

Survey of Species Composition at BIRDLINK - Native Plants and Volunteers

Background: Native plants, or species that naturally occur in an area, either presently or historically, provide variety and beauty for us to see and experience in nature. However, a closer look at native plants also shows how connected they are to other organisms in a shared ecosystem. They offer a lot of services, such as food, shelter, and nesting areas, to many animals. Native plants also benefit from some of these animals, which pollinate them so they can reproduce. They can also grow alongside volunteer species which are plants that grow on their own from seeds that float in on the wind or are dropped by birds. Learn more about native and volunteer plants in this fun plant survey!

Some questions that could come up from this survey of BIRDLINK are when do different plants at BIRDLINK bloom or what volunteer species are present at the site?

The purpose of this survey is to identify this region's native plant life along with possible volunteer species. The time frame of this survey could be a one-time visit for data collection or long-term over months to observe seasonal changes of plant life in the structure.



Materials: plant field guides (ideally regionally specific), plant dichotomous keys, magnifying glass, smartphone with wildlife identifying apps, compasses, sketch books, paper, color pencils, pen/pencil

Procedure:

1. Look at the plants contained in the BIRDLINK structure and work to identify them. This can be done using a magnifying glass, field guides, dichotomous key or a phone app like iNaturalist or PlantNet.
2. For each plant that you identify, write down the common name, scientific name (*Genus species*), whether the plant is native to your area or a volunteer, the way that you identified the plant, a sketch and whether the plant is in bloom or not in the table below.

Now that you have identified some plants at BIRDLINK, what is the most interesting fact you have learned so far?

Supplemental Activity

After observing the structure and the plant life within it, fill out this chart to gather your thoughts:

I notice...	I wonder....
It reminds me of....	Drawing of your favorite plant in BIRDLINK

Data Collection:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Is this plant native or a volunteer?	How did you identify the plant?	Sketch the plant here	Is the plant in bloom? If it is, describe the flower smell and color

After you have collected data for this survey, draw a figure that would display the data in a visual way. It could be a graph, map, table, chart, etc.

Conclusion

a. What trends did you find in your data? Refer to the figure you created above.

Additional discussion questions could be: how many native plants did you identify vs. volunteers? What are benefits of some of the native plants you found? Where are the volunteer plants originally from? Are there benefits to the volunteer plants that you identified?

b. Why do you think it's important to study the plant make-up of BIRDLINK? Why do you think we should focus on biodiversity and conservation in spaces like these?