



BioBlitz Report

**Faculty of Science
Saint Mary's University**

June 2010

Introduction

Purpose

BioBlitz is a taxonomic survey that identifies as many different species as possible in a 24-hour period. BioBlitz is designed to increase the communities' awareness of the scientific importance of biodiversity in our immediate neighbourhood and the valuable services that various animal and plant species provide to improve the quality of our lives. This event brings elements of scientific research, education and competition together.

Goals

1. Identify as many species as possible in a given area in a 24-hour period.
2. Discover rare, previously unidentified, or unusual species
3. Educate the community and bring awareness to biodiversity and conservation in wilderness areas
4. Engage the community in meaningful citizen science
5. Provide a forum for education on species, their habitats and the environment
6. Develop a database for species identification

Summary of 2010 Event

The BioBlitz organizing committee formed in September 2009 and included several community organizations, as well as a number of departments from Saint Mary's University (see [Appendix](#) for a list of organizations and members).

The event took place on June 4th and 5th, beginning at 3pm on Friday and ending at 3pm on Saturday. The site for scientific survey was Crystal Crescent Provincial Park, in Sambro, Nova Scotia, located 29 kilometers outside the downtown core of Halifax, Nova Scotia See [Appendix](#) for map.

Eight groups, including 74 scientists, participated in the collection and identification of species (see [Appendix](#) for list of 2010 Twig Leaders). Six hundred and twenty two species were identified, including:

Algae - 31
Amphibians and Reptiles- 8
Aquatic Invertebrates - 12
Birds - 56
Fish – 4
Insects – 196
Intertidal Organisms - 35
Mammals - 16
Non-vascular plants, Fungi, and Lichens - 67
Vascular plants - 184

Terrestrial Invertebrates – 13

A base camp for the scientists was held at the Saint James United Church (3811 Old Sambro Rd.), located approximately 5 kilometers from Crystal Crescent Provincial Park. This site provided food, equipment and supplies for the scientists, as well as the educational displays and activities of the community organizations. Displays and activities were provided by the following community organizations:

- Saint Mary's University – Recruitment Department
- The Ecology Action Centre
- The Discovery Centre
- The Community-Based Environmental Monitoring Network
- The Halifax Field Naturalists
- Young Naturalists Club
- Techsploration

It should be noted that the Sackville Rivers Association was scheduled to have a display, but due to an accident involving Larry Bell, Lead Volunteer, they had to withdraw at the last minute. Similarly, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society was also scheduled to have a display, but were unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.

A geocaching activity was independently organized by Heidi de Boer and Jing Yang (Biology Department) as well as various Biology students from Saint Mary's University (this was not part of the actual BioBlitz, nor was it coordinated by the BioBlitz Steering Committee, but took place during the event). Unfortunately the geocaching event was not well attended and was not nearly as successful as originally hoped.

A few hikes, organized by the Young Naturalists Club and the Ecology Action Centre, were lead at various times through the Provincial Park. The hikes, organized independently, but promoted by the BioBlitz material, were relatively successful (45-50 participants in total).

Sponsorship was funded by:

- Participating Organizations – staff time
- Saint Mary's University – staff time and fiscal support
- St. John Ambulance – first aid volunteers
- The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy – products
- Tim Horton's – product
- Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund (contributions from hunters and trappers) – fiscal support (\$7,000)

Organizing Committee

Organizing Committee

Member	Organization
Hugh Broders (Co-Chair)	Saint Mary's University
Tim Frasier (Co-Chair)	Saint Mary's University
Michelle Fitzsimmons (Coordinator)	Saint Mary's University
Lisa Clements (Coordinator)	Saint Mary's University
Janet Stalker (Science Communications Officer)	Saint Mary's University
Steven Smith	Saint Mary's University
Jen Graham	Ecology Action Centre
Jocelyn Rankin	Ecology Action Centre
Larry Bell	Sackville Rivers Association
Chris Miller	Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
Steve Thurbide	Discovery Centre
Andrew Hebda	The NS Museum of Natural History
Oliver Mass	The NS Department of Environment
Art Lynds	The NS Department of Natural Resources

The 2010 BioBlitz had one paid staff member - the Event Coordinator. The role of the Coordinator was to:

- attend all committee meetings
- communicate information to committee members and event participants
- develop and manage website
- coordinate with Departments on promotional materials, sponsorship, ITSS and site maps
- apply for grants and other sponsorship opportunities
- contact and coordinate community organizations for displays and activities at event
- manage expenses and budget
- facilitate finding and booking base camp
- ordering and supplying food and beverages
- purchasing and managing all supplies and equipment necessary for implementing the event (i.e. t-shirts, name tags, posters, etc.)

