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Become a Citizen Scientist!



What is Citizen Science?

Citizen science is research gathered by amateurs and volunteers to complete or assist with a scientific project. There are many different organizations utilizing the help of citizen scientists in fields of study ranging from astronomy to zoology. This all means a citizen scientist can be anyone!

Since there are so many different groups collecting data it is easy to help out, no matter what your interests are. Here at the Outdoor Education Center, we are very interested in nature and our environmental systems, so we will be focusing on citizen science projects that can bring positive changes to our local ecosystem.



Outdoor Education Center Projects

Here at the OEC, we are developing ways to become more engaged in citizen scientist projects so that we can submit data for the things that we already do. Some of our current activities that we can organize and submit data for would be water quality analysis, invasive species identification, general plant and animal identification and bee population surveying.



Houston has many opportunities for citizen science projects and observations, such as monitoring the many waterways for pollution or life

Citizen Science on the Go

The development of smart devices has put the world at our fingertips. This makes citizen science programs easier to access than ever before. Here are some of the OEC's favorite citizen science apps. (*Students, if you want to get involved in some of these projects make sure you have the guidance and permission of an adult.*)

iNaturalist – This app allows you to submit photos of plants and animals that you have observed on a hike, bike or even in your backyard! Linking these images to specific groups allows fellow observers and scientists to check your identification or provide assistance identifying something you are not sure about.

Texas Nature Trackers – This program actually coordinates citizen science through iNaturalist for the Wildlife Division of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This program is a way to help deliver data on some of the most sensitive species in Texas.

Creek Watch – This is a fantastic app that gathers information about our local waterways. The data collected and submitted is provided to local water authorities so they can track pollution and make informed decisions on how to protect this vital resource.

Citizen Science in the Houston Area

If you want to get involved in a citizen science project, but aren't quite sure how to get started or what to do, there are many great organizations in Houston that would love to provide guidance for a great cause. Below are some examples!

Follow the links for more information.

The [Houston Arboretum](#) has many programs available including an annual bird count and a program mapping the changes animals and plants go through over time.

The [Houston Audubon Society](#) is a great place to learn about and protect native and migrating birds. They have a variety of bird surveys all over the city, as well as chimney swift and purple martin specific events.

If you like getting down to the coastline, [Texas A & M's Galveston](#) campus is interested in what you are seeing in regards to how bird species are reacting to mangrove invasions of the native marshlands.

