

WINTERGREEN STUDIOS

ANNUAL LAND ART BIOBLITZ

Wednesday, May 29 to Sunday, June 2, 2019



Report to TD FEF July 2019



Wintergreen Studios and the Annual Land Art BioBlitz

Wintergreen Studios is a year-round, environmentally-friendly educational retreat centre, located in the heart of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is part of a global network of UNESCO designated sites, selected for their unique geographic features and presence of communities committed to sustainable development.

Wintergreen's off-grid solar-powered facilities serve the three-fold focus on education, culture, and the environment. The 204-acre property protects a richly diverse ecosystem, comprised of mixed forests, meadows, granite outcroppings, ponds, marshes, and a glacier-carved lake. Through a network of trails, visitors to Wintergreen can experience this natural beauty up-close, meeting beavers, owls, flowering plants, snakes, dragonflies, and other unique species along the way. This ease of access to plants and animals makes Wintergreen Studios a perfect location for the Annual Land Art BioBlitz events.



The TD FEF Annual Land Art BioBlitz is a 5-day event that combines artistic expression with natural history workshops, aiming to teach participants about their relationship to the more-than-human world. In contrast to traditional 24-hour BioBlitz events, Wintergreen's approach is to slow down, get creative, and get up close to the species who live among us.

The 2019 event was a succession to last year's Annual Land Art BioBlitz; also supported by TD FEF. To share these teachings widely, the BioBlitz was open to all ages and welcomed public drop-ins as well as elementary and secondary school groups who pre-booked a field trip to Wintergreen. Artists and naturalists were also present each day and night, offering workshops, guided hikes, and species identification assistance. Over the course of 5 days, the BioBlitz supported more than **2000 workshop participants**, bringing a greater awareness and appreciation of the non-human species living in Southeastern Ontario.

What Did We Achieve?

Due to the generous support of TD FEF, along with additional small grants, in-kind contributions and volunteer support, we hosted our flagship Land Art BioBlitz event from Wednesday, May 29, 2019 to Sunday, June 2, 2019. Each day offered between 7 and 19 workshops, art and sensory experiences, and guided hikes, led by Wintergreen staff, volunteers, and guest instructors. Self-guided exploration of Wintergreen was also encouraged, giving participants an opportunity to look for species and experience the land at their own pace. At the end of each day, species information was gathered from participants and recorded in a central document. Specific details on participants, activities, and identified species are described below.

Participants

During the first three days of the BioBlitz, Wintergreen hosted 14 elementary school groups (ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 6) and two secondary school classes (both Grade 9). Participating schools included JG Simcoe P.S., Rideau Vista P.S., Tamworth E.S., Centennial P.S., Regiopolis-Notre Dame Catholic H.S., and Corky Peppley (Homeschool Group). For



Rideau Vista P.S., the entire student population was in attendance during our second day of programming.



The majority of classes arrived by bus (paid by Wintergreen with support from TD FEF), and on arrival, were given information packages with their schedule for the day, species ID cards, name tags for students, and a sheet to record student feedback. The school day began with an opening ceremony, followed by the first scheduled activity. Classes participated in 2-4 different activities throughout the day (depending on their departure time); some assigned and some via self-selection. For each school group, several adults joined the students including school principals, teachers, teaching assistants, parents, and other classroom volunteers.



Outside of school groups, children, adults, and seniors visited Wintergreen throughout the 5-day event, dropping into workshops or participating in self-guided activities. Some public participants chose to stay for multiple days, camping overnight on Wintergreen's grounds. While the majority of participants during the week were from school groups, public participation was highest on Saturday and Sunday.

In total, the 2019 Annual Land Art BioBlitz reached **366 children** (ages 6-17), **40 youth** (ages 18-24), **108 adults** (aged 25-54), and **31 seniors** (ages 55+). Many of these visitors participated in multiple activities, thereby exceeding our goal of 2000 participants with a grand total of **2007 workshop attendees**. We also hosted **1009 first time workshop**

attendees, which increased the awareness of Wintergreen’s work in sustainability and environmental education.

In comparing these numbers to the 2018 BioBlitz, this year saw 23 more children, 19 more adults, and 19 more senior participants. In addition, the first time workshop attendees increased by 36 and the **total number of participants in 2019 were up by 216.**

BioBlitz Workshops

The daily workshops were the highlight of the BioBlitz event, offering strong community engagement as well as a space for new partnerships to form and existing partnerships to expand. For instance, we welcomed **12 guest instructors** to run the workshops; most travelling from southern Ontario and one from the United States. Seven of these instructors returned from last year’s event to



deliver new or updated programming, which met our objective of deepening 6 partnerships at the BioBlitz. An additional goal was met of species experts learning from each other, as guest instructors often invited one another on self-guided hikes and attended fellow instructor’s workshops when scheduling permitted.



