

Bio Blitz Yields 385 Species

The first annual Bio Blitz at Gorge Metro Park on June 9 and 10, 2006 was a great success. Thirty-five volunteers shared their time and expertise to survey the 155- acre park for mammals, reptiles and amphibians, birds, fish, spiders and plants. The seeps and springs of the Gorge were also surveyed for water quality.

A breeding bird survey of 49 species included cooper's hawks, cedar waxwings, indigo buntings, scarlet tanagers and eastern screech owls. Great blue herons and wood ducks are utilizing the Cuyahoga River. Eastern phoebes and turkey vultures are nesting in the rock outcroppings of the sandstone gorge. Downy woodpeckers, northern flickers and red-eyed vireos are enjoying the forest while common nighthawks can be seen over the river at dusk.

The fish survey was a *shocking* experience. An electro-shocking technique was used to temporarily stun the fish for identification purposes. Nineteen species were identified including small mouth bass, hog suckers, green-sided and rainbow darters, all of which are classified as clean water indicators by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. One of Ohio's most beautiful minnows, the spot fin shiner, was also found in this section of the Cuyahoga River.



Five reptile and four amphibian species were recorded during the event. The northern brown snake and the two-lined salamander were documented for the first time in the park. The salamander was captured by our youngest Bio Blitz participants, while the snake was found by our Metro Parks volunteer snake-survey crew. Northern dusky salamanders and painted turtles were also recorded.



Many mammals common to this region were identified during the blitz. Some were very curious why all these volunteers were sharing the forest with them throughout the 24-hour event. Unfortunately for them, we did not share our spoils as they had hoped.



A butterfly survey was conducted in the park for the first time. Eleven species were recorded including the question mark, little wood satyr, hobomok skipper and the spicebush swallowtail. All of the species found during the inventory are common in Northeast Ohio, but that didn't temper the enthusiasm of Bio Blitz volunteers.



Moths, dragonflies and spiders were also surveyed during the blitz. Larry Rosche identified seven species of dragonflies in the Gorge on Friday. Moths were inventoried using a sheet and a black light. The moths were attracted to the sheet by the light and some species were vouchered for further identification. Several Metro Parks volunteers participated in this survey.



Todd Blackledge from the University of Akron documented more than 36 species of spiders from 13 families. Some species were collected for further identification in the laboratory. His capture techniques were simple, yet effective. Families of spiders found included orb weavers, crab, jumping, wolf, ground and cobweb spiders. Three bat species were recorded in the park



including the common little brown and big brown bat. A pregnant eastern pipistrelle was also captured during the mist netting survey on Friday evening. These surveys will continue in the Gorge this summer to document other species of bats that inhabit the park.

About 235 plants were documented during the one-day event. Numerous weedy and tolerant species were found invading along the rim and residential boundary; however, several interesting species indicative of a cool, rocky forest were also found. These included mountain maple, an interesting shrub typical of more northern or mountainous regions, and bulblet fern. This fern grows on rocks and is so named because it produces bulblets beneath its leaves, which drop off and begin new, apparently cloned, ferns



All of the seeps and springs in the Gorge were surveyed by Annabelle Foos from the University of Akron. Measurements, such as temperature, conductivity and amount of water discharged, were taken. These results will be compared with the same measurements taken five years ago.

Many insects were found but could not be identified. Two species of crayfish were found by Roger Thoma. He was looking for an additional crayfish species that exists in this part of the state, but did not find it.

All said, there were 385 species identified during the Bio Blitz, and there are more species being identified in the laboratory. This intense effort will compliment the yearlong ecological inventory being performed in the Gorge this year.

Our department would like to send a sincere thank you to all of this year's participants. We are so pleased with the results from this event and could not have accomplished as much without your assistance and expertise. Volunteers make great things possible.



Another Bio Blitz will be conducted next year in a different park. The park to be surveyed has yet to be determined, but the blitz will be completed in early June. We hope the next event will include even more experts and will yield even bigger results.

For more information regarding the species recorded during the bio blitz, please contact Marlo Perdicas, park biologist, at (330) 923-0720 or mperdicas@summitmetroparks.org

List of pictures:

1. Electro shocking crew: Paul Pira, Roger Thoma and Jason Whittle
2. Tomas and Nicolas Curtis collecting salamanders.
3. Northern brown snake
4. Raccoon
5. Chipmunk
6. Metro Parks volunteer Doug Caeasar photographing butterflies
7. Silver spotted skipper
8. Dr. Todd Blackledge from the U of Akron identifying spiders
9. mountain maple
10. Dr. Annabelle Foos from the U of Akron taking water samples

Photo Credits:

1. Mike Johnson
2. Annabelle Foos
3. Rob Curtis
4. Bob Dodd
5. Bob Dodd
6. Marlo Perdicas
7. Doug Caesar
8. Marlo Perdicas
9. Rob Curtis
10. Rob Curtis