



Backyard Bio-blitz

What's in your Backyard?

A Bioblitz is a survey of all of the living species in an area. More species means greater biodiversity which is important for a healthy sustainable ecosystem.

What kind of ecosystem do you have in your backyard, at the edge of your backyard, or Local Park? Check all that apply:

- Open Grass
 Forest
 Stonewall
 Wetland
 Pond
 Stream

How many different plants and animals can you find?

Pick a spot in your yard and mark off a 10 foot by 10 foot square. Remember to look under logs and stones. Be aware of birds and insects flying overhead. Use the chart to record data.

Organism Example: Birds	Tally Marks ////	Total Number 4	List any names of the organisms that you found. Crow, Chickadee, Cardinal
Mammals			
Amphibians (frog, salamander)			
Reptiles (turtle, snake)			
Invertebrates (Slug, centipede, pillbug, worm, spider)			
Insects			
Birds			
Plants			
Fungi /Mushroom			

Based on what you found, do you think your backyard ecosystem is healthy or stressed? Why?

If stressed, what can you do to help?

Draw a picture of what you found in your backyard.



Backyard Ecosystems: How Can You Help?

We can get discouraged when learning about the ways humans affect ecosystems. It can feel like we are part of the problem, instead of the solution. However, each of us can play a role in helping wildlife and supporting a healthier ecosystem in our own backyard!

Provide Water

All animals need food, water, and shelter to survive. If they cannot find all of these things, they will leave or die. Sometimes water is hard to find, especially in summer when it dries up, and in winter when it is frozen. YOU can help by providing clean drinking water for animals. You can do this by putting a bird bath or large bowl in your back yard. Remember to change the water daily in the summer (to prevent mosquitos from laying eggs). Garden stores sell heated bird baths to keep the water from freezing in the winter.

Plant a Wildlife Garden

Talk to your parents about planting native trees and flowers to attract animals, especially insects like bees and butterflies. These insects help pollinate plants and also serve as food to other animals in the food web. Talk to an expert at your local garden store about the right kinds of plants for your backyard and the animals you want to attract. Even a small window box with the right plants can help certain species!

Provide Places for Nests and Shelters

Build a birdhouse. Different birds need different sizes and locations for their nests. Make sure to research ahead of time to find out which birds in your area are in most need of shelter, and the type of shelter they need.

Bird Feeders

Put up a bird feeder to attract wild birds. Be sure to place it somewhere near shelter like bushes or tall grasses so the birds have a place nearby to hide from predators. Be aware that if you start feeding the birds, you cannot stop feeding them! If you stop, then the birds that have traveled to your feeder may suffer because there is no longer enough food to support them all. If you go on vacation, make sure a friend or neighbor can refill the feeder while you are gone.

Chemicals

Many chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers can grass and gardens grow, but they can also harm the ecosystem. They can kill birds, bees, and butterflies. They can also end up in streams, ponds, and groundwater which can hurt frogs, and salamanders. Ask mom and dad about what chemicals they use outside. Talk to a garden expert about compost and natural fertilizers.

Litter

Sometimes litter looks like prey to animals- like Juice straw wrappers that end up in the water and look like fish to turtles- if they try to eat it, the material can get stuck in their throats and they can choke. If you see trash in your backyard, around your school, a parking lot, or anywhere: pick it up!