

National Park Service Project Completion Report Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU)

Project Title: Workshops and Program Support for National Park Service, Rocky Mountains CESU

Project Code UMT 257, P11AC90665

Type of Project: Technical Assistance/Education

Funding Agency: National Park Service

Partner University: University of Montana

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Start Date of Project: 6/1/2011

End Date of Project: 12/31/2015

Funding Amount: \$11,680

Project Summary:

The National Park Service, RM-CESU cooperated with the University of Montana, College of Forestry to support various NPS regional office and park activities related to NPS activities as part of the RM-CESU:

- 1) Funding for supplies for the Rocky Mountain NP Bioblitz, August 2012; see the attached press release following the ROMO Bioblitz, attached below.
- 2) Funding for meeting support for RM-CESU annual meetings, especially the partner meeting in Fort Collins, fall 2013
- 3) UM staff support for preparation of project summary sheets of NPS projects. These summaries are posted on the RM-CESU web site: <http://www.cfc.umt.edu/cesu/>
- 4) Office support for the NPS Research Coordinator on the University of Montana campus.

Number of students participating in this project: a number of RM CESU university graduate students participated in the ROMO Bioblitz, especially as field guides for the public participants.

Lessons Learned from this project: The RM-CESU has been successful for the National Park Service because of the presence of a NPS Research Coordinator on site at the host University, the University of Montana. Collaboration with staff and students at the University of Montana has enhanced the delivery of science products to the public.

Other RM-CESU agencies or research partners who participated in this project: Rocky

Mountain NP was the host of the NPS-National Geographic Society Bioblitz

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Press Release, NPS and National Geographic Society

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK BIOBLITZ REACHES NEW HEIGHTS
Thousands of Scientists, Students and the General Public Converge on Park
For Scientific and Personal Discovery**

ESTES PARK, Colo. (Aug. 27, 2012)—After two days of exploration and documentation, the Rocky Mountain National Park BioBlitz held on Aug. 24 and 25, 2012, captured a vivid snapshot of the plants and animal diversity in the Rocky Mountains. Led by nearly 200 scientists from around the country, thousands of amateur explorers, families and schoolchildren conducted an inventory of the plants, insects, mammals, birds and other creatures that inhabit the majestic park. A companion festival at the Estes Park Fairgrounds celebrated biodiversity. The Rocky Mountain National Park BioBlitz and festival coincided with the park service's 96th birthday on August 25.

Highlights:

- More than 5,000 people, including more than 2,000 schoolchildren, participated in BioBlitz and its concurrent Biodiversity Festival.
- The initial scientific species count as of the 4 p.m. closing ceremony Saturday was 489, but a passing bald eagle during the ceremony raised the count to 490. Organizers expect the number to increase significantly over the next few months as state-of-the-art testing of the collected samples continues.
- The two-day, 24-hour count added species to park lists in an already well-documented park. This included a new tree, lizard, nine insects and 13 nonvascular plants. The big brown bat species was officially confirmed at BioBlitz 2012.
- In addition to scientific discovery, the 2012 BioBlitz focused on personal discovery and understanding the park in new ways. For a group of 4th-graders from a Denver school, it was the ultimate field trip and the first time in a national park for most of the students.
- National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis participated in the BioBlitz, working side-by-side with students exploring meadow and alpine tundra ecosystems. The BioBlitz coincided with the release of the updated Leopold Report, a report that has been guiding park service management of natural resources for 50 years. The revised report includes the impacts on the parks of environmental changes and humans.

- The Biodiversity Festival included a wide variety of music, nature-inspired activities, photography workshops, talks, art, live animal demonstrations and hands-on science activities. The festival emphasized biodiversity and encouraging the public to do their part to protect the environment. Many visitors interacted with representatives of science, nature and environmental organizations at more than 45 booths.
- An integrated art program at the festival included flags featuring local species, made by local and visiting artists and schoolchildren. Festival participants were invited to do art on site, including “create a creature” and participating in a watercolor class led by a nine-year old artist-in-residence.

The BioBlitz was part scientific endeavor, part festival and part outdoor classroom. Participants combed the park, observing and recording as many plant and animal species as possible in 24 hours. Activities included counting elk, catching insects, spotting birds, exploring and examining aquatic invertebrates and using technology to better understand the diverse ecosystems of this unique park.

“This was a fantastic opportunity for the public to meet and work with scientists, to understand and appreciate what makes Rocky Mountain National Park such a special and biologically rich place,” said Vaughn Baker, Rocky Mountain National Park superintendent. “For many people, especially schoolchildren, this was their first visit to the park, and it was exciting to have them experience it with amazing scientists and naturalists as their guides.”

“Watching scientists, students and the general public in the field exploring and making discoveries put a smile on my face,” said John Francis, National Geographic’s vice president for research, conservation and exploration. “Scientists joined students and people from the surrounding communities and celebrated their unique roles as members of the natural systems where they live. It was also exciting to see new technology and smart phone apps being used in the field to document and identify species finds.”

Rocky Mountain National Park was the sixth in a series of 10 annual BioBlitzes to be hosted by National Geographic and the National Park Service, leading up to the Park Service’s centennial in 2016. During closing ceremonies the BioBlitz flag was passed to Carol Clark, superintendent of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve and New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, where the seventh BioBlitz will take place May 17-18, 2013.