



10 Steps to Bioblitz! – Takeaways



1. Pick a partner / pick a park
 - Someone who wants the data
 - Interesting location

Whether you already manage/work in a park that you'd like to bioblitz, or are looking for a park to bioblitz in, it's always best to have someone who **wants** the data/information that will be produced – so the bioblitz is for both engagement and data-generating purposes. A huge motivator for citizen science volunteers is the desire to contribute to something meaningful. The #1 output of a bioblitz is the beginnings of a species list – so if the park has never had a biological inventory done (or had one done a long time ago), the bioblitz will help serve that purpose.

2. Wrap session location
 - Wi-fi! Good, strong, wi-fi!
 - Ideally within walking distance

The main purpose of the wrap session is to get bioblitz participants to sync their observations. Providing wi-fi allows people to do this without using their phone's data plan. We definitely recommend testing the wi-fi prior to the bioblitz, with as many devices at once as possible. It's also helpful if the location has a place you for you to project the iNaturalist project – either a screen or a blank wall.

Ideally the wrap session would be in the same location as the bioblitz, like an interpretive center or event space. If your park does not have an indoor space with wi-fi, then try to find some place as close as possible. The farther people have to drive, the fewer will show up to the wrap.

3. Find other potential partners
 - Friends groups
 - Local volunteer groups
 - Environmental education groups

Does the park have a local friends group? How about people who do restoration or lead walks in the park? Other local groups with a volunteer base, like an Audubon society or a chapter of the California Native Plant Society? Not only can you find people to help you plan, you can get volunteers with some expertise!

4. Set a date & time

- Think about: plants flowering, bird migrations, weather, etc.

Remember that the easiest organisms for people to photograph on their phones are **plants**, and that plants are easiest to identify when they're flowering or fruiting. Also, you'll get more people showing up and willing to use their smartphones when it's not raining!

Determine how long you want your bioblitz to run. We've held grassroots bioblitzes as short as 2.5 hours and as long as 14 hours. With longer bioblitzes, you should plan to have shifts for people to register to attend – a morning group, an afternoon group, an after dark group (if you're going to look for owls/bats/moths/etc.), and you may want to hold short wrap sessions after each shift. An interesting thing we've noticed, though, is that we usually end up with similar numbers of observations and species, regardless of if the bioblitz lasts all day or just spans the morning!

5. Make an iNaturalist project page & an Eventbrite page

- Banner image, logo, a "place" created
- Determine attendee capacity

You'll need to create a new project in iNaturalist. You want your project type to be "bioblitz." To set up a bioblitz project, you need a date and times and a place with a defined boundary in iNaturalist. Check to see if your "place" already exists (e.g., search for the park name) and that the boundary looks correct. If there are multiple choices, check each one to see which best encompasses the area you want to bioblitz. If your place does not exist, you can create a new place in iNaturalist: give it a logical name, and you can either draw the boundary in iNaturalist or upload a kml.

Add a description about your bioblitz to the project page: why you're having it, important information, what to bring, etc.

On the bioblitz project page, you can link to registration for an Eventbrite event, so it's good to have that set up ahead of time (though you can add it later). You can set registration limits on Eventbrite as well as have it make a waitlist. If your bioblitz is event is free, realize that not everyone who signs up will show up – we usually find we get 50-75% attendance.

6. Recruit team leaders & experts

- Team leaders know: how to model searching/observing, how to use iNaturalist, where to go, when to come back, remind people to sync
- Experts to help with IDs – in person or online

Depending on how you decide to create groups for your bioblitz, you may want to have more "leaders" or more "experts." You can group people by area: designate portions of the park for each group to bioblitz, where participants will be looking for and documenting everything they possibly can. You can also group people by taxa: create groups based on what they'll be focusing on documenting – e.g., the plant group, the bird group, etc. (We've often found that with taxa-based groups, participants expect a led nature walk, and expert leaders end up defaulting to that – so most of our bioblitzes have been area-based, to promote the idea of everyone being curious and searching for/documenting anything you can find.) You can also have a mix of these types of groups. It's often a good idea to also have a group that will be more kid-focused for families that

show up with younger children: not hiking very far, staying close to bathrooms, maybe some fun equipment (magnifying boxes for insects, nets to look for stream critters, etc.).

