestic cottonwood growing by the Connecticut River near Goodwin College.

Also participating were 26 middle school and high school students from across Connecticut that were selected as Jr. Scientists to work alongside notable scientists and some of the region's top naturalists. The students had guided mini-safaris, collected their own specimens, and offered presentations to the public.

The Dorr Foundation sponsored the 2009 Connecticut State BioBlitz. Other major financial and in-kind contributors include the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at UConn, Center for Conservation & Biodiversity at UConn, Goodwin College, the Friends of Keney Park, the City of Hartford, the Town of East Hartford, the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UConn, the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Leadership Greater Hartford, Keney Park Trailblazers, B.A.S.S. Federation Nation, Upper Albany Collaborative, and the VCB Association.

The Connecticut State BioBlitz has become a model for more than 500 similar events around the globe, whose singular charge is to reveal the wonderful diversity of life occurring just outside our backdoors. "The discovery of more than 1,700 kinds of wildlife in Greater Hartford was far richer than any of the event's organizers would have imagined," says David Wagner. "The event underscored the important role

that urban environments can play in sustaining Connecticut's biological riches, and encourages curiosity and excitement about science in both children and adults." For additional information please visit <http://web.uconn.edu/mnh/bioblitz/> or call (860) 486-4460.

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2009 CT State BioBlitz images available upon request.