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THE UNIVERSITY
OF VERMONT

LOW-IMPACT SURVEY TECHNIQUES A MESSAGE TO BIOBLITZ PARTICIPANTS

We think it's wonderful that you are interested in participating in a comprehensive effort to survey an area for its biological diversity. Collecting biological information can both further our knowledge about the natural world and assist us in our efforts to conserve and manage important communities and features. We do, however, have a responsibility to ensure that our surveying activities do not cause damage to the natural character of the areas we seek to know and protect. Over the years, we have worked with many field researchers to develop techniques and practices that when implemented, will keep disturbances to a minimum. We suggest you adopt the approaches listed below. Many have been implemented quite successfully with little effect on the overall ability to successfully survey areas for biological information. We would be interested in hearing about what you think of these approaches and if you have others to recommend.

Best of luck in your field endeavors.

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- 1) Keep your group size small and send only one individual into sensitive areas. Keep the number of visits to an area to an absolute minimum.
- 2) When planning to survey a site from the ground, plan both your course of access and egress carefully to avoid unnecessary wandering and trampling. Travel to specific intended locations, stay in place once there, and leave directly to the next location or off site. Use a piece of plywood or other material as a work surface to distribute your weight if you plan to be in a specific area for a period of time.
- 3) Visually scan or use binoculars to observe features from the periphery of sensitive areas rather than directly entering them.
- 4) Consider developing written description and using photographic vouchers rather than collecting individual specimens. If you need to collect, take only what is necessary for documentation and deposit specimens into collections in secure locations that could serve multiple functions. Avoid collecting for personal uses.
- 5) When traveling off road or trail, try to avoid trampling through low wet areas and lush understory, up or down steep slopes, over exposed bedrock with moss and lichen cover, and in other sensitive areas.
- 6) If your work involves studying soil formation and profile characteristics, try locating a naturally exposed bank or road cut. Use a narrow bore soil auger to retrieve samples rather than dig a soil pit. If a pit is to be dug, carry a small tarp on which to place the soil during excavation and return the soil layers and turf divot in the correct order when done.
- 7) Backtracking to where an animal has been is less likely to disturb a critter that might flee your pursuit if you track it. Avoid disturbing animals during critical courting, mating, nesting, fledging, feeding, migrating, and hibernating times.