



MINI BIOBLITZ TOOLKIT

What is a BioBlitz?

The BioBlitz concept is all about volunteers, scientists, naturalists, wildlife enthusiasts, school groups, students and members of the public working together to find as many different species as possible within a natural area – all whilst racing against the clock! The combination of wildlife experts and the wider public is fundamental to the BioBlitz concept and it is an effective way to educate the public about the wildlife on their doorstep.

This toolkit contains useful ideas for developing your very own “mini BioBlitz” event. Most BioBlitz events last for 24 hours in order to survey all diurnal and nocturnal species. However, on the 24th July 2010, the Bristol Natural History Consortium held their first ever “mini BioBlitz” event in Brandon Hill park for 3 hours. This was a pilot event to see if a “mini” version of the original BioBlitz could be feasible. The purpose of this toolkit is to provide some handy hints and tips to set up your own “mini BioBlitz”. Please use it as a source of ideas that you can add to and adapt.

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Mini BioBlitz Timeline

As soon as possible/ already done?!

- Select your site and get permission to use it
- Set the date
- Begin planning the structure of the event and decide how your budget/ funding will be spent
- Begin assembling your team of volunteers (naturalists, guides and media)

Over the next month:

- Invite expert naturalists
- Continue volunteer recruitment
- Form a media team to promote your event; start setting up blogs/social media sites
- Invite any societies, local groups or organisations who may wish to attend
- Finalise event structure and plan a rough timetable for the day
- Arrange site facilities- parking, catering, toilets etc. If applicable (you may already have these all on site or nearby that you can use)
- Book equipment- marquee, tables, chairs, microscopes etc
- Write risk assessments and other policy documents and arrange any licences which are needed
- Arrange first aid cover, on-site security and marshalling if required
- Contact the relevant body if the site is protected (SSSI's etc)

In the last two weeks leading up to the BioBlitz:

- Prepare recording sheets, maps of the site and any other documents
- Create and distribute information pack for volunteers and naturalists
- Inform the local police about the event
- Check everything you need is ready and all volunteers/naturalists are clear on what they are doing, finalise a timetable for the day
- Step up the publicity campaign to your target audience (whether this is students or families and other members of the public)

On the day:

- Co-ordinate delivery and set up of equipment, base camp and activities
- Brief staff and volunteers
- Talk to any media present and have media team updating websites, blogs etc
- Enjoy your Mini Bioblitz!

After the event:

- Pack up and ensure the site is left clean
- Thank all those who helped
- Finish collating the findings and report them
- Complete event feedback; send volunteer feedback forms to BNHC
- Put any photos, videos, quotes or blogs from the day up on your social media sites and send to BNHC to be put up on theirs
- RELAX!

GETTING STARTED

Choose a site:

- The site for your species hunt needs to be chosen carefully. Public parks, local nature reserves and privately owned estates are all popular.
- For best results the site should have a diversity of habitats and species groups.
- Ideally the site should contain appropriate facilities such as toilets (these will be an added cost if you have to arrange them separately).
- The best site location will be easily accessible for both the public and the set-up team and will contain somewhere suitable to set up your base camp (i.e. a flat, open area).
- Make sure you find out who owns the site and that you get access permission for your mini BioBlitz to take place (i.e. if it is a public park then you will need to contact the local council to get a site license).



Set a date:

- Choose a date carefully to ensure that you avoid competing with other events. Or equally you may wish to tie in with another event that is happening?
- Depending on your intended audience (school groups, families, scouts, guides, etc) the event may need to be held specifically on a weekday, weekend or during a holiday period.
- It is very important to consider where you will be recruiting your naturalists and other volunteers from (i.e. if you want to use university professors then you need to make sure the date doesn't clash with when they are working in the university).
- BioBlitzes can take place at any time of the year and you can find a range of different species depending on the temperature. However, late Spring and early Summer recommended if you wish to spot a wide range of species (and want better weather!)

Budget:

- You will require funding to cover the running costs of your event (you may wish to consider seeking sponsorship).
- How much is needed will depend on the scale of the event you are aiming for and the materials you already have.
- Once you have established how much you have to spend on your mini BioBlitz you will need to take the following aspects into consideration:
 - Marketing expenses (flyers, posters, adverts in local papers, etc)
 - Volunteer expenses (t-shirts, refreshments, travel costs, etc)
 - Buying/Hiring equipment (marquees, tables, surveying equipment, etc)
 - Miscellaneous costs (site fees, licenses, etc)

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Roles:

- For a mini BioBlitz it is recommended that you recruit three types of volunteers:

Naturalists will be crucial in helping us to find and identify species within the estate and to engage the public in wildlife identification and recording.

