

Acton WildAware Beacon article  
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### Getting Ready for Acton Bioblitz 2016

Acton Bioblitz 2016 (June 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>) will be an environmental education event that encourages connection to the natural world. Everyone is invited to explore outdoor spaces around their homes and neighborhoods, Acton conservation lands and recreation areas for all manner of insects (such as bees, ants and butterflies); turtles; birds; amphibians such as frogs, toads and salamanders; aquatic mammals like beaver and otters; terrestrial mammals such as squirrels and woodchucks, and raptors like hawks and owls. People will create a list of the animal species they record, and the location. We will make a map with red dots indicating each and every location of the Bioblitz data collection. In September, Acton Natural Resources will host a public gathering and celebration at NARA Park with a wild animal handler, a WildAware cake, free buttons and games. Posters from the past year demonstrating public photo submissions will be on display as well as the resulting inventory and town map identifying survey locations generated from the Bioblitz.

As you explore and begin to think about mapping your yard or other area, you may see and hear a variety of wildlife and learn right away about the plants and animals that live there! Next time bring along binoculars and magnifiers. A clipboard with paper and pen(cil), and a camera are useful for recording. A tape recorder is helpful for picking up bird, frog and other wildlife songs and calls. If short on time, try brief visits a few times a week at various times of day to look, listen and record what wildlife lives in, or visits there.

#### Guidelines for Field Work:

Do be a careful observer and take notes about what you find  
Do roll logs and rocks slowly over and back to the position you found them in  
Do try to identify unknown species while you're in the field.  
Do also look for animal signs such as feather, tracks, nibbled leaves and cocoons.  
Do wash your hands carefully as soon as you return inside.

Don't damage trees or other plants by digging them up, ripping off leaves or bark  
Don't put anything you find;berries, leaves, mushrooms and bark in your mouth.  
Don't reach under logs or rocks, crevices or other spaces if you can't see into them.

Places to look: high in the sky, between trees, on the ground, in tree branches, on plant stems and leaves, under rocks, on tree trunks, in leaf litter, under and around logs, edges where forests meet meadows and land meets water. Common wildlife to watch for in your neighborhood include ants, spiders, caterpillars, worms, bees, moths, pillbugs, chipmunks, rabbits, squirrels, and birds of many kinds. If you are lucky: turtles, frogs, toads, snakes, fish, salamanders, deer, foxes, woodchucks, raccoon, skunks, hawks, and herons. As meadow grasses and forbs grow tall and the trees leaf out, wildlife may not be as obvious

and some, such as owls and crickets may be heard but not seen.

Leading up to the Bioblitz, residents are encouraged to focus their observations by mapping the site that they will survey, being as specific as possible:

- Define the borders of the site by drawing its outline
- Include built structures like your home, sidewalk, school or parking lot.
- Draw in the location of trees and shrubs.
- Are there any nests, burrows, hives, anthills and dens?
- Draw in lawn space, flower gardens and vegetable gardens.
- Does the area include fallen tree branches, rotting logs, and large boulders?

For newcomers to Acton who are not yet familiar with the flora and fauna in our town, the local children's library collections include a wide array of excellent books about local wildlife. Acton, Naturally, An Introduction to Familiar Species-Pocket Naturalist's guide is available from AB PIP at [www.actonpip.org](http://www.actonpip.org). The cost is \$6.00. All sales support AB PIP Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) K-12 education activities.

Reference: [http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Documents/BioBasics\\_Activity\\_1-3.pdf](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Documents/BioBasics_Activity_1-3.pdf)  
Illinois Biodiversity Basics Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Chicago  
Wilderness, World Wildlife Fund Student Page Backyard BioBlitz

*Paula Goodwin is a member of the Acton Conservation Commission who introduced WildAware with Acton Natural Resource Assistant Bettina Abe. WildAware is a program sponsored by the Town of Acton Natural Resources Department that began in September and will continue through the summer of 2016. The purpose of WildAware is to educate the community about the existence and habits of wild creatures, and the goal is increased community awareness of shared habitats. For information, call 978-929-6634 or send email to [nr@acton-ma.gov](mailto:nr@acton-ma.gov).*