In keeping with Wintergreen’s mandate on intersecting education, culture, and the environment, the BioBlitz workshops were centered around *biodiversity, music, and art and sensory experiences*. Activities ranged in length from 30 minutes to 3 hours, and provided a mix of active programming, interactive presentations, and quiet, reflective experiences. As

anticipated, there were 13 more workshops available this year (compared to 2018), bringing the 2019 total to **86 biodiversity, music, and art and sensory sessions**. Of these 86 workshops, there were **11 new sessions**, including wild foraging, body awakening and beekeeping, delivered in conjunction with recurring BioBlitz activities, as indicated in the charts below.

Workshop Type	Name of Workshop	Instructor	Number of Workshops	Total Attendees	New Workshop
BIODIVERSITY	Astronomy	Walt Sepic <i>Firefly Adventures</i>	1	18	-
	Attracted to Light	Jason Crockwell <i>Naturalist</i>	2	20	-
	Beekeeping 101	Alex Pederson <i>Limestone Beekeepers' Guild Ontario Beekeepers' Association</i>	1	13	YES
	Birds of a Feather	Monica Capovilla <i>Wintergreen Staff</i>	1	28	-
	Coexisting with Snakes	Matt Ellerbeck <i>Reptile & Amphibian Conservationist</i>	1	17	-
	Foraging	Becky Lamb & Lee Earl <i>Toronto's Wild Foragers Society</i>	3	75	YES
	Guided Hikes	<i>Various Wintergreen Staff & Volunteers</i>	18	408	-
	Herpatology 101	Kenny Ruelland & Eric Woodley <i>Reptile and Amphibian Advocacy</i>	5	118	-
	Insect Exploration	Jason Crockwell <i>Naturalist</i>	2	56	YES
	Owl Calling	Jason Crockwell <i>Naturalist</i>	1	10	YES
	Pollination Station	Nancy Cole <i>Ontario Beekeepers' Association</i>	1	17	YES
	Pond Study	<i>Various Wintergreen Staff & Volunteers</i>	16	355	-
	Self-Guided Hikes	-	-	116	-
	Sustainability Tour	Rena Upitis <i>Wintergreen Staff</i>	3	59	-
	Wicked Big Puddles	Geoff Carter <i>Wintergreen Volunteer</i>	1	28	YES
TOTALS			56	1338	6

Workshop Type	Name of Workshop	Instructor	Number of Workshops	Total Attendees	New Workshop
ART/SENSORY	Forest Therapy	Stana Luxford Oddie <i>Cataraqui Region CA</i>	2	28	-
	Labyrinth Walk	Rena Upitis <i>Wintergreen Staff</i>	5	51	-
	Land Art	<i>Various Wintergreen Staff & Volunteers</i>	4	79	-
	Soundwalk	Jesse Stewart <i>Musician, Artist, Educator</i>	3	20	-
TOTALS			14	178	0

Workshop Type	Name of Workshop	Instructor	Number of Workshops	Total Attendees	New Workshop
MUSIC	Body Awakening	Kevin Fell <i>Hoza</i>	3	204	YES
	Closing Ceremony	Kevin Fell <i>Hoza</i>	1	16	YES
	Earth My Body	Kevin Fell <i>Hoza</i>	9	220	YES
	Land Art Dance & Improv	Kevin Fell <i>Hoza</i>	1	18	YES
	Forest Rhythms	Kevin Fell <i>Hoza</i>	1	9	YES
	Square Dancing	Walt Sepic <i>Firefly Adventures</i>	1	24	-
TOTALS			16	491	5

Species

Similar to the 2018 BioBlitz, there were **over 500 species identified** during the 2019 event, with the help of guest instructors, novice naturalists, and the many field guides and species identification tools available at Wintergreen Studios. Within our database, species were grouped into categories of mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians, insects, birds, non-woody plants, and trees, shrubs, and woody vines. There were many species found for the first time at Wintergreen’s Land Art BioBlitz as well as several species at risk. The species at risk data was submitted to the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC), to



help inform biodiversity conservation initiatives in Ontario. A summary of the species found at Wintergreen is detailed below.

