



**May 2015 file photo of a Leopard frog is shown an unknown location, courtesy of Lea Randall, Calgary Zoo.**

There's no actual hidden prize at the end but a day of seeing wildlife is enough of a treasure.

Calgarians are being called on to become citizen scientists in a sort of nature hunt this Saturday. The Weaselhead Natural Area BioBlitz brings together nature lovers, naturalists and scientists on a scouting mission to tally as many species as possible in the ecologically important area.

The list of species that gets inventoried between 6 a.m. and 11:30 p.m. goes into a national database along with information gleaned from other blitzes happening across the country at the same time.

"I think we'll get people who are interested in nature and have some expertise but want to expand their knowledge in other areas," Sarah Neville, executive director of the Weaselhead Preservation Society.

The Weaselhead was chosen for the Calgary BioBlitz because it's a uniquely diverse natural area in the city. There are plants and animals here that can't be found elsewhere in Calgary.

"I have found some unusual things in the Weaselhead but my feeling is they're unusual because people are not looking for them," said Neville, who noted an uncommon species of ladybug was found there by a student on a school tour.

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The day is structured into segments, each with an expert in a particular field. For example, 6 to 8 a.m. is Birds with Bob Lefebvre, 9-12 p.m. is Aquatic Invertebrates with Cassiano Caue Possas and from 1 to 4 p.m. you have your choice of pollinators, butterflies, or fungi with three experts. The highlight, or lowlight as the case may be, is the last count of the day between 10:30 and 11:30 p.m. Sarah Neville will work with volunteers to try to find amphibians in the dark.

"I think it could be more like a walk in the dark at night," Neville said with a laugh. "You hear the kinds of frogs we have more in May. Two colleagues went last week and they heard nothing. But we could hear lots of other things."

In addition to the day-long count, there will be a community biodiversity fair where people can learn about the plants and animals that live in the Calgary area.

All activities begin at the parking lot at 37th Street S.W. and 66th Avenue S.W. Children are welcome to join but they must be at least 10 years old and accompanied by an adult.

Participants are asked to register online in advance, as each session is limited to 10 people. For more information call Christina Pickles at 403-998-4782. or email.

The Calgary event is part of BioBlitz Canada 150, a sesquicentennial project funded by the federal government and supported by the Canadian Wildlife Federation. There are more than 60 conservation partners and, in Calgary, that includes the Alberta Council for Environmental Education, Weaselhead Preservation Society, Nature Calgary and the City of Calgary.

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## AS ADVERTISED IN THE CALGARY SUN

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