Guides/Stewards are more general volunteers that can have various roles:

- Assisting Naturalists by sharing knowledge and helping to identify species (we recommend at least 2 guides assist 1 Naturalist with their group).
- Monitoring the equipment by signing it in and out to ensure it doesn't get lost.
- Handing out flyers around the site to engage the public.
- Meeting and greeting the public at Base Camp.
- Ensuring the group surveys leave Base Camp on time and with all survey forms and recording sheets.
- Helping the public look at species under microscopes at Base Camp
- Helping with set-up and pack-down of the event
- Any other general duties that need doing.



Media Volunteers will be in charge of collecting in the species record forms, managing the web link up on site and reporting online of any finds made. They will also be in charge of taking photographs and making film clips during the event. You can recruit your media team a few weeks before the mini BioBlitz so that they can start setting up blogs and social media sites to promote the event (**HINT- For more information on the 'media' side of things, please see the 'Media Toolkit'**).

Pre-event Volunteers are useful for helping with the logistics prior to the event, such as ordering gazebos, collecting equipment, etc.

- There are no set rules on how many naturalists, guides and media volunteers you need to have. It is important that the event is well staffed, and the more volunteers the merrier! To give you a rough guideline of what worked well, the BNHC's mini BioBlitz in Brandon Hill Park had around 70 members of the public turn up and involved 8 Naturalists, 17 Guides and 5 Media volunteers (as well as 5 BNHC staff). This was a small pilot event and volunteer numbers can be expanded to fit your chosen site, length of event, and target audience.



- It is crucial to try to recruit a diverse breadth of knowledge (i.e. it would be no good if you had 15 tree experts and 1 mammal expert!)

- Most volunteers who have time will take part for free if your event sounds fun, provides them with good experience for their CV or produces useful data. Depending on your budget you could offer to provide travel costs, refreshments or lunch. You could even allow volunteers to promote their organisation/university/zoo via flyers or a stall at the event.

Recruiting Volunteers:

- Local environmental websites and email newsgroups are a great way to network and reach environmental enthusiasts. Other ideas for recruiting volunteers include:
 - Wildlife Trusts
 - Local Record Centres
 - Local Museums/ Zoos
 - BTCV (Environmental Conservation Volunteering)
 - Universities (Volunteering/Environmental departments)
 - Environmental websites (e.g. environmentjob.com)
 - Town Councils
 - Local community/friends groups with an interest in the site.
- If you are a University holding a BioBlitz event with purely student volunteers and/or participants then you could try recruiting them in the following ways:
 - Contact students on courses related to conservation or ecology
 - Contact students on media courses, photography, video and arts for media team members
 - Attract students at Fresher's events and with campus-wide media (such as Blackboard)
 - Approach any environmental societies that your university may have (such as 'people and planet')
 - Approach any volunteering department or public engagement unit your university might have

Briefing Volunteers:

- It is important that all volunteers are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities. An information pack should be emailed prior to the BioBlitz to give some background information about the event, what you hope to achieve from it and other important information.



- Volunteers should also be briefed on the day to outline clearly what is expected of them during the mini BioBlitz and to cover important health & safety issues. Information that needs to be covered either before or on the day includes:

- **Site layout** – volunteers need to be aware of the site layout so that they can assist the public in locating activities, toilets, first aid facilities and the Base Camp.



- **Emergency procedure** – the Event Organiser must ensure that all volunteers are aware of, and understand, their specific duties in an emergency and the arrangements for evacuating the public from the site, including the use of coded messages.

- **First aid** – what procedures and protocol should be followed should an accident or injury occur during the event? Where are the First Aiders located? It is important that volunteers are aware of the recommended actions.

- **Clothing & equipment** – all volunteers should wear suitable footwear that is appropriate to the duties they are performing. They must also wear a BioBlitz t-shirt to make them recognisable to the public.



- **Lost property** – the Event Organiser needs to establish who is responsible for lost property and where it can be located – usually within the Base camp.

- **Lost children** – the Event Organiser must delegate someone who is CRB checked to be the Lost Children steward. Volunteers must be informed of the procedure to take if coming across a lost child. It is the Event Organiser's responsibility to ensure that the



volunteers are police checked or Criminal Records Bureau checked (refer to: <http://www.crb.gov.uk/>). Brief volunteers that in the event they notice anything suspicious, spot a lost child or require first aid, to notify a member of staff (which should be easily spotted in high-visibility jackets) or to go to the base camp, where someone should be at all times. Ensure volunteers are informed that working procedures mean that no staff or

volunteer should ever find themselves in a one-on-one situation with a child or vulnerable adult.

