

BioBlitz ... finding nature in the city

What is BioBlitz?

BioBlitz is a scientific race against time. It is educational. And it is heaps of fun!

The goal is to count as many species as possible in a 24-hour survey of large urban park area. The emphasis is on recording the total number of species, not naming every creature that has been found.

The first BioBlitz in New Zealand was held in Auckland in April 2004. It is a regular annual event in parts of the USA. BioBlitz in Auckland was very enjoyable for everyone because it was a unique opportunity for scientists, students and the public to experience the vast array of species (biodiversity) living in healthy urban parks. It is rare for so many different types of biologists to be able to work together in the same place, at the same time and on the same project.

The public can visit base camp and go out in the field with scientists.

The searchers

Teams of specialist biologists (botanists, mycologists, entomologists, etc) search around the clock for every possible species they can find. Nocturnal animals, such as some insects and vertebrate pests, are much easier to find during darkness. Most species can be identified in the field.



Base camp

Species that cannot be identified on the spot are brought back to "base camp" for other experts to examine using microscopes and other specialist equipment. Base camp is a great place for the public to talk to scientists.

All information is recorded on computer databases. The total number of introduced and native species is tallied at hourly intervals, and announcements are made at regular intervals.



Valuable data

BioBlitz generates a list of species found in the park areas. This benefits successful park management by identifying pest species that should be monitored or controlled, and native species that need looking after. The surveys may reveal unique aspects of the parks that were not known previously. As we gain valuable information about urban environments, we can begin to understand the extent to which urban parks are sustaining the richness of city biodiversity.

The final tally

BioBlitz finishes exactly 24 hrs after it started. The countdown to the final tally starts at midday, three hours before the final number is announced.



Why is biodiversity important?

We usually hear "biodiversity" associated with the vast number of species in tropical rainforests. Yet the diversity of life in our own backyards is phenomenal. You have many more neighbours than you realise! Most of these neighbours are essential. The clean water, fertile soil, and air to breathe that we take for granted are all the result of the vast network of species performing the special tasks that are their role in life. Some people call biodiversity the "web of life" because it supports us every minute of the day.