

Opportunistic Data Collection Protocols - 2017

Lower Hudson PRISM Blockbuster Survey

Opportunistic data collection is important, but different from Natural Area and HPA surveys

If there are Group 1 or Group 2 species that you do not find during your Natural Area or HPA surveys, but occur elsewhere in your survey block, it is especially important to record these species occurrences using the Opportunistic Data Collection Form.

This way, we will know about the presence of focal invasive species that would otherwise go unreported. For example, suppose you survey one Natural Area (and its Parking Lot/Trailhead) and one HPA, and during neither of these surveys do you find any Black Swallowwort, but you know of a site elsewhere in your block where this species occurs – you should use the Opportunistic Data Collection Form to report this occurrence (using the procedures detailed below).

Opportunistic Data Collection is fundamentally different from the Natural Area or HPA surveys, because unlike them, it does not aim to record all the focal species present at the site, and therefore is also not used to document focal species *absence* from a site. Because of this, rather than collecting opportunistic data along measured trail segments, you will simply need to record the actual locations and abundance of the species you choose to report, document them photographically if required (see below), and record some basic habitat data.

In any case, be sure you that you have site entry permission as needed and a safe place from which to make and record your observations. In particular, avoid active railroad tracks, and make sure that you and your vehicle are far enough off roadsides to be both safe and in compliance with applicable traffic regulations.

- I. There are three methods for taking GPS Coordinates.
 - * use the (new) Blockbuster SmartPhone application which has built-in GPS capability.
 - * use a dedicated GPS Unit (e.g. Garmin)
 - * use a GPS application on your SmartPhone

If you're using a hand-held GPS unit, ensure your GPS is communicating with satellites. You may need to do this before you enter the tree canopy.

- II. Use the Opportunistic Observation Data Form or the SmartPhone app. On the cover page, write your Block Code, the Date, and your full Name(s). If you're working as a team, please indicate which of you is the Lead Surveyor.
- III. Acquaint yourself with the Abundance and Site Codes listed on this cover page.
- IV. When you sight an invasive species, record the following information where requested on the form:
 - name the Site as best you can. You can include several Sites on one form.
 - take a GPS reading, and
 - if you are using the paper form, write the WayPoint number and/or GPS Lat/Long coordinates,
 - describe the Site using one or more of the listed Habitat Codes,
 - record either the common or scientific name of the species, or the Species CODE for paper forms.
 - estimate the Infestation Size in terms of x feet by x feet,
 - for each Infestation Size, classify the Abundance using one of the Abundance Codes
 - for example: 3 means 'Scattered dense patches' within this particular Species' Infestation size.*
 - take one to two PHOTOS of any Group 2 species you are reporting.
 - If you're not using the SmartPhone app, include in your photo the top half of the data form's cover page (to help us link photo with the form). Mark the PH box next to the species name.

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About Waypoint Numbers:

if you are using the Opportunistic SmartPhone app, you won't have to write anything down.

However, if you are using the paper forms:

- write the number in the P(W)# field as it is shown on the GPS unit (e.g., if it shows 002, write 002 not 2).
- Use decimal degrees (e.g., 40.76542 N, -74.54163 W) to 5-decimal precision.

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**Thank You:**

By participating in the 2017 Lower Hudson PRISM Blockbuster Survey, you are making an important contribution to the knowledge and understanding of invasive plants in our region, which is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you find this an enjoyable and rewarding experience.