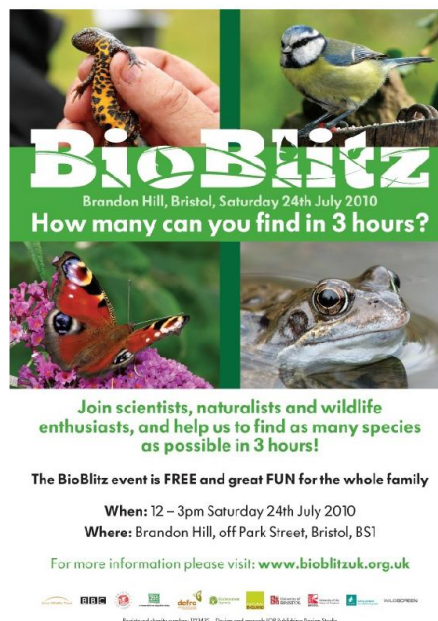
- **Refreshments** – all volunteers should be given comfort breaks, allowing for refreshment during the event.



- **Event de-brief** – At the end of your event, it is important to thank everybody that has volunteered. It is also a good idea to hand out evaluation forms to all volunteers for feedback comments concerning the way the event was managed.

MARKETING YOUR EVENT

- Set aside at least 4 weeks to promote your mini BioBlitz. The aims and scale of the event will influence how much marketing you want to do for your event. Try some of the following:
 - Contact Local schools - Schools contact details can easily be found through council's web pages. As a BioBlitz event is educational, free for the public and great family fun, most schools will be more than happy to advertise the event. Try to get a mention on the schools newsletter, or if not perhaps email or post a copy of your flyer for them to stick up on the schools notice board?
 - Advertise locally by using posters and flyers in tourist information centres, museums, zoos, science centres, libraries, city farms. They may also have a mailing list that they could circulate an email round for you.
 - Many cafes or shops have notice boards or may agree to put up a poster in their windows.
 - Contact relevant local groups, organisations and events websites. Approach relevant facebook groups and twitter streams.
 - Advertise your event on the Bristol Natural History Consortium website and blog (www.bioblitzuk.org.uk)
 - Get permission to put laminated posters up in and around your site (if it is a park it will be council owned so you can contact them).



- If you are a University marketing your event internally, there are a number of ways you can attract student volunteers and staff participation such as:
 - Send information out via relevant Society and Group mailing lists
 - Place posters around campus
 - Blackboard and other central University media
 - Create a Facebook Group within your University, or feed into pre-existing groups.
 - Attend Campus events such as Freshers Week, marketplaces, or other forums where students will be able to explore the event opportunities
 - Let staff know through mailouts, posters in staff common rooms, and any newsletters that exist
 - Liaise with public engagement and volunteering teams at your University who may already have marketing strategies they can help with.

LOGISTICS

Base Camp:

- For a successful mini BioBlitz you will need a central area or 'Base camp' that can serve as the focus for the event. The Base camp should be easily found and centrally located in your activity area if possible.
- Firstly check to see if there are any existing buildings on site that you can use (do they have electricity/lighting/heating?) If not then work out how large you would like your Base Camp to be. A few gazebos or tents will suffice. Make sure you plan for bad weather!
- If you wish to have power to run laptops, kettles, internet, etc then you may need to hire a generator (at an added cost). However it should be noted that if you have a low budget then this is a cost that can be avoided. Laptops batteries should last for the duration of a mini BioBlitz, lighting won't be a problem as it won't be going through to the evening and there are microscopes available that don't require power. Internet access can be gained through wireless networks (for example if there is a café nearby then you could ask their permission) or a portable dongle.
- The base camp can be used for several purposes and should include the following areas:
 - Registration/Information table (could be outside if the weather is dry) – here the public can register, find out about the days events and meet with naturalists to then be taken off around the site.
 - Equipment table(s)- all the sampling/ identification equipment can be spread out so that Naturalists can easily borrow equipment they need for sampling. It is also recommended that an Equipment sign out form is used to keep track of where all the equipment is going and to avoid the loss of any equipment. This is especially important if you have borrowed equipment from field centres/universities, etc.
 - Identification/Microscope table – A table set up with field guides/ microscopes will enable naturalists to confirm their identifications and help members of the public identify anything they have found. Examples of exciting recent finds can also be displayed for the public to look at.
 - Media Team – Table(s) and Laptop(s) for data entry and a white board to publicise the latest results (white board could be outside if the weather is nice). If you want to update blogs and websites, you will need to organise internet access.
 - Volunteer Area (Small gazebo or table in the main tent)- An area for volunteers to pick up their t-shirts/lanyards/refreshments and leave their belonging in a secure place.
 - First Aid tent – you will need to hire first aiders to have on site.