Closer to the event, the Faculty of Science Communications Officer was contracted to manage the promotion of the event including, but not limited to, media releases, website design, and promotional materials. An Assistant Event Coordinator was also hired in May 2010 to assist in last minute planning and to help coordinate the actual event (a SEEP student from the Dean of Science Office worked in this role). All other Organizing Committee members were volunteers.

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The Organizing Committee Chairperson oversaw the group's monthly meetings, which began in September of the year preceding the event (2009). Members committed to attending each meeting and assisting in appropriate areas of planning based on their individual and/or organization's expertise. Also note the event coordinator(s) required a SMU email address, phone number and work space throughout the 10 month planning process.

Saint Mary's University Staff and Faculty

The participation of the following SMU departments in the Organizing Committee was vital to the success of this event:

- Biology – Committee Chair, scientists, equipment technicians, etc.
- Dean of Science Office – Event Coordinator, Science Communications Officer
- ITSS – database and website development
- Public and External Relations – media relations and promotion
- Geography – mapping

Community Organizations

Community representatives are a critical part of a BioBlitz. Organizations that provide education or awareness to biodiversity, conservation, species identification, and science education should be included in the committee.

Government Departments

Representatives from the Nova Scotia Departments of Environment and Natural Resources played critical roles in the logistical planning of the survey site and obtaining government permissions such as a Letter of Authority (for permission to use crown land for an event) and a Research License (for permitting research in a designated wilderness area).

Scientists

Participating scientists included professors, students and technicians from Universities and other academic institutions as well as local naturalists, government agencies and community groups with environmental expertise. The diversity of this group added depth to the research portion of the event and also created a sense of camaraderie among participants from differing backgrounds and lines of work.

Sub-Committees

While the 2010 BioBlitz Steering Committee did not form sub-committees, in previous years sub-committees were designed to assist with certain aspects of planning the event. These were made up of members from the Organizing Committee (although they can also include others who would like to be involved in only specific aspects of planning the event). The sub-committees each had a Chair and held meetings separate from the Organizing Committee to discuss elements

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of planning concerned with their respective committee. Minutes from these meetings were presented and discussed at Organizing Committee meetings.

Sub-committees greatly enhanced the planning of the Outreach/Community Organization portion of the event, and as a result it is recommended they are created again in future years. The following are sub-committees from previous BioBlitz:

Education

This committee discussed which organizations will be involved in the event, as well as display set-up, event activities, theme of the event, target audience, pre-event activities and presentations, and community engagement.

Science

This committee discussed the scientist's role in the event, Twig leaders and their responsibilities, equipment and supplies for identifications and inventory, database design, scientists needs for the event, scientist recruitment, and submittal of science permits and protocols.

Promotions

This committee discussed promotional materials, media relations, advertising and other areas of communication (i.e. PSA's and partnering websites).

ITSS, Logistics and Sponsorship were sub-committees in the past; however, we find these areas can be successfully coordinated at the Organizing Committee level.

Scientists

Twig Groups

In 2010 we organized eight "Twigs," or research teams, divided by taxonomic group:

- Amphibians and Reptiles
- Aquatic Invertebrates
- Birds
- Fishes
- Mammals
- Non-vascular plants, Fungi, and Lichens
- Vascular plants
- Terrestrial Invertebrates

Twig Leaders

The leader of each twig group had considerable expertise in the group's taxa and put in extra time both prior to and during the event. Responsibilities included communicating information to the group's members, coordinating identification efforts, and managing the group's database.

2010 Twig Leaders

Name	Organization	Twig Group
Gwyneth Jones	Saint Mary's University	Aquatic Invertebrates
Jeff Ogden	NS Dept. of Natural Resources	Insects
David Richardson	Saint Mary's University	Non-Vascular plants
Colleen Barber/Sue Meek	Saint Mary's University	Birds
Karen Harper	Saint Mary's University	Vascular Plants
Hugh Broders	Saint Mary's University	Mammals
Andrew Hebda	NS Museum of Natural History	Fish
Ron Russell	Saint Mary's University	Amphibians & Reptiles

Twig Members

Members included volunteers with varying levels of expertise in the group's taxa such as academic professionals, students, naturalists, community scientists and citizen scientists.

Registration

All twig members were required to register before participating in the BioBlitz (early registration was preferable to accommodate t-shirts, ID's, food, accommodations and equipment).

