

# Kids to 'BioBlitz' Volcanoes park

*Hundreds of citizen scientists will help record species in a 24-hour survey*

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Hundreds of isle elementary and intermediate students will be tapped as citizen scientists over the weekend to help catalog species in Volcanoes National Park as part of a 24-hour biological survey activity.

The so-called "BioBlitz" event is the ninth of what will be 10 annual surveys in national parks across the country, co-hosted by National Geographic and the National Park Service to record species living in the parks.

Past events have been held in Golden Gate National Parks, Rocky Mountain National Park and Saguaro National Park.

SOME 850 students in grades four to eight are expected to descend on the Hawaii island park Friday, led by 170 volunteer scientists and cultural practitioners to find and identify as many species of plants, animals, microbes, fungi and other organisms as possible.

"Together, they will be dispatched across the park's 333,086 acres to explore and document the biodiversity that thrives in recent lava flows and native rain forests of Kilauea vol-

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cano," according to a National Geographic news release.

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The park's "diverse ecological zones provide refuge for many distinct plant and animal communities, includ-

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To be part of a scientist-led inventory team, participants must register online at [national-geographic.com/bioblitz](http://national-geographic.com/bioblitz). Participation is limited and spots will be filled on a first-come basis. Children ages 8 and older, accompanied by adults, may participate in the free inventory opportunities.

ing endangered endemic species," the news release said. "The fascinating geology and biology are vital components of the cultural heritage of indigenous Hawaiian people."

Star of the Sea middle school science teacher Cristina Veresan is taking 20 of her students to participate in the event.

"This BioBlitz will be unique because we have endemic species that won't be found at any other national park. It really gives the students a chance to appreciate that," Veresan said. "Kids learn science best by doing science, and this is a fantastic opportunity for citizen science, working alongside real scientists ... and interacting to collaborate on a biological inventory of the park."

STUDENTS will use smartphones and an app called iNaturalist to photograph, identify and map species finds to add to both National Park Service and international species databases.

"The ultimate goal is to instill a conservation ethic in students and help them really come to know this environment so they are more likely to protect it," Veresan said.

In addition to the student event, the public can participate in the free Biodiversity & Cultural Festival at the park, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Kahua Hula near the Kilauea Visitors Center. The festival will offer hands-on science and cultural exhibits, workshops, food, art and entertainment. Park entrance fees will be waived both days.