You can find leaders and experts from within your own organization, your partners for the bioblitz, or from others who know the area. Leaders do not have to be experts – the best leaders are ones who have some natural history skills/knowledge and know the area, and are willing to model how to search and to share their knowledge without it turning into a “led nature walk” experience. Leaders should also be comfortable using iNaturalist so they can help others in their group.

Experts can definitely be leaders if you feel they can provide the right experience for a group. We often group experts with leaders as “co-leaders” – so they don’t have to lead a group but can still be out documenting and sharing what they know. Calling upon your experts for their expertise is most helpful during the wrap session, so participants can get ID help and ask questions. You can also have experts who aren’t in the room, but who are on iNaturalist helping to ID observations from the bioblitz.

7. Outreach! Get the word out!

- Social media
- Local calendars

To find bioblitz participants, you need to promote the bioblitz. Use existing volunteer networks of your partners and other related local organizations. Social media from you and your partner organizations is a great way to find a younger, “tech-savvy” audience. Reach out to local media to see if they’ll promote the bioblitz ahead of time and potentially come out to cover it day-of. Local event calendars are always looking for items to add.

8. Send out reminder emails

- Logistics
- Information about iNaturalist
- What to bring

A day or two before the bioblitz (no earlier, since we’ve found many people sign-up last minute!) send an email to everyone who has registered. Remind them when and where to meet, and what the goals of the day are. Ask everyone to create an iNaturalist account and download it on their phone **before** coming to the bioblitz – and make an observation or two to familiarize themselves with the app. Also let them know that they can definitely share a phone with someone if they don’t have one, or can bring a digital camera and upload their observations afterward to the website. Remind people what supplies to bring: phone, water, good shoes for walking, layers, etc.

9. Bioblitz!

- Gear: signage, sign-in, food, projector, laptop, etc.
- Get participants going ASAP!
- Wrap session: fun & informative & engaging

The day before the bioblitz, it’s good to gather all the gear you’ll need both for the bioblitz and for the wrap session.

Day-of, make sure it's obvious to participants where they should be going/where to sign in. Generally try to start close to on-time, and limit your introductions so that participants can get out and start bioblitzing! You can spend time during the wrap session for more detailed information about your/your partners' organizations. It also usually helps to have one person who's willing to stay at your sign-in location for the duration of the bioblitz, to help direct late-comers and answer questions for/chat with people leaving early – and remind them to sync their observations.

Beyond getting people to sync their observations, wrap sessions allow for sharing of observations (“who saw something cool or unexpected?”), helping people get IDs (this is a great time to point out people with expertise in certain areas), and thanking participants. Providing some snacks is always nice! You can project your iNaturalist bioblitz project and look at the “real-time stats” (it's a link on the project page that shows up once your bioblitz starts), which will constantly update with the total number of observations, the number of species, and the leaderboards: who has the most observations and who found the most species. It will also show photos of the most recently-added observations.

10. Follow-up to participants

- Thank you
- Total finds / Interesting finds
- Help with IDs

A week or so after the bioblitz, send out a follow-up thank you email to participants. Highlight some interesting things that were found during the bioblitz, and be sure to share the total numbers of observations and species. Adding photos of organisms and of the bioblitz itself is always nice. Remind people that they should check back in with the iNaturalist project page to see if anyone has added IDs to their observations, and to help add IDs to observations.

Resources

General

- [California Academy of Sciences Citizen Science website](#)
- [Nerds for Nature website](#)

Getting Started with iNaturalist

- [iNaturalist Getting Started Guide](#)
- [iNaturalist on Vimeo](#) - good, brief, global impact overview by Scott
- [How to Use the iNaturalist App - YouTube](#)
- [iNaturalist: Creating an Account & Account Settings - YouTube](#)
- [McLaren bioblitz video](#)

Bioblitz

- [iNaturalist Bioblitz Guide](#)
- [Crowdsourced BioBlitz Recipe Book](#)

Results from some grassroots bioblitzes:

- March 7, 2015: [Eastern Golden Gate Park Bioblitz](#)
- September 27, 2014: [Memorial Park Bioblitz](#)
- July 13, 2014: [Pillar Point Bioblitz](#)
- May 4, 2014: [Green Hairstreak Bioblitz](#)
- February 23, 2014: [Lake Merritt Bioblitz](#)

Educators

- [iNaturalist Teachers' Guide](#)
- [Get to know - Bioblitz!](#) - This is guide to doing bioblitzes with kids in educational settings
- [Citizen Science Toolkit for Teachers](#)