project NO2

CITIZEN SCIENCE, MOTIVATION AND EMPOWERMENT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM PROJECT NOAH, A NATURE OBSERVATION PLATFORM

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Overview

Project Noah (Networked Organisms and Habitats) is a multi-award-winning, free application designed to engage the public to document biodiversity. The platform is built around a simple, interactive mobile and web interface that caters to the general public while providing a structure for complete ecological records. Launched out of NYU and first supported by National Geographic, in 8 years of existence, over 325K registered users and 813K spottings from 7 continents and 196 countries, Project Noah is one of the largest global online communities for nature sightings. Project Noah has connected users to national and local conservation projects, citizen science projects, academic institutions, natural history museums and independent researchers worldwide. By profiling a few of Project Noah's most prolific or inspiring participants (a retiree, an amateur expert, two students, a park ranger and an entrepreneur), we shed some light on drivers of citizen engagement in nature science, and hope to show that citizen science can be an agent of personal and social change.

Project Noah spottings at a glance





With acknowledgments to the **Project Noah Community** and the **Project Noah Rangers Team, and Matthias Ammann @Science et Cité f**or facilitating Project Noah's participation at ECSA 2018.



Malcom Wilton-Jones, Spain Retired avionics engineer Glider pilot

Now retired for 11 years and with a love of flying, birds and astronomy, Malcolm is Project Noah's most prolific contributor with over 24k spottings, mostly dedicated to documenting birdlife is his fragile local marshes. Malcolm joined Project Noah over 7 years ago at his daughter's suggestion. With a valuable **life-long experience** with computing, photography and birding to offer, Malcolm literally turned his participation into a retirement job, becoming Project Noah's resident IT help desk.

"As part of my past work as an avionics engineer I also studied computers and coding, and worked with design and development work of aircraft electronics systems. This gives me an insight into programming in general and how to fix problems when things go wrong, finding ways to keep Project Noah running and helping users adapting to technology changes.



Engagement tools and options

- Patches and photo competition
- Blog participation and international community

Jacob Gorneau, USA

Team member, National Moth Week

"I joined Project Noah in 2012 at the **age of 13** by uploading the miscellany of

images I captured around my rural New York home, not having a clue as to the

library of biodiversity just outside my doorstep. Documenting this biodiversity,

however was impossible without the help of selfless community members who

helped with identifications and encouraged me to continue sharing my finds. With

my particular interest in insects, citizen scientists at Project Noah, many without a

formal background in nature study, empowered me to believe that I too could

develop the encyclopedic knowledge necessitated by a curiosity of the

natural world. The Project Noah community was instrumental in developing my

passion for nature study and in empowering me to formalize my passion for

- Strong social media visibility

Student

- "Ranger" status (site moderator and ambassador)
- > 2'000 local or global missions to choose from
- Secure classroom option for teachers with >16'000 students accounts
- Sense of ownership: create your own mission



Leana Lahom-Cristobal, Philippines

Former engineer and IT professional

Social entrepreneur

Co-Founder, PhiLep, Inc.

Deforestation is an acute problem in the Philippines, and many local species are endangered and face a catastrophic extinction rate by end of the 21st century. Moths and butterflies are recognized indicators of biodiversity and play an important role in the pollination of both crop and non-crop plants, showing both economic and ecological significance. Until recently, there was no centralized public resource available to provide an up-to-date and useable catalogue of butterflies and moths for the Philippines. In 2012 a group of motivated Filipino citizens led by Leana L. Cristobal and Agnes A. Talavera (lawyers, engineers/IT professionals, agriculturists, artists, conservationists, wildlife photographers, economists, educators, anthropologists and entomologists) set up two large field missions on Project Noah, inviting the public to submit images and observations of Lepidoptera from the entire archipelago. Data and contributors gathered via the Project Noah field missions enabled the creators to eventually launch PhiLep in 2014, with a mission to collaborate with groups with similar interests so that all the recorded information may be used to conserve Lepidoptera species and their habitats, and motivate local communities to minimize practices with negative environmental impact.





nature, particularly with respect to insects, by majoring in Entomology at Cornell University, where I am now a junior. They were also able to connect me with a partner citizen science project, National Moth Week, where I am an active team member helping to write blog posts and organize events. I am forever thankful for the support and friendship of many in the Project Noah community who have helped and continue to expand my worldview and my understanding of the world we live in".



"How can you raise awareness on biodiversity conservation and environment protection when your countrymen and women are not aware of what they have? Philippine Lepidoptera, Inc. is now the leading source of information on Philippine lepidopterans and we are proud to say that we started and were able achieve this feat through Project Noah".





Chun Xing Wong, Malaysia Student

Co-Founder, 1StopBorneo Wildlife

Growing up in Tawau, a small city in Northern Borneo, I got to experience wonderful biodiversity here first-hand. Although I have always been fascinated with wildlife, I had never met anyone who had the same interests as me due to low nature awareness here. That is until I finally discovered Project Noal back in 2011, which I decided to try. On my first spotting uploaded into the site, I received a lot o welcomes and praises from the Project Noah community. This was a huge encouragement to me and nstantly knew that Project Noah was the perfect platform for me. I was really touched by the fact tha Project Noah managed to bring together so many people who are as passionate about nature as me. One of the most amazing things that I have witnessed is that citizens can be transformed into espected wildlife experts on Project Noah. Project Noah has also provided me with the opportunity to earn from others and improve my skills. I am now studying Biogeography at university, and getting involved in wildlife research, thanks to Project Noah and **the drive it gave me.** In recent years, I have nanaged to find other local young citizen scientists and together we **started a new NGO** called 1StopBorneo Wildlife, with the aim of bringing a positive change towards our natural environment With the help of 1StopBorneo Wildlife and University of Malaysia Sabah, we have provided interested itizens with an opportunity to experience scientific work such as identifying wildlife, camera trapping rehabilitation, and discussing innovative ideas for habitat conservation. The most important lesson learned from Project Noah is that you don't have to work as a scientist to be able to contribute Photograph of Chun by fellow Project Noah member Albert Kang. to science".



Dominik Hofer a.k.a. bayucca, Switzerland Dentist

Amateur expert

Am amateur entomologist with a passion for the Neotropics and a library to rival that of experts, Dominik is Project Noah's top species identifier, with over 9k identifications to his credit.

^{II}Identification is my passion, my nature pulse. I am not motivated by credits, but by knowledge acquisition and by being an inspiring example to others. Identification is one thing, but we are also here to tell a story. By sharing my experience and knowledge I can be part of these stories. My experience is respected by professionals, but I know my limits. When needed I reach out to my network of master experts from the scientific community, privately or on social media expert groups. Thus, a dental specialist from small Switzerland I in the meanwhile can be a global naturalist, embedded in a large community of nature lovers, nature photographers and scientists. For me Project Noah is a complete package for sharing spottings from all over the world, getting identifications by experienced members, being connected to a global nature network and learning interesting news and facts about the natural world. I am very proud to be part of this community".



Nuwan Chaturanga, Sri Lanka Park Ranger

A young man working in his family business with a passion for the natural world, Nuwan was one of the first adopters of Project Noah in Sri Lanka, inspiring numerous Sri Lankan students to follow step and join. Fascinated by lepidopterans and especially moths, poorly documented in his region, he quickly got himself involved in local research and conservation projects. A member of Project Noah's rangers team (site moderators), Nuwan eventually turned his life around and became a real life ranger, training with the Sri Lankan Department of Wildlife Conservation as a wildlife guard.





"Many of my friends had no idea about our beautiful local wildlife until they saw my contributions to Project Noah".







WSIS Prizes 2017 e-science Champion



