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**SAGUARO BIOBLITZ: TAKING STOCK OF TUCSON'S BACKYARD NATIONAL PARK  
AND CELEBRATING BIODIVERSITY, OCT. 21-22, 2011**

*Thousands of Scientists, Naturalists, Community Leaders, Schoolchildren, Volunteers  
To Participate in 24-Hour Race to Discover and Record Species Living in Saguaro National Park*

TUCSON, Ariz. (Sept. 22, 2011)—Flanking Tucson on both the east and the west, Saguaro National Park is a remarkable example of the Sonoran Desert ecosystem, including exceptional stands of saguaro cactus, critical rare riparian areas, unique wildlife and impressive desert mountain ranges. To better understand, appreciate and protect this natural and national treasure, the National Park Service and National Geographic Society are teaming up to host a 24-hour **BioBlitz species count** and a two-day **Biodiversity Festival, Oct. 21-22, 2011**. The Friends of Saguaro National Park and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum are also collaborating in this exciting event to discover, document and celebrate all that lives in the 91,445-acre park.

Part scientific endeavor, part festival and part outdoor classroom, the BioBlitz will bring together more than 150 leading scientists and naturalists from around the country, thousands of local citizens of all ages, more than 2,000 students from the greater Tucson area and more than 100,000 schoolchildren who will join via the Internet on a [National Park Foundation Electronic Field Trip](#). Together they will comb the park, observing and recording as many plant and animal species as possible in 24 hours. Inventory activities include counting cacti, catching insects by day and night, spotting birds, exploring washes, examining aquatic organisms, and observing and using technology to better understand the diverse ecosystems of this unique national park.

In this extraordinary experience open to the public, participants are invited to work with experts to count, map and learn about the park's diverse organisms, ranging from microscopic bacteria to towering saguaro cacti. This free event is open to "explorers" of all ages. While children ages 8 and older may participate in inventory teams with their parents, there also will be age-appropriate activities for younger kids at the BioBlitz's "base camp" at the Tucson Mountain District's Red Hills Visitor Center at 2700 N. Kinney Road, Tucson. Off-site parking and shuttle service is mandatory and will be provided from the nearby Old Tucson Studios.

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Said Saguaro National Park Superintendent Darla Sidles, "This will be a great family event, and we invite everyone who knows Saguaro, or wants to know the park better, to come out and experience the fun of discovery in the outdoors. We want to make people aware of the amazing biodiversity that exists within the park and in their own backyards. Having that increased awareness will encourage us all to appreciate and protect these amazing resources that make our Tucson home so special."

Festivities will begin on Friday, Oct. 21, at 9 a.m. with the opening of the Biodiversity Festival, followed by the kickoff ceremony at 11:30 a.m. The 24-hour race to document the biodiversity of Saguaro National Park will begin promptly at noon, when teams go near and far throughout both districts of the park to begin the species inventory. Due to limited space on inventory teams, advance registration is required to ensure a spot on a team. To register, go to [www.nationalgeographic.com/bioblitz](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/bioblitz). "Base camp" will be a center of activity, but teams will be located in both east and west districts of the park, and check-in may take place in field stations where appropriate. This information will be available on the registration site.

Ongoing entertainment and educational opportunities will take place at "base camp" and the Biodiversity Festival. People can watch scientists doing round-the-clock research to identify and document species collected in the field. The festival, which runs 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 21, and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 22, will feature live music, animal demonstrations, science experiments, talks by leading scientists, educational activities provided by prominent science and environmental organizations, food and art. Members of the public can even "graduate" from the Biodiversity University by participating in select activities at base camp. **No registration is required for the festival.** For a schedule of events, go to [www.nationalgeographic.com/bioblitz](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/bioblitz).

