



Canada's nature selfie for our 150th

NEWS RELEASE

RESULTS OF MAY 16 PARLIAMENT HILL BIOBLITZ: ANOTHER KIND OF ACCOUNTING

OTTAWA, May 18, 2017 – As the Auditor General reported on numbers just south of the Hill, meanwhile, on the Hill's eastern side, the numbers of living species were tallied, as Parliamentarians led a demonstration nature count to launch BioBlitz Canada 150, a nation-wide Canada 150 Signature project.

"This fascinating project will help us raise our environmental awareness," said the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage. "Let's take this opportunity to celebrate Canada 150 by connecting with Canada's natural beauty and learning more about Canada's wild species—a priceless resource."

In only 45 minutes, the Parliamentarians' teams blitzed an impressive 137 species of the air, land and water, all logged onto the national *iNaturalist.ca* database. This, for a location in middle of Canada's capital, downtown, within centimetres of where hundreds of tourists walk by, and metres from the turbulent Ottawa River, at historic flood levels only days before.

Two squads vied in a little friendly contention, this time outside Parliament, by representatives of the different political stripes, plus the Clerk of the House of Commons on behalf of all the Hill officials. Several are top-notch naturalists in their own right, and they were joined by some local specialists.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Science Kate Young cheered them on, and added her estimate of how many species would be found. Estimates ranged from 3,100 species to 67 (the latter more symbolic than serious). The closest to the actual total was by MP (and professional biologist) Richard Cannings (South Okanagan-West Kootenay) who predicted 167.

Among the smallest of the species were barely visible freshwater plankton. A special find was a Yellow-banded Bumble Bee, a species listed as "Special Concern" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Among the largest species identified was a Butternut tree along the escarpment of the Hill.

A mere ten minutes drive away, the maximum species list is 3592, in the Gatineau Park area, site of the BbC150's National Capital BioBlitz for the public on June 10-11. This tally has been compiled over decades by constant surveying and by experts in the most obscure taxa — and even there, a species new to science was added this past year.

Other bioblitzes are set for the next days and months across Canada: the attached backgrounder gives the 35 official events, with a growing list of independent projects also posted at bioblitzcanada.ca. CWF and its partners in conservation across the country call on Canadians to join in all year at a BbC150 event or on their own with the resources available on the website.

The CWF will be inviting all Canadian to play along by guessing the total species identified under the project as of October 31, 2017, with the end of the events season. Watch for that announcement, soon to follow.

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About the Canadian Wildlife Federation:

The Canadian Wildlife Federation is dedicated to fostering awareness and appreciation of our natural world. By spreading knowledge of human impacts on the environment, sponsoring research, promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, recommending legislative changes and co-operating with like-minded partners, CWF encourages a future in which Canadians can live in harmony with nature. Visit CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca for more information.

About BioBlitz Canada:

BioBlitz Canada is a national partnership of leading conservation, education and research organizations with the goal to document Canada's biodiversity by connecting the public with nature in a scientist-led participatory survey of life from sea to sea to sea, and make sure this important information can be useful to current and future science, with open-source access to all. Its vision is to help Canadians learn about and connect with nature, be it in one's own backyard or the most important ecological sites in Canada.

Other partners in conservation include:

Alliance of Natural History Museums of Canada, Biodiversity Institute of Ontario, Biological Survey of Canada, Birds Studies Canada, Canadian Museum of Nature, Canadian Wildlife Service (Environment and Climate Change Canada), iNaturalist Canada, Nature Canada, Nature Conservancy of Canada, NatureServe Canada, New Brunswick Museum, Parks Canada, RARE Charitable Research Reserve, Royal Ontario Museum, Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Stanley Park Ecology Society, Toronto Zoo, Vancouver Aquarium and other organizations.

About iNaturalist Canada:

Launched in 2015, iNaturalist Canada is a virtual place where Canadians can record and share what they see in nature, interact with other nature watchers, and learn about Canada's wildlife. The app is run by the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in collaboration with iNaturalist.org and the California Academy of Sciences. Parks Canada, NatureServe Canada and CWF's Hinterland Who's Who have been key partners in the development of iNaturalist Canada and will continue to play a role in the program.

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