



The Ecolympics: A week-long event for galvanizing individual action.

To celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity and to raise awareness of the current crisis in biodiversity loss, my colleague, Alex Coverdill, and I, together with a team of students organized a week-long series of participatory events at Boston University called the Ecolympics. They ran from April 17-24 and events were geared toward the themes of sustainability, reduction of the human footprint on the environment and education about biodiversity.

The events were everyday actions that we've all heard about but perhaps don't practice. They included things like recycling, taking shorter showers, turning off lights, powering down computers, avoiding bottled water, eating less meat, avoiding plastic, driving less, using re-usable cups and shopping bags, researching endangered species and taking the stairs instead of the elevator. We had twenty-three events in all. We were hoping to sign up at least fifty students and were pleased that more than 200 people finally signed up. Most of the participants were from Boston University, but we also had several people compete from other universities and from Canada and Germany.

Points were awarded for each event that was completed and prizes were awarded in a lottery system. Prizes included gift certificates to restaurants that served local food, passes to the Museum of Science, DVDs of the Planet Earth series and eco-friendly yoga mats. During the week, we also ran a biodiversity photo contest, had a screening of Planet Earth and organized a vegetarian cooking class. In addition, we started a Facebook group so that participants could interact with each other.

Feedback from participants was very positive, and many said that they enjoyed the challenge. However, we also found out that once the Ecolympics were over, most participants went back to their old habits. Nevertheless, we were encouraged by the number of participants and hope to build on this success next year.

Next year we hope to run the Ecolympics for two weeks instead of one week, to keep statistics on the overall impact of our actions and to add a mini-lecture series or forum as well as more lead-up events. We also hope to encourage other universities to participate. In fact, we think the Ecolympics model could be adapted for use at any school, community or corporation. Our goal is to raise awareness to the point that everyone does their own Ecolympics events every day of the year.

Here are a couple of links:

Our main list of events: <http://www.bu.edu/core/ecolympics/events/>

A list of frequently asked questions: <http://www.bu.edu/core/ecolympics/faq/>

Our homepage: <http://www.bu.edu/core/ecolympics/>

Please contact me for any further information:

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ECOLYMPICS

April 17-24, 2010



Register today at
bu.edu/core/ecolympics

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