



Stewardship Day 2017: BioBlitz

The Siena School Catalogs Biodiversity in Silver Spring, MD

Silver Spring, Maryland, April 27, 2017- The Siena School celebrated its annual Stewardship Day, a school-wide event dedicated to environmentalism and service learning, on April 24th. This year, Siena teamed up with the National Geographic Society and iNaturalist for the school's first-ever BioBlitz: an organized effort to record the biodiversity in Maryland's Sligo Creek Park. Siena's BioBlitz engaged students and teachers as citizen scientists to interact with their community's natural resources and gain hands-on learning about biodiversity.

With iNaturalist, a free web and smartphone application used globally, students and teachers were able to take photos of organisms in Sligo Creek Park and post them to iNaturalist's online database. Each post was logged with a user-designated taxonomical classification and an app-generated geotag. In order to crowd source for the most accurate data, other iNaturalist users have the ability to view shared posts and make suggestions as to taxonomy. Data from iNaturalist is continually added to the body of data that scientists use to study the effects of climate change, invasive species, pollution, and other factors in ecosystems across the world.



John Francis, the former Vice President of Research, Conservation, and Exploration at National Geographic, kicked off Stewardship Day with an engaging presentation. During his time at National Geographic, Mr. Francis initiated a 10 year partnership with the National Park Service to conduct BioBlitzes in national parks. He spoke to Siena students and faculty about the importance of engaging citizens to catalog biodiversity to further global scientific research. Mr. Francis was joined by Dan Beaupre, Vice President of Experiences at National Geographic, and Scott Louire, Co-Director of iNaturalist.

After morning presentations, students and faculty divided into small groups and set out to catalog a vast array of species throughout the neighboring Sligo Creek Park system. With the guidance of volunteer experts from the community, The Siena School logged over 150 unique entries of plants, animals, and fungi.

About The Siena School

The Siena School in Silver Spring, Maryland serves bright, college-bound students with language-based learning differences, such as dyslexia. Siena's staff and board of advisors include distinguished national, state and local education leaders and professionals. The school was established in 2006 and serves students in grades 4 – 12. Siena's program is designed for students with mild to moderate learning needs who are experiencing a discrepancy between their academic achievement and intellectual abilities in one or more areas such as reading, writing, oral expression or math. Siena delivers an individualized educational program featuring small class sizes, research-based instructional methodologies, a highly trained staff and an educational environment specifically designed to meet the unique needs of our students, with a specific emphasis on the arts. For further information, The Siena School can be contacted at (301) 244-3600 or on the web at www.thesienaschool.org.

About the National Geographic Society

The National Geographic Society is a leading nonprofit that invests in bold people and transformative ideas in the fields of exploration, scientific research, storytelling and education. They support educators to ensure that the next generation is armed with geographic knowledge and global understanding. National Geographic aspires to create a community of change, advancing key insights about our planet and probing some of the most pressing scientific questions of our time. Their goal is measurable impact: furthering exploration and educating people around the world to inspire solutions for the greater good. For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.org.

About iNaturalist

iNaturalist is an online social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature. It's also a crowd sourced species identification system and an organism



occurrence recording tool. You can use the app to record your own observations, get help with identifications, collaborate with others to collect this kind of information for a common purpose, or access the observational data collected by iNaturalist users. The primary goal in operating iNaturalist is to connect people to nature and inspire them to feel that the non-human world has personal significance and is worth protecting. The secondary goal is to generate scientifically valuable biodiversity data from these personal encounters. For more information, visit <https://www.inaturalist.org>.