

iNaturalist: Volunteers are invited to explore nature during BioBlitz

By Kyle Spurr • The Daily Astorian
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SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Citizen scientists identify and measure dragonfly larvae at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

Experts from across the region will be on hand to educate and assist citizen

For many, exploring nature used to mean pinning butterflies to a board or capturing bugs in a jar.

scientists during the BioBlitz event at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

• **Jerry Freilich**, a former research coordinator at Olympic National Park and director of the North Coast & Cascades Science Learning Network. He has worked in six national parks since 1978 as a ranger, naturalist and research scientist.

• **Robert Michael Pyle**, an expert in butterfly science and conservation for more than 50 years. He has a Ph.D in butterfly ecology from Yale University. He lives and studies maritime butterflies in Grays River, Washington.

• **Rich Hatfield**, a senior conservation biologist for the Xerces Society, an international nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat. He is a founder of Bumble Bee Watch, a citizen science website to track and conserve North America's bumble bees.

• **Jim Johnson**, an expert studying the carnivorous insect Odonata since 1995 and photographing them since 2006. His focus is on the identification and

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park wants visitors to rekindle that wonder by volunteering as citizen scientists this weekend for a nationwide effort to record the biological diversity in more than 100 national parks.

During the BioBlitz event today and Saturday, visitors are invited to go around Netul Landing and identify every living thing they come across, with a focus on pollinators such as birds, insects and plants. Experts will lead hikes to help inventory different species.

Rather than grabbing or killing the various pollinators, visitors will be encouraged to take photographs of the species and upload them through the cellphone application, iNaturalist.

Photos can also be uploaded at iNaturalist.org, an online community for reporting personal observations of any plant or animal species in the world.

All experts need is a clear photo to properly identify many species, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Superintendent Scott Tucker said, and not a board pinned with insects.

"This is a great way to show folks they can come out into nature and utilize technology to enhance their experience," Tucker said.

National attention

National parks have held individual BioBlitz events in the past. This weekend will be the first time national parks make the effort simultaneously.

The event is part of the National Park Service's ongoing centennial celebration.

A Jumbotron will be set up at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., during the two-day event to showcase each national park's findings. What is found in Astoria may be broadcast on the Jumbotron in the nation's capital. The same feed on the Jumbotron will be projected at Netul Landing, for local participants to see what is being found across the country.

"Thousands of people will be able to see the parks in a different way than they ever had before and learn about the natural resources," Tucker said.

Science Central

When visitors arrive at BioBlitz, they will have a variety of ways to participate.

distribution of Pacific Northwest species with occasional forays to other areas of the continent and Latin America.

• **Candace Fallon**, a conservation biologist at the Xerces Society. She is a coauthor of the society's latest book, "Gardening for Butterflies: How You Can Attract and Protect Beautiful, Beneficial Insects."

• **Mike Patterson**, a biologist, educator and professional counter of things living in Astoria.

• **Kathleen Sayce**, a Willapa Bay-based ecologist. She is a board member of Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris, South Pacific County Community Foundation, and Filipendula Chapter, Native Plant Society of Oregon.

• **Tony Johnson**, chairman of the Chinook Indian Nation. He is the education director for the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe, and a teacher of students of all ages.

MORE INFO

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park is hosting BioBlitz, an event where citizen scientists are invited

Expert biologists will lead groups of about 12 on hikes to inventory species. The experts will also give presentations and demonstrations. The family-friendly event will have free children's activities, information booths and a chance to use microscopes.

The flurry of activities will be held around Netul Landing. Park rangers are calling the area, "Science Central."

"We are centering the event around the Netul area, where we have a big shelter," Carla Cole, the park's natural resource program manager, said.

Cole said the park is focusing its BioBlitz on pollinators, since the it does not have much information on them or the funding to conduct inventories.

The effort also falls in line with a national pollinator initiative. In 2014, President Barack Obama directed an interagency task force to develop a national strategy to promote the health of honey bees and other pollinators.

Cole said the strategy focuses on bringing awareness and encouraging federal agencies, such as the national parks, to promote the conservation of pollinators.

Visitors this weekend will discover moths, butterflies, dragonflies and beetles, Cole said.

"These BioBlitz events are a great opportunity to utilize citizen scientists to build our species list," she said.

In addition to the scientific work, the event will have a cultural aspect. Tony Johnson, chairman of the Chinook Indian Nation, will present a traditional wood carving demonstration on Saturday.

Overall, Cole said, BioBlitz is meant to encourage citizen scientists to better understand their parks and engage the next generation of stewards.

Own neighborhood

The way people experience national parks has drastically changed over the years, Tucker said. Part of the centennial celebration has been for national parks to examine how they relate with their communities.

More park visitors look to connect through technology, whether it is liking a park's Facebook page or using an online application such as iNaturalist.

The BioBlitz event is a good way to embrace the technology, Tucker said. Visitors can count plant and animal species using apps such as Bumble Bee Watch, Project Budburst, eBird, along with iNaturalist. These programs allow anyone to

to join experts to explore and inventory the park's pollinators, plants and other species.

Those interested can sign up online at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com), or just show up.

BioBlitz begins at 8 p.m. Friday for Moth Night. The event continues Saturday for a sunrise bird count from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., and biodiversity festival and inventories from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Participants will meet for the events at Netul Landing.

For more information, contact the park at (503) 861-2471 or go online to www.nps.gov/lewi

become a citizen scientist.

The park wants visitors to know the same programs can be applied in their own neighborhoods.

Tucker said the park is relying on more citizen scientists since it does not have the resources to hire biologists for inventories each year. An event like BioBlitz helps involve the community.

"One of the overarching goals of the centennial is to engage the next generation of park visitors," Tucker said.