Mammals

There were **14 species of mammals** recorded at the 2019 BioBlitz, including the Snowshoe Hare who was last recorded in 2017, along with the Muskrat; last recorded in 2016. More common mammals such as North American Porcupines and White-tailed Deer

were also present this year, as well as the Coyote, which was recorded for the first time at Wintergreen's Land Art BioBlitz.

Fish

Fish species increased from zero in 2018 to **5 fish species** in 2019, all of which were new additions to the Wintergreen species database. The species found were the Northern Redbelly Dace, Bluntnose Minnow, Brock Stickleback, Common Sunfish, and Iowa Darter.



Reptiles and Amphibians

BioBlitz participants found **20 reptile and amphibian species**, including the De Kay's Brownsnake and a Chorus Frog species; both first-time sightings at the Land Art BioBlitz. Additional finds included the Blue Spotted Salamander last seen 2 years ago, along with returning species like the Eastern Smooth Green Snake and Midland Painted Turtle. The reptile and amphibian list also included one endangered species, one threatened species, and one species of special concern in Ontario.



Insects

From spiders to flies to spider flies, the invertebrate sightings were vast, totalling **189 insect, arachnid, and other invertebrate species**. This year yielded 101 new invertebrates in Wintergreen's database, including the Darkling Beetle, Goldenrod Gall Moth, Mining Bee, and Orchard Orbweaver. Last seen in 2017, the Stilt Bug and

Woodlouse were recorded once again, along with several damselfly and butterfly species. Within the insect category, there were two species of special concern found.

Birds

A total of **46 bird species** were identified during this year's BioBlitz, showing an increase of 8 species compared to the 2018 results. Notable first-time sightings included the Black-billed Cuckoo,, Least Flycatcher, and Warbling Vireo. Several species returned for the 4th year in a row, such as the Common Loon and Barred Owl, in addition to the American Redstart, Eastern Bluebird, and Cedar Waxwing, last seen in 2017. Out of the 46 species of birds recorded, one is currently threatened and one is of special concern in Ontario.



Non-Woody Plants

On the non-woody plant list, there were many returning favourites such as Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Blue Flag, and the edible Wild Leek; all contributing to the total of **208 plant species** found. Last identified 3 years ago, Orange Hawkweed and Tall Buttercup were located at Wintergreen once again, in addition to one threatened plant species.



Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines

In our final BioBlitz category, participants identified **56 species of trees, shrubs, and woody vines**. Many unique species continue to grow at Wintergreen Studios, like the Tamarack, Jack Pine and - the studio's namesake - Wintergreen. Participants also identified several maple, oak, and elm

species, in addition to the White Poplar; a new species in the database. In referencing the Ontario's Species at Risk list, participants found one endangered tree species.

Comments and Testimonials

Upon participating in the Land Art BioBlitz, students and teachers were invited to write comments about their experience. In reviewing these responses, many attendees expressed excitement about the programs, as well as a sense of calm in spending time outside. For example, in using the prompt "**I felt...**", students from a Grade 2/3 and Grade 4/5 class said:

"...happy because I got to see a snake."

"...excited because it was so so so fun"

"...calm because the nature was beautiful"

"...peaceful"

Observing pond life was a common highlight for the school groups, in addition to seeing different flowers blooming in the forest. This came through when students were given the prompt "**I noticed...**" and responded with:

"...there are things living in the mud"

"...the pond and I love the frogs"

"...the trilliums"

"...how our coyote call echoed around"

"...crazy huge red flowers with huge leaves"





In thinking about the best part of their day, students particularly loved the foraging workshop, demonstrating their new knowledge about edible species in their comments. For instance, when prompted with **“My favourite moment was...”**, Grade 2/3 and Grade 4/5 students said:

“...foraging because it was cool when we ate the plants”

“...the drums were fun. We got to play them and we did a song and dance.”

“...holding a turtle”

“...sumac tea, eating honeysuckle”

“...seeing the lake and the bridges”

“...being in the mica pit and not knowing how we were going to get out”



Students also left unprompted comments about their time at Wintergreen, which captured their enjoyment of slowing down and taking the time to appreciate the natural world around them:

“We got so calm”

“Thanks, I needed that”

“It was really nice sitting alone in the woods”

“I want to stay here”



Teacher feedback was also extremely positive, reinforcing the importance of bringing students to Wintergreen and offering them a space to explore and connect with nature. One teacher was already thinking ahead to the 2020 BioBlitz, in stating:

"Thank you for having us :) We would love to come again next year" - Grade 2/3 Teacher

A Grade 4/5 teacher expressed how all of their students *"enjoyed the day immensely"*, and gave students—who otherwise do not have access to natural areas—a chance for meaningful outdoor exploration. The latter was particularly true for one Syrian student who was simply *"aching to stay"*, while another student who often misses field trips was *"utterly thrilled...to have the space and opportunity to be in nature!"*

The Grade 4/5 teacher was also very impressed by the forest therapy session, which they felt was *"well-received by the kids who wisely self-selected themselves for that."* The teacher summed up their satisfaction of the BioBlitz in a final comment that speaks to overall student engagement and the transformative quality of outdoor experiences:

"I can't tell you how special it was for us to see how special it was for our kids to be there...Parents who were there were quite touched by the children's response to it all."