In the week leading up to BioBlitz, renowned naturalist J. Michael Fay, a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence and Wildlife Conservation Society scientist, will bring to Tucson the experience of his 2,000-mile walk across the wilds of Africa and his more recent Redwood Transect. Beginning in the Rincon Mountains on the east side of the park, crossing the city and the Tucson Mountains, and arriving at "base camp" Friday for BioBlitz opening ceremonies, Fay will traverse the park and document every living thing he sees. While Fay has not been in Tucson for nearly three decades, he began his early research in the area, receiving his B.S. from the University of Arizona. He will share his observations during his Tucson transect in a presentation Saturday at the Biodiversity Festival.

"Saguaro National Park has amazing biodiversity, with each district featuring unique ecosystems," said John Francis, National Geographic's vice president of research, conservation and exploration. "As a father of two and a global citizen, I am concerned about how people safeguard nature on our planet, not just in the parks where it is protected and studied, but in their backyards and cityscapes that can be enriched and restored with care. I hope schoolkids and adults will be inspired by Mike Fay and others who can show the importance and joy of protecting Saguaro National Park and surrounding treasures."

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Those who cannot attend the BioBlitz in person can take a virtual adventure at [www.nationalgeographic.com/bioblitz](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/bioblitz). Throughout the event, the site will feature a streaming Twitter feed, blogs, video clips of scientists and regularly updated photo galleries that capture the finds and experiences of participants. Additionally, teachers, students and families across the country are encouraged to participate in the BioBlitz experience remotely via the National Park Foundation Electronic Field Trip (EFT). Live EFT broadcasts will be held on Friday, Oct. 21, at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. (ET) and will feature engaging lessons about biodiversity and how these important activities can be done in everyone's backyard. The Saguaro EFT, made possible through support from the [Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation](#), will also be available for post-event viewing. For more information and to register for the EFT, go to [www.electronicfieldtrip.org/saguaro](http://www.electronicfieldtrip.org/saguaro).

The Saguaro BioBlitz has been made possible through the support of foundations, nonprofit organizations and corporations. The presenting sponsors are Friends of Saguaro National Park; Tucson Electric Power, a UniSource Energy Company; Verizon Wireless; and The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust. Additional nonprofit and foundation support comes from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum; Unilever United States Foundation; the Harold M. and Adeline S. Morrison Family Foundation; the Western National Parks Association; The Martin & Hildegard Gluck Foundation; the Bess Spiva Timmons Foundation; and The Norcross Wildlife Foundation. Additional corporate support is provided by BBVA Compass; Citigroup; Southwest Gas Corporation; Tohono O'odham Gaming Enterprise; Summit Hut; West Press; and Old Tucson Studios.

National Geographic has had a close relationship with the National Park Service since it helped draft legislation to establish the Service in 1916. National Geographic has given grants to establish or sustain national parks and has extensively covered the parks in its media for nearly a century. The Saguaro BioBlitz is part of the organizations' latest joint venture. This event is the fifth of 10 annual BioBlitzes that will be held at urban national park units around the country, leading up to the Park Service's centennial in 2016. The first BioBlitz was held at Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., in 2007; Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in California was the BioBlitz site in 2008; Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore was the site of the third BioBlitz in 2009; and last year's BioBlitz was held at Biscayne National Park in Florida.

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### **About Saguaro National Park**

Established in 1933, Saguaro National Park protects an incredible example of the Sonoran Desert ecosystem. The landscape is dotted with archaeological sites, historical remnants and places of importance for American Indians. Saguaro National Park is located adjacent to Tucson and consists of two districts that border the east and west sides of the city. More than 70,000 of the park's 91,445 acres are designated wilderness. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/sagu](http://www.nps.gov/sagu).

### **About National Geographic**

The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to "increase and diffuse geographic knowledge," the Society works to inspire people to care about the planet. It reaches more than 400 million people worldwide each month through its official journal, National Geographic, and other magazines; National Geographic Channel; television documentaries; music; radio; films; books; DVDs; maps; exhibitions; live events; interactive media; and merchandise. National Geographic has funded more than 9,600 scientific research, conservation and exploration projects and supports an education program promoting geographic literacy. For more information, visit [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com).