



WINTERGREEN
STUDIOS

LABB 2023

Report to TD FEF

October 2023



TD Friends of the
Environment
Foundation

Introduction

Wintergreen Studios is a wilderness environmental centre that embodies joyful ways of living in balance with the natural world. Our programs and off-grid facilities inspire people to live harmoniously, to become more resilient, and to return to their homes, workplaces, and communities nurtured and rejuvenated—ready to make a difference. Wintergreen Studios is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe peoples, and is comprised of over 200 acres of mixed forests, meadows, and granite outcrops in the heart of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is part of a global network of UNESCO designated reserves—natural regions with unique geographic features, populated with people committed to sustainable community development.



Annual Land Art BioBlitz

The Annual Land Art BioBlitz (LABB) takes place over 5 days at Wintergreen Studios, where students and the public gather to take part in educational workshops on natural history and healthy living. Participants are also invited to explore the 204-acre property to get up close to the plants, animals, and fungi on the land and contribute their observations to iNaturalist, a community science database.

Land Art BioBlitz 2023 was a free event, open to all ages. We welcomed public drop-ins as well as elementary and secondary school groups who pre-booked a visit to Wintergreen for the first four days of the event. On the fifth day, members of the general public, as well as youth from Pathways to Education and families new to Canada were in attendance.

What Did We Achieve?

From May 30th to June 3rd 2023, we hosted our ninth Annual Land Art Bioblitz. The event was made possible through funding from TD FEF, along with one additional grant, in-kind contributions, and extraordinary volunteer support. In 2023 we focused on expanding our elementary and secondary school groups, as well as partner organizations, to help young and old appreciate the non-human species living in Southeastern Ontario while ensuring all participants felt safe and comfortable participating.

Throughout the event, we hosted 171 workshops—nearly 100 more than in 2022. These workshops included a variety of art and sensory experiences, as well as many ways of exploring the outdoors through guided hikes and self-guided explorations. We also logged species that were observed by participants using iNaturalist. Through our website, we offered several curated virtual curriculum units and Land Art Activities that participants could do from home.

 **School Visits @ Wintergreen**

 **Family Day @ Wintergreen**

 **iNaturalist**

School Visits @ Wintergreen

From May 30th to June 3rd, Wintergreen hosted 7 elementary and secondary schools with 348 students and 31 staff and volunteers. Participating schools included Loughborough Public School, Kawenna'ón:we Primary School, Molly Brant Elementary School, Frontenac Secondary School, Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute, Forest Folk Kingston, and Pathways to Education.

Most schools arrived by bus and were greeted by staff with information packages and schedules for the day. Each day began with an opening ceremony and land acknowledgement, followed by a series of scheduled workshops with a lunch break between the morning and afternoon sessions. Students participated in activities such as nature journalling, reptiles & amphibians, guided hikes, and wild foraging.

Family Day @ Wintergreen

On June 3, 2023 we hosted Family Day at Wintergreen Studios. Over 80 people attended this family-friendly event, which was packed with workshops on topics ranging from nature photography to molluscs to a Labyrinth Walk.

This year, for the first time, we partnered with Immigration Services for Kingston and Area (ISKA) to bring families new to Canada to the LABB 2023 event. It was extraordinary to host families from countries around the world and we look forward to growing our connection with ISKA in the years to come.

iNaturalist & Species Count

iNaturalist is a community science app, supported by our LABB partner, the Canadian Wildlife Federation. It allows users to track their observations of various living species, including plants, animals, and fungi. A project titled Wintergreen Studios Biodiversity was created in the app late in 2022, with the boundaries of the land specified. It now contains all of the observations made since the initial LABB event in 2015 and will be used in future years.

In total, there have been 2,448 **observations** added to our project representing the 204-acre plot surrounding the Wintergreen Studios lodge since 2017. These observations encompass 1,233 separate **species**. Each year we add a few more!

The top six most observed species at the 2023 Land Art BioBlitz were:



Chalk Fronted Corporal

27 observations



Dot-tailed Whiteface

12 observations



Rattlesnake Fern

10 observations



Indigo Bunting

9 observations



Spongy Moth

9 observations



Ruby-Throated Hummingbird

9 observations

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS?

The 2023 Land Art BioBlitz achieved incredible results, bringing our community together to learn about and celebrate the natural world through various artistic explorations!



TESTIMONIALS

Students expressed their appreciation and enthusiasm for the various learning opportunities offered during LABB 2023.

“ When I was at Wintergreen, I noticed that all the nature and wildlife was actually free instead of being stuck in one spot and I loved all the hiking.

“ While I was at Wintergreen I wondered if this was a national park!

“ While I was at Wintergreen, I felt calm and energized at the same time. I was really happy that I got to hike and that there were a lot of trails to travel on. I also liked the fact that I got to see so many animals.



Finances & Support

Funding

In addition to the **\$7,000** grant from TD FEF, we received funds from an additional grant for **\$3,000**. We also received **\$13,000** of in-kind support from various individuals and community organizations. In-kind support included volunteers as well as contributions from Pathways to Education.

Project Costs

Staff costs for planning and coordinating the BioBlitz event were **\$8,000**, while honoraria for our workshop speakers totalled **\$7,000**. Facilities costs were **\$4,900**. Buses were extraordinarily expensive in 2023, totalling **\$4,600**. Other expenses included curriculum materials, marketing, and portable toilets.

TOTAL PROJECT COST = **\$38,090**
TOTAL FUNDING RECEIVED = **\$10,000**
TOTAL IN-KIND SUPPORT = **\$11,590**
TOTAL COST TO WINTERGREEN = **\$16,500**

Volunteers

In March 2023, we hosted a teacher candidate from Queen's University who assisted with workshop development and trail maintenance. The teacher candidate also volunteered her time for two days during the event. Returning teacher candidates from prior years were also among the many volunteers.

In total, we had **16 volunteers** who contributed more than **350 hours** throughout this year's BioBlitz event.

Funders, Partners, and Supporters

For nearly a decade, foundations, corporations, not-for-profits, and individuals have contributed to the success of the Land Art BioBlitz in the way of funding, promotion, volunteering, and workshop facilitation.



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



LOOKING AHEAD

2024 is a special year for us: it marks the 10th anniversary of BioBlitzes held at Wintergreen. In recognition of the 10th anniversary, we will be hosting a four-season Land Art BioBlitz.

We are grateful to TD FEF for recognizing the value of this event and we look forward to celebrating nature's beauty and diversity again in 2024.

01

Audience Scope

For the 2024 event, we intend to engage more in-person participants from equity deserving groups to each of the seasonal offerings.

02

Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn

We look forward to expanding our programming to all four seasons in 2024, beginning with the Winter Tracks & Traces program. This will be followed by the Spring LABB and a Summer Solstice Festival. We will cap the year with an Autumn Land Art BioBlitz.

03

School Visits

To involve as many students and schools as possible, we plan to increase school visits from 4 days to 8 days in 2024, celebrating diversity across the seasons.