Registration included signing a waiver of liability provided by the University's Financial Services Department. In future years it is recommended all participants also sign a media waiver when registering (contact External Affairs).

Communications

Website

The website for the event can be found at www.smu.ca/bioblitz. The website was developed by the ITSS Department, but was updated and modified originally by the Event Coordinator, and taken over by the Science Communications Officer. All modifications are done through Adobe Contribute. Currently, the website has the following information:

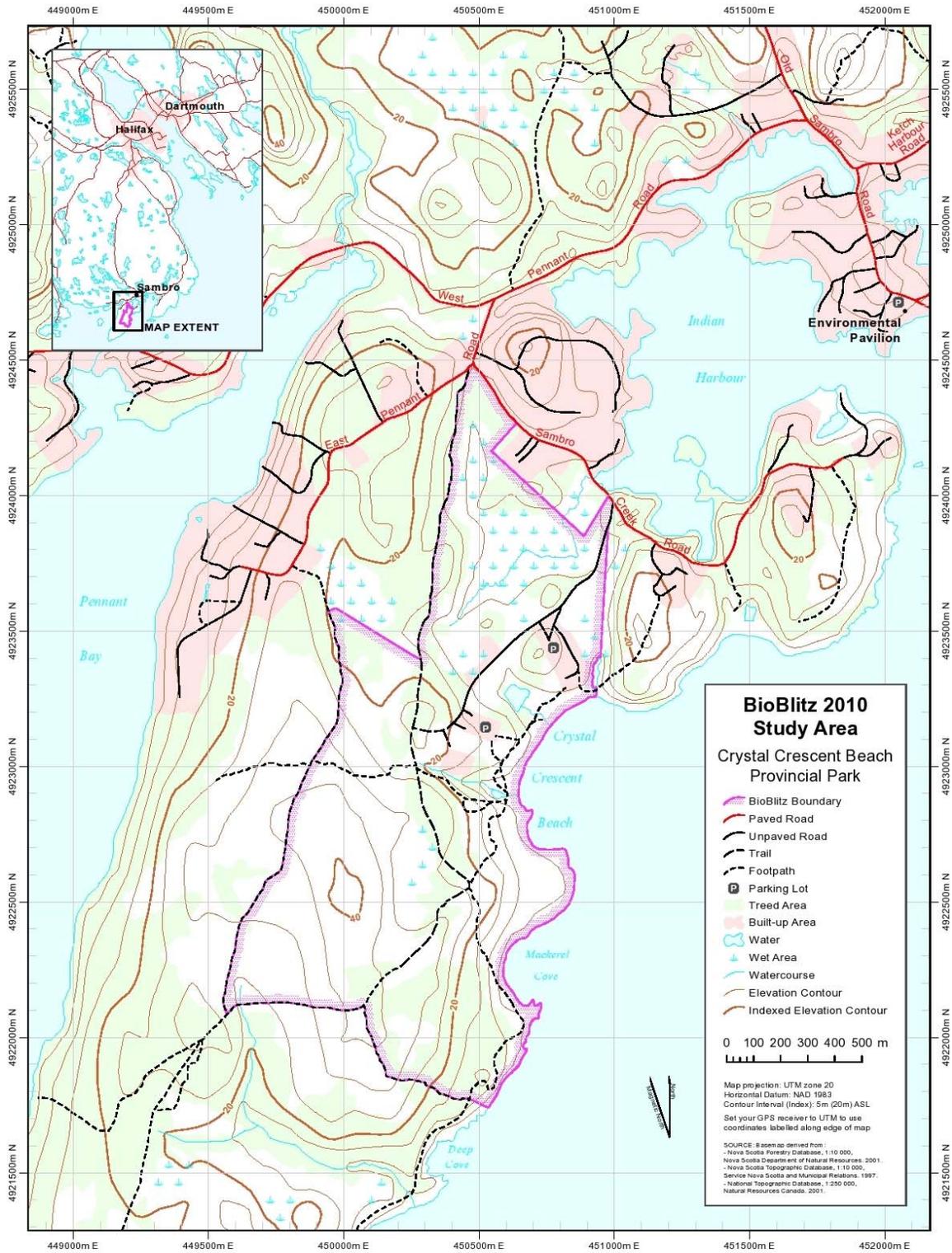
- Event date, time and location
- Contact information
- BioBlitz description
- News
- Event updates
- Sponsor listing
- Twig leader information
- Species information

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- [Activities listing](#)
- [Past BioBlitz details](#)
- [Results](#)
- [Links](#)

BioBlitz 2010 Maps

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Crystal Crescent Provincial Park