Species Recording:

- The main point of a BioBlitz event is to achieve a list of what species were found in the area. A simple, standard recording form is needed for everyone to use on the day (see appendix for a sample form). You will need to include:



- * What was found (Scientific name/Common name)
- * Where (Grid reference if possible)
- * When (Date/Time)
- * By Whom
- Try to encourage the public to go off in groups with naturalists as this will ensure that the data collected will be verified by a professional and will therefore be more accurate.
- Inform participants that forms need to be handed in throughout the event, not just at the end. Try to type your species list up during the event on a laptop at Base camp.
- How do you intend to use the data you collect? You could perhaps integrate it with your local records centre, so it is worth getting in touch with them before the event.

Equipment:

- You will need a range of equipment for catching and identifying various species around your site. You will also need various bits and pieces for setting up. Do try to borrow as much of your equipment as possible. This will keep costs down enormously. Universities, local outdoor study centres and wildlife trusts are usually very helpful and as long as you promise to return the equipment as borrowed and replace anything lost then they will more than likely let you use it at no cost.
- Below is a sample list of some of the equipment you will need:
 - Identification Books
 - Field Study Guides (laminated fold out charts; easy to use and popular with a wide range of age ranges) examples include: Trees, Lichens, Fungi, Woodland Plants, Orchids, Ladybirds, Bugs on Bushes, Shield Bugs, Bees, British Bats, Garden Birds (the list is endless)- field-studies-council.org/publications/foldout.aspx
 - Clipboards (at least one per Naturalist and member of staff)
 - Mini Hand Lenses (great for getting children involved in identification)
 - Sweep Nets
 - Pooters
 - Trays (ideally white for ease of observation/identification)
 - Collection magnifying pots/tubes/transparent containers
 - Microscopes for identifying unknown species back at 'Base' (also good for entertaining the members of the public)
 - Pond Nets
 - Plastic spoons
 - Wellies
 - Whiteboard (for informing the public who and what time the next naturalist will be going out. Also for keeping a running total number of species)
 - High visibility jackets for staff members
 - Laptop(s) for Media team

- T-shirts for volunteers (consider Green for Naturalists and Yellow for guides to make them more distinguishable)
- BioBlitz Banners
- Extra Flyers
- BioBlitz stickers
- You will also need a box of useful Bits and Bobs:
 - Scissors
 - String
 - Cable ties (useful for putting up banners and laminated posters)
 - Hole punch
 - Selotape
 - Pens/Pencils
 - Bin Bags
 - Antiseptic hand gel
 - Sun cream
 - Toilet roll
 - Insect Repellent
 - Disposable Gloves
- There may be a few things that you need to rent:
 - Chairs
 - Table
 - Marquee/ Gazebo (s)



Mini BioBlitz Forms and Paperwork

Below is a list of the various forms and paperwork you will need on the day. You can download most of these through our website which you can then modify to suit your needs.

1. Map of the survey area showing grid references and location of facilities (Your Local Recording Office may be able to help out with this)
2. Species recording form- (Your Local Recording Office may be able to help out with this)
3. Species list of the site (if available- check with local wildlife trusts)
4. Registration for the public (can combine it with a competition)
5. Inventory of all the equipment, the quantity and who it was borrowed from.
6. Equipment sign in/sign out form
7. Laminated signs for the various tables (eg: equipment, volunteer table, registration, first aid, media team)
8. List of all volunteers with contact details
9. Briefing information to read out to volunteers
10. Emergency contacts for volunteers
11. Emergency contacts for staff organising the event (eg: police, first aid, etc)
12. Volunteer evaluation/feedback form
13. Photo release form (very important to get permission from parents/guardians if taking photographs of children).
14. Timetable of talks/events



And Finally:

You are now ready to hold your mini BioBlitz! The most important thing you need to remember about a BioBlitz is that it is **FUN** and equal parts surveying the species of an area and engaging volunteers and the public with the wildlife on their doorstep. You can make your event as long or as short as you like, and do feel free to get in touch with the Bristol Natural History Consortium if you have any questions: www.bioblitzuk.org.uk