



The Socially Distant Bioblitz Series

Environmental Studies Department
Glover's Ledge
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In mid-March, 2020, the threat of Covid-19 shut down Antioch University New England. At that time we knew little about the virus, and halted gatherings at Glover's Ledge for public safety. The annual Glover's Ledge Spring Bioblitz was right around the corner, however, and the staff decided to transition that event to a Covid-19 safe format to get folks outside and boost morale in otherwise uncertain times. Thus, the Socially Distant Bioblitz Series was born.

What is a Bioblitz?

A Bioblitz is an event where attendees are encouraged to roam an area and identify as many species of living beings (animals, plants, fungi, insects, etc) as possible within a given time period. Glover's Ledge hosts a Bioblitz annually to collect data on species and habitat composition, with the free app iNaturalist.



September, 2018 Bioblitz attendees collaboratively identifying species seen at Glover's Ledge.

The staff at Glover's Ledge use the data to better understand and plan for landscape stewardship. The event typically has high attendance, with attendees congregating to help each other identify species and hike together through the forests and fields.

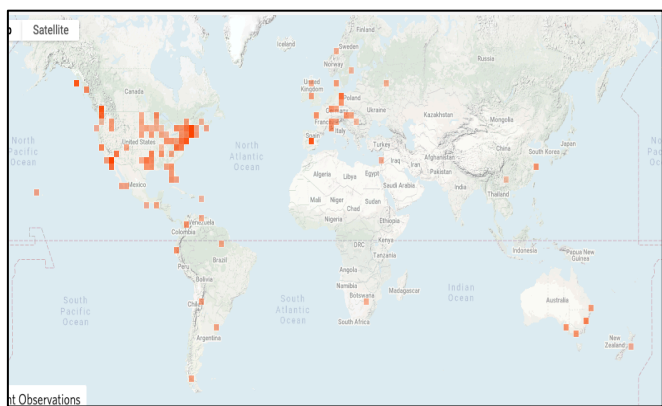


Up close with the species at Glover's Ledge! Any and all living beings count as observations for a Bioblitz. Even tracks and traces, like scat, or audio recordings of songs or calls could be counted as identifications.

What is a Socially Distant Bioblitz?

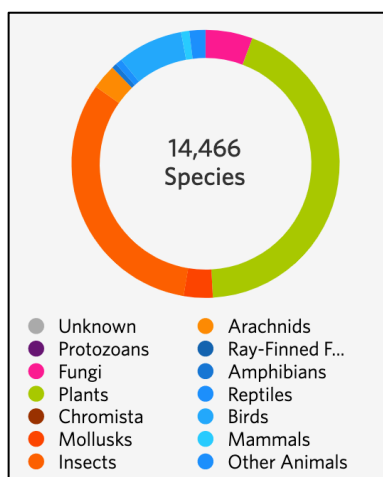
Adjunct Antioch University New England faculty Steven Lamonde, Chief Environmental Officer of Distant Hill Gardens and Nature Trail Michael Nerrie, and Environmental Education & Outreach Coordinator of Glover's Ledge Sara Lobdell collaborated to adapt the annual Bioblitz to a "socially distant" format. Instead of gathering in-person at Glover's Ledge, participants merely had to join the Socially Distant Bioblitz project on iNaturalist. Then, at any time day or night on the date of the Socially Distant Bioblitz, participants could head outside and identify species in their own, local, landscapes. The goals of this format were to allow participants to contribute from wherever they might be, collaborate "together" in a time when we couldn't physically gather, and to provide an outlet for folks to get outside to boost morale.

The pilot Socially Distant Bioblitz launched April 5, 2020. To our great surprise, the event caught on worldwide! On April 5, 2020, 349 observers contribute 12,748 observations of 3,121 species from across the globe.



Map of global observations from the April 5th Socially Distant Bioblitz. For details: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/socially-distant-bioblitz-4-5-2020>

A Socially Distant Bioblitz ran every several weeks until October 18, 2020 after the success of the first Socially Distant Bioblitz. Overall 844 folks contributed 99,550 observations covering 14,466 species across every continent but Antarctica. Along the way, 5,215 identifiers helped identify the photos and observations that were submitted.



Species details across all Socially Distant Bioblitzes, from April 5 to October 18, 2020.

More detail on the Socially Distant Bioblitz Series at: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/socially-distant-bioblitz-series?tab=about>



Eastern White Pine (above, photo: *copepodo*, iNaturalist) and Eastern Hemlock (below, photo: *Ian Manning*, iNaturalist) were the most observed species, with 495 and 295 observations respectfully.



Although participation died down after October, 2020 for the original Socially Distant Bioblitz series, many contributors were inspired to create similar spinoff events in their local areas. Environmental Education & Outreach Coordinator Sara Lobdell continued to use a “socially distant” format for the fall 2020 and spring 2021 Bioblitzes at Glover’s Ledge, as well, to ensure Antioch students could participate even if they had not moved to Keene while Antioch was virtual.

The Socially Distant Bioblitz series was published!

See: <https://commonthread.antioch.edu/after-more-than-12500-observations-in-single-day-organizers-plan-more-socially-distant-bioblitzes>