

# Mini BioBlitz

## Featured Activity

### Goal

Learn about the importance of biodiversity and explore the variety of life in spot near you.

### Time

1½-2 hours minimum. Will vary depending on your approach.

### Materials

- Notebook
- Camera (digital, cell phone, or pocket camera) or sketchpad and drawing supplies
- Ruler or measuring tape
- Magnifying glass
- Binoculars if available
- Field guides or other catalogs and resources of plant and animal life in your area. Alternatively, you can take photographs and use web resources later to identify findings.
- Bug boxes or other containers to collect specimens (temporarily)

### Resources

eNature Field Guides

<http://www.enature.com/fieldguides/>

BioBlitz Videos - National Geographic in the Field

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/field/projects/bioblitz-video.html>

A "BioBlitz" is an intensive inventory of all of the living organisms in a given area, usually done over a 24-hour period, so that you can evaluate the biodiversity of a habitat.



*E.O. Wilson speaks at Biodiversity Day II*

On July 4, 2009, we celebrated E.O. Wilson's birthday (and the anniversary of the day Thoreau went to live at Walden) by organizing a Biodiversity Day at Walden Pond. More than 50 scientists worked to find more than 2000 species of plants, animals, insects, fungi and other forms of life in Walden Woods, from the smallest speck of a creature to the largest tree.

Celebrate with us by doing your own BioBlitz this year. You can do one anywhere. In a park. Near your school. Even a backyard blitz. Go ahead and try it! Maybe your mini BioBlitz will be a jumping off point for a project you can do to help a "Walden" in your community.

### Before You Start

- Do you want to make an official event of your BioBlitz? If so, be sure to let your newspaper know what you are doing and why. You might even invite special community guests or parents to join students as they survey their sites.
- Pick your blitz location. If an event, you will likely want a single location large enough for your group. Otherwise, students can observe a very small area (like a 20' x 20' area near their house or school) or a particular habitat (tidal pool, pond shore, etc.). Large groups can break into teams to study different locations or habitats, or they could specialize in a particular form of life (plants, animals, insects).
- Establish the time frame. You could do a quick blitz with, for example, a 1 hour time limit. Or you might try to

## Featured Activity continued

observe the site at 4-5 different points during a 24-hour period so you can see day and night bioactivity.

### Instructions

1. Collect reference materials and observation tools for your location or habitat, e.g., a map, field guide, notebook, camera, pencils, tape recorder, etc.
2. Head out to your biodiversity site. Bioblitz organizers often set up a central table, tent or meeting location where you find common supplies - guides, materials and other tools to help you identify species, drinking water, etc.
3. Orient yourself to your biodiversity survey site. Draw a quick map or sketch of your surroundings, including any notable features or landmarks.
4. Sit for 5-10 minutes to listen, observe and familiarize yourself with your site. Then start cataloguing life you find! Keep a list. Take pictures or create sketches.

Think and act like a scientist. Be very methodical as you walk the full length and width of your site. You may want to survey all of the plant life first, then birds or bugs, etc. - whichever approach keeps you organized. Older students may even want to collect water, soil and other samples to examine later under a microscope.

Use a note sheet like this to keep track of your inventory:

Life Found	Where Found	Time of Day	Description/Observations	Picture/Sketch #
Pacific Goose Barnacle	attached to rock	1:50 pm / low tide	1-3 inches long, in big clusters covering the rock below the water line	21
Seaweed	floating in tidal pool	1:55 pm	Looks like a long piece of bright green lettuce. Not sure what it is yet.	22

5. Tally up the results! How many different species did your group find? Discuss some of your findings and observations:
  - Which species are most (least) abundant and why do you think this is true?
  - Are the species you found "native" or "invasive"?
  - What would happen if one species were threatened or disappeared?
  - What were some of the forms of life could you NOT see or record?
  - Why is biodiversity important?
6. Did your BioBlitz give you any ideas about projects you could do to help protect biodiversity in your community? What place or issue needs your care and attention? Do a project and share your pictures and stories in the World Wide Walden Project Showcase.