

SWOSU Biology Group Helps with Oklahoma BioBlitz

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SWOSU students and faculty recently volunteered at the 11th annual Oklahoma BioBlitz at the Chickasaw National Recreation Area in Sulphur. SWOSU will be very involved when BioBlitz comes to Foss Reservoir and the Washita National Wildlife Refuge in 2012.

The SWOSU Department of Biological Sciences took a team of 17 students, friends and faculty to assist with the recent 11th annual Oklahoma BioBlitz at the Chickasaw National Recreation Area in Sulphur.

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. The volunteers count as many species as possible in a 24 consecutive hour time frame. The volunteers range from university professors to Boy Scouts to high school students to enthusiastic retirees.

Over 880 species were collected during the event. Participants included Erica Benda, Ryan Christensen, Bonnie Farris, Rachel Kauk, Lata Koirala, Irene Lopez, Danny Mann, Pamela Moreno, Sean O'Brien, Rebecca Odom, Melissa Peters, Amber Rymer, Shannah Rider and Chloe Rider. Three faculty also attended including Drs. Jimena Aracena, Steven O'Neal and Peter Grant.

Grant said BioBlitz is a fun and exciting event to educate people about the natural diversity "in their back yard." It offers them a hands-on scientific experience and a chance to learn more about the diversity of life where they live.

BioBlitz was inaugurated in 1996 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.

In 2012, the 12th Oklahoma BioBlitz will be held at Foss Reservoir and the Washita National Wildlife Refuge. Anyone who is interested can volunteer to help count Oklahoma's diversity! Additional information on BioBlitz is available by visiting the Oklahoma Biological Survey's web site at <http://www.biosurvey.ou.edu/bioblitz/BioBlitz.html>