

## Fall 2011 Newsletter



### Bioblitz Captivates Citizen Scientists!

Brian Titaro, *Conservation Technician*

The first BioBlitz in Stanley Park was a unique and unparalleled opportunity for visitors to experience the wonder of nature through a scientific lens. Adults and children alike clamored to see how even the smallest of fish and mammals had an identity and a purpose. Birds, insects, plants and reptiles also played starring roles in this show of biodiversity. Hundreds of “hands on” interactions with nature revealed the Park as a hotspot of biodiversity in Vancouver. Not only were citizens entertained, excited and educated, a total of 143 species not previously listed by the Stanley Park Ecology Society were recorded.

During the International Year of the Forest, on a hot weekend at the end of summer, Stanley Park was buzzing with its first ever “BioBlitz”. Co-hosted by the Stanley Park Ecology Society and the South Coast Conservation Program, this biodiversity blitz involved local researchers, ecology experts, stewardship groups and the general public. This 24 hour science relay identified a multitude of living organism types in Stanley Park.

Considering how heavily used Stanley Park is, it’s amazing that this type of event had never taken place before. Spanning August 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 20+ scientists with a legion of volunteers and local citizens launched into the Park, clipboards and field guides in hand, to perform a beach seine, small mammal trapping, lichen surveys, fish and amphibian surveys and many more events in a quest to record the diversity of flora and fauna in this 400 hectare urban oasis.

Even those whose skills weren’t scientific enough to tell the difference between a huckleberry and a salmonberry were included. Free interpretive events throughout the weekend were delivered to educate people from throughout Metro Vancouver about the Park’s biodiversity and hidden wonders.

Highlights of the weekend included hummingbird, bat and owl surveys. Individuals and families were able to interact with a local expert as he effortlessly caught, analyzed, and delicately banded three Anna’s hummingbirds over the course of just

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#### Contact Us

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an hour. The owl survey delighted observers as three barred owls flew over their heads and called back in response to the recorded calls that the biologist sent out into the dark forest. Five active, healthy bats were transferred from a veil of mist-nets over dark waterways to the hands of researchers and to the eager eyes of more than 30 people who participated until almost midnight.

The BioBlitz was a huge success largely due to the number of interactions between the public and the biologists. At the close of the weekend, more than 1000 individuals from the community had participated in one or more BioBlitz activity. Many individuals stayed engaged all weekend. One young boy participated in the beach seining, hummingbird trapping, amphibian trapping, fish trapping and aquatic insect pond dipping.

For children and adults, the BioBlitz provided an ideal opportunity to escape the hot city and connect to the natural world with the bonus of guidance from local ex-



Three Anna's hummingbirds were caught, banded and released during the BioBlitz.



A barred owl was spotted in the Stanley Park forest moments before the owl survey began.

perts happy to share their knowledge. As the last of the display tents were coming down the organizers celebrated a successful BioBlitz. The positive impact for the public was reiterated as another young boy who had spent the entire weekend under guidance catching frogs, butterflies and insects at Beaver Lake approached and excitedly asked, "Will you be doing all of this again next weekend?" The smiling response from SPES's Conservation Technician was, "Not next weekend, but maybe next year."

Thanks to all the scientists, partner organizations and volunteers who worked to make this weekend such a tremendous success! For a complete list of species identified during the first ever Stanley Park BioBlitz, please check [www.stanleyparkecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca) mid-September.

To keep connecting to nature, SPES has regular interactive walks and events on weekends throughout the year. Check our programs listed on pages 4 and 5, or at [www.stanleyparkecology.ca/programs](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/programs).

### SPECIAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING EVENT

#### VANCOUVER'S BEST-KEPT SECRET: STANLEY PARK NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

In its splendid relationship of natural environment and commemorated cultural elements, Stanley Park is the epitome of the large urban Canadian park. Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of Vancouver and the 100th Anniversary of the national parks system, Parks Canada historian, Lyle Dick, illustrates and highlights many of the outstanding values that define Stanley Park as a nationally significant cultural treasure.

When: Wednesday, October 26 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Details: Stanley Park Dining Pavilion ballroom. [www.stanleyparkecology.ca/calendar](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/calendar)

