

For Immediate Release

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**Rhode Island Natural History Survey's seventh annual BioBlitz
to be held at the Cumberland Monastery, June 9-10**

KINGSTON, R.I. – March 23, 2006 – The Monastery in Cumberland has been selected as the site of the seventh annual BioBlitz, organized by the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, on June 9 and 10, 2006.

A bioblitz is an attempt by scientists and volunteer naturalists to tally as many species of organisms (plants, animals, insects, etc.) as they can in 24 hours on a particular parcel of land. Participants include people of all levels of expertise searching high and low across the landscape, plus educational activities for children and families. During the 2005 event, held in Bristol, more than 100 naturalists counted 927 species.

“The Monastery is an ideal site for this year’s BioBlitz because it has a wonderful diversity of habitats that will ensure that participants have a wide variety of species to count. It also has a distinctive history that adds to the interest of the site,” said David Gregg, executive director of the Rhode Island Natural History Survey. “We’re especially pleased that the Cumberland Conservation Commission, the Blackstone River Watershed Council, and the Lincoln Land Trust have joined us as partners in this event.”

The 550-acre Monastery property is owned by the town of Cumberland and is the site of a public library and other offices and the former site of the Abbey of Our Lady of the Valley, a Trappist order. The property was bought in 1900 by a French-Canadian religious community whose Nova Scotia abbey had been destroyed by fire. The town acquired the property after the abbey buildings burned in 1950.

The Monastery grounds include a wide range of habitats including hay fields, abandoned fields, farm ponds and wetlands, a small tributary of the Blackstone River, and a variety of forests. According to Gregg, the site, being an inland location, should yield a different variety of birds, insects, and small mammals than have been found at previous Rhode Island BioBlitzes, and the characteristic northern Rhode Island soils should yield unusual plants, lichens, and fungi.

“The Cumberland Conservation Commission is pleased to partner with the Blackstone River Watershed Council and the Town of Cumberland in the presentation of BioBlitz 2006 at the Monastery,” said Commissioner Frank Geary. “The Commission has for many years sponsored environmental and conservation related programs for children and adults, and we feel that the BioBlitz is the perfect vehicle to promote conservation through hands on projects. We are excited at the prospect of bringing scientists, educators, neighbors and children together to take part in this very worthwhile project. Not only does a project like this bring a community together, it paves the way for our children to learn to respect the environment at a very early age.”

Judy Hadley, vice president of the Blackstone River Watershed Council, added: “The Blackstone River Watershed Council is honored to be co-sponsoring the Rhode Island Natural History Survey’s 2006 annual Bioblitz. The Council continues to take an active role in promoting awareness and the health of the Blackstone River through community outreach projects such as the Bioblitz, which is an excellent vehicle for people to better understand the rich biological diversity found in our watershed.”

The RI Natural History Survey is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1994 to facilitate communication among the many people, agencies, and organizations interested in the ecology of Rhode Island; to gather and disseminate information on Rhode Island’s wild animals and plants, geology, and ecosystems; to foster the preservation of Rhode Island natural history collections; and to engage in educational outreach.

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