

# Recording the seasons using the Nature's Notebook platform

August 3 2022

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The proliferation of citizen science platforms has allowed for widespread collection of data in countless disciplines, including phenology, the study of the timing of seasonal events in plants and

animals. Writing in *BioScience*, Theresa Crimmins of the USA National Phenology Network (NPN) and colleagues survey the research and applied scientific advances made using the Network's digital platform, Nature's Notebook.

According to the authors, since the platform launched in 2009, [community members](#) throughout North America have contributed over 30 million phenological records. Drawing on previous surveys, the authors were able to detect patterns in usership: first, individuals tend to use the platform for personal enjoyment and record observations, but the majority only contribute data for one season. Members of preexisting organized groups, such as schools, tend to contribute much more consistently and frequently, but on a more limited diversity of organisms. Other users are natural resource professionals and researchers. Data on the timing of seasonal events is critical for [natural resource management](#), and data from Nature's Notebook is increasingly employed for these purposes. For example, The US Fish and Wildlife Service engages the southern Arizona public to track the timing of flower resources used by the migratory lesser long-nosed bat, a species recently removed from the US Endangered Species List.

To conclude, the authors find that the platform is well-suited for asking and answering well-defined questions, but has limitations for answering unplanned questions as a result of spatial and temporal unevenness and species biases in data collection. They propose more structure in the data collection process as a solution to expand the potential uses of the data. However, they note that the NPN is "well positioned to drive phenology data collection across the country." The authors also touch on how to partner with Indigenous communities in the study of phenology with respect for data sovereignty, especially related to data on the locations of certain plants and animals.

**More information:** Theresa Crimmins et al, *Science and Management*

Advancements Made Possible by the USA National Phenology Network's Nature's Notebook Platform, *BioScience* (2022). [DOI: 10.1093/biosci/biac061](https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biac061)

Provided by American Institute of Biological Sciences

Citation: Recording the seasons using the Nature's Notebook platform (2022, August 3) retrieved 22 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-08-seasons-nature-notebook-platform.html>

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