

Biodiversity Institute – survey of public attitudes

October 22, 2018

The survey (see appendix for survey questions) was conducted from mid-September to mid-October 2018. The survey was distributed to the public via email listserves and personal social-media accounts. None of the Wyoming newspapers or Wyoming Public Radio agreed to provide a link to the survey from their websites. Despite the low exposure, 717 people responded to the survey.

Of the 717 respondents, 4 indicated that the University of Wyoming (UW) should not continue supporting the Biodiversity Institute (BI), 6 were unsure, and one person did not address this particular question. **Overwhelmingly, 706 respondents indicated that UW should continue supporting the BI.**

Most respondents were Laramie residents (396), with another 173 from other towns across the state (Figure 1). The remaining respondents (129) live in 32 states (AK, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, LA, MA, MI, MN, MO, MT, NC, NE, NM, NY, OH, OR, PA, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI) and 5 countries (Australia, Canada, Israel, Nepal, and the UK). The majority of out-of-state respondents were UW alumni although 13 individuals cited collaboration with BI and Vertebrate Museum (VM) staff as their connection to the institute. **The broad support for the BI across the state is indicative of the success of the outreach effort of this unit and is in complete alignment with UW’s strategic plan.** Also remarkable is the widespread reputation of the BI across the nation and the world.

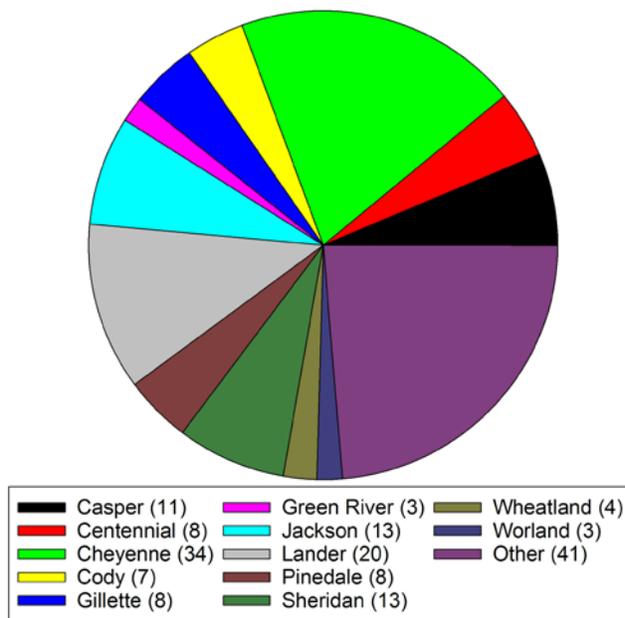


Figure 1. Distribution of respondent locations across Wyoming. Towns with less than 3 respondents were merged into the “other” category and include: Alpine, Arapaho, Baggs, Banner, Bear River, Buffalo, Burns, Daniel, Douglas, Dubois, Evanston, Fort Bridger, Fort Laramie, Greybull, Kelly, Kemmerer, Lovell, Meeteetse, Moorcroft, Newcastle, Powell, Rawlins, Rock Springs, Saratoga, Story, Sundance, Tie Siding, Torrington, Wilson, and Yellowstone National Park.

Many respondents (112) voiced support for the BI without having participated in any of the **numerous and diverse activities** it offers. Many of these individuals indicated that their knowledge of the BI resulted from reports they received from their children who participated in many of the BI **K-12 programs**. Others were familiar with the unit through its publications (especially the “Key to the Conifer Trees of Wyoming” 35.1% and “Plants with Altitude” 27.0%; for additional publications see appendix). The remaining respondents indicated that they have participated in more than one activity for **a total of 1,893 contacts with BI programs**. The majority of respondents participated in activities in the Berry Center in Laramie or in Citizen Science programs across the state (Figure 2). **The high number of**

A few choice quotes from respondents further illustrate the important outreach and educational roles the BI plays in the State of Wyoming:

“It is the most potent, effective, and exemplary public outreach venture at UW, along with being a model of genuine interdisciplinarity (integrating the sciences, arts and humanities) at an institution that has very few such programs.”

