

SWOSU Students and Faculty Participate in Oklahoma BioBlitz

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Eleven students and faculty from Southwestern Oklahoma State University participated in the recent Oklahoma BioBlitz held at the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge near Lawton. The group from SWOSU helped with the project, which is a rapid inventory of biological diversity hosted by the Oklahoma Biological Survey.

The SWOSU Department of Biological Sciences recently participated in the 7th annual Oklahoma BioBlitz, which was held at the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge near Lawton.

The Oklahoma BioBlitz is a rapid inventory of [biological diversity](#) hosted by the [Oklahoma Biological Survey](#) and conducted by volunteers from around the state and the region. As many plants and animals in a designated area of public land that can be identified in 24 consecutive hours are tallied. A total of 1,008 species were collected, according to SWOSU Department of Biological Sciences Chair Dr. Peter Grant.

Bioblitz has two main goals. The first goal—education—aims to inform people about the diversity of plant and animal life in a local area through hands-on experiences and nature interpretation. Grant said this was achieved by displaying many of the organisms collected by the biologists and holding special classes for elementary school students.

“Individuals who visited BioBlitz could actually collect some of the specimens counted in the survey,” Grant said. “This is how many of the insect specimens were obtained.”

The second component is scientific. The biologists who were involved in BioBlitz are specialists in their field. The specimens collected provide valuable information about distribution and abundance of these organisms, which can be used in the scientists’ research.

BioBlitz was invented in 1996 by scientists from the National Parks Service and inaugurated in Washington, D.C., by scientists from the National Park Service, the National Botanical Garden, and the Smithsonian Institution. BioBlitz of varying types have since been conducted in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York, Texas, North Carolina, North Dakota and other states.

A total of 11 individuals were involved from SWOSU. Student volunteers included Mbarga Bodo, Nick Grant, Danielle Gross, Mandy Hayes, Melissa Johnson, Brittney Nix and David Supeck. Four Biology faculty led the SWOSU contingent: Drs. Jimena Aracena, Steven O’Neal (algae and plankton leader), Joseph Maness (herpetology leader), and Peter Grant (terrestrial invertebrate leader).

For more information about BioBlitz, visit the Oklahoma Biological Survey website at <http://www.biosurvey.ou.edu/biotiddly.html>.