Partners, Volunteers, and Project Costs

Partners and Funding

We had many sponsors and partners contribute to the *Annual Land Art BioBlitz*. In addition to the **\$10,450** grant from TD FEF, we received funds and in-kind support from a number of organizations, totalling just over **\$26,000**. This included approximately \$14,000 in funding from the Ontario Sports and Recreation Communities Fund, ParicipACTION and Queen's

Players. In-kind contributions from Pathways to Education and Sustainable Eastern Ontario reached \$12,000; extending beyond our \$10,000 in-kind support goal. Additional partnership support from Hoza and the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority was also received.



Volunteers

At the end of last year’s BioBlitz event, the intention was set to partner with Queen’s University for volunteer support in 2019. This goal was met by welcoming 5 new volunteers from Queen’s to the workshop facilitation team, in addition to 2 returning volunteers who attended Queen’s in 2018. These volunteers were Chris Cusimano, Kara Macissac, Geoff Carter, Shanshan Tian, Julianna De Francesco, Dan Blair, and Jill Glatt. In addition to our volunteer workshop facilitators, there were 3 volunteers assisting with administration and hospitality throughout the event: Louise Good, Sharon Carr, and Gary Rasberry.



These **10 volunteers** contributed a combined total of **200 hours**, valued at **\$3,000**.

Project Costs

Two staff members coordinating the BioBlitz over an 8-month period was the largest expense at **\$24,000**, while honoraria for 8 of our guest instructors totalled **\$3,475**. Transportation costs for busing students to and from Wintergreen was roughly **\$2,620**. Likewise, food for staff, volunteers and instructors, along with facility needs such as tent rentals equalled just over **\$2,500**. Supplies and materials for BioBlitz activities came to **\$1,908**, while marketing for the event, which included posters, brochures, and flyers, was the lowest expense at **\$1,150**.



TOTAL PROJECT COST = ~\$38,653

TOTAL FUNDING RECEIVED = ~\$36,450

TOTAL COST TO WINTERGREEN = ~\$2,203

Looking Ahead

The next Annual Land Art BioBlitz will take place from **Tuesday, June 2 to Saturday June 6, 2020**. Following the model we developed over the past 2 years, we will continue to offer programming to school groups, bringing both elementary and secondary students to Wintergreen. A significant change for next year will be running the BioBlitz from Tuesday to Saturday (traditionally Wednesday to Sunday), in order to have an extra day for school group programs. This will bring over 500 additional workshop participants to the 2020 BioBlitz, as our school group days averaged 587 workshop participants this year. In

contrast, Sunday programming has consistently attracted the least number of attendees, with an average of 64 workshop participants over the last 3 years.

We also aim to engage more at-risk youth in 2020, as the group scheduled this year did not attend their sessions. To prevent this scenario in 2020, Wintergreen will debrief with the partnering organization to identify the barriers to attendance and work throughout the school year to prepare students for the trip. Additional partnerships with youth education institutes will also be explored, to maximize at-risk youth participation in the BioBlitz.

In looking ahead to 2020 programming, we wish to expand our guest instructor roster by adding experts in new areas that link to biodiversity, music, and/or art and sensory experiences. We also intend to increase 'earth-care' activities, such as bee hotel construction, gardening and composting sessions, and learning to cook with local food. In considering curriculum expectations, we envision a stronger literature connection in the 2020 BioBlitz, using children's books within workshops that link to our central themes. Additional suggestions offered by BioBlitz staff and volunteers were well documented throughout the event and will greatly influence the programming delivered next year.

Our work in 2019 grew from an aspiration to slow down and notice the natural world, which came to fruition through the generous support of TD FEF. As the program evolves for the 2020 BioBlitz, we will continue to honour this mandate of connecting participants with nature in a creative, intentional, and embodied way.

Photo Credits

All photos by **Morgan Chin-Yee**, from the *2019 Annual Land Art BioBlitz*.

