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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Hallie Shere, 619.255.0189, [hshere@sdnhm.org](mailto:hshere@sdnhm.org)  
Marketing Specialist/Public Programs and Publications

**BioBlitz Balboa Park Celebrates Local Biodiversity  
San Diego Natural History Museum and Regional Researchers Join Public  
in a 24-Hour Environmental Science Event**

*San Diego; October 26, 2007*—On May 2–3, 2008, the largest urban park in America will become a venue for a unique type of public discovery—BioBlitz Balboa Park. The public will interact with working scientists, volunteers, and educators to explore Balboa Park’s biodiversity as a community. The heart of BioBlitz is a “rapid biodiversity assessment” that answers two questions:

1. How many species can be found in Balboa Park in 24 hours?
2. What are those species?

These questions will be answered by the scientists and volunteers of the Biodiversity Research Center of the Californias (BRCC)—the research division of the San Diego Natural History Museum—and a select group of scientists from around California who will be coming to San Diego for BioBlitz Balboa Park. To discover the smallest of Balboa Park’s residents, scientists with the E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation have volunteered to participate in the event to collect and identify microorganisms, with the potential of revealing novel species. In a first for BioBlitzes worldwide, BioBlitz Balboa Park will have Museum paleontologists searching for fossil evidence of the park’s ancient biodiversity.

“Sitting in one of the most diverse counties in the country, San Diego is the perfect venue for a BioBlitz. We are planning on really wowing the public with the number of species we find in 24 hours,” says Dr. Michael Wall, the Museum’s curator of entomology and one of the leaders of BioBlitz Balboa Park. “Every day, the scientists and volunteers in BRCC are working to explore and understand our regional biodiversity. BioBlitz Balboa Park will be our chance to share some of what we do every day with the public.”

BioBlitz Balboa Park will feature science education stations for all ages. The weekend event engages the general public in biodiversity, boosts science accessibility through hands-on exposure, and emphasizes the importance of our local and global environment. Scientists and educators will interact with the public sharing current research projects, science activities, and collections/specimens.

On Friday night (May 2) while the scientists are in the field collecting until the early morning, families with children ages 6 and up can join the overnight camp-in at the Museum. This exciting program will feature an outdoor insect-collecting activity (“night lighting”), owl-spotting on the Prado, arts and crafts, and an early-morning hike to look for the birds that live in the Balboa Park. The camp-in costs \$50 and includes an evening snack and continental breakfast.

On Saturday (May 3), the public is invited to come to Balboa Park to interact with the scientists, bring in bugs and plants from their own backyards for identification, take guided nature hikes with Museum-trained naturalists, look at nature specimens under microscopes, and see examples of some of the 8.2 million specimens in the Museum’s scientific collections. There will also be stations geared with activities for children ranging from leaf rubbings for the youngest naturalists to hands-on investigations such as owl-pellet dissections for older children.

The first BioBlitz was conducted in 1996 in Washington, DC, organized by Sam Droege of the U.S. Geological Survey, and since then they have been held in various cities around the US and internationally. BioBlitz did not have a public component until the Carnegie Museum of Natural History conducted one in a Pittsburgh park in 1997 and invited the public to see what the scientists were doing. A BioBlitz in New York City’s Central Park (2003) yielded 393 plants, 78 moths, 14 fungi, 10 spiders, 9 dragonflies, 2 tardigrades, 102 other invertebrates, 7 mammals, 3 turtles, 46 birds, and 2 frogs.

Celebrating its 133<sup>rd</sup> year, the San Diego Natural History Museum is the second oldest scientific institution in California; third west of the Mississippi. A binational museum, its mission is to interpret the natural world through research, education, and exhibits; to promote understanding of the evolution and diversity of southern California and the peninsula of Baja California and to inspire in all a respect for nature and the environment. Located in Balboa Park at the intersection of Village Place and Park Blvd., the Museum is open daily except for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Phone: 619.232.3821. Website: [www.sdnhm.org](http://www.sdnhm.org).

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