

IDENTIFICATION DASH

Become an *ecologist* in your own backyard!

Introduction:

There is no better teacher than the great outdoors! This activity can be conducted right outside your home, whether that is in a backyard-garden, the flower patch near the front steps, or a grassy crack in the sidewalk.

Recommended Grades: K-5

Materials:

- Ruler or Measuring Tape
- String (or even a hula hoop)
- Magnifying Glass
- Binoculars
- Data Sheet - Attached
- Pencil (maybe crayons too)

Vocabulary:

- ✦ **Observations:** Watching and measuring an object or patten.
- ✦ **Data:** Information gathered.
- ✦ **Organism:** Anything living or once living.
- ✦ **Species:** A group of similar organisms.
- ✦ **Biodiversity:** All the different types of living things in an area.
- ✦ **Ecologist:** Scientists who study how plants and animals interact with their environment.

Directions:

First things first... head outside, but don't forget your supplies!

Safely look around your house for a quiet space where you can sit and make observations for at least 5-15 minutes. Next, measure twelve inches on your ruler and use string to make an even square, or just throw down a hula hoop for an observation circle!

As you sit quietly, use your data sheet to list every organism you see and maybe even something left behind by one. Be sure to look up! If you are under a tree make sure to use those binoculars. I recommend using an electronic device to download the SEEK app by iNaturalist, it uses pictures to find the names of species you don't know.

After filling out the data sheet you can measure how much biodiversity you found near your house. To do this just count up the different species you found. Finally, take some time to reflect.

Questions to consider: What about this spot makes it possible for these organisms to live here? How are they working together, or possibly against each other? Do you ever interact with these plants or animals? How do we as humans affect their space? How do you feel spending time outside? How would life be different without this space?

Dear Caregivers,

This lesson plan was created as part of a capstone project I am submitting for the National Geographic Educator Certification, utilizing the *Nat Geo Bioblitz* program as a resource. If you are interested in sharing your experience as a piece of my capstone story, you would like more resources, or you have questions please send me an email. olw2@cornell.edu



| DATA SHEET

Observer(s): _____ Date: _____ Place: _____

Species (common and/or scientific name)	Number Observed	Time	Notes (on specific location, certainty, life stage, etc.)	Observer Name