

You can be a star—on science's stage

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The rapid growth in "citizen science" projects during the past decade is enabling more and more science enthusiasts, hobbyists, students and other ordinary people to participate in the excitement of real-world scientific research and help solve serious scientific mysteries. That's the topic of the cover story in *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN), the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society.

Deirdre Lockwood, C&EN contributing editor, traces the growth of [citizen science](#) from the Audubon Christmas Bird Count of 1900 to a recent [project](#) in which volunteers collected rainwater from Hurricane Sandy to help researchers analyze the storm. Today, chemists are getting help from the public by crowdsourcing research projects and distributing tasks, like data collection, to large groups of people. This citizen science movement has gained momentum in the past decade through funding, enthusiasm and technology. Lockwood reports that National Science Foundation funding of citizen science projects has grown from a handful each year in the early 2000s to at least 25 per year today.

The article notes that people can browse hundreds of projects for citizen scientists on websites like [SciStarter.com](#), [citizenscience.org](#) and [zooniverse.org](#). Chemistry projects include helping to curate the chemical structure database ChemSpider, monitoring water quality in local waterways or playing the puzzle game Foldit, whose users figured out the structure of a complex molecule that had stumped professional scientists for years. One chemist designed a kit using Legos that has allowed students at 70 high schools and colleges to join a search for

compounds that could help make hydrogen gas—a potential green fuel—from sunlight and water.

More information: "Crowdsourcing Chemistry",
[cen.acs.org/articles/90/i46/Cr ... rcing-Chemistry.html](http://cen.acs.org/articles/90/i46/Cr...rcing-Chemistry.html)

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