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Counting Heads, Wings, Roots and More at a Door County BioBlitz

(Madison, WI) Every once in a while, nature needs to stop and take a head count. On June 26th, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, with help from Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay, and volunteers from throughout the state, will hold a day-long biological survey of Europe Bay Woods State Natural Area in Newport State Park. The event, called a BioBlitz, is one of three being held in Wisconsin this summer.

“BioBlitzes are kind of like a head count in nature,” noted Jeffrey Potter, coordinator of the events for the Foundation, “you’ve got just twelve hours to count as many species as you can.” Designed as part educational event, part scientific endeavor and part festival, BioBlitzes bring together scientists and the public to explore local biodiversity and the science used to measure and protect it. “We’re going to see how many different species we can find at Europe Bay Woods in just twelve hours; it’s a lot of work, but it’s also a lot of fun” he said.

Matt Frank, Secretary of the DNR, will be on hand in the morning to participate in the event and offer encouragement to the many scientists and members of the public expected to attend. “This is a great opportunity to work side-by-side with some of the state’s top field ecologists and have some fun learning about Door County’s biodiversity at the same time,” Frank said.

Secretary Frank will also be congratulating a key BioBlitz partner, the Newport Wilderness Society, on their 25th anniversary. The group was named “Friends Group of the Year” by the Friends of Wisconsin’s State Parks in 2009 and they played a significant role raising funds for Newport State Park’s new education building. “Our state park friends groups are making a real difference for our parks, their passion and commitment represents the best of Wisconsin conservation efforts,” Frank added.

While a few BioBlitzes have been held in Wisconsin before, none have been held at any of Wisconsin’s 600+ State Natural Areas. These specially designated areas are considered “the best of the best” remnants of original Wisconsin landscapes. “They represent a window into our past and a road map for how and why Wisconsin’s Great Lakes coastal habitat should be

protected and restored now and in the future,” noted Thomas Meyer of the DNR’s State Natural Area program. “Europe Bay Woods is a relatively new State Natural Area and so the data we collect during the BioBlitz will be especially helpful,” he added. Meyer is just one of 25 scientists volunteering for the event.

Ecologists and scientists from the Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as non-profit conservationists from Newport Wilderness Society, Ridges Sanctuary, Friends of Toft’s Point and the Nature Conservancy will be on-hand to lead citizen-scientist teams all day.

“This event is open to any one for any amount of time - come for a few hours or stay for the whole day” Potter said. The BioBlitz will run approximately twelve hours, from 6am to 6pm and is free and open to the public. Short, guided data collection trips throughout the day will include plants, insects, birds, mammals, trees, amphibians and more. “If it lives in Europe Bay Woods, we’ll be looking for it,” Meyer said.

If you’re interested in participating in the BioBlitz, meet at the event “base camp” at Ferdinand Hotz Park on Europe Bay Road. The small township park will serve as event headquarters with a field lab for scientists and activities for kids and families will be available. The Peninsula School of Art will lead a public art project and guest speakers will offer short presentations on a host of topics throughout the day.

Guest speakers include Roy Lukes, who will talk about the diversity of Door County nature, Jack Travis, who will talk about geology of the peninsula, and the Green Living Project, a group from California, who will be talking about sustainable living and share stories and short films from community projects in Central and South America.

Registration is recommended and free, but not required. Visit www.wisconservation.org and follow the “BioBlitz” link on the home page for details and more information.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Royalty-free images are available for this story, just visit <http://wisconservation.org/index.php?page=media-images> to select and download images with photo credits and captions.

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The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. For more than twenty years, the Foundation has worked with citizens, businesses, non-profits and the government to promote the protection and enjoyment of Wisconsin’s public lands, waters and wildlife. Learn more and donate online at www.wisconservation.org.

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