

American Ginseng and Salt-Meadow Grass Among Rare and Unique Species Discovered During SUNY-ESF and *Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps* BioBlitz

SUNY-ESF Says Results Suggest Recovery of Onondaga Lake is Well on Its Way

September 23, 2014 - Nearly 450 species, including several rare and unique species, were identified by State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) professors and students, and *Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps* volunteers during an Onondaga Lake BioBlitz on Sept. 12 and 13.



Led by SUNY-ESF, the BioBlitz, an extensive survey conducted in 24 hours, provides a snapshot of mammals, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, insects, fungi, trees, shrubs, and other plants. Scientists say that snapshot will help them learn more about how to continue restoring this important landscape. Among the discoveries were a patch of rare American ginseng, salt-meadow grass, and a naturally reproducing population of brown trout in Onondaga Creek.

Left: Alexander Weir, Ph.D., SUNY-ESF associate professor, assists SUNY-ESF students in identifying fungus species. Right: An array of mosses common in New York were available for students and community participants to reference as they identified the moss species discovered.



Left: Katherine England, a SUNY-ESF senior studying aquatic and fisheries science, displays bracket fungus, which grows on trees and woody debris. Right: Christopher Maldonado, a SUNY-ESF junior studying environmental biology, identifies and examines moss using a microscope.



To watch a video from the event, [click here](#).



The BioBlitz was part of the celebration surrounding the inauguration of SUNY-ESF's fourth president, Quentin Wheeler, Ph.D., pictured above (center) helping a SUNY-ESF student identify insects. "The Onondaga Lake project is one of the great examples of restoration ecology," said Wheeler. "Learning more about its current state will help us better chart its future."



"The remediation of Onondaga Lake has been one of the most exciting remediation projects in the United States, and when complete, will make the lake and the surrounding area one of the most interesting landscapes in upstate New York," said Donald Leopold, Ph.D., SUNY-ESF professor, shown above (right) with James Gibbs, Ph.D., SUNY-ESF professor. "This BioBlitz suggests that recovery is well on its way."



"I really am so happy that people from ESF are here," said Diane Haun, an *Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps* member from Syracuse, pictured above (left) speaking with Neil Ringer, Ph.D., SUNY-ESF professor. "It's interesting for someone to hold a fish and show it to you, and not just go fishing. It's a whole different experience, understanding the different species and how they interact."

The *Conservation Corps* is an expanding organization of volunteers who are contributing to restoration projects that are creating or improving wildlife habitat in the Onondaga Lake watershed.

"SUNY-ESF has been an integral partner in the Onondaga Lake cleanup and at the forefront of a national and local team designing for, and monitoring, biodiversity in and around the lake," said John McAuliffe, Honeywell Syracuse program director. "The BioBlitz showcases their excitement for increasing the lake's biodiversity and restoring native habitats."



Conservation Corps members helped identify plant and animal species.

Left: Shannon Farrell, Ph.D., SUNY-ESF assistant professor, assists Ellen Booth, of Liverpool, in identifying bird species. Right: Lauren Tarr, a first-year graduate student in the Department of Environmental Studies at SUNY-ESF, spots snow geese on Onondaga Lake.

Honeywell has made progress restoring wetlands and making enhancements at Geddes Brook, Harbor Brook, Nine Mile Creek, and along Onondaga Lake's Western Shoreline. To date, 37 acres of wetlands have been created or enhanced and about 312,000 native plants, trees, and shrubs are providing diverse habitat for more than 110 wildlife species including mink, beaver, wild turkey, bald eagles, northern pike, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and snapping turtles.

Honeywell's [Habitat Restoration Plan](#) includes wetlands, shoreline improvements, and a robust habitat layer for the lake bottom.

The *Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps* was established in 2012. Founding partners of the *Corps* include Montezuma Audubon Center, Onondaga Audubon Society, Parsons, O'Brien & Gere, and Honeywell. To learn more or to participate in future activities, please contact montezuma@audubon.org or call 315-365-3588. For more information on the Onondaga Lake cleanup, please visit www.lakecleanup.com.

For more photographs of the *Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps*, [click here](#).

For more information on the Onondaga Lake BioBlitz, including results, [please visit SUNY-ESF's website](#).