

# Vermont Atlas of Life Field Days

## National park

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

## Dates

20 July and 29 September 2013, and 19 July 2014

## Focus

Digital technology to contribute natural history observations to online databases

## Key partners

- Vermont Center for Ecostudies (advertising, coordination, presentations)
- NPS–Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (funding through the Call to Action initiative item 7: “Next Generation Stewards,” ONPS 2014)

## Background

The Vermont Atlas of Life is an online repository of state biodiversity knowledge. It was conceived to harness and coordinate independent surveys conducted by naturalists, scientists, state and federal agencies, and conservation organizations. The initial events—Vermont Atlas of Life Field Days—were hosted at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP to demonstrate the feasibility of using citizen scientists to catalog park and state biodiversity. A follow-up event in

2014 ran under the moniker “bioblitz.” It attracted more visitors and resulted in more observations than the 2013 events.

## Methods

Staff made presentations on how to obtain and use iNaturalist and eBird accounts, status of databases, bumble bee identification, and the value of citizen science to research. Individual field walks were conducted on birds, ferns, trees, wildflowers, aquatic invertebrates, bumble bees, dragonflies and damselflies, and moths. Participants contributed their own nature sightings to the Vermont Atlas of Life in real time and after the events. Most observations were of live animals or vegetation, though some invertebrates were collected for later identification, and were made with cameras, sound recorders, and field notes.

## Participants

In 2013 approximately 60 people attended the two events, one-third of whom brought a smartphone camera and had preinstalled the iNaturalist app; about two-thirds were equipped with a traditional digital camera and uploaded photos at a later time. One NPS staff (20 hours) and two partner staff (80 hours) helped present and guide activities. In 2014 approximately 50 people attended the bioblitz and they stayed for multiple programs, for a total of 137 program participants.

## Results

Observations made during park walks and reported to iNaturalist numbered 111 in 2013. This year observations reported increased

to 847 from 338 species. Most insect species were new park records (see photo) and included 4 new species of bumble bees for the park in 2013, and 2 more in 2014. Fifteen species of birds were reported on the first field day; 11 were recorded the second day. In 2014, 47 species of birds were reported for the bioblitz.

## Resources

- Photo collections are viewable at <http://www.inaturalist.org/places/marsh-billings-rockefeller-national-historical-park-woodstock-vt-us>.
- Bird observations are mapped and summarized by month online at <http://ebird.org/ebird/vt/GuideMe?src=changeDate&getLocations=hotspots&hotspots=L271555%2CL769957%2CL697684%2CL697688%2CL697689%2CL769958&parentState=US-VT&reportType=location&monthRadio=on&bMonth=01&eMonth=12&bYear=1900&eYear=2014&continue.x=47&continue.y=10>.

## Publications

Accomplishments reports are available at <https://irma.nps.gov/App/Reference/Profile/2204770> and <https://irma.nps.gov/App/Reference/Profile/2215605>.

## Park contact

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With a wingspan of 2.4 inches (62 mm), the ilia underwing (*Catocala ilia*), a moth, was first documented for Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park during the first of two Vermont Atlas of Life surveys in 2013.