

# Bio Blitz-ing

I attended my first insect bio blitz last Saturday (26 Jul 2014) at the Erickson Wetlands in Argyle, WI. The [Driftless Area Land Conservancy](#) (DALC) is responsible for this fabulous new land legacy which encompasses 220-acres of diverse habitat which contains multiple sloughs and oxbow lakes and over a mile of Pecatonica River frontage.

Earlier in the year, we joined the folks from Applied Ecological Services (AES) on several bio blitzes that identified plants, aquatic life, birds, and “herptiles.” DALC has hired AES to create a mangement plan for the property. In order to do that effectively and responsibly, it’ important to understand the biota in the area. Here’s some photos from an earlier bio blitz.



We did some seining in the river first. Here’s a tadpole.



Mike McGraw with a Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*).



© Jim Hess

Mike checking for eggs from Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*).



Susan Lehnhardt photo'g the biggest ant mound we've ever seen!

The purpose of this particular blitz is to learn about what insects use this property. These events are never a "one and done" occasion; they are merely one of countless that will occur over many years into the future. They do provide an initial assessment of the life that is present, which in turn, provides data that will be used for ascertaining land management plans.

We had a great turnout with a number of members from the [Wisconsin Entomological Society](#) (WES). We had beetles experts, tree cricket experts, moth experts, and generalists. We met at 4pm and did some collecting and surveying of the area to figure out the best place to set up for the night event. Then off to Good Fellas, a local pub, for some tasty dinner and great conversation.



© Jim Hess

A few of the WES folks getting oriented before we begin. L-R: PJ Liesch, Steve Bransky, Kyle Johnson, Susan Lehnhardt



© Jim Hess

We started by checking out some insects on a beating sheet.



Trekking down one of the paths.

There was a black light set up and two mercury vapor set ups, each with white sheets hanging vertically near them. A black light is an ultraviolet (UV) light which broadcasts light spectrums that are highly visible to insects. The mercury vapor light emits a higher spectrum of UV light and a much more intense light than black lights; they attract more insects and possibly a larger diversity of insects. Since night-flying insects navigate by the stars and the moon, the lights create an artificial moon, attracting them to the white sheets; this makes it easy for humans to observe, collect, and photograph these insects.

Once the lights were set up, it didn't take long for the insects to arrive! The lights coupled with the fog arising from the water and moist ground created an eerie green glow across the land.



Nancy Collins took a great photo of the essence of this nighttime blitz!



Once the lights were up, it was great fun checking out all the interesting insects! In the foreground is Jordan Marche checking out the beetles.

Within minutes, two uncommon/rare moths were found. One was an Underwing (*Catocala* sp) and the other was called a Silphium moth. Many county records were established on this night but it will be sometime in the winter before the insects are vouchered and the photo IDs made. When that list is created and shared, it will be the same level of excitement all over again!

Here's a few more random shots from the evening.



© Jim Hess



© Jim Hess



© Jim Hess



© Jim Hess



© Jim Hess