“It is something Wyoming has nothing else like in the entire state. If we lose it, then we lose a lot of value education opportunities”

“It's a great engagement tool for the University of Wyoming”

“I believe the Biodiversity Institute is a jewel in the crown of the university, and without it, the attitudes toward Wyoming based science both on campus and off, would suffer.”

“The Biodiversity Institute is the definition of community engagement and is exactly what the University should strive to be in that area..... This decision by UW Administration is ridiculous and insulting to everyone involved”

“The BI is the most visible arm of science at the University of Wyoming. I am currently a Fellow at _____ University and, over the course of a year, have had 3 faculty members here at _____ in various departments (English, Pharmacology, and Biological Sciences) reach out to me for contacts and collaborative opportunities with the BI.”

“I haven't attended programs at the biodiversity institute, but my kids have and they love them. They shout because they are so excited when they see the Berry Center. The Biodiversity Institute is helping to foster young, creative, inquisitive minds in WY, and this should be preserved”

“I have lived in several other cities, including international cities, and despite the cultural, intellectual, and scientific resources and enthusiasm of those communities, they have nothing like the BI --- and they wish they did! Closing the BI might make UW more like other places, but in the worst way. We have something exceptional, unique, and essential in the BI, and it is a phenomenal waste that UW is considering eliminating it.”

“.....Furthermore, the BI is a nonpartisan entity that has done phenomenal work connecting UW scientists and students with communities throughout the state. The BI's programs are all rooted in science - both the doing of it and the sharing of it, and the way that BI programs are run makes it very clear they are also deeply informed by the science of science communication and best practices in public engagement and science education. Closing the BI is going to debilitate UW. It will take another decade or more, and a phenomenal amount of time, money, and energy, to even approximate the capacity and relationships that the BI has built with very little support from anyone except Bob Berry. Just think what the BI and UW could be if the University of Wyoming did more than lip service to its legal commitment to support the BI!”

For confidential transcripts of all comments offered by respondents (36 pages of text) please contact Dr. Merav Ben-David at bendavid@uwyo.edu

Appendix. Biodiversity Institute survey questions.

1. Have you participated in any of the following Biodiversity Institute activities? Please select all apply:
 - Berry Center programs (Vertebrate Museum tour, Vertical Dance, Biodiversity Movie Series, Art exhibitions, Live Raptor show, Educational events for children, Seminars and lectures, Biodiversity Concert series, Fly Fishing and Biodiversity Expo)
 - Citizen Science programs (Short-eared Owl survey, BioBlitz, Moose Day, Rocky Mountain Amphibian Project, Girl Scouts in Science)
 - Courses or workshops (Drawn to Biodiversity workshop, History of Natural History, Science Communication, Citizen Science)
 - Wyoming Citizen Science Conference (2016)
 - WyoBio.org (citizen science portal)
 - Plants and gardens walks
 - Pollinator week activities
 - K-12 programs for schools
 - Science Café
 - Other:
 - I have never had the opportunity to participate in a BI activity or attended a BI event, but I think they are valuable.
2. Are you familiar with any of these BI publications?
 - Plants with Altitude
 - Pocket Guide to Wyoming Macroinvertebrates
 - Key to the Conifer Trees of Wyoming
 - Native Mussels of Wyoming
 - Other: respondents also listed “Birds of Wyoming”, “Mammals of Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park”, “Amphibian Identification Guide”, “Wyoming toad coloring book” and “Wyoming Migration Atlas”.
3. We would appreciate knowing why you value the Biodiversity Institute in your own words:
4. Please indicate whether you agree with the following statements. Select all that apply:
 - The BI is an effective venue for promoting education, outreach and community engagement.
 - The BI provides a valuable portal for information about Wyoming biodiversity.
 - The BI is a welcoming place for families and individuals.
5. Do you agree with the following statement?
The University should continue to support the Biodiversity Institute. Yes No Unsure
6. Your name and location