

FREE

GOING GREEN

The Valley guide to an eco-friendly lifestyle

Spring 2016

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Cute in the field ...

not in your house

Green pest solutions

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NATURE SURVEY



Naturalist John Green points out an interesting bird for a Biothon team participating in a species survey for the Hitchcock Center in Amherst.

Contributed photo

Biothon celebrates the creatures around us

Hitchcock Center event happens on two weekends: May 13-15 and June 3-5

By ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH
For Going Green

AMHERST — Biothon: It's a rite of Spring in the Pioneer Valley, when nature enthusiasts emerge from their hibernation and scout out the living world around them: Biothon is a great fundraiser for the Hitchcock Center, 525 South Pleasant St., and an entertaining and educational event for all ages.

The 17th annual Biothon will happen during the second weekend of May and the first weekend in June. We're spreading out the fun this year so that we can catch peak bird migrations, document the blooming of hundreds of plant species, and marvel at the activities of everything from ants to moose.

You don't have to be an expert; just bring your enthusiasm and curiosity about the natural world.

Kids and families appreciate how much they learn by exploring new places and by bringing a new eye to the diversity of life around them; each year, youth teams from several schools and towns join in and find dozens of species.

How it works

People form teams, headed by an experienced naturalist. The idea is to go to a favorite natural area where lots of species of plants, animals, fungi, insects, and other critters might be found. Teams recruit a cohort of people who are willing to bid on the total number of species found during the foray. Bidders can pledge on a species-by-species basis (a penny, a dollar, or any amount per species), or donate a fixed total amount. Members of the Hitchcock staff and board help with fundraising for pledges; team leaders and members are encouraged to recruit friends and family to bid on species or join in the fun. You can do it online at the [Hitchcock Center](http://HitchcockCenter.org) website:

www.hitchcockcenter.org.
Another way to contribute is to buy our new and beautiful Biothon coloring postcards, available for the See **BIOTHON**, Page 7

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■ Biothon: Join a team to count species

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first time this year.

At the end of the field trip, teams tally up the species they have seen and send their lists in to the Hitchcock Center. Prizes are offered for the teams that have seen the most species or have raised the most funds. At the same time, teams contribute valuable data on the species present in the natural areas around the region. Last year's Biothon raised a whopping \$17,000 to support the Center's many great programs. Let's raise even more this year!

Many amateur and professional naturalists have been participating in the Biothon for years, and keep returning — both for the new discoveries and the sheer camaraderie. Elizabeth Farnsworth, who teamed up for forays to Mount Tom and Mount Warner in 2015 that counted nearly 400 species, says, "It's great to get outdoors with friends and to be amazed at the incredible variety of organisms you can find in a few hours. We even found some species previously unknown in the county!" Biothon founder, David Spector, says, "If I had to pick only one highlight, it would be encountering and



Contributed photo
A young team member keeps track of species seen on a recent Hitchcock Biothon.

sharing with other naturalists in the field and hearing about interesting sightings from other teams."

Join the fun

Visit the Hitchcock Center's website or call Development Coordinator Marcus Simon at 413-256-6006 to learn more. Team leaders should sign up by March 1.

How to make growing pots from newsprint

By DEBBIE ARRINGTON
The Sacramento Bee (TNS)

You can make your own growing pots for seedlings out of newspaper. This will help to get those veggies growing early. As an alternative to expensive peat pots or plastic containers, try this idea.

You need a page of black-and-white newspaper, a half-liter plastic water bottle and tape (cellophane or masking work fine). Cut a



5-inch strip of newspaper lengthwise (that's about 22 inches long).

Use the bottle as a mold. Place the bottle sideways on the sheet with about 1½ inches of paper extending past the bottom of the bottle. Roll the newsprint around the bottle into a cylinder. Secure the end with a little tape.

Fold the edge over the bottle bottom and secure with tape. Slide the newspaper off the bottle and you have a 3½-inch-tall pot. Fill with potting mix and plant a seed. Place pot in a tray or saucer and add water.

When ready to transplant in the garden, you can put the whole pot in the ground; the newspaper will dissolve, just like the peat pot.

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