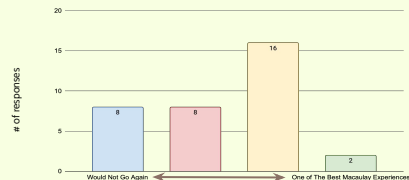


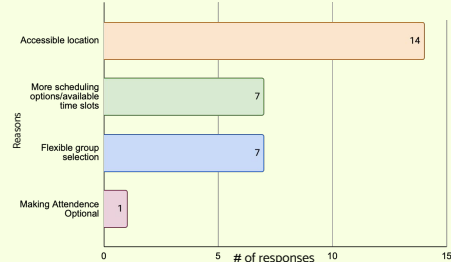
## Introduction and Aim

BioBlitz is an annual collaborative event that brings science experts and Macaulay students together for hands-on scientific research experience. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for students to engage in actual scientific research and data collection enhancing their observational skills and communication (O'Donnell, Brundage, 2023). Our research is to explore and analyze whether Macaulay students remain invested and motivated in the BioBlitz, examining a variety of factors that impact their experiences. Through this research, we gained an understanding of what drives or hinders student motivation. We decided to examine 'motivation' mostly with the data provided by iNaturalist, namely the number of observations and species recorded, as well as results from primary research, which was composed of both quantitative and qualitative data on student experiences. Because our study is exploratory in nature, the goal is to highlight trends from both sources and try to draw connections in overall student engagement with BioBlitz.

### How would you rate your BioBlitz Experience?

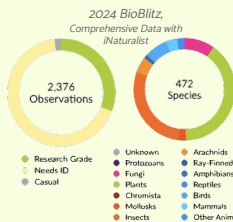


### What would you change about BioBlitz?

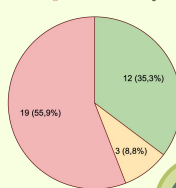


## Reasons

- Accessible location
- More Scheduling options/ more available time slots
- Making attendance optional
- Confusion regarding integration into coursework
- Flexible group selection



### Do you think BioBlitz Should Be Continued?

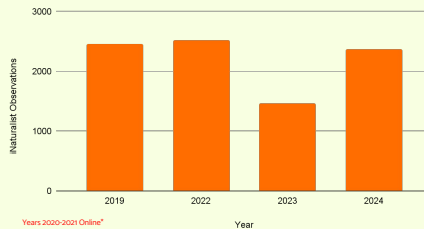


# BioBlitz

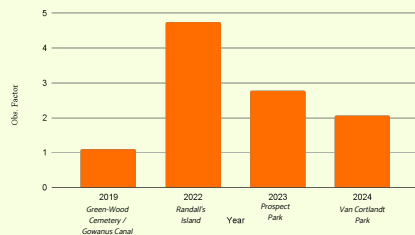
## Are Macaulay Students as Motivated About BioBlitz as in Previous Years?

Natasha Herman, Sabrena Hassan, Tin Ng, Ruhshona Sayfiddinova

### BioBlitz Observations by year, via iNaturalist



### BioBlitz iNaturalist Observations / Acres by Year



## Trends and Limitations

Because BioBlitz remains mandatory as an event, attendance has been rather consistent, wavering between 85-100% over the past years. We took observations from 2019-2024 and also divided them by acres covered by research. Factoring in the acres of the research sites, it can be seen that BioBlitz engagement, at least in terms of overall observations, has reached a rapid decline in the past two years. However, our data presents several limitations, such as uncertainties about how much acres were actually researched on, weather conditions, the true attendance statistics in each park, and the ecological environment differing. Nonetheless, we do see a rapid fluctuation when it came to observations, which may be attributed to the doubts that many of these students had in our primary research.

# METHODS

Our data consisted of both primary and secondary resources.

Data was taken from the platform iNaturalist to highlight student observation trends over the past BioBlitz events.

Our group conducted a survey to gather Macaulay students' experiences regarding BioBlitz. Collected data from 2023 and 2024 to compare and analyze participants' experiences over the past two years.

## Results

In the anonymous survey we released, we received 34 responses regarding student experiences with location, enjoyment, and group placement. Responses were quite mixed, with only 53% of respondents enjoying the event, with concerns highlighted in location, group allocation and relevance to academic curricula. While it was a general consensus that locations could have been made more accessible and that students should have been able to pick their own groups, one student thought that BioBlitz should have a more solid purpose in the Seminar III course syllabus, whereas three other students thought that it should be kept as an extracurricular optional activity rather than something that requires mandatory attendance. Student feedback on BioBlitz remained optimistic regarding its continuation, with 91.2% of respondents wanting to see the event continued. Of this 91.2%, 55.9% of students suggested that they would want to see some changes made. This points to a clear indication that while students are supportive of BioBlitz and its continuity, they want to see changes, especially with the aforementioned variables of location, accessibility, and relevance to subject curricula. However, our data came with several limitations, with the major one being a lack of diversity in respondents. When asked which BioBlitz they attended, 32/34 (94%) of students attended BioBlitz 2024 (Van Cortlandt Park), whereas only 2/34 (6%) of respondents attended BioBlitz 2023. This disparity meant that while qualitative data was obtained from this year's attendees. There was little to no data obtained from students in previous years regarding their experience, and results on that were dependent on secondary sources alone.

### References:

- O'Donnell, Kelly, and Lisa Brundage. "It Turned into a BioBlitz: Urban Data Collection for Building Scientific Literacy and Environmental Connection." *CUNY Academic Works*, academicworks.cuny.edu/mhc-pubs/3/. Accessed 26 Nov. 2024.
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