

# People connect with nature

**BY HEATHER PEDEN**  
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Students from Bishop E.Q. Jennings School had a sneak preview of the BioBlitz that ran Friday evening and runs again today at the Mills Block Forest Management Property

A countrywide project to help connect Canadians with nature, BioBlitz is locally hosted by Ontario Nature in conjunction with

the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

The idea of the BioBlitz is to pair experts from the community who know a lot about different aspects of nature with people who know just a bit, explained Jake Guggenheim with Ontario Nature. It's a sharing of knowledge and a way to get people outside.

It's also a wildlife survey, explained Mallory Vanier, conservation education specialist with Ontario Nature.

"The overall goal is to tally as many species as we can in this area over the two-day period," said Vanier. "Our strategy as a community blitz is through guided hikes and activities. It's called citizen science, it's basically getting people actively involved in a hands-on scientific initiative."

Annie Belair from the Canadian Wildlife Federation said the blitz is to help encourage people to get interested in the natural world right outside their doors.

"We are encouraging people to use the iNaturalist app," she said, explaining the app lets people take a picture of a plant or animal or tree with their phone and it logs the date and location. "Even if you don't know how to identify it, someone is looking at the pictures it goes into the national database. It's really science, it's counting."

The start to the BioBlitz on Friday was open for school groups to participate in a nature walk, in which they helped count different species of plants and animals, and complete a nature-based craft.

For student Heather King, her favourite part of the day was letting a spider crawl on her finger.

Today "We are going to have experts here who can speak to trees, herbaceous plants, aquatic insects, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, we've got a little bit of everything here," said Vanier.

The BioBlitz continues today from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.



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**Grade 7 and 8 students from Bishop E.Q. Jennings School participate in a nature walk for the BioBlitz at the Mills Block Forest Management Property on Friday.**