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Media release

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Blackboy Ridge Bioblitz

Last weekend (October 23-24), 133 people of all ages converged on a small, but special reserve 80km northeast of Perth with one aim in mind – to explore and discover as much biodiversity as they could.

As its name suggests, BioBlitz 2010 was a 24-hour intensive community survey of native plants and animals across Blackboy Ridge, a 64ha reserve in the Shire of Chittering that was extensively burnt by bushfires earlier this year.

Sponsored by conservation group WWF-Australia, the survey was officially opened by WA Chief Scientist Professor Lyn Beazley, and led by volunteer scientists from the state's top research organisations, including CSIRO, the WA Museum, Birds Australia, the WA Department of Environment and Conservation, Curtin University, and retired and consultant experts.

The good news during the 24-hour survey was Blackboy Ridge Reserve was found to be making a very healthy recovery, with extensive regeneration of vegetation and the discovery of 171 species of native plants and 61 species of native animals and birds – not including more than 100 species of invertebrates (and millions of flies!)*

Blackboy Ridge is a prime example of the astounding diversity within Australia's Southwest Ecoregion – a corner of the continent stretching roughly from Shark Bay to Esperance that is internationally recognised as a "global biodiversity hotspot", and one of only 34 in the world.

In ecological terms, the Southwest Ecoregion is as important as the Amazon Rainforest, the Galapagos Islands, the Jungles of Borneo and the Plains of Africa.

Within this remarkable Ecoregion, Blackboy Ridge Reserve is an area that has been defined as a particularly important area for conservation, with WWF-Australia working to improve management of native vegetation and habitat within its landscape.

The reserve is managed by the Chittering Landcare Centre on behalf of the Shire of Chittering, with WWF-Australia working with both to ensure it endures in the face of a number of threats, including introduced weeds, feral animals and too-frequent bushfires.

It was with this in mind that volunteers from around the region – and as far away as Burracoppin and Manjimup – converged for WWF-Australia's 6th BioBlitz to search hills, gullies, trees, leaf-litter and dense scrub to find whatever they could.

The almost 30 children who accompanied their parents were particularly good at spotting hidden frogs, camouflaged grasshoppers and tiny flowers, with birds, mammals, spiders, reptiles, amphibians and fungi all found in this beautiful patch of bush they call home.

This press release and associated material can be found on www.wwf.org.au

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As well as celebrating this magnificent natural area, those who participated in BioBlitz will never look at bushland the same way again – realising that every bit of bush is a treasure.

It was a fitting activity for the area in 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, with the project supported through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program and the Council of Australian Museum Directors, through assistance from the Science Connections program within the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

ENDS

For media enquiries, please contact WWF-Australia WA Media Officer Cortlan Bennett on 9442 1206 or 0404 700 001, or email cbennett@wwf.org.au

2010 Blackboy Ridge BioBlitz statistics

- Participants: 133
- Youngest: 1 year
- Oldest: "Wouldn't be polite to say!"
- Under 18s: 28 (often kids were the first to spot the animals)

- Number of survey sessions: 47

- Native species recorded during survey:
 - 42 species of birds (including Carnaby's Black Cockatoo)
 - 171 species of flowering plants (though reserve probably has around 300 species)
 - 2 species of fungi (pretty good for this time of year)
 - 9 reptiles
 - 5 frogs
 - 5 mammals – including 3 species of bats
 - Invertebrates – a conservative estimate would be 100 species, including at least 10 different species of grasshoppers and 40 million flies!

- Unfortunately also 4 non-native species of mammals (not including humans) and a